

VOICES OF FAMILIES
AFFECTED BY IMPRISONMENT



BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT



2007

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We are indebted to John Carmody whose poem on the inside back cover offers a poetic expression to the content of the Research. © John Carmody 2007

We would like to express our gratitude to Marjorie Daly for the original artwork, painted with care and attention, which adorns the cover. © Marjorie Daly 2007

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PREFACE

The Bedford Row Family Project began in 1999. Its main concern was the impact of imprisonment on families and family life. While the life of those making up prison society has received increasing, though still insufficient, attention over the past two decades, it seemed to those who began this Project that the lives and needs of families who had a member in prison were pretty much forgotten. An awareness that families themselves “do time” while their son, brother, father or mother are in prison is beginning to sink in to society’s consciousness. Along with this awareness comes the question about whether family members don’t all suffer a degree of social, material and relational punishment that, while unplanned, may be as unnecessary as it is unjust.

Since 1999 the activities of the Project have grown steadily as have the number of families and family members who have connected to the Project by bringing to it their needs, experiences, talents and creative participation. One of the strongest learnings the Project has made concerns the strength of family relationships. However much the event of going to prison seemed outwardly to split the family into two parts, with one part being behind the prison wall, the Project’s experience of listening to family members taught us all repeatedly that family life and relationships persist through the time of a prison sentence and in very practical ways transcend the material boundary of prison walls. But these relationships clearly become vulnerable in this passage and in this space and the Project, in the midst of a range of its activities, is particularly concerned with the manner in which our laws, social policies and practices either increase or diminish this vulnerability which is so intensely felt at the heart of individual lives and family relationships.

At the end of 2004 the Board of Directors of the Project felt the need to bring together all the different experiences that the Project was receiving, to give voice to those experiences in a wider social context, and to prioritise the different responses that the Project needed to make as it developed. With this end in mind the Board commissioned a research consultancy, *Kelleher Associates*, to undertake the research that is the basis of this report some two years later.

This has been the Project’s first experience of undertaking systematic research. The Board emphasised with the consultants the importance of the family members’ voices being heard through the research. We are deeply grateful to both the many family members who participated in the research as well as to the research consultants for ensuring that the whole research process has been one extended collaborative effort from start to finish. The outcome of this endeavour is a Research Report which the Board is pleased to recommend to its many audiences as a trustworthy account of the prison-family relationship as it is experienced by a group of family members in one part of Ireland – i.e. the mid-western region. It should be noted that the research itself was carried out in the period from October 2005 to June 2006.

As a Research Report the reader will note that it contains different kinds of examination and expression. In its examination of *policy* the emphasis is upon careful description of existing policies affecting the area of concern and a critical questioning of the extent to which these policies are achieving their intended goals. In the focus on the experience of family members concerning the impact of imprisonment upon them the emphasis is on allowing the voices of the individuals to be heard in terms of their own unique content. This is a particularly important section of the Report which contains unique descriptions of individuals’ experiences on either side of the prison boundary. While possibly shocking for those whose daily experiences are at some remove from prison life, it is important that the experiences of individuals are heard and find response. And finally, in the focus on the *Bedford Row Family Project*, the emphasis is

upon a consideration of the adequacy of its resources and the appropriateness of its structures for the growing range of tasks it sets for itself.

A Project like ours depends for its effectiveness on strong collaborative links with many persons and agencies. Central to these links lies our relationship with Limerick Prison and many of its key personnel. From the Project's beginning it has found a very positive response from prison authorities to the varied concerns of family members represented to them through the Project. The openness of the Prison management to the Project's requests to operate a hospitality service for visitors at Limerick Prison was a significant step towards increased family friendliness. Over the years Project staff have invariably met with a gracious response to enquiries or special requests made to senior Prison management on behalf of families. It is with great sadness that in the final stages of this Report we learned of the untimely death of Mr. Pat Laffan, the Governor of Limerick Prison. Mr. Laffan, along with several other Prison staff, has been a close supporter of our Project's development and a central facilitator in the realisation of certain parts of the research reported in these pages. The Project also acknowledges the support of the Irish Prison Service which has provided core funding since 2001.

The reader of this report will become aware that there is much to be done. It is our belief in the Bedford Row Family Project that the way forward is along a path of collaboration and partnership which joins creatively the unique insights and abilities of prisoners themselves and their families and those of the many different personnel, within the Prison system and in the wider community, who are committed to working with them towards a better future.

Jim Sheehan
Chairperson – Board of Directors
Bedford Row Family Project
June 2007

1 INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Imprisonment of a family member has a significant impact on those left outside. Even though they have not committed a crime, family members can feel stigmatised and shamed and carry huge emotional and health costs. Families deserve support in their own right, a support which is tailored to their own needs.

Supporting families is also crime prevention. Having a parent involved in crime is a strong risk factor for the child becoming involved in crime (Withers 2003). Supporting children and teenagers when a parent goes into prison can help to interrupt the cycle of inter-generational criminal activity. It has also been found that people in prison who maintain good family contact are twice as likely to have employment and housing on leaving prison and are six times less likely to re-offend (Loucks 2004).

The Bedford Row Family Project commissioned *kelleherassociates* to undertake research on the needs of families who attend the project. The research has three main aims:

- To give expression to the experiences of families of having a family member in prison.
- To assist the Bedford Row Family project to make informed decisions about its future work.
- To undertake a critical examination of the manner in which statutory policies, provision and practices impact upon these families and their relationships.

As part of the research, interviews were held with 52 family members, including eleven ex-prisoners. Personnel from key agencies in the Limerick region, including staff at Limerick Prison, were interviewed. Discussions were also held with staff from the Bedford Row Family Project. A review of key government policy documents and selected literature was carried out.

The conclusions and issues arising from the study are presented fully in Chapter Five of main Report, which the reader is urged to consult for expansion of Paragraphs 2 to 6 below, which summarise the key findings. (Note that throughout this summary, reference is made to Chapters in the main Report)

2 THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIES

2.1 General

Families affected by imprisonment experience anxiety, shame and grief as they journey through the criminal justice process - arrest, trial, imprisonment and release. Attending court is challenging and stressful for family members and often, (particularly in the case of serious crimes), made more difficult because of the unwelcome intrusion of the media. For many, experience of imprisonment aggravates underlying problems that are already putting strains on family life including poverty, childcare problems, health problems, substance misuse and very often the threat of homelessness. (Chapter 3).

2.2 Visiting

Visiting conditions was a key issue raised by families as good visiting arrangements are seen as fundamental to maintaining family relations and supporting both the person in prison and the family. The lack of an activity room for children awaiting visits and the absence of a crèche for young children were of concern to families.

The lack of privacy for adults and the difficulty of having private conversations in the visiting room (visiting box) makes visiting difficult. The visiting room is noisy and overcrowded and people have great difficulty carrying on conversations.

2.3 Children

Children can experience guilt and insecurity when a parent is taken into prison and encounter difficulties when visiting parents in prison. The present study tells of the shame and secrecy around imprisonment and the grief, fear and confusion experienced by children (Chapter 3.2). Changes in behaviour can vary from aggression and restlessness to withdrawal and depression. Children are often ridiculed at school and performance at school can be affected. International research has found that one-third of prisoners' children suffer significant mental health problems, compared with 10 per cent of children generally (Loucks 2004).

Adults interviewed told of the difficulties of when and how to tell children about the imprisonment of a relative.

Services for children such as bereavement counselling, self-help groups and activity based group events, are, as yet, under-developed and there is a lack of awareness about the effects of imprisonment among professional groups, such as counsellors and teachers.

Given that Ireland has ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, in which children's right to family life is paramount, it is important that the rights of children affected by imprisonment are addressed.

3 GENERAL ISSUES CONCERNED WITH IMPRISONMENT

3.1 Prison and Inequality

It is no surprise that there is a concentration of prisoners in Limerick Prison from the five most disadvantaged areas in Limerick City (Chapter 4.11). This brings into focus the need to address issues relating to inequalities of wealth and opportunity that play a powerful role in generating crime. Specifically, greater investment needs to be made and greater collaboration between different agencies is necessary if disaffected communities in Limerick City are to be re-generated.

3.2 Immigrant Community

Paralleling the increasing numbers of immigrants to Ireland, the number of people from ethnic minority groups in prison is increasing (Irish Prison Service 2004). In this context, there is need to ensure that cultural competence underpins the work of all service providers which have a brief for families affected by imprisonment.

3.3 Gender

In focussing on families affected by imprisonment, it is difficult to avoid gender issues. The vast majority of prisoners are male and it is mainly women who carry the responsibility of caring for the family, visiting the prison and the cost of supporting a relative in prison.

3.4 Prison Conditions

Families and prisoners expressed concern about the following issues which fall under the heading of ‘prison conditions’.

- The long periods of idleness and lock-up. (Chapter 3).
- The two new training workshops in Limerick Prison are not open due to lack of staff. Education classes take place in a number of different rooms dispersed throughout the prison in cramped conditions. (Nevertheless, some prisoners reported significant progress in their education).
- Lack of drug treatment services, and poor and inadequate mental health services. The need for urgent reform of the mental health service in our prisons is strongly articulated by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF 2002).
- Lack of programmes on parenting, relationships, offending and violent behaviour which families say need to be further developed.
- Lack of sanitation in prison cells in the old wings of Limerick Prison which do not have in-cell sanitation. (These wings were built in the early 1800s and prisoners in these wings ‘slop-out’ on a daily basis).
- There are only one and a half Probation Officer positions for the 280 prisoners in the prison at any one time.
- The CONNECT programme, which is concerned with active sentence management, has not been implemented.
- The practice of release of prisoners into homeless hostels. (Families stated that there is need for a range of options to meet their accommodation needs).
- Lack of employment opportunities on leaving prison. While acknowledging that it is not the prisons’ fault, many family members stated that having a criminal record is a substantial barrier to gaining employment on release from prison.

4 THE BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT

The fact that families affected by imprisonment are very much a neglected group makes the pioneering work of the Bedford Row Family Project highly significant.

The Bedford Row Family Project has developed an impressive integrated response, which seeks to address the exclusion and the disconnections experienced by families affected by imprisonment. The project has several inter-related elements, which are described more fully in Chapter 2:

- Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison
- Information, Advocacy, Support
- Outreach Service to Families
- Education and Development
- Group Work and Counselling
- Support to Ex-Prisoners

- Inter-Agency Work

Through its inter-agency work, the project has contact with a large number of organisations and has high visibility and credibility with the community sector and agencies in Limerick City. The project is highly valued by families.

Due to the responsiveness of the project to the needs of families and ex-prisoners, activities and programmes have expanded rapidly. This has resulted in increased staffing, administrative and management demands. The challenges to the project are outlined in Chapter 5.3.

