

# **Prison Visiting Committee**

## **Annual Report 2018 Limerick Prison**

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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 2018 was males: 230 females: 35.

Having up to 44 female prisoners during the long, hot summer of 2018 with no proper air conditioning was unacceptable. One can only hope that the new Female Prison starting in 2019 will improve the situation.

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 prison wellbeing.
- Courts
- Hospitals for treatment
- Committals and discharges from the community

These movements, while unavoidable, can lead to acute shortages of staff, putting pressure on educational and other activities within the prison. This is an ongoing problem at the prison. The committee held monthly and interim meetings during the year visiting all areas of the prison, unannounced on a regular basis. The catering department maintains the highest of standards and provides valuable training for participating prisoners.

Members of the visiting committee continue to receive the support and co-operation from the governor, deputy governor, chief officers and other personnel with Limerick Prison.

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

- Visiting difficulties – complaints re; dogs
- Identifying visitors
- Screen visits
- Delays with post
- Medical treatment
- Cancellation of activities due to staff shortages
- Lack of practical work/experience for females

- Delays accessing the yard
- Conditions of the communal toilets and 2 showers for the female prisoners
- Concerns regarding welfare following discharge

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

### Prisoner Welfare

There have been a number of developments during 2018 which are impacting positively on prisoner welfare.

The ongoing necessity for segregation of prisoners continues to need careful management.

The 'Isolation Unit' is in urgent need of redevelopment. Limited improvements were carried out; however, it is not suitable and should cease to be used for long term occupation.

The committee found that the officers whom they met in this area to be genuinely caring and concerned for the welfare of the prisoners.

There was a disruption to the medical service which impacted on the prisoners. This was regrettable as the service is essential and the committee welcomes the full restoration of the service.

However, the rigid scheduled attendance of the psychiatrist can have a negative impact and this needs to be reviewed to ensure flexibility in attendance and to have continued positive effects.

The front of Limerick Prison has had a facelift during 2018 and this is to be welcomed. The visiting area has also been redecorated during 2018.

We look forward to the new Female Prison which will greatly relieve the overcrowding at the jail.

Pat Conway,

Chairperson Limerick Visitor Committee