

**Report of first follow up Inspection
of Limerick Prison by the
Inspector of Prisons
Judge Michael Reilly**

16th January 2012

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Presented to the Minister for Justice and Equality pursuant to
Part 5 of the Prisons Act 2007.

Judge Michael Reilly
Inspector of Prisons

16th January 2012

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- 1.1 In paragraph 1.14 of my Report on an Inspection of Limerick Prison dated 25th November 2011 (hereinafter referred to as the “November Report”) I stated that it was my intention to submit four follow up reports to the Minister for Justice and Equality. I undertook that I would submit these reports on the 16th January 2012, 1st March 2012, 1st May 2012 and 15th June 2012.

- 1.2 In Appendix A of my November Report I set out time lines by which action was to be taken to deal with serious concerns identified by me in my said Report.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Report is to specify the action already taken and to comment where necessary.
- 1.4 The information contained in this follow up Report is informed by an unannounced inspection of Limerick Prison carried out on Wednesday 11th January 2012, my conversations with the Deputy Governor, Assistant Governor and Chief Officer, my conversations with various prison officers, my conversations with prisoners and general information from other relevant sources.
- 1.5 For ease of reading I set out hereunder and in the same sequence as in Appendix A of the November Report the issues to be dealt with and my comments.

Toilet Patrol for A and B Divisions during periods of lock up. (Appendix A 1.)

- 1.6 I stated in paragraph 2.18 of my November Report that the Governor of the prison undertook that as and from 28th November 2011 a ‘toilet patrol’ would be provided on A and B Divisions during periods of lock up. This would mean that as and from that date prisoners would be released, on demand, to attend to their toilet needs during all periods of lock up. I am satisfied that the toilet patrol works effectively on B Division during such periods of lock up. There is a difference of opinion between certain prisoners on A Division and prison management as to whether the toilet patrol operates as efficiently in A Division. I am unable to resolve this difference but will keep the matter under review and will report as appropriate.

Repair flushing mechanism in toilet in Safety Observation Cell in D1. (Appendix A 2.)

- 1.7 I inspected the flushing mechanism in the toilet and can confirm that this has been repaired.

Yards, urinals etc to be cleaned. (Appendix A 3.)

- 1.8 The A Yard was clean but the urinal was dirty and overflowing. The B Yard was clean as were the benches. The urinal was clean. The toilet in the C Yard was filthy and blocked. Despite opening onto the yard the smell from this area was atrocious. The yard was clean. The D Yard was clean but the sheltered area was dirty as was the urinal. I am satisfied that the dirty areas could not be taken as one off occurrences as the general condition of the areas suggested to me that the urinals and toilet had been in this condition for some time.

Toilets in D recreation hall to be cleaned. (Appendix A 4.)

- 1.9 The toilets in the recreation area of D Division were boarded up. I was informed that they had been taken out of commission. I was informed that they would not be replaced as the prisoners in the D Recreation area have access to the urinal in the D Yard and are allowed back to their respective landings to use the toilets. I have already referred to the state of the urinal in the D Yard. Security considerations could also delay prisoners returning to their landings to use the toilets. I consider this unsatisfactory.

Identification of prison personnel. (Appendix A 5.)

- 1.10 All uniformed prison personnel in Limerick Prison have been issued with identification numbers that are worn while on duty. The Irish Prison Service must be complemented on bringing forward this much needed reform.

**All A and B Divisions be clean and equipment in wash/slop out areas repaired.
(Appendix A 6.)**

1.11 There has been a vast improvement in the cleanliness of A and B Divisions and especially in the areas of wash/slop out. With the exception of one shower on A2 Landing all showers were working. The smell of sewage has been eradicated. All broken equipment in the wash/slop out areas has been repaired, replaced or removed. A number of call bells were either not working or were faulty. I am satisfied that these defects were not of recent origin as I was informed that these faults had been reported on a number of occasions to the relevant authorities in the prison. This is unacceptable on many grounds including welfare, health and safety and security. Two new machines for cleaning floors are in use in A and B Divisions. This has meant that the floors on A1 and B1 are being cleaned to a high standard. All upper landings were clean. Prisoners on cleaning duties informed me that they were not being supplied with adequate cleaning materials to enable them maintain A and B Divisions to the standard required. I was assured by prison management that this was being attended to immediately and that double the quantity of cleaning materials would be made available to the cleaners. A numbers of cells on A and B Division have been painted. This has been done to an acceptable standard. I am specifically not referring to the repair/replacement of broken windows in this report as this is a matter that I will be reporting on in my next report due to be submitted on 1st March 2012.