5 POLICY CONTEXT

Important changes in thinking took place in government and academic discussion in the late 1990s and early 21st century and there was overwhelming consensus on the need to put in place a modern prison service and prison programmes more conducive to the re-integration of prisoners into family and community life (Chapter 4). Progressive developments in Limerick Prison include the enhancement of multi-agency work through a number of measures:

- Weekly multi-agency meeting of prison staff.
- The Bedford Row Hospitality Service, which is an effective partnership between the Limerick Prison Service and the Bedford Row Family Project.
- Liaison with the Homeless Persons Centre to accommodate prisoners who are identified as homeless.
- Liaison with the Community Welfare Service.

Although some reforms have been put in place, families continually maintain that reforms have not been sufficient to significantly improve the conditions of prisoners or visiting conditions for families. The slowness in implementing reforms at a national level has been attributed to limited resources, lack of coherent implementation mechanisms, bureaucratic inertia, industrial relations difficulties and lack of political will (O'Donnell 2002; Heylin 2001; National Economic and Social Forum 2004; Healy 2006).

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

An overview of the research findings and issues arising from the research are presented in Chapter Five of the main body of the Research Report. Six key recommendations emerged as significant for families and they are outlined briefly in this summary.

6.1 Family Contact Person

Families expressed a strong view that the appointment of a designated family contact person by the Irish Prison Service would be a support to them. Where appropriate, s/he could be consulted in sentence planning.

6.2 Positive Sentence Management

This was also identified by families as an initiative that would be of great support.

6.3 Pre-Release Programme

Good work currently underway in Limerick Prison with respect to developing a co-ordinated pre-release programme has been commented on favourably by

families and they report that they would further benefit from progression of this programme without delay. Bedford Row Family Project could be supported to develop a parallel programme for families, as when prisoners are being released from prison, families need support to rebuild relationships and to adjust to the change.

6.4 Children

The Bedford Row Family Project plans to develop its work with children affected by imprisonment. Resources would be needed to undertake this work, which would involve:

- Development of guidelines, and assistance for parents, on informing children about a parent's prison sentence.
- Development of published material to help children to understand the effects of imprisonment on the family.
- Pro-active initiatives to meet the needs of children with ADHD, particularly in families where there appears to be a link between ADHD and offending behaviour.
- Incorporation of issues concerning children and young people affected by imprisonment into training programmes for teachers, social workers, Gardaí, prison officers, health workers and voluntary agencies.
- Recruitment of designated Staff to undertake focused issue based work with children/young people who have a relative in Prison.

6.5 Equality

The introduction of legislation to allow criminal records of adults to be expunged after a period of time, and the implications of this, needs to be considered by statutory authorities. As part of this consideration, the rights of prisoners and families of prisoners need to be enshrined in equality legislation. The Equality Authority would be ideally placed to commission a position paper outlining a specific legal framework for removing prison records.

6.6 Funding of Bedford Row Family Project

The funding arrangements for the project are outlined in Chapter 5.3. Four main government departments/agencies and a number of charitable organisations provide funding for the project. Long term funding of Bedford Row Family Project by main Government Departments would enhance the consistency of programmes undertaken by the Project and thereby the feelings of security felt by families in the focus group. Finance raised through fund-raising could then be used to expand and innovate other project development activities.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.1 BRIEF OF THE STUDY

In September 2005, the Bedford Row Family Project commissioned *kelleherassociates* to undertake research on the needs of families of prisoners. The research has three main aims:

- To give expression to the experiences of families of having a family member in prison.
- To assist the Bedford Row Family Project to make informed decisions about its future work.
- To undertake a critical examination of the manner in which statutory policies, provision and practices impact upon these families and their relationships.

It is expected that the research will provide:

- Insights into how imprisonment affects families.
- Guidelines to the Bedford Row Family Project in regard to its future direction.
- An outline of policy issues concerning families and prisoners affected by imprisonment.

1.2 APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH

The research, which is mainly concerned with the experiences of families in the Limerick region, whose relatives were in Limerick prison or other prisons, was carried out over a nine-month period between Oct 2005 and Jun 2006.

The research tasks undertaken included:

- A review of key government policy documents and the role of key agencies and government departments.
- A review of selected literature on families affected by imprisonment.
- An analysis of documentation on the development of the Bedford Row Family Project.
- Interviews with staff of the Bedford Row Family Project.
- Interviews with members of key agencies that have a brief to support families of prisoners and ex prisoners.
- Interviews with 52 family members including 11 ex prisoners. (People interviewed were referred for interviewing by the Bedford Row Family Project).

The study adopts a qualitative approach on the impact of imprisonment on families who attend the Bedford Row Family Project. This approach enabled family members to be heard in their own words as they reflect on the challenges of having a family member in prison. The research is novel in the Irish context in that there are no other qualitative studies which give a voice to families affected by imprisonment. It complements the more quantitative studies on crime and imprisonment (Bacik and O'Connell 1998; McCullagh 1996, 2002; O'Mahoney 2000a)

A second literature review was undertaken and discussions were held with members of the Bedford Row Family Project to identify the main themes to be addressed in

interviews. A semi-structured interview schedule was used in the study (Appendix C). Interviews lasted on average one hour.

The study adopted a ‘formative’ methodology, that is, as the research progressed, feedback was provided to the Bedford Row Family Project on issues of concern to the project that arose in discussions with the various interests involved in the study.

1.3 BREAKDOWN OF STATUS AND NUMBER INTERVIEWED

Excluding the 11 ex prisoners, the relationship of the 41 other family relatives to the prisoner is outlined in the following table.

| Status | Number |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Mother | 16 |
| Sibling | 9 |
| Partner | 7 |
| Father | 4 |
| Child/daughter | 4 |
| Other relative | 1 |
| Total | 41 (6 male and 35 female) |

1.4 AUDIENCE FOR THE RESEARCH

The audience for the research is:

- The research participants themselves and their families.
- The Bedford Row Family Project.
- The Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Government departments and agencies most closely involved in shaping the policy and services for prisoners and their families.
- The general public.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All participants were assured that their interviews were given in the strictest confidence. Names and some personal details have been changed to protect their identity. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, staff of the Bedford Row Family Project offered support to people interviewed at the end of each interview.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

Chapter Two outlines the main elements of the Bedford Row Family Project. The interviews with family members are documented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four reviews policies that impact on prisoners and their families. Chapter Five gives an overview of research findings and outlines the issues arising from the research.

The Bedford Row Family Project will be referred to throughout the report as the Bedford Row Family Project or just Bedford Row.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT

2.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROJECT

The Bedford Row Family Project, initiated by the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of Mercy in 1999, is one of the few projects in the Republic of Ireland that has as its key focus the support of families affected by imprisonment. The particular focus of the Project followed on from a research study conducted in collaboration with statutory agencies and community based projects in the Limerick area. The research study conducted an examination of the unmet needs of families in the Limerick region. The Franciscan Friars and the Sisters of Mercy made initial seed funding for the project available.

The impact of imprisonment on families had low political priority at the time. However it was apparent to community organisations and agencies working in marginalised communities in Limerick City that imprisonment was a key issue affecting a large number of families. The public at large was for the most part unaware and somewhat indifferent to the devastating impact of imprisonment on the families left behind.

The Bedford Row Family Project from its beginnings made a conscious decision to provide a service where the approach and ethos was one of respect for individuals and their families. The experiences of families are listened to and the project helps individuals to re-build self esteem and resilience. The experiences of families help to shape the direction of the project. For many families the response of Bedford Row contrasts with the prevailing hostile attitudes to families affected by imprisonment where families feel blamed, isolated and ostracised. In the Bedford Row Family Project families are encouraged and supported to address and deal with issues that are affecting them, in their own time and at their own pace.

One of the first activities of the Bedford Row Family Project was to establish an information and refreshment service in the waiting area of Limerick Prison. This was established by the co-ordinator of the project. The service was located in a prefab building, known as the “search hut”. Families of prisoners soon got involved in assisting the co-ordinator on a voluntary basis and later on a part-time paid basis. Early on in the development of the project a person with professional social work qualifications was employed.

In 2001, Bedford Row established peer support groups for families visiting prison who themselves had experienced imprisonment. At the end of 2001, the Irish Prison Service agreed to provide funding to the project for staffing and running costs. The project was evolving fast and was well on its way.

In 2002, a new project leader was recruited. She set about developing new initiatives and sourcing significant funding for the project.

Today the Bedford Row Family Project operates from two centres. One is a two-storey building in Bedford Row in Limerick City centre, which is rented from the Franciscan Friars at a nominal fee. The premises has been refurbished and adapted to suit the needs of the project. An emphasis is placed on the creation of a warm, welcoming atmosphere

and comfortable chairs and bright colours are all part of the surroundings. The project also operates a Hospitality Service from the Reception Centre in Limerick Prison.

The Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison is an important source of first contact. Other people make contact with the project on the recommendation of a friend or family member who has personal experience of the project. People have also been referred by agencies including social work and counselling services, the Probation Service (PS) and the Irish Prison Service (IPS).

A major challenge to the project today is the heroin epidemic, which has hit Limerick City in the last few years. This has put added pressure on families and on the project. The role of drugs in crime is well documented and the prevalence of drugs has aggravated the problems of marginalised communities located in segregated housing estates with few community facilities. The drugs epidemic has fuelled inter family feuds as conflicts escalate over drugs and ‘patches’. As we will see in Chapter Three, these conflicts can spill over into the prison environment.

2.2 VISION, MISSION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project is inspired by the values of solidarity and compassion. Solidarity is built in the circle of listening and response which unites funders, families, people serving prison sentences, staff, volunteers and directors in the search for better ways of going forward together.

The project is committed to listening to the experience of people affected by imprisonment, and allowing that experience to shape the direction of the project.

Vision Statement

The Bedford Row Family Project is committed to promoting the well being of individuals and families who struggle against disadvantage.

In a spirit of openness, hospitality and respect we welcome all who come to us and value them as shapers with us of our vision.

We endeavour to work collaboratively with other organisations both statutory and voluntary.

In the tradition of compassion and solidarity of Catherine McAuley and Francis of Assisi, we will work towards the building of God's reign of joy and inclusion.

Mission Statement

The Bedford Row Family Project seeks to facilitate the families of prisoners as a group sharing common interests to identify the needs and issues which are of importance to them, to develop strategies to address those issues and needs, to carry those strategies through to implementation and to monitor and evaluate their progress.

Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the project are:

- *To establish an information and refreshment station at Limerick Prison.*
- *To establish a child-care service to meet the needs of families of prisoners.*
- *To access/establish services which meet the educational needs of the families of prisoners.*
- *To access/establish services which provide support and counselling to the families of prisoners.*
- *To establish an information, referral and advocacy service to the families of prisoners.*

In support of its main objectives the project is committed to:

- *Networking with other agencies.*
- *Increasing public awareness of the needs of families of prisoners.*
- *Developing programmes for men and women who have been in prison.*
- *Promoting research on the specific issues of families of people in prison.*
- *Raising the necessary funds to resource the activities of the project.*

The project adopts a community development approach and works in collaboration with other groups and organisations. It seeks to facilitate the self-development, empowerment and participation of families affected by imprisonment in its decision making processes.

