

## **Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report 2015 Limerick Prison**

Limerick Prison is a remand and committal Prison for male prisoners from counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary and for female prisoners' from the Munster counties.

This is a closed, medium security prison the capacity of the prison is for 220 males and 24 females. The inspector of prisons' bed capacity is stated as 185 males and 24 females.

The Committee held monthly and interim meetings during the year. The committee also visited the new and old prison in Cork this year.

Again this year Limerick Prison was a very busy establishment with movement of prisoners' to court, other prisons', hospitals' for treatment, committals from the community and discharges. All this movement often leads to an acute shortage of staff which can put pressure on educational and other activities within the prison.

We have had excellent co-operation from all the officers during our visits and our inspection of all areas of the prison grounds.

Again this year the committee met with many prisoners at their request. Most complaints centred around lost clothing, visitors having trouble with the dogs at the prison, prisoner transfer, medical treatment and cancellation of activities due to staff shortages were among the complaints.

Most of the complaints here were discussed with prison personnel and results were mostly positive.

The Families and Imprisonment Group (FIG) is very active in Limerick Prison. The essential pillars identified by the FIG are as follows;

- Communications

- Physical improvements
- Staff training
- Parenting courses and resettlement interventions
- Community partnerships

The committee are glad to see the ongoing training of staff to deal with prisoners' and their families. The design and atmosphere in C block is now much improved. The visiting room has been redecorated and the family room is also available to prisoners' on an enhanced regime.

### **Parenting plus**

This programme is to facilitate prisoners' and their partners' in developing their parental skills. A prison officer and a teacher in Limerick Prison perform parenting skill courses for prisoners', while Bedford Row works in the community with their partners.

To date this programme has been delivered to two cohorts of twelve prisoners' each. Unfortunately only eight prisoners' have completed the course. Successful completion requires that prisoners' do not test positively for illicit substances during the course.

The committee have dealt with no complaints from female prisoners' in 2015. The actual prison is very old but the prisoners' there seem very happy with the regime. The new female prison is planned for completion by 2018. At a request of the visiting committee the female recreation room was to be refurnished to a proper standard, this has been finalised. The room is now homely, comfortable and appropriate to the prisoners' needs.

A focus group of three women from E division and several NGOs was formed to consider how best to improve the service for the women in Limerick Prison.

The Number of prisoners' in Limerick Prison on the 05/01/2016 was Male 221 and female 29.

**Improvements to the Prison in 2015**

- Greenery and shrubs in the forecourt of the prison.
- Improvements in the visiting areas. i.e. made more family friendly
- Redecoration of recreation room in female prison.
- Another very successful Red Cross course. 20 males completed the course and were presented with diplomas at a very enjoyable family day.
- New Court facilities being constructed near the prison.

The visiting committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the new Governor of Limerick Prison, Mark Kennedy and his staff for their help and co-operation throughout 2015.

Pat Conway,

Chairperson Limerick Prison Visitor Committee