

**Limerick Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report encompassing**  
**10-12-2003 to 14-12-2004**

We the members of Limerick Prison Visiting Committee are pleased to present our annual report .

The committee held monthly meetings in conjunction with interim meetings and other visits to the prison on occasions. We met with individual prisoners at various locations throughout the Prison with on average four to seven prisoners presenting themselves to the committee per month. Areas identified as problematic for prisoners are categorised as follows:

1. Transfers to other places of detention,
2. Loss of privileges,
3. Restoration of lost remission,
4. Family visits,
5. Medical treatment,
6. General complaints .

Education Service

Earlier this year the committee was pleased to be informed that the capital funding had been allocated for the new education building within Limerick Prison. This new building will facilitate the broadening of the modules available to the prison population . The committee has found that the education staff within Limerick Prison continue to provide a high quality programme of education for prisoners, this despite the current limitations encountered due to infrastructural constraints .

These programmes facilitate inmates to: -

1. Cope with their sentence,
2. Achieve personal development goals,
3. Reintegration into society post release,
4. The establishment of an appetite and an appreciation of the Life Long Learning concept .

Students where appropriate, are encouraged and facilitated to work towards external accreditation for modules undertaken within the Education Unit . It is noted by the committee that every effort is made to broaden access and participation in education within the prison. Current analysis shows a participation rate between 50- 55% . Pre-release programmes continue to be based on a multi - disciplinary ethos . The committee also notes that students within the Education Unit continue to offer their work to charitable causes within Limerick City and the surrounding areas. Charitable contributions include: -

- Items of furniture
- Craft and Art work,
- Coffee morning,
- Skipaton .

Benefactors include CARI, Adapt House, Milford Hospice, St Gabriel`s School and Centre and Bedford Row Project. Two prisoners were presented with first prize for works submitted to Listowel Writers Week .

### Inspector of Prisons

Judge Kinlen (Inspector of Prisons ) visited Limerick Prison 17-02-04 and 18-02-04

. This visit was welcomed by the committee .

### Opening of New C Wing

With the opening of the new "C Wing" on 09-02-04 the capacity of the male prison has increased by 106. The committee welcomes the fact that in - cell sanitation is the keystone of the Irish Prison Service building programme resulting in better conditions for prisoners and staff alike. The committee recommends that in - cell sanitation be extended to the two remaining wings, which are without same at present i.e . A Wing and B Wing . The committee recommends this as a matter of priority and urgency.

We the committee understand that the capacity of the Irish Penal System has been reduced due to the closures of the Curragh and Fort Mitchel Prisons earlier this year.

We are also glad to say that the upgrading of the CCTV,circle area, visitors reception area, main gate locking area and the introduction of palm readers on gates has been completed. The committee is particularly pleased to see that the visitors reception area is of the highest standard in order to ensure visitors to the prison are afforded the highest standards of dignity and facilities .

### Catering

The highest standards of industry best practice in catering have been applied to the catering department of Limerick Prison. Throughout the year the committee has visited the catering department and has found it to be of the highest standard of cleanliness and hygiene. All food items were sampled at points of production and

service to prisoners and were found to be of the highest quality both in presentation and make - up. The committee would like to complement the catering team, both staff and trainees on gaining the Treble Excellence Ireland Hygiene award for the fourth year in a row. We are glad to welcome the introduction of the 28 day cycle menu in Limerick Prison and the expansion and broadening of the food types available to all prisoners .

### Substance Abuse

We the committee, note the continued efforts of the Governor and his staff in the curtailment of the illegal use of drugs within Limerick Prison. This is an ongoing battle and the committee have noted the continued work of prison staff at all levels especially in the control room through electronic monitoring via internal and external cameras, visitors reception, committal reception and visiting box in an effort to curb the entry of drugs .

To curtail the supply of drugs been thrown into the prison the committee notes the installation of additional nets over the recreation yards.

