

Portlaoise Prison
Dublin Road
Portlaoise
Co. Laois



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Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath
Port Laoise
Contae Laoise

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Visiting Committee Annual Report 2010

We, the members of the Visiting Committee at Portlaoise Prison are pleased to present our Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 2010.

The Committee meet on the first Tuesday of each month throughout the year and two members of the Committee visit the Prison on an unannounced visit once a month. Each month members of the Committee visit different areas of the Prison and inspect all the facilities and services which are available to the prisoners.

The Committee met with a large number of prisoners throughout the year who had various requests and issues which they wished to raise with the Visiting Committee. The Committee brought these issues and requests to the attention of the Governor along with their recommendations and were satisfied with the decision or action taken on each occasion. The Committee would once again like to highlight the fact that an increasing number of requests were made by prisoners who had been transferred to the new state of the art C Block and were looking to go back to Mountjoy Prison or Dublin based Prisons. Most of these requests to return to Dublin prisons were to facilitate family visits.

Throughout the year, the Committee visited the new C Block and are delighted to report that this new Block which was officially opened on 23rd November, 2009 by Minister Dermot Ahern is a very modern building with in cell sanitation and provides a wide range of workshops and education

facilities for offenders housed in this Block. However, the committee are very disappointed to report that only two of the workshops are in operation to date. Despite, several requests by the Governor for more staff to operate the rest of the Workshops, to date, no extra staff have been transferred to Portlaoise to make provision for the opening of these workshops.

We are happy to report that all prisoners have access to a very good health care system which includes a full time Medical Officer, who along with the Nurse Officers and Medical Orderlies provide excellent care for all the prisoners. A Physiotherapist from the local hospital visits the Prison on a weekly basis and a visiting Psychologist also attends at the Prison on a regular basis. The following clinics are also provided on a regular basis or as required : Psychiatrist, Dentist, Chiropodist and Optician.

The Catholic chaplain, Fr Drumm and the Church of Ireland Minister continue to care for the spiritual needs of the prisoners.

The Prison also has a full time Probation Officer who addresses a wide range of issues with the prisoners such as offending behaviour, anger management, addiction, coping skills, problem solving skills and resettlement issues. Most of the work is carried out on an individual basis but some group work programmes also took place during the year. Some prisoners also requested help with sourcing accommodation, social welfare and employment in preparation for their release throughout the year.

The Education Centre offers prisoners a wide range of subjects at basic, intermediate and advanced levels. The Education Centre held a number of examinations by accredited bodies during the year and a number of prisoners sat these exams. A number of pre release courses were also offered during the year which include courses in Goal Setting, Personal Development, Relationships and Job preparation.

Visiting speakers from the following agencies also visited and gave great assistance and were very informative and beneficial to the Pre Release Programme.

- Citizens Information Centre
- Linkage (Employment issues)
- Adult Education Guidance Service
- Educational Trust

The following courses were also completed to aid prisoners with their needs and requirements for employment upon release :

- Environmental Food Hygiene (Leonardo)

- Pre Release Programme
- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)
- Web Design
- First Aid / CPR
- Addiction Studies

The Education Centre had an average enrollment of between 220 and 235 prisoners throughout the year. The Centre has a teaching staff of 9 full time teachers and 20 part time teachers. 2 teachers from the National College of Art and Design also teach on a part time basis.

Industrial Supervisor in charge of the Kitchen and his team of Assistant Industrial Supervisors continue to produce and maintain very high standards in the preparation, cooking and distribution of food on a daily basis. The 28 day menu caters for both normal and vegetarian diet.

Prisoners working in this area must take part in a number of certifiable training courses which assists them in the performance of their work and helps them maintain an interest in their work.

Once again, we congratulate the Governor and his staff in this area on their achievements in receiving the Q mark and the Taoiseach's Award for excellence in catering.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Governors Whelan and Downey, his management team and staff for the courtesy, assistance and hospitality provided to us on our visits to the Prison at all times during the year

Tom Colgan
Chairman

Anne Turley

Eilish Croke

Michael Hough

Susan Meagher

William Foley

Tim Long