Identification of a Dedicated Committal Area, High Support Unit and Drug Free Support Unit. (Appendix A 7.)

Dedicated Committal Area

1.12 I have been informed that due to the overcrowding in Limerick Prison it is not possible, at the moment, to have a Dedicated Committal Area for either male or female prisoners. I have been informed that such an area will be provided on B1 Landing for male prisoners in September 2012. I understand that this will be possible as the capacity of Limerick Prison will be reduced to 220 as soon as the new prison block in the Midlands Prison is opened in September

2012. I will be relying on this assurance and will report subsequent to September 2012. I understand that the Director General of the Irish Prison Service (hereinafter referred to as the “Director General”) intends developing an end to end Prison Strategy for female prisoners. I look forward to reading this strategy document and would ask that it will not only deal with general issues but will specifically deal with the serious and urgent issues of overcrowding, the provision of dedicated committal areas, the provision of high support facilities for vulnerable prisoners and the opening of drug free support units. I will report further on this in due course.

Dedicated High Support Unit

- 1.13 I have been informed that it is not possible, at present, to provide a Dedicated High Support Unit in Limerick Prison. The main reasons are the overcrowding of the prison and the absence of an appropriate area. I understand that the Director General intends bringing forward a Strategic Plan for all prisons. I would ask that he address the issue of High Support Units. It is essential that all relevant prisons have a Dedicated High Support Unit of sufficient size, sufficiently equipped and adequately staffed to provide for vulnerable prisoners in such prisons. The template which should be replicated is that of the High Support Unit in Mountjoy Prison. This has 9 cells and caters at present for a population of 582 prisoners – a ratio of 1:65. This High Support Unit has received favourable commendations from such reputable bodies as the World Health Organisation which considered it as meeting best international practice and worthy of one of its most prestigious awards. I have been informed that as an interim measure a High Support Unit will be provided in the new block to be opened in September 2012 in the Midlands Prison. This is to provide support for those prisoners in Limerick Prison, Cork Prison and the Midlands Prison who are clinically assessed as requiring care in such a unit. Based on the experience of Mountjoy Prison and on a similar ratio of prisoners to such cells it would seem that such a unit should have as a minimum 18 cells appropriately constructed, sufficiently equipped and adequately staffed to cater for the population of the three prisons which at present numbers approximately 1,175. The provision of High Support Units is one of the most important issues facing the Irish Prison Service. Where short

term measures are the only option strict time lines must be published in order that there can be no ambiguity as to when High Support Units will be provided in all appropriate prisons. I will keep this matter under review and report as appropriate.

Drug Free Support Unit

- 1.14 I have been informed that, given the chronic levels of overcrowding and the Victorian accommodation in Limerick Prison coupled with inadequate drug treatment services at present in place, it is not possible in the short term to introduce a Drug Free Unit in Limerick Prison. This must be addressed as an urgent issue in the Strategic Plan being drawn up by the Director General. I have been informed that once the capacity of the prison is reduced to 220 in September 2012 an interim arrangement will be re-examined. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the planning of such an interim arrangement should take place immediately, that protocols should be established and that Standing Operating Procedures should be agreed in order that a Drug Free Support Unit could be in operation as soon as the population of the prison is reduced to 220. The template that should be used is that which has been formulated and will operate in the, soon to be opened, Drug Free Support Unit in Mountjoy Prison.

Review of Prisoner in D1. (Appendix A 8.)

- 1.15 The conditions under which this prisoner 'lives' has improved. The prisoner has a good relationship with two officers. He will not engage with other prisoners or staff. He is well looked after medically. His cell was dirty when I inspected it on 11th January 2012. He soils his cell and will not clean same. He is given a shower every day. He is taken out for exercise. His cell is thoroughly cleaned once a week. While I acknowledge that the prison officers are doing what they can for this prisoner they are not trained to deal with the situation. The continued detention of this prisoner in these conditions continues to give cause for concern. I will expect further progress to be made

in this case prior to my next follow up report due to be submitted on 1st March 2012.

General comment

- 1.16 While this follow up Report only deals with those matters identified in Appendix A (1-8) of my November Report I am encouraged by the progressive attitude apparent in the prison and the improvements detailed in this Report.
- 1.17 In my report due to be submitted on 1st March 2012, I intend not only referring to items 10 and 11 in Appendix A of my November Report but revisiting those issues referred to in this Report as necessary.