2.3 MAIN STRANDS OF THE PROJECT

In any one week the project engages with several hundred individuals. These include spouses/partners and other relatives, children and ex prisoners. The project has sustained personal contact with approximately 200 individuals. In 2005, there were over 6,000 visits to the Bedford Row Family Project. A customised database gives staff and management information on the numbers participating in the project.

In 2005, 541 adult relatives and friends were on the contact list of the project and adult relatives made 188 new contacts. Approximately one-third of new contacts are male and two-thirds are female.

The loss of a parent or a close relative through imprisonment is traumatic for children and young people. Although the focus on children is relatively new, to date the project has worked with over 200 young people.

Between 2003 and 2005, the project worked with 132 ex prisoners.

2.3.1 Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison

The Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison is a partnership arrangement between the Bedford Row Family Project and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The Deputy Governor of Limerick Prison is a member of the Board of Directors of the Bedford Row Family Project and the support which the project receives from prison management is highly valued.

The Bedford Row Family Project is aware of the importance to families of maintaining good family contacts. People in prison who maintain good family

contact are twice as likely to have employment and housing on leaving prison and are six times less likely to re-offend (Loucks 2004). Listening to the needs of families and supporting and facilitating families to maintain contact with prisoners is in itself crime prevention. Although there are no statistics in Ireland on the number of families who lose contact with relatives in prison, statistics in England suggest that 45 per cent of people in prison lose contact with families (Heybourne 2005).

The Irish Prison Service also understands the importance of family contact for prisoners and one of the core values of the service is to help prisoners, where possible and appropriate, to maintain relationships with their families (*Strategy Statement 2001-2003*). In line with this, the Limerick Prison Service acknowledges the importance of supporting families to maintain relationships with prisoners and recognises the important role which Bedford Row plays in providing a friendly environment for families visiting the prison (Limerick Prison Service 2006).

The Bedford Row Hospitality Service is located in the new visitors' reception area, a purpose-built building at Limerick Prison, which opened in 2004. The reception centre is a modern room with walled seating. Alongside this room there is a modern toilet and baby changing facility. However the reception centre is small and has no separate play area for children. The Hospitality Service operates from a small kitchenette in the reception centre. Prior to this, visitors waited in the prefab search hut outside the prison.

Prison visiting hours are from 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. five days a week. Normal visiting rules permit each prisoner to have two visits a week. Three people excluding children can attend any one visit. In more recent years, for security reasons, prisoners are required to nominate a list of people who are then sanctioned by prison management for visiting. Prisoners who are sanctioned for breaking prison rules, such as bringing in drugs to the prison, are only allowed screened visits. In such situations, a total screen that prevents touching or any personal contact separates visitors and prisoners.

The Hospitality Service is staffed during visiting hours. Staff offer refreshments and non judgemental support and understanding to families and aim to maintain a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the reception centre. Approximately 400 cups of tea are given out each week. Art and play materials, such as colouring sheets and jigsaws, are provided for children. Leaflets and reading materials are available for adults. A broad range of issues is covered in the leaflets and booklets and includes information on welfare rights, drugs, bullying and suicide. Information is available for new visitors on visiting times, security and basic rules on visiting, items that may be handed in, search procedures, as well as information on children visiting prison.

At any one time there are approximately 280 males and 16 females in Limerick Prison. The Hospitality Service staff meet the vast majority of families who visit the prison. Thus, the Hospitality Service at Limerick Prison is a key frontline service of the Bedford Row Family Project and it is an important point of first contact with many families. Many families are referred to and go on to access other services from the Bedford Row Family Project, such as social work support, information and referral, counselling, adult education and the social clubs.

Staff of the Hospitality service interact well with prison staff who vet visitors, ensure visitors' property is secure and deal with other security issues. Staff of Bedford Row recognise that good relations with prison staff are important as the more credibility, value and acceptance they have from prison staff, the more help they can be to families.

In 2004, project workers who had a close relative serving time were requested by prison management to discontinue work in the Hospitality Service. This presented a serious challenge to the project. For individual workers it was a very difficult personal experience. Many people interviewed for the study felt that this was unfair treatment of families:

This struck at the heart of what the project stood for. It went against basic principles of the project, which are that families of prisoners should not be discriminated against.

The Board of Directors made a decision to use the opportunity to strengthen the Bedford Row Centre base by redeploying Staff to information, advocacy, course co-ordination, and reception duties there.

The Hospitality Service is highly valued by families (Chapter Three). However, both staff and families see the need for crèche facilities for young children and an activity room for children awaiting visits. Without such facilities when the reception centre is full, children play with the games and colouring books on the floor, while others run around the room, noisy and out of control. Staff also identified the need for a separate room where individuals could have privacy to discuss personal issues. If facilities were available within the prison area the project could be expanded to offer counselling to family members. Many families for of a variety of reasons do not make their way to the centre in Bedford Row. Staff made the point that there is need for ongoing staff training in crisis counselling and in how to manage conflict.

2.3.2 Information, Advocacy, Support

A one-stop information, referral and advocacy service for families of prisoners and ex prisoners is a key area of work of the project. It is an area of work which involves great sensitivity and skill and is seen as a vital tool for the empowerment of families. In carrying out this work the project has developed good working relationships with many agencies and organisations such as the Citizens' Information Centre, the Social Welfare Office and the Health Services Executive.

There were 438 queries to the project in 2005. The most common queries related to education and training followed by queries relating to prisons. These included requests for information on visiting times, transport arrangements, special visits, transfers, and temporary release on compassionate grounds. (See Table, 'Type of Query', next page).

The project is run on an open-access basis and people are welcome to drop-in on an informal basis for a chat and cup of tea. This open-access nature of the project creates challenges for the project as on a day-to-day basis it can be uncertain what the demand for the drop-in will be. In addition, during times when there are large numbers of people attending programmes in the centre, it can be difficult to accommodate open access.

TYPE OF QUERY

| Query | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Education, training, employment | 93 | 21.2 |
| Prisons | 82 | 18.7 |
| Accommodation | 65 | 14.8 |
| Social Welfare | 52 | 12.0 |
| Health/addiction services | 48 | 11.0 |
| Community Welfare | 34 | 7.7 |
| Legal | 24 | 5.5 |
| Other | 40 | 9.1 |
| Total | 438 | 100.0 |

2.3.3 Outreach Service to Families

In 2001, the project employed an experienced social worker on a part-time basis. Although her formal title is social worker, she sees her role more of an outreach worker and much of her work involves home visits. Her workload also includes referral to other agencies, accompaniment to court hearings and other forms of advocacy. At any one time she is engaged with approximately 25 families, while working more intensively with about 12 families.

This work involves a huge investment of time as it involves supporting people through the trauma of having a close relative in prison. It is often a 'holding exercise' providing a space where people can talk in confidence and get help to come to terms with the trauma of having a relative in prison. This service is highly valued by families as we can see from Chapter Three.

2.3.4 Education and Development

In partnership with the Limerick City VEC, the project initiated an education programme in autumn 2002. Many members of families who have experienced imprisonment have a low level of educational achievement, which places them at a disadvantage in terms of accessing further education/training or employment. Since 2002, 240 people have registered for a class and 74 people have received a FETAC Record of Achievement. This has given participants a great sense of confidence and achievement.

The education element of the project involves recruiting learners and tutors and making returns to Limerick City VEC. This requires significant administrative resources and staff time.

2.3.5 Support and Counselling; Adults

As well as supporting families in the Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison, personal development, support and counselling are provided through a range of activities in the Bedford Row Centre. These are also highly valued by participants. (See Chapter Three).

a. Social Club

The Women's Social Club was initiated in 2003 in response to requests by women for a safe place to meet with other women and an opportunity to learn new skills. Many of the women had commented that they had no social life because of fear, a sense of shame and sometimes because they felt intimidated. The empowerment of women was a central principle underpinning the work of the social club. In the words of the facilitator, the social club aims to:

Meet people where they are at and help them to let go of some of the self-blame.

When the social club, sometimes referred to as the 'support group', was set up in 2003, it started a range of activities suggested by women such as bingo and went on to offer cookery and crafts. Gradually a whole range of courses were made available to women and included courses on parenting skills, stress reduction techniques, support in dealing with addiction, arts, line-dancing, health issues and self-awareness programmes. Having fun and celebration are important aspects of the Social Club and, in 2005, a trip to Galway was organised which brought participants closer together in mutual support.

Twenty-seven people were involved in the Social Club in 2005. The Club formed the basis for more in-depth personal development work where participants have the option of participating in the Life Skills programmes. Both the Social Club and the Life Skills Programmes are highly valued by participants and are seen as 'life-changing' by many participants.

b. Life Skills

Peer support and mentoring play a central role in the Life Skills programmes. A psychotherapist and a person who has training in counselling, facilitation, addiction studies, and community health and community development facilitate the programmes. The basic Life Skills programme is ten weeks and the advanced Life Skills programme is 17 weeks.

The aim of the programmes is to assist participants to understand how the broader structures of society interact with personal factors to affect their lives. The programmes provide a safe place for family members to come to terms with co-dependency, self-blame and feelings of anger, shame and resentment. It helps people to release anger and to develop a way of expressing concerns without anger.

A range of issues emerge in the groups such as how to deal with addiction and how to cope with the pending release from prison of a partner or son. Domestic violence and sexual violence also emerge as issues and many women learn safety measures from the Life Skills programme. The option of individual counselling is available to women who wish to address their individual needs in a more in-depth way. Women assessed the support they receive from the Life Skills programme as very valuable (see Chapter Three):

The life skills course is brilliant. It responds to what is coming up on a particular day - kids, drugs, and relationships. It takes a lot of courage.

A participant on the basic Life Skills Programme has the option of progressing to the Life Skills Two Programme. The aim of this 17-week programme is to give participants the skills to support other families affected by imprisonment. Coming to terms with one's own grief and bereavement is a central element of preparing people to engage in this work. One facilitator outlined the challenge as follows:

Participants need to be able to leave their own issues behind them or it will be difficult for them to hear other people. You cannot listen to other peoples' problems unless you are off your own case.

They also need to understand addiction so that they are not enabling addictions.

In 2005, 18 women participated in a Life Skills programme. The experience of the facilitators is that it can take up to two years of group work for participants to express, and to come to terms with, their feelings. They were of the opinion that ideally the Life Skills programmes should be organised over a two-year period offering four modules on a progressive basis to participants.

c. Counselling

There is a panel of five qualified counsellors available to provide a counselling service for individuals, couples and family groups. In 2005, 411 counselling sessions were availed of. At one particular time there were 38 people availing of the service. The project also makes referrals to other counsellors and therapists. People who opt for counselling find it very rewarding:

It was like a trunk of a tree being taken off my shoulders. She (therapist) brought me through the whole lot. I realised that others were going through the same thing and that it was not my fault.

