

# **LIMERICK PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

**1st JANUARY 2003 TO 9th DECEMBER 2003**

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

The committee held monthly meetings with interim visits by members and other visits on occasions. We met prisoners on an individual basis on average about four per month. Their complaints were varied, and came mainly under the following headings:

- 1) Transfer to other places of detention.
- 2) Loss of Privileges.
- 3) Removal of Remission.
- 4) Family Visits
- 5) Medical Treatment

A meeting took place with the Probation & Welfare Staff in January of 2003. This meeting proved most informative to the committee. Many topics were discussed and included the following:

Access to Literacy programmes  
Reintegration back into society  
The Bedford Row Project  
Employment Prospects and difficulties  
Care Services and access to same  
Follow up after release

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the committee met with Judge Kinlan. The committee noted the contents of the report as issued by Judge Kinlan.

The committee noted with sincere regret the death in custody of prisoner Domnic Dawson. A post mortem is awaited to determine the cause of death. The committee is concerned about the undue delay in the return of the toxicology report.

Two female prisoners ran a half marathon to raise funds for the Leukaemia Department, Mercy Hospital, Cork. This venture raised the sum of €700.00.

Catering:

The highest possible standards apply in the Kitchen at Limerick Prison. The food was sampled regularly by the committee and was found to be of top quality. We, as a committee, have to compliment the staff on the cleanliness of

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the kitchen, the high standard of hygiene in the preparation, cooking and distribution of the food. The quality and nutritional value of the meals was excellent. We are pleased to note that Limerick Prison has been awarded the Hygiene mark from Excellence Ireland, for the third year in a row.

### **Building Programme:**

The building programme is now very advanced. The Administration section has opened in the new C division. The Gate Lock area with new and very much improved facilities for visitors is nearing completion. The committee note that it has proved necessary to open the old part of E wing as a male wing. The committee understands that this has been done to facilitate work in the circle area of the prison, as B wing had to be shut down on a temporary basis.

### **Substance Abuse:**

The committee note the continued efforts of the Governor and his staff to curtail the use of illegal drugs at Limerick Prison. This is of serious concern to the Committee and staff. Further precautions are in place, including the CCTV cameras in the visiting areas and the recreation yards. All visitors to prisoners, are searched before admission to the visiting areas. The recreation yards are covered by permanent netting but unfortunately contraband is being thrown onto these nets and is then knocked down by the prisoners using handballs and footballs. The committee has recommended that secondary nets be installed to prevent this activity from happening. The Governor has installed temporary secondary nets and the committee is recommending that these temporary nets be replaced by permanent netting.

The committee also noted the recent introduction of a Detox programme at Limerick Prison and the discontinuation of maintenance programmes. The committee is of the opinion that this should only be undertaken as part of a structured programme with all the resources that a detox programme demands, i.e. Counselling etc. The committee fully supports every effort to help those addicted to mood altering substances to abstain. The committee note the agreement between the Mid Western Health Board, Limerick Prison and the Irish Prison Service Headquarters, to provide counselling services for those that want to get off drugs as part of a structured programme.

### **Education Unit:**

**The committee recommend that the current Education facility, which is totally inadequate, be replaced with a modern structure. This would lead to increased attendance and would facilitate the offering of a greater range of subjects.**

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**The staff of the Education Unit at Limerick Prison continue to be committed to the provision of a high quality, broad and flexible programme of education that meets the needs of the inmates. This programme helps inmates to:**

1. Cope with their sentence
2. Achieve personal development
3. Prepare for life after release
4. Establish an appetite and a capacity for life long learning

Students are encouraged and facilitated to work towards accreditation where relevant and appropriate. Efforts are made on a continuous basis to widen access and increase participation in education. Current analysis shows a participation rate of between 50%-55%. Pre-release programmes continue to be based on a multi-agency approach. Students at the education unit continue to offer their work to charity. Contributions include:

Items of furniture  
Art/Craft work  
Skipathon  
Coffee morning

Benefactors include:

CARI  
Adapt House  
Milford Hospice  
Bedford Row Family Support

**The Education Unit would like to emphasise the importance of Education in the reintegration of prisoners into society. Consequently the committee feel very strongly, that the Education Unit, requires urgent upgrading.**

## **Other Institutions:**

The committee was not allowed in this calendar year to visit another prison in the state. This is a most unwelcome development. The committee feel that these visits, even though they are only one a year, help the committee in their work. It is hoped that such visits will be allowed in 2004.

## **Business Plan:**

The committee welcome the recent Business Plan developed by Limerick Prison. This plan is based on the following:

Custody of Prisoners Committed by the Courts  
Caring for Prisoners  
Promoting Rehabilitation and Integration

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Managing Human Resources

Estate Facility Management

This will facilitate prison management in setting targets and developing strategies. The plan is designed to operate from 2001 through to 2003.

It costs around €1300.00 per week to keep a prisoner in detention. The committee is concerned in regard to the release of prisoners when the necessary backup facilities are not in place or are not available to help them reintegrate back into society and to gain employment. Some prisoners leave with little or no financial resources. This in particular is not good enough and needs urgent attention. All prisoners when leaving, will receive an information leaflet giving details of Social Services, Health Services and Probation and Welfare Services. This comprehensive document of the relevant agencies covering the southern area will be available in early 2004.

**Connect Project:**

The committee welcomes the introduction of the Connect Project to Limerick Prison. This programme will provide linkage in the reintegration of prisoners into the community. Four Prison Officers have been trained in the delivery of this programme and will be working in conjunction with the National Training and Development Institute as well as local partnerships.

**Welcome:**

We welcome the return to Limerick Prison of Chief Officers Noel McGrath and Brian Cronin. We also note the promotion of Chief Officer Tadgh O Riordan to the rank of Chief Officer Class 1.

**Farewell:**

The committee would like to express their thanks to Mr. Tim O Driscoll and Mr. John Dowling for their commitment and work during their term of office. The committee is concerned that no new members have been appointed in their place. The committee also would like to note the retirement of Chief Officer Class 1 Vincent Foley from the Prison Service. The committee wish all three every health and happiness in the future.

**Limerick Prison Visiting Committee**  
**Annual Report**  
**From 1 st January 2003 to 9 th December 2003**

**Acknowledgments:**

In conclusion, we wish to record our thanks to the following:

The Governor,

Deputy Governor, Assistant Governor

The Secretary and Assistant Secretary

All officers and staff including visiting staff, for their advice, assistance, cooperation and courtesy at all times. This was very much appreciated by all the members of Limerick Prison Visiting Committee.

Signed	Michael Foley	Signed	Eileen O'Brien
Signed	Robert Welch	Signed	Lena Lynch
Signed	W. J. O'Brien	Signed	Thomas O'Keefe
Signed	John Connor	Signed	Joe O'Keefe
Signed	Michael O'Brien	Signed	

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Signed		Signed	<i>Collette Flynn - Scully</i>