The committee also notes the continued work of Dr R Ryder, Nurse Officers and Aljeff in their work with the Prison Detoxification programme. The committee would like to complement Aljeff who have assigned two addiction counsellors three mornings a week to provide counselling services in the area of addiction. Aljeff provide this invaluable service on a purely voluntary basis as of now. This service is in conjunction with the efforts of the governor and his multi - disciplinary team . The committee supports the ongoing efforts to have a full time counsellor assigned to Limerick Prison in partnership with the Mid-Western Health Board .

### Aftercare

The committee is concerned about the level of supervision and aftercare service available to prisoners. Our recommendations have been forwarded to Prisons Policy Division who have requested clarification of same. We feel that a board under the auspices of the Probation and Welfare Service be established consisting of FAS, Mid Western Health Board, IBEC, enterprise boards, trade unions and local aftercare services such as Moyross and Southill Outreach. It is our opinion that this type of structure would enable the board to liaise with prison staff in linking the prisoner to the services required, and would enable a smooth and enhanced transition from custody to the community. The board should deal with such issues as employment, healthcare, emotional and psychiatric care, addiction issues and substance abuse programmes.

The committee was also pleased to note that information booklets as espoused by the committee have been introduced for all offenders released from Limerick Prison.

This booklet contains information on:-

1. Social Welfare payments,
2. Home life,
3. Money management,
4. Education,
5. Work and training,
6. Legal matters, contact numbers for support agencies.

### Death of Dominic Dawson

The toxicology report on the late Dominic Dawson who passed away in Limerick Regional Hospital on 24 th May 2003 has been forwarded to the relevant authorities .

### Prison Doctors Industrial Action

We were concerned that the Prison had been without a doctor for 11 weeks which, caused a lot of inconvenience during the summer months leaving 290 prisoners with a reduced level of medical cover. We were happy to see the end of the doctors dispute on 10-08-04 and would like to complement the medical staff within the prison for the way in which they dealt with a very difficult situation .

### Business Plan

The committee has noted that the Prison Business plan is progressing .

### Connect

The introduction of the Connect project was welcomed by the committee and is progressing as planned with the "Introduction Programme". This programme is currently being offered to all committals to Limerick Prison .

### Psychology Service

The psychologist assigned to Limerick Prison has taken up a new post at University College Galway. The committee would recommend that a replacement psychologist be assigned to the prison as a matter of priority .

### Visitation

We visited Cork Prison in September this year within the guidelines of all current circulars and regulations. We feel that this was a valuable learning experience for the committee as a whole .

### Chairperson

Mr Michael Fahy having dedicated five years as chairperson of the committee did not go forward for re - election . He deemed it important that another member of the committee be afforded the opportunity to gain valuable experience as chairperson of the Visiting Committee of Limerick Prison .

The committee welcomes the appointment of Mrs Teresa Lynch as our new Chairperson . The committee was also pleased to learn that our former secretary Pat O Toole has been promoted to Assistant Governor .

### Farewell

The committee would like to express our thanks to Mr Michael Doherty for his commitment and hard work during his tenure on the committee. We wish him every health and happiness in further pursuits .

We were saddened when we learned of the death of committee member Mr Robert Mulcahy, who departed this life last January. We greatly appreciate his contributions to the activities of the committee during his tenure. May he rest in peace .

### Welcome

We welcome the appointment to the committee of Mr Pat Driscoll, Mr James Lynch and Mr . Michael O Shea .

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In conclusion we wish to express our thanks to:

- The Governor,
- The Deputy Governor,
- The Assistant Governor,
- The secretary and assistant secretary,
- All prison staff .

We would also like to thank all those who gave advice and assistance to the committee throughout the year, which enabled the committee to fulfil its duties .

This help, co - operation and assistance is very much appreciated by all members of the Visiting Committee of Limerick Prison .



\_\_\_\_\_ Teresa Lynch Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_ Ger Connolly

\_\_\_\_\_ Michael Fahy

\_\_\_\_\_ Collette Flynn-Scanlon

\_\_\_\_\_ Thomas O Keeffe

\_\_\_\_\_ Eileen O Brien

\_\_\_\_\_ Noreen Mitchell

\_\_\_\_\_ Anne O Keeffe

\_\_\_\_\_ Pat Driscoll

\_\_\_\_\_ Michael O Shea

\_\_\_\_\_ James Lynch