

Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report 2016 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 for males was reduced from 220 to 210 during 2016 as A Wing became single occupancy. Capacity for females continues to be 24. The inspector of prisons' bed capacity is stated as 185 males and 24 females. The average number of prisoners' in Limerick Prison during 2016 was 220 Males and 28 Females.

Limerick Prison continues to operate at full capacity. There is constant movement of prisoners to:

- ✓ other prisons – to both relieve overcrowding and in the interest of prisoner well being
- ✓ courts,
- ✓ hospitals' for treatment
- ✓ committals from the community and discharges.

These movements, while unavoidable, can lead to an acute shortage of staff putting pressure on educational and other activities within the prison. The successful Escort Support Pilot Scheme has been renewed and this should continue to be of assistance in planning staff rosters etc.

The Committee held monthly and interim meetings during the year.

Members of the Visiting Committee continue to receive the support of and co-operation from The Governor, Deputy Governors, Chiefs, Officers and other personnel operating within Limerick Prison.

The committee met with many prisoners at their request. Most complaints centred on

- visiting difficulties - complaints re the dogs identifying visitors
- lost clothing – this is a problem that in the main appears to be linked to prisoner transfer. We have been assured and are satisfied from a decline in

the number of such complaints in recent months that every effort is and has been made to minimise/eliminate this type of incident.

- Medical treatment
- Cancellation of activities due to staff shortages
- Lack of practical work opportunities/experience for females

Most of the complaints heard were immediately discussed with designated prison personnel and the majority were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

There have been a number of developments during 2016 which are impacting positively on prisoner welfare

- **The Listeners scheme** was introduced in February 2016. The listeners is a peer support group led by the Samaritans which aims to reduce instances of self-harm and suicide in prison. Prisoners are selected by the Governor and the Samaritans (the Samaritan has the last say on who is trained) to train as Listeners and they provide emotional support to other prisoners who are struggling to cope.

7 male prisoners trained as Listeners and 3 Female prisoners. This was reduced to 6 males and 1 female by the end of 2016.

4 female prisoners are currently being trained and the training for Male Listeners will be starting in March.

- **The Presidents Award - the GAISCE** commenced in Limerick Prison in January 2016. The President's Award is aimed at participants aged up to 25. It is essentially a self-development programme which is a direct challenge from the President of Ireland to young people to realise their potential. There are three levels of Gaisce – Bronze, Silver and Gold. Prisoners are required to undertake a physical recreational activity for 26 weeks, a community involvement activity, learn a personal skill for 13 weeks and a team activity (it is an adventure journey in the community but we cannot do this in prison) in order to satisfy the requirements to achieve the award.

During 2016 in July **10 participants** in the Gaisce Bronze award took part in an Active Retirement function and in November **15 participants** in the Bronze and Silver took part in a Christmas Active Retirement function, which saw Active Retirement groups from the community visit the prison for a full 3 course meal and musical entertainment with spot prizes. A total of 290 guests were successfully catered for -130 in July and 160 in November.

In December 2016 **11** prisoners were presented with the Bronze award at a ceremony attended by their families and with presentations of awards and certification by the CEO of the Gaisce Yvonne Mc Kenna. At the end of 2016 there is **1 enrolled in the Gold award, 6 prisoners enrolled in the Silver award and 21 enrolled in the Bronze award who are at various stages of completion.**

6 prisoners who were over 26 were trained to be Gaisce support leaders (GSL) to support/encourage younger inmates who are taking part completing the awards. The GSL supports younger inmates and supports prison officer PALS (President Award Leaders).

- **Red Cross had lapsed in Limerick and was restarted in 2016.** 16 completed the Red Cross in 2016 and a further 6 trained as facilitators. The facilitator's then co facilitated course on overdose prevention course. Training is planned for 2017 January/ February when it is intended to roll out phase 2 of the Red Cross programme which deals with the Prison to Community and work will be done in association with the Probation Service.

It is intended to roll out an environmental waste project and the Red Cross inmates will be the leaders on the recycling part of this on the landings.

- **A Lifers group commenced during 2016 in partnership with the Probation Service.** The lifers all did a course prior being invited to attend. 13 Lifers are part of this group in 2016. Guest speakers who have met the group in 2016 include: IPRT, the Director General Michael Donnellan and head of Psychology Dr Emma Regan. Two very successful lifer's family day visits took place in the prison in December. The parole board is scheduled to attend during 2017.
- **The Alternative to Violence programme commenced in 2016 and ran 3 courses:** Module 1 was completed by 16 prisoners, Modules 2 and 3 by 10 prisoners, Certification is awarded after each module. It is intended that 6 courses will take place in 2017.

See hereunder the list of Certification completed by Limerick prison in work and training in 2016

- 6 inmates completed the Guild of Cleaners and Launderers Certification. (Laundry)
- 25 inmates completed City & Guilds Cleaning Certification (125 individual certs). (Industrial Cleaning)
- 40 inmates completed Manual training (Kitchen)
- 7 inmates completed Food Safety and You certification with FSAI (Kitchen).
- 7 inmates completed City & Guilds Foundation course in Food Safety (Kitchen)

In 2017 it is intended to provide certification in picture framing (awaiting clearance from IPS College for permission for W.T.O to attend training) and also in Basic carpentry with QQI in C Wing Craft shop.

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 Parenting Plus Programme was reviewed in 2016 and it is intended following, consultation with the female prisoners, to roll out a new programme in 2017.

Improvements to the Prison in 2016

The current phase of redevelopment works is due for completion at the end of March 2017.

This phase included:

- Demolition of remainder of buildings and stone wall to Costello Yard.
- Provision of new temporary carpark facility with new temporary entrance.
- Construction of section new precast concrete perimeter wall.
- Provision of new permanent staff carpark, with new entrance and access route to prison.
- Construction of new precast concrete perimeter wall to C-Yard with integrated guard post and turnstile access to yard area.
- Construction of new Stores/Trades building.
- Construction of new MV and LV switch rooms and ESB substation.
- Demolition of old B Wing and B Annex.
- Demolition of Old Army Quarters building.
- Relocation of Waste Management area.

The next phase of the redevelopment works is due to go out to tender at end of March 2017 with contractors expected on site in early May.

This phase will include:

- Provision of new temporary staff mess facility in new carpark area with ancillary services.
- Decommission, demolition and clearance of current staff mess facility to provide new Probation building site.

- New mains ESB feed from Courthouse transformer to new MV/LV switch room and new mains feed from LV switch room to basement switch room in prison.
- Services works to allow for demolition of current LV switch room, ESB substation, main boiler house, old generator plantroom & tank room, and old Trades/Stores building, and site clearance of these areas.
- Diversion of services to include service routes and duct routes for next phase of works i.e. D&B contract.
- Possible upgrade of CCTV network.

The Design & Build phase of works is scheduled to go out to tender in August / September with contractors envisaged on site in February 2018 for an estimated 24 - 30 month build programme.

This phase will include:

- Completion of Prison perimeter wall.
- Construction of new 100 cell B-Wing block to include office spaces, staff facilities, new prison kitchen, training kitchen and staff mess, new prison laundry and work training workshops.
- Construction of new 50 bed Female prison with 8 apartment units, healthcare facility, education and training facilities and visiting rooms.
- Construction of new back gate lock to include new Visitors entrance & reception area for female prison, PSEC, OSG and gate offices and OSG kennels.
- Construction of new exercise yards, PSEC parking, Kitchen/Laundry delivery area, Waste Management and recycling area, horticulture area etc.
- Construction of new Probation Service building.

The committee is anxious that the design phase will incorporate best European Practise and allow for the progression of prisoners as well as preparing them for re-entry into the community. On the physical side the committee would like that serious consideration be given to the front of the building removing the razor wire and replace with wrought iron gates in keeping with the period of the prison.

The visiting committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governor of Limerick Prison, Mark Kennedy and his staff for their help and cooperation throughout 2016.

Patricia McCarthy

Chairperson Limerick Prison Visiting Committee