2.3.6 Support Work with Children

Children living with the experience of having someone close to them in prison can often feel traumatised and isolated (Buist 1997). Although work with children is relatively new for the project and only began formally in 2004, the project to date has worked with over 200 children and young people. In the summer of 2005 the Bedford Row Family Project organised day trips to the Kilkee Waterworld in Co Clare, the Acquadome in Tralee Co Kerry, Waterworld, Castlegregory Co Kerry and Fota Island in Cobh, Co. Cork. Parents or carers accompanied the children on the trips. These trips allowed children to interact with other children without the burden of shame and stigma. It also allowed carers space to communicate with the children in a fun and relaxed environment.

The Castlegregory trip was specifically aimed at young boys who were at risk of getting involved in crime. Two ex prisoners assisted three leaders from the Bedford Row Family Project. The ex prisoners talked and chatted to the young

boys about the realities of prison life, the devastating effects prison has on both prisoners and families. The trip was successful and it was felt by staff that this group of young people should be a particular focus of the Bedford Row Family Project.

Other activities organised by Bedford Row Family Project for children included music and dancing classes for nine to twelve year olds, and letter writing to fathers in prison. Staff are reflecting on what form centre-based activities for children might take in the future. Summer projects will be included in future planning. In 2005, further initiatives were undertaken to respond to the particular needs of children and contact has been made with local agencies working with children, such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), Schools, Barnardos, the ISPCC, and Young People at Risk.

As well as providing bereavement counselling and group work for children, staff see the need to provide courses for parents on when, how and what to tell children and young teenagers about the imprisonment of their parent (or other relative). There is also an issue of what to tell the school, as many families feel that some teachers do not know how to deal with issues that arise for children. This issue is further addressed in Chapter Three.

In Ireland there are not many projects with the specific aim of working with children and young people affected by the imprisonment of a relative. The Bedford Row staff plan to work to support carers of children of imprisoned parents and will learn from international best practice in this area.

2.3.7 Work with Ex Prisoners

No agency has responsibility for the re-integration of prisoners on leaving prison and there is no research or tracking system to monitor what happens to prisoners once they leave prison. Many prisoners are left to 'drift'.

An increased number of ex prisoners are approaching the Bedford Row Family Project centre where they are welcomed and can avail of the information and referral service. The project is conscious of the multiple and complex needs of many ex-prisoners relating to low self-esteem, relationship difficulties, difficulty finding accommodation, and training and employment needs. Some ex prisoners have an addiction problem.

It is the policy of the Project to keep Bedford Row premises drug free. An addiction counsellor from ALJEFF counselling service is available to meet family members and ex offenders coping with addiction at the Centre one afternoon a week. This is a very welcome development. Staff also see the need for a Community Employment scheme specifically for people leaving the prison.

Bedford Row staff are reflecting on how best to respond to the needs of ex prisoners. If the project is to cater adequately for ex prisoners, staff have identified the need for substantial resources. This would include funding for a staff member who has expertise in managing offending behaviour and in carrying out risk assessment.

The project works with a range of agencies with the aim of bringing about a more integrated response to the needs of both prisoners leaving prison and ex-prisoners.

2.3.8 'Help is at Hand' Conference

The project works to break down barriers with the wider community and to raise public awareness and understanding of the impact of imprisonment on families. The project also publishes annual reports, leaflets and pamphlets on the experiences of families affected by imprisonment.

In this context a key public awareness event was the *Help is at Hand* conference held at Limerick University in May 2005. Here families affected by imprisonment had an opportunity to speak of their experiences and to dialogue with local agencies, both statutory and voluntary. This ensured that the voice of the families affected by imprisonment was heard. In addition, the aspiration is that their voice would shape current and future policies and practices. A follow-up conference in May 2006 was held to inform families of progress made in relation to the recommendations made at the previous conference *Help is at Hand* and also to consult with families on further actions which needed to be taken.

The 2005 conference was attended by 203 people and comprised of a broad representation from both the voluntary and statutory sectors:

SECTORS REPRESENTED, 'HELP IS AT HAND' CONFERENCE

| Status | Number | Percentage |
|--|------------|--------------|
| Families of prisoners and ex prisoners | 49 | 24.1 |
| Bedford Row Family Project | 22 | 10.9 |
| Statutory agencies | 48 | 23.6 |
| Voluntary and community sector | 84 | 41.4 |
| | 203 | 100.0 |

A combination of factors made the seminar a unique event. Families affected by imprisonment were involved with management, staff and local agencies in planning the seminar. Following the launch of the conference by Mr. Tim O'Malley, Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, the seminar opened with a video of nine men and women telling it like it is for families who have a member in prison. For the first time families spoke out publicly as a group about their experiences, insights and hopes. This set the tone for the remainder of the seminar, which included talks from three keynote speakers¹ and workshops. Mr. Tadhg O'Riordan, Acting Governor of Limerick Prison closed the conference.

The conference was a landmark event in the history of the project and served to make the project better known. This generated increased demand for the services of the project. It also provided a range of ideas for its future development. Bedford Row staff assisted by two members of the Management Committee have started work on incorporating the relevant recommendations in a three-year Strategic Plan, 2007-2009. Some staff members are interested in projecting a more public image of the project and see the need to engage in public education using different sections of the media.

¹ Mark Heybourne from Action for Prisoners' Families, Chris Grimshaw, Time for Families, and Siobhan Brett, Pathways.

2.4 STAFFING AND FINANCING OF THE PROJECT

2.4.1 Staffing

The project is located in two locations – the visiting area of Limerick Prison and the Resource Centre at Bedford Row. Staff include members of families who have been affected by imprisonment, volunteers and people with specialist qualifications in social work, education, accountancy, counselling and information technology.

Full-time workers include a project leader, and a receptionist/information/advocacy worker who is employed on a Jobs Initiative Scheme. A part-time social worker is also employed. Two part-time workers are employed as part of the support staff of the Project. Since the completion of the Research part of this Report a full time administrator has been appointed.

Four part-time workers staff the Hospitality Service in the Limerick Prison visiting area. The project leader and social worker normally work one session a week in the visiting area.

A number of volunteers help with the various Project activities. Some regular members of the project play an important role in helping to create a welcoming atmosphere in the Bedford Family Centre.

Eight tutors deliver adult learning courses and there is a panel of five qualified counsellors/therapists to provide counselling for people wishing to avail of it.

Two group facilitators are contracted by the project to facilitate the Life Skills programme.

On-going training and development of staff is a priority. During the past year staff members have availed of training in addiction studies, facilitation skills, child protection, dealing with difficult behaviour and computer literacy.

2.4.2 Financing of the Project

The Franciscan Friars and the Sisters of Mercy who jointly pioneered the project and financed its initial costs have continued to support the project financially. Since 2001 the Irish Prison Service has provided annual core funding to the project to cover running costs. In 2006, annual core funding received was €105,000. The total expenditure each year is approximately €250,000.

The following government departments/agencies also provided funding for the project:

- The Department of Education and Science part-fund the adult education dimension of the project through Limerick City VEC. (The St Stephen's Green Trust has provided funds to meet the shortfall).
- FÁS fund a Jobs Initiative post that is used to staff the information and advocacy service.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs (through the Family Support Agency) and J. P. McManus Foundation have provided funds for counselling on a year-to-year basis.

- The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs have provided funding for staff development, refurbishment and research.
- The Dormant Accounts Fund has provided funding for the operational costs of the hospitality service for a two-year period.

The project also receives grants from several other sources of funding.²

2.5 MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

A Board of Directors made up of 16 members meets three times a year and has overall responsibility for ensuring good governance of the project. The Board, which comprises members from statutory agencies, the religious orders that initiated the project and members of families affected by imprisonment, approve the annual budget and the audited accounts and make the major policy decisions.

A Management Sub Committee meets on a monthly basis and oversees the effective implementation of policy.

Two of the 16 board members are members of families affected by imprisonment. It was felt by some staff members and members of management that this number should be increased. It is well documented that sometimes people from the community sector may have difficulty participating and having their voice heard on committees that are predominantly comprised of paid workers from state and voluntary organisations many of whom are professionals (Harvey 1994; PA Consulting 1998, *kelleherassociates* 2005). One of the difficulties for people in participating on committees is that the organisational culture and language used in some instances is bureaucratic and difficult to understand. People from the community sector that do not work in these environments may feel left out. Their input is crucial as they have direct experience and understanding on how services impact on their lives. It is important to recognise that training and support are needed to ensure effective participation and all board members need training to ensure the maximum participation of all members.

2.6 WORK WITH LOCAL AGENCIES

A core aspect of the work of the project is strengthening links with local agencies to provide a more integrated, co-ordinated response to the needs of families and ex-prisoners. In order to progress this work, the project in 2004 invited local agencies working with prisoners and their families to participate in an inter-agency group.

The inter agency group has been important in many respects in that it has brought a greater focus to the needs of prisoners and their families. Also, it has led to increased communication and the strengthening of local information networks and better working relationships and referral between agencies.

Several issues have been identified by the inter agency group. These include issues affecting prisoners in prison and issues affecting families of prisoners and people leaving prison.

² Other sources of funding have included the Allen Lane Foundation, the Civil Service Charities Fund, PAUL Partnership, the Probation and Welfare Service, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Ireland Fund, Katherine Howard Foundation, the Health Services Executive (Mid West Region), Limerick City Council, the Courts Service (Limerick), and from time to time, private or anonymous donations.

In-prison issues include:

- Poor prison conditions.
- The negative effects of prison on prisoners, such as the lack of autonomy, the erosion of confidence and lack of financial independence.
- Inadequate visiting facilities.
- The need for further development of existing parenting programmes and programmes on offending behaviour and anger management.
- Inadequate drug treatment services in prison, including detoxification services and counselling.
- The need for prisoners to be facilitated to use their time more productively.

Central to any response to the issues raised above is the need for a multi-agency approach to sentence management in prison.

For those leaving prison there is need for:

- An expanded information leaflet.
- In-reach to the prison so that prisoners do not leave prison without accommodation and welfare benefits being in place.
- Addiction services in the community.
- A range of accommodation options, which would include supported accommodation, support to maintain tenancies in the private rented sector and local authority accommodation.

Progress had been made in a number of areas:

- The inter-agency group has produced an accessible information leaflet aimed at people leaving prison and returning to the Mid Western area. In producing the leaflet consultation was held with ex-prisoners.
- Members of the inter-agency group played a major role in planning the conference, *Help is at Hand*.
- Good work currently underway in Limerick Prison with respect to developing a co-ordinated pre-release programme has been commented on favourably by families and they report that they would further benefit from progression of this programme without delay.
- Bedford Row Family Project could be supported to develop a parallel programme for families, as when prisoners are being released from prison, families need support to rebuild relationships and to adjust to the change.

There is a weekly meeting of a multi disciplinary group of prison staff, which meet to review progress of prisoners. The ALJEFF counselling agency provides addiction counselling in prison and family visits are being considered for long-term prisoners and for ordinary prisoners on special occasions. One of the issues identified by the inter-agency group is the need for accommodation for prisoners post-release. There are now a number of groups engaged in developing a response to the accommodation needs of prisoners.

2.7 THE PERSPECTIVE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Interviews were held with eight key personnel from the statutory sector. These included the Probation Service, the Community Welfare Service, Prison Education Service, Limerick Prison Service, Linkage, Homeless Persons Centre, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Local Employment Service (LES).

All personnel interviewed valued the work of the Bedford Row Family Project as is illustrated by the following quotes:

Bedford Row's focus on the rights of families is very helpful. It provides a one-stop shop and families have easy access to the broad range of services and supports it offers. It has a good working relationship with other agencies and is a credible voice for change.

The Prison Service is of the opinion that Bedford Row is making an enormous contribution. In particular the hospitality service is making a huge difference to families visiting the prison. It is especially important for families who are travelling long distances.

There is a good working relationship between Bedford Row and the Community Welfare Service, which works for the benefit of families. The CWS value the experience of Bedford Row.

Bedford Row Family Project is a very good support. It helps people to get through an awful time and the stigma of having someone in prison. It is a fantastic service with a wider range of experiences – easy to access and gives one-to-one support.

The local inter-agency group helped workers to develop personal contacts and to clarify the roles of the various agencies.

Bedford Row is very important. Families serve prison sentences too. Women who attend Bedford Row get a strong sense of themselves. Prisoners can make massive demands on families.

2.8 NATIONAL NETWORKS

At a national level, the project is a member of NEVA (National Network of Ex-Prisoner Voluntary Agencies), which is a national network of voluntary, and community agencies working with ex-prisoners and their families. The project is on the mailing list of the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIES AFFECTED BY IMPRISONMENT

Carol Coulter (1991) has documented that the web of punishment extends beyond the prisoner and beyond the prison. In the present study we see how having someone in prison entangles innocent partners, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and children, who are punished even though they are not the ones who have been accused or sentenced.

It ripples straight through the family, like ripples in a pond. As a father I feel great shame.

When a member of a family goes into prison the whole family is up in turmoil. The stigma is passed on to the family and we all “do the time”.

We know that people who commit crimes should be punished. We know that the victims are suffering, but why should the families be criminalised.

Fifty-two people were interviewed for the present study, which included eleven ex prisoners, one of whom was a female.

STATUS AND NUMBER INTERVIEWED

| Status | Number |
|----------------|-----------|
| Mother | 16 |
| Father | 4 |
| Sibling | 10 |
| Partner | 6 |
| Ex Prisoner | 11 |
| Child/daughter | 4 |
| Other relative | 1 |
| Total | 52 |

Offences for which people were imprisoned ranged from minor offences such as breach of the peace to theft, possession and sale of drugs, discharging a gun, possession of firearms, robbery, sex offences, assaults, non-fatal stabbings and murders.

In this chapter relatives clearly tell us how having a relative in prison and losing someone close to them is one of the most disturbing experiences in life for both adults and children. Also, prisoners tell of their experiences of prison and families reflect on what the Bedford Row Family Project means to them.

Comments made during the Course of the Research are quoted below in italics, grouped under different headings.

3.1 FAMILIES

Social Rejection and Stigma

The under-mentioned quotes suggest feelings of rejection, stigmatisation, and labelling by many of the families interviewed.

There is a palpable hostility towards the families. My friends moved away.

My sister, the boy's aunt, was visited by the local county councillor and told that she would be thrown out of her house if her nephew came to live with her on release.

When I was getting a house five years ago people asked who was the father of my children. They objected to me getting the house because he was in prison.

My young sister and brother get the crime thrown in their faces when they walk down the road.

You have to keep telling yourself, it is not your fault. You have done nothing wrong. You did not send him out to do it. But if something happens you don't stop loving them and being there for them.

The feeling I got was that I had done the crime. I did everyday of the nine months sentence.

When I go to the doctor and the secretary calls my name, I feel that everyone is looking at me. I have so many mixed feelings. Why are people judging my family because of what my son had done?

My son being in prison is difficult for my other children who have not been in trouble. They get labelled too.

Some of the girls I work with know (about her brother's crime). I am working with a person now who does not know. I would not tell anyone. They would judge you because of what your brother did. I do not tell anyone where I am from.

In some cases labelling exacerbates a sense of isolation or what Baker-Miller and Stiver (1997) refer to as 'disconnectedness' from the world:

I would not come outside the door when it happened. It was all over the papers.

His younger brother will not go out on his own unless his sister is with him. He stays in the house all the time.

Not everyone is unsympathetic to the trauma experienced by families. A number of families received a lot of support from neighbours:

I have learned that I have some fantastic support from my friends. I have brilliant friends that I can talk to.

The neighbours were very good. They told my mother that they knew that she had done her best for my brother.

We have the best of neighbours. They were a great support. They liked my husband. They gave me money at Christmas for him and bought clothes for him.

It was all over the papers but nobody in the community showed us the papers. People were good to us. The community was in shock (he was a quiet boy).

Health Impact

People on lower incomes in Ireland die younger and experience a greater degree of chronic ill health than people on higher incomes (Balanda and Wilde 2001). Furthermore people in Ireland die younger than the average Western European (Tussing and Wren 2006).

Health inequalities are aggravated by such factors as unemployment, inadequate housing conditions and a poor built-environment (Barrington 2004). The continuing anxiety and isolation experienced by families affected by imprisonment can add to what are already high levels of poor health:

When my daughter heard that her brother was going to prison she was physically sick for four weeks. My youngest daughter can't go near the prison; she can't bear to see him locked up and not being able to cope.

My father took it very badly. The shock of his son being in prison affected his health.

Mental health difficulties were referred to by many of the families in discussions:

I did not realise the amount of mental torture it causes.

I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, but I had to keep going for my family. It brings a lot of shame. For a long time I was going around with my head down.

I am a nervous wreck trying to stay in my own shoes. You do not know what to expect. Then you get disheartened. You don't trust people.

I went down very badly, I thought I would not come out of it.

The strain of living with continuous stress can mean that it is hard to face the realities of life:

I took three overdoses. I saw it as the only way out. Now I have moved on. I was only damaging myself.

Work

For some families imprisonment of a family member can cost family members their jobs:

I was working in a warehouse. A few fellows there knew the family. They said it to the boss who said to me "we won't need you to come in on Monday". I got the sack. There was nothing I could do.

In work I was in a position of trust. When the court case appeared in the paper, I was asked to take early retirement. I had 21 years of service left. My son got a job as a security guard. The Gardaí pulled up and told the owners that they had the brother of a prisoner employed. He was asked to leave.

Family members cannot get a job when they hear our surname. When I get married I am going to change my name.

Arrest and Trial

The impact of imprisonment can begin with the arrest. It continues through the remand, bail, trial, appeal and sentence. Family members are often shocked and experience disbelief when they find out about the offence and sometimes cling to a belief that the family member will be found innocent. There is the initial shock of having someone close to you arrested and charged:

The Gardaí came one morning early. The bedroom was covered with Gardaí. I knew nothing about the crime at the time. I could not believe it. It did not hit home for a long time.

I was shocked when I heard about the crime. I never thought that he would go down.

When I heard it (that her husband was involved in a crime) on the radio I nearly passed out.

The time waiting for the trial while the case is being prepared can be very difficult and attending the trial is stressful and traumatic on family members:

He was out for twelve months while the book of evidence was being prepared. He lost his job. The Gardaí were constantly coming to my door and pulling him in.

The case was adjourned five times. I had to travel to Tralee. I was there on my own. You don't not know what is going on. You do not know why it is adjourned.

It took two and a half years before the case was heard. I attended the court every time. I was standing in the hallway for two to three hours each time. It becomes a normal part of your life.

The trial is hard. Court is a humiliating experience. It is unfriendly. You don't know who's who, what's what. You don't know what is going on. You are conscious that the whole place is packed. You cannot hear properly. Sometimes prisoners are taken away and mothers have no idea why.

I was devastated the first time I was in court or had a Guard at my house. A cold sweat would come out on me.

I was there (at the trial) with my three younger children. I felt the pain. I was worried about my mother and grandmother. They were shocked. I found the trial devastating.

I went to the trial in Dublin. I went to give my Mam support. It was a lot of responsibility for me. I was in shock. The other family was sitting next to us for a full week.

I went to court alone. I had a sick feeling in my stomach. Going in front of the judge I felt degraded, just like a piece of dirt.

For some mothers attending the court is too terrifying:

I went to the courthouse. I would not go in. I was terrified.

I did not attend the court case. I was threatened. There were protests outside the court, people saying - where is your mother? The trial was a nightmare.

The trauma and challenges of the court can be eased somewhat by having someone who can support the family and attend the court hearings with the family:

The social worker (from the Bedford Row Family Project) came to the court with me. I could not hear or think. All I heard was "ten years". It was awful.

Avoiding the media can be almost impossible where a serious crime is concerned:

The journalist and cameramen were there. To avoid them, we waited in the courthouse. We went out the emergency exit and down the back. We walked through the back streets so that we would not be seen. It was awful.

You are under the glare of the media. They want photos. The family, innocent victims, carry it for life. My mother heard it all over the radio that he was done for murder. The information was out before we got home.

The media were waiting. I ran up along the steps with them following me. The trial went on and on. It went on for six weeks. I attended the court every day. It was a nightmare. I was heart broken.

It is difficult to cope with the continuous publicity when someone is before the court for a serious offence:

At work I kept turning off the local radio station and tearing pages out of the paper. I did not want people in work to know about the trial.

It was embarrassing hearing it on the news. I was mortified. I did not want anyone to know.

My son read it on the paper and I pretended it was another person of the same name.

Family Contact

Prisoners who maintain contact with family have a significantly higher quality of life on release and are six times less likely to re-offend than those who do not have contact (Hairston 1991, quoted in Loucks 2004). Some relationships survive the trauma of imprisonment, some do not. Women are also more loyal to their imprisoned partner than men are to imprisoned women (Wolleswinkel 2002).

Family support is important both while the prisoner is in prison and upon release back into the community. Contact with the family while in prison provides a balance to the institutional life demanded by prison rules and regulations. In England, 45 per cent of prisoners lose contact with families while in prison (Heybourne 2005) and 22 per cent of those who are married become separated or divorced on leaving prison.

Visiting, letter writing and telephone contact are the main ways in which families keep up contact with prisoners. Prisoners can make one telephone call a day although they cannot receive incoming calls.

Reception Centre and Visiting Room

Balancing the divergent priorities of maintaining good order and security while respecting the rights of the family is a demanding challenge for the Irish Prison Service. This challenge particularly comes into play when families are visiting.

Facilities in both the reception centre and the visiting room in Limerick Prison have improved. Despite this, dissatisfaction was expressed with many aspects of the visiting conditions.

The reception area was considered small which affected visitors particularly at the weekends when there were large numbers visiting. Also there was no special room or play facilities for children:

I will never forget when I went to Limerick Prison first, there were children flying around the place. There should be a room for children and childcare workers. The kids are screaming and people screaming at you to keep them quiet.

New visitors may be unfamiliar with the visiting regime and need help through the initial anxiety of visiting:

I did not visit my son for six months. I did not know how to go about it. Then I heard about Bedford Row. They encouraged me to visit my son. Bedford Row phoned the prison on my behalf and I got a special visit. I was left with him for one hour. He looked so well. The prison officers were very nice. They knew that it was my first time to visit.

The first visit I brought clothes, towels and gel in for my son. I discovered that I was not allowed to bring in these things. You have to leave in money and they get them in the tuck shop. I had no money left. I had spent all my money.

Sometimes you are afraid in the waiting room. You are afraid of who is looking at you. It is very embarrassing having your name called out. When you are waiting people chit-chat - what sentence did he get? I find it embarrassing to have to say that he got seven years.

Seeing the prisoner in a confined space for the first time is often an unnerving experience:

The first time I went to visit Rory (in St. Pat's) I went on my own. This was a big mistake. When the gates slammed behind me I broke down and sobbed. I cried all the way home on the train. I was broken hearted.

It broke my heart to see him sitting there and not being able to touch him. It was hard seeing him on the other side. It was hard walking away.

I was in bits the first time I went to see Keith. I was sick the whole way up in the train and sick in the taxi. What was going through my mind was what was I going

to meet? I was terrified of seeing Keith. Keith had a black eye and cut lip. He had got a beating from a prison officer for insulting the officer.

Most people interviewed considered the visiting area (called visiting box by families) inadequate. Having to see someone you love in such a public situation is very upsetting. There is very little privacy and it is difficult to communicate with the prisoner:

Jordan would not talk at visits. He closed up. I could not say what I wanted to say. I could not express myself. I would say how are you? How are you getting on? The prison officers were listening. If you lean over to hear, the guard will come and tell you to sit back. You over-hear conversations.

I hate visiting. Everyone can hear what you are saying. He does not talk to me. I would like more privacy. In Limerick you are sitting there close to everyone else. It is hard to know what to say. If you have someone who is very loud beside you, you are drawn into their conversation.

You are all bundled up on top of each other. I said to my brother - "all I can see is your mouth going. I cannot hear. Can you hear me?". He replied, "The whole room can hear you".

Visiting is very difficult for children and for the accompanying parent:

In Limerick the visiting on Saturdays is unreal. There are too many kids for the space and too much noise; you can't talk to the person.

When children are visiting everyone gets hyped. Kids get annoyed. You have to keep saying sit down, be quiet, to the children. Everyone is upset.

The child's father (the prisoner) took the child in his arms once while we were visiting. The prison officer told the mother to take the child back. The child was upset.

The point was made that there is a need for special family visits with a range of activities so that the parent in prison can enjoy some normal time with his or her children:

There are a lot of kids visiting in Limerick Prison. There should be a special family room where you can have a cup of tea and have normal relations with the person you are visiting.

Distance from Prison

Travelling to visit relatives in prison adds to the existing financial burdens of families. Some financial support is available from the Community Welfare Service. As well as the financial burden, getting to prisons outside of Limerick is difficult and often challenging. This is particularly so if the person visiting is reliant on public transport:

I get the train from Limerick to Dublin and then get the Kildare train to Clondalkin station. I then walk for 40 minutes. It can be scary walking along the roads as in places there are no footpaths. I always get a cab back to the train. When it is dark it is very dangerous to walk. The whole day costs about €100.

We wait for two hours before we can visit and then only have 20 minutes with him. We have to catch a bus at 3.40pm.

When my son was in Mountjoy in Dublin I did not go to see him for five months. I was terrified of going to Dublin because of what I heard about all the drugs in Dublin City.

Cost of Visiting

The additional costs of having someone in prison was a concern for almost all families:

Finance is a big problem. All the family members chip in to give Ray €25 a week. A week's papers and magazine is €12.

I had a pension of a €130 a week when my son was in Portlaoise. I gave my son €40 for cigs, biscuits and shampoo and money for magazines and papers every time I visited. My son had no clothes and the governor gave him clothes. I had to borrow money to buy a tee shirt and pants. I found it very hard. The rest of the family is on the dole. I had to starve myself, let bills go and borrow money. I would not have the price of the dinner. I would eat nothing for the whole day I was visiting.

I gave €30 a week out of my dole money. It was very hard.

People in prison depend on family. If the family have no money it is awful. I often let myself starve to give him the money. I got into the habit of drinking water instead of eating food.

Prisoners get caught up in what they themselves want and often have high expectations of what families can and should provide. Families feel sorry for the person in prison and do their best to provide for them:

He kept saying - Ma can you give me an extra few bob? Surely you can afford clothes. I gave him €100 at Christmas for clothes.

It is hard having someone in prison. They (prisoners) are very demanding when they are in jail. You have to take care of them, make sure you have money for them for clothes. They are depending on you and you know that. The way they see it you have the freedom and they are locked up. It gets to you.

It is like having a grown adult you have to look after. I give him €20 for his goodies every week and €10 for clothes. You can't hand in trainers in Limerick. You have to get them through the prison. They are double the price. The family suffers and nobody sees this. He does not understand why he cannot get what he wants.

Emotional and Physical Exhaustion

Visiting is described as emotionally and physically exhausting. A lot of the strain comes from the limitations of the visiting environment but also because families perceive that many prisoners are not making progress and the criminal justice system is not effective in rehabilitating the prisoner:

When I go up to the prison I put on my mask. I go up every Saturday. No matter how long you go up to the prison it does not get any easier. All I want to do is to get in and get out as fast as I can, but I don't let him know that. He is still my son and has a heart and a soul. There are times when I know he is taking drugs and spending most of the day in his cell. I worry that he is not making progress.

It is very hard visiting. It is hard to keep the conversation going. It can be hard to watch him and knowing that he is not coping. You do the time with him. Walking away from the prison is horrible.

The whole Saturday is taken up with visiting the prison. I dread the visit. The dread does not go away until I come out of the prison. It is difficult not being able to have a proper conversation with him; seeing him making very little progress; seeing him not taking responsibility for what he has done and losing touch with reality.

The visits were very hard. I put on a brave face. I hid the worries I had that he could do nothing about.

Family Feuds

Family feuds make visiting difficult and some families are reluctant to visit for fear of intimidation by feuding gangs:

There is a lot of feuding and you don't know who's who. You could be caught between two feuding families.

I was afraid to visit my son. I was terrified. My own family was terrified. You don't know who is in the visiting room. I came across friends of another feuding family in the visiting room. The prison officer had to stay in between us.

I had to put in for special night visits where no one could see me go in. I went once a week. On one occasion when I was going I met a chap at the bus stop. He was screaming "murderers". He beat the crap out of me and kicked me. I went to the Garda Station.

When my father was in Limerick, he was on special protection. We had to have special family visits arranged.

Screened Visits

Prisoners sanctioned for breaking prison rules are only allowed screened visits. In such situations, visitors and prisoners are separated by a total screen which prevents touching and any sense of personal contact.

Security

Despite attempts to reduce drugs coming into prisons, drugs are passed into prison in numerous ways including through people returning from Temporary Release (TR) who hide them internally in their body, in the soles of shoes, and insert them into newspapers. Drugs are also passed: orally between partners, in babies' nappies and when fathers hug their children.

In some situations families feel pressure from prisoners who are using drugs to smuggle drugs into the prison. Families desperately want their relative off drugs. However the nature of addiction, the lack of awareness of the dynamics of addiction in families, the way that drug dealing operates in the prison means that families come under a lot of pressure:

Prisoners addicted to heroin build up a debt. Prisoners in control of the supply put pressure on these prisoners to put pressure on their relatives to bring in drugs or else they will be beaten up in prison. They also make threats to have relatives done in. I would not give in to the pressure to get drugs in but it very difficult.

Several recommendations for addressing the security issues were put forward by families including:

- Urine testing of prisoners.
- Searching everyone as they enter prison, including prison staff and other professionals.
- Introducing improved detector systems and making it compulsory for everyone to go through the detector system, including prison staff and other professionals.

Paralleling the increased security, it was felt that it was essential to address responses to the drug issue through providing:

- A drug free unit.
- A medical unit with detoxification facilities.
- Methadone maintenance for prisoners who are on methadone maintenance prior to coming to prison.

Family Visits

For prisoners in Limerick Prison, special family visits were arranged in the nearby presbytery. These were discontinued as they were considered a security risk:

In Limerick you can only get a private visit if there is bad news such as death or sometimes for an occasion like for First Communion. The special visits used to be in the Presbytery.

My son got to the stage where he would not go to the prison to visit his dad. He was recovering from a bad accident. A special visit was arranged in the priest's house.

The point was made that there is a need for special family visits with a range of activities provided for the children so that the parent in prison can have some normal time with children:

There are a lot of kids visiting in Limerick Prison. There should be a special family room where you can have a cup of tea and have normal relations with the person you are visiting. It is important for a father to be able to hug his children.

Some teenage children would like to be able to visit their father on their own:

She is now 13 years. She would love to visit on her own.

Families were hopeful that family visits will be re-introduced for long-term prisoners:

Long-term prisoners are supposed to get family visiting, like they have in Castlereagh. There used to be visits in the Presbytery. Prison officers sit outside the door. It was good. You could bring in take-aways. It was stopped because of drugs.

Special visits or 'open visits' where there is not a physical barrier dividing family members and the prisoner and where both parties are able to touch each other are now only available when there is a family crisis. Some people interviewed would like to have what is called in the Canadian system Private Family Visits (PFVs) for long-term prisoners where families can visit for up to 72 hours in a bungalow in the grounds of the prison.

Celebrations

There are a few times when both families and prisoners can relax and enjoy celebratory times together. The annual drama that takes place in many prisons is one such occasion:

Mary McAleese was there and all the elite, Gay Byrne. You could not distinguish between wardens and prisoners. There was no stigma. It was in a beautiful church. To see him (my son) on the stage was like winning the Lotto. To see him achieve this after what happened was wonderful.

Derry was great. He stole the show. The food was brilliant afterwards. We all mixed. You could not tell who was a prisoner and who was not.

Prison System

Despite the recent changes, families feel that in general that the prison system is outdated and repressive and in badly need of reform:

It is very much a 19th Century institution and very little has changed.

Families were aware of the new prison-building programme in Limerick Prison and acknowledged that the new prison cells are a big improvement on cells in the old wings of the prisons. They appreciated that each cell now had a television and radio and recognised the benefits of the new gym.

Some families reported enhanced education provision in prison but noted the lack of a properly equipped education unit. The education facilities are located in rooms spread throughout the old prison in different locations.

The conditions for some prisoners in Limerick caused a lot of concern to families and prisoners. The practice of slopping out is degrading:

Malachy found being in prison very difficult. He was slopping out for the twelve months he was in Limerick.

Families were concerned about the negative effect that prison had on prisoners and with the fact that they were not challenged to confront their negative behaviour:

Keith is still getting drugs in prison. His time in prison has made him worse. He stays in the cell all day and does nothing. I feel that they (prisoners) should be made to do some kind of work or study. They lose touch and become disconnected. He is not a father to his nine-month-old son. I want him to be helped to face reality. Keith needs a session where the family can confront him. You cannot do this during visiting time. He also needs counselling.

I don't think prisoners should be allowed to stay in their cell all day. They just get more withdrawn and they don't have to face reality. There should be some order and challenge to the day. They should be brought out of their comfort zone.

Prisoners need more help in prison. They need schooling and help to get a job. In Limerick my dad was stuck in his cell all day.

In prison they give prisoners drugs to help them sleep. Eventually they need more drugs and then they switch off. There is very little treatment for addicts. My son never got treatment while he was in prison.

My son never dealt with his drug problem while he was in prison. He stays in his cell all day. He is now institutionalised and does not care. He is worse now than when he went into prison. For lesser crimes young people should do community work rather than be sent to prison.

What my son needed was a structured environment and a detox programme. His drug problem got worse and worse. Now he is out of prison his behaviour is bizarre and his body is swollen with drugs. There is no help within the criminal justice system for him.

As well as the negative effects of prison on prisoners, families are concerned about the lack of communication with families regarding the progress of the prisoner. Many families would like the role that families play in the rehabilitation of prisoners to be recognised. They would like more family involvement and to be informed about the prisoner's welfare:

Rory is not coping well at all. One time recently I went up to the prison and he was suicidal. Nobody would tell me anything. It is all a secret. I would like to talk to someone about Rory.

I was worried about Malachy. He found prison difficult. I got no information on his progress until I asked. There should be someone you could talk to about how a prisoner is getting on.

We were in the dark when it came to finding out about his progress. There should be joint meetings between parents and prisoners and the probation service.

I could not get information – was Jordan well? He never came out of the cell for 24/7. He would not go to the yard. He was intimidated and felt that there were people who would get at him. He was not able to cope with prison. He was suicidal and threatened to take his own life. There were very few medical

services. He stayed in the cell 24/7 for months solid. I would like to have known what I could have done.

Given the negative effects of prison the point was made that there should be alternatives to prison for those who have committed minor offences:

Prison is not the place for people like Jordan who was drunk and disorderly. He had lost his brother in tragic circumstances. He was angry. He was grieving. He got no help in prison. He did cold turkey on the drink. He went to AA. There should be alternatives for people like Jordan.

Prison often has the effect of enhancing the status of a young person:

He felt like a hero going to jail. He knew several other lads in prison and he loved the attention.

Families of long-term prisoners were aware that long-term prisoners were better catered for:

At 17 years he was in Limerick Prison. He did his Leaving Cert. in Limerick. There is one fantastic teacher there. He is now in Wheatfield. It is the making of him. He is doing a college course by correspondence in English and History. He is also learning to be a brickie.

Derry is doing very well in Castlerea. He is learning English and Maths. His skin is perfect and he is doing fantastic.

Reintegration of Prisoners

Imprisonment inevitably changes relationships within the family. The time of greatest challenge is at the beginning and the end of a prison sentence. When a prisoner is being released from prison both the prisoner and the family need support to rebuild relationships and to adjust to change. Ideally planning for release should begin the day the person goes into prison.

Families and particularly mothers and female partners have seen the effects that institutionalisation has on the prisoner and are concerned about how prisoners will adjust when they are released:

He is caught up in a time warp. He has not had to take responsibility for anything in prison. Money has changed. They have no contact with money. It is like having a bear and putting him in a cage. His life has stopped. How will he live back in a family again?

When he comes out, people's lives will have changed. My mother has moved accommodation. My sister is working in a different job. People have moved and are doing different things. He will be left with the question, where do I fit in?

With the exception of long-term prisoners, prisoners receive little preparation for coping with life when they are released.

When Justin comes out he wants the partner that he had before he went in. People are changing while Justin is in prison. He thinks that the whole outside

world has stopped. When he comes out he wants everything the way it was. There should be a course for prisoners and a course for families.

He can't accept that things have changed since he went in. We have to get on with our lives. He gets taunted in prison and takes it out on us. He tries to control our lives. He makes demands such as that we are in the house at a particular time each day when he phones. There should be courses on family life before they come out of prison. Sometimes there are threats over the phone. It is head wrecking and this affects the children.

The one fear I have is that he will come out worse than when he went in. He is so long in prison he will need help getting back in to the system. I would love if there were help for him to readjust.

Lack of preparation and the concerns regarding institutionalisation are borne out by the experience of women whose partners have been released:

They have a routine in prison. It is hard for them to adjust to being home and having to do things for themselves. It took a long time for him (her partner) to get back to reality. He is out ten months now and is only beginning to face reality. It is like having a child. He has been locked up for so long that settling down is difficult. I can't always be there for him. Before leaving prison they should be put on a course to prepare them for coming out.

When he came out first he (her husband) could not do anything for himself. He was used to having things done for him. I had to tell him he was left prison and to do things for himself. He has lost all confidence. He would need someone to help him to get onto a training course or to help him to get work. He does not leave the house now except by car.

It was difficult for him (her son) meeting people. He was nervous and jittery. This was partly to do with the fact that he was put in solitary confinement. One of the difficulties for him was not being able to sit around a table and eat with other people. He was so used to eating alone in the cell.

While their husbands/partners are in prison women learn to cope with situations that they may not have thought was possible. The relationship needs to be re-negotiated when their partners come out of prison and they are naturally apprehensive about this:

We have got on with our lives. I am used to taking responsibility, managing the money and paying the bills. I am not sure how he will take this.

I am worried about him coming out after years in prison. He is not the same. He is distant and cut off. I am bitter but a lot stronger.

I am looking forward to it, but I am scared. I have my own routine. I will have to adjust. I do not know what I am facing.

Many women fear that if the prisoner does not address the underlying causes of his crime that the relationship will not survive:

I am changing because of counselling. I would love if he could go to group counselling to deal with his anger.

There should really be family therapy. It is going to be so hard when he comes out. My daughter has said that when he gets out I will have no life. He has my head wrecked.

Families of drug-dependent and alcohol dependent prisoners often find the period coming up to release extremely stressful and fear that they will become involved in crime again:

There is little treatment for addicts in prison. My son never got treatment. He got involved in crime to feed his heroin addiction. He was in and out of prison. It was very difficult for the family when he was released.

When he came out of prison he was on drugs and he was very volatile. The other children were afraid of him. He had no respect for his mother.

Children grow and change and the family moves on. For the prisoner, time has stood still and when he is released he may want things the way they used to be. Fathers who have spent time in prison away from their children need help in how to understand and relate to their children:

She was just born when he went into prison. She hardly knows him. For her it is like having to accept a stranger in the house.

She was three when he went in. She is now 13 years. He still thinks of her as "my baby". He cannot accept the clothes she wears and decisions she makes. There is need for family counselling.

Canadian research found that one in three married male prisoners had been violent towards a female partner and one in five had been charged for the offence. It is important that issues relating to domestic violence and sexual violence are addressed in prison, if violence is not repeated in future relationships (Withers 2000; 2003).

Although it was not specifically elicited, domestic violence and sexual violence emerged in conversations as a key issue for some women. Many women (mothers and partners) had been to the ADAPT refuge and some had taken out barring orders. Alongside name-calling, the types of physical and sexual violence experienced included the following:

- Beaten with the buckle of a belt.
- Raped with a knife to the throat.
- Made to sit down and have matches thrown on the woman.
- Dinner thrown at the woman and dinner thrown onto the ground.
- Kicked in the stomach leading to a miscarriage.

Two women described their situation:

I had a bad husband. He broke the home up. I had six children. My husband was very violent. I got a lot of beatings. There were a lot of fights. He called me all sorts of names, a dope, and a tramp. I wasn't married a week when he broke my nose. This happened a second time. I got belts in the head. I am nearly going blind. I feel guilty that I stayed there so long. I had no confidence. I was frightened to get up and go. I did not know how to leave. I was in and out of ADAPT House. I was in and out of psychiatric hospitals. I had many barring orders against my husband.

My husband was very violent. I had two barring orders against him but I was persuaded to take him back. His good behaviour did not last. The children saw all the violence. One time my husband had a foot in my throat and then put my head in a basin. I had nowhere to go with six children.

One woman who had severed her relationship with her ex partner felt that her ex partner had not changed and feared for her life:

I have had to get CCTV cameras. My ex boyfriend is very violent. He discovered that his father was not his father.

There is no place for families leaving violent situations to go.

Some families have other worries when prisoners are released:

We worry all the time about what will happen when he is released. He will not have a life when he comes out. He will have to leave Limerick because of what he has done.

Although families acknowledge that in some cases procedures are in place for the planned release of prisoners, this was not everyone's experience:

Jordan got out on a Wednesday. He was supposed to get out on a Friday. He had a plastic bag of clothing and nowhere to go. I had told the prison that there was a barring order against him. He arrived at my doorstep with a plastic bag. This was in November 2005.

Pre-release planning needs to focus on accommodation, employment and vocational training. A range of housing and accommodation facilities is required and it was felt strongly that prisoners should not be released into hostels for homeless people:

If they can't go back to the family home they should not be released into a hostel. They should not be left out on the street. Even if they can go back to the family Lifers may need to live separately for a while. There should be different options - halfway house, bed-sit.

As well as accommodation ex prisoners need help to link to vocational training or to find employment:

There is need for something when they come out. When they don't get respect from society they have their own way of getting respect. They up the crime and use crime as a badge of honour.

Ex prisoners need to know that they have a stake in society. They need work. They need to be involved.

In order to ensure that prisoners get continuity of care both during their sentence and post release period there is need for one agency to be given responsibility for a 'through-care' strategy.

In summary the following are some of the aspects of the prison system in Limerick Prison which families are most critical of:

- Long periods of time spent by prisoners in cells.

- The practice of ‘slopping out’.
- The inadequacy of mental health services.
- The inadequacy of drug treatment services.
- Lack of programmes to address offending behaviour and anger in prisoners.
- The inadequacy of educational facilities.
- The impact which imprisonment has on the family is not being addressed.
- Workshops not in operation.
- Insufficiency of parenting programmes
- Insufficient number of probation officers.
- Lack of a Positive Sentence Management Structure that is applied to all prisoners.

Community Based Supports for Families

Many feel that if effective community based supports were in place that much crime, particularly fatal crimes, could be prevented:

The week it happened Neal was totally out of control. We were all terrified of him at home and the other children used to lock themselves in their bedrooms. I went to the Gardaí three times and pleaded with them to take him off the streets. He had broken bail twice. I had a feeling that something terrible was going to happen. Every day I was in someone's office pleading for help. The worst thing that I thought would happen is that someone would get hurt. I rang the Guards and they said that they could not put him in the cell. The psychiatrists said that there was nothing that they could do. I begged and pleaded for help. He would not go to counselling. He would stand out and be different.

Neal's illness is now being treated with medication that is being prescribed by a medical doctor in Britain. He is coping well in prison. When he took the medicine he said that all the noises in his head had stopped.

A substantial number of people in prison have mental health problems and O'Mahony estimates that 20 per cent have been in a psychiatric hospital (1997).

I am convinced that my son has ADHD syndrome. It is a chemical imbalance and medication is important. It should have been diagnosed and treated. It is still not diagnosed or being treated.

Seán has attempted suicide five times in prison. He is getting bullied. The prison officers watch him around the clock. I have sent a letter to say that I am concerned about my son, that he will commit suicide. There is a prison doctor. He has not seen a psychiatrist. I got a letter from Seán saying "It would be great if I could get the suicide thought out of my head". I am worried sick over it.

Neal acts on impulse and compulsion. His attention span is very limited and he gets bored. He was not into sport. He is highly intelligent and got the Leaving Certificate. He has a short memory. When he gets into a temper, there is no talking to him. Anything can spark off a temper. He is easily led and has no friends. At 13 or 14 he started drinking and taking hash. The Gardaí were always at the back door looking for him about stolen cars and robbing cars. I went everywhere looking for help. The system let him down big time.

Despite their reservations about prisons and their awareness of the lack of help within the criminal justice system for prisoners to confront their difficulties, for some families because of the lack of support, imprisonment is experienced as a relief:

If he were not in prison he would be dead. He was let out for his father's funeral. He looked gaunt. He was very bad.

I asked the Gardaí to put my teenage son away for his own sake. He was taking tablets as well as alcohol. He was a passenger in a stolen car. He was put on curfew and had to be in by 10 p.m. My life stopped then. A day did not pass that I was not either in Henry Street or Roxborough Garda station. At 10 p.m. I got a call from the Garda station. When I went down, Rian was out of his tree on drugs and drink. He was losing weight. I told the Gardaí that I had been going to court for the last three weeks trying to get him put away. I said put him on remand or he will die.

One mother whose son is not in prison now but has served numerous sentences is finding it very difficult to cope with her son's behaviour:

He is a tormented individual and is always scheming. He is like a loose cannon. I am nervous of him. He is now wasting away. I have done my level best to let the authorities know how bad the situation is. He will kill someone or be killed. There has been no help for him within the criminal justice system. The psychiatric service is non-existent.

This mother also pointed out that there were no services for families who are coping with very difficult adolescents and young adults and who often feel threatened themselves.

Safety in Communities

Many marginalised communities in Limerick are under severe pressure and people do not feel safe:

Society is going to crack. Society is collapsing. There is no law and order any more in many areas.

It is difficult to bring up children. My son saw a lot of drinking, drugs and joyriding on the road. His uncles were hard men. He got attacked because of who he was. He got a bottle broken off his head because of who was. He was labelled from the time he was a child. This type of violence leads to more violence and eventually to serious assaults.

My son got into a row with one of the feuding gangs. He got stitches in the arm, face and chest. After a year or two they shot him with a sawn off shotgun. He would not tell the Gardaí who shot him. It had a terrible effect on his mind. That changed my life completely. I never felt safe after that.

In the mid nineties everything changed when drugs became available. Up until then the area was a safe place. It was lovely for the children. You could swim in the river. There were regattas on the river. My son was not involved in drugs until he was in his twenties.

It is very hard here. It is not a safe environment. The place is crawling with heroin. My son left school early. He started sniffing glue, then went on to hash, then on to heroin.

Attacks are often unprovoked and what seems like a small incident can have very serious consequences:

My mother was shot in a senseless attack and severely wounded. We had a party at the house. We refused to let a well-known family who rule the roost into the party. They came back with a shotgun when they were not allowed into the house. They shot my mother and left her with 25 pellets in the side of her body. Only that my youngest brother pulled my mother back she would be dead now. My brother was shot in the eye. Gardaí could not give us protection to go to court.

Things can start slowly - you can have your windows broken and locks broken over a slagging match.

The escalation of violence is often drug related:

The house of a family was burned down because one gang felt that the young fellow was selling drugs for an opposing gang.

If someone does not pay for his drugs they get a young fellow to shoot in through the window.

Families interviewed gave examples of how for a combination of reasons, violence erupts leading to a vicious series of incidences including stone throwing, beatings, shootings, burning of cars and most destructively burning down of houses:

Stones were being thrown through the window. A few minutes later pellets came blasting in. I was terrified. Another time blasts of a machine gun came through the window.

I was given six hours to get out of the house. There was a lot of hassle. I left the house with two plastic bags. The house was later bombed at 5p.m. My whole life was gone with it, photos, furniture and clothes. I now live in fear.

My daughter's husband was fighting with the neighbours and beat up one of them. The thing got out of control and they burned their house down.

I was stabbed as a result of a fight between my boyfriend and another gang. I got stitches and took my two kids to London the following day. I left for safety reasons as the Gardaí said that they could not protect us. I stayed there for four years. For the first two nights in London I was homeless and slept in a car with the two children.

Gardaí

A number of studies have pointed to the link between lack of confidence in and antagonistic relations with the Gardaí and social marginalisation (Whitaker 1985 and Mulcahy and O'Mahony 2005). Although many people reported that individual Gardaí were helpful and supportive there were many examples of negative behaviour and

harassment by the Gardaí. These ranged from continual harassment of people when they were released from prison to negative behaviour towards a prisoner's family:

I am worried about him (her husband) coming out. Will the Gardaí still hassle him again? I am afraid when he is out with the kids the Gardaí will pull him in. This would be traumatic for the children.

He will do time again. I am dreading the time when he comes out of prison that the Gardaí will come to my house and rip up the floorboards.

Gardaí harass young people. They need to learn how to deal with them.

Family members often feel that they are labelled by the Gardaí because a member of the family has been to prison:

Some Gardaí treat you as if you were the prisoner.

I am targeted by the Gardaí because of what my brother did.

The Gardaí stop me and ask me my name. They have said to me "are you going down the same path?" - meaning as my brother. When I am stopped by the Gardaí now I give my mother's name.

One interviewee reported being beaten by the Gardaí:

I was in trouble with the law. I suffer from manic depression. I thought I was Alice in Wonderland. I busted up three cars in a garage. The Gardaí came and gave me the worst beating in the garage showroom. I was angry.

Community Leadership

Building community leadership was seen as one of the solutions to the problem as well as the presence of more Gardaí in the communities:

People are frightened. There is need for community leadership. There is need for more community Gardaí to be seen in the communities. Drugs are a big problem and have led to feuding gangs. Drugs should be legalised. No one will testify any more. People have to take a stand against drugs.

The point is made by Connolly (2006) that the operation of local drug markets can engender significant apprehension and a reluctance to co-operate with law enforcement initiatives because of the fear of reprisal from drug dealers. One worker living and working over a long number of years in one of the communities most affected by drugs and unemployment spoke of the lack of hope among people who are left in disadvantaged communities, most of whom are good tenants or home owners, but live in fear. The worker saw the need for a programme to regenerate communities:

There are blocks of houses now boarded up. People are leaving because of intimidation. House prices have fallen drastically. Nobody wants to come and to live here. Drugs are affecting a lot of families. A small number of families are controlling the area. People feel so hopeless that the area needs to be considered as an area in need of intensive care or in other words there is need to move in and do things for people. For example there is need to clean up the whole area and to

keep it clean. When the community begins to recover then it can move from intensive care to high dependency and gradually to take charge of the life of the community. The local authority does not understand a community development approach. It is engaged in remedial work rather than in the regeneration of a community with the involvement of people. I feel I hold some hope for people. I need to watch that my hope does not go.

The installation of CCTV cameras in some areas was considered to be effective:

It started off with one camera eight years ago. Since the CCTV cameras and stop and search patrols, things are a lot quieter. The CCTV cameras cover the whole entrance going in and out of Moyross. People feel a lot safer.

People interviewed felt that there was a great need to have:

- Large-scale investment in the re-generation of marginalised areas with effective consultation with residents.
- A greater Garda presence in neighbourhoods and the need for Gardaí to be trained in community relations and community development principles.
- Stop and search patrols.
- More street lighting.

3.2 CHILDREN

Children are inevitably affected when a parent is imprisoned and it is estimated that approximately 900 children have a parent in Limerick Prison at any one time. However we are only now beginning to understand the effects of imprisonment on children and to raise questions about the supports children need to cope with the trauma of having a parent in prison. There is need to reflect on how prisons can accommodate children who need and want a relationship with a parent who is in prison. King (2002) has highlighted some of these issues in the Irish context.

International literature indicates that many children express their grief, fear and confusion through changes in their behaviour and performance at school (Loucks 2004). Changes can vary from aggression and restlessness to withdrawal and depression. The specific impact of imprisonment on children depends on the child's age at separation, the relationships which existed between parent and children before imprisonment and the degree of stigma around imprisonment that is present in the family's community. Research has found that one-third of prisoners' children suffer significant mental health problems, compared with 10 per cent of children generally, so it is important that proper services are put in place (Loucks 2004).

Most of the imprisoned parents are male as, world wide, women account for only a small minority of the prison population. The children of imprisoned mothers are often split up or taken into the care of the State while children of imprisoned fathers for the most part remain at home with their mothers, but often in difficult and poor circumstances (Wolleswinkel 2002). One of the first issues to be faced by families is when and how to tell children that their father/mother is in prison (Pugh 2004).

Disclosure

Parents interviewed dealt with how and what to tell their children in different ways. Whether or not to tell children is a major concern for some mothers and carers:

The child (three years) does not know he (his father) is in prison. The child thinks that his father is in a school. It is heart breaking.

Some parents hide the truth from their children because they themselves were too ashamed. They also feared that the child would be stigmatised or bullied if the whereabouts of the child's father was known:

The children think that he is in the army, above there working in the prison. I have not told them he is prison, as I do not want them to be jeered at by other children.

Some children, although they know that their father is in prison, are not told the exact nature of the offence:

I told her one day that her dad was in prison for being drunk. I did not tell her that he had robbed a car.

The amount of detail can vary with the age of the child. Nine or ten years is considered by some to be a good age to tell children:

It is important to tell them the truth before they are nine or ten. The little one thinks that he is in for no lights on his bike. She has not showed emotion to her father. She has not touched him. She is embarrassed. The reason is that she did not know her father before he went into prison.

Other children are aware not only that their father is in prison, but the offence for which he is in for:

I told my daughter what he was in for (murder). Barnardos picked up the pieces. They talked it through and how she was feeling. She went into herself. Now she has worked through it. Barnardos understand about bereavement. If I had not Barnardos, I do not know what I would have done. The feedback from Barnardos is that the child does not want to upset her mother so she kept a lot inside.

If children are not given a plausible explanation, they may worry about where the parent really is. Not telling children also denies children the opportunity to discuss their feelings of trauma or separation. One mother (an ex prisoner) who choose not to tell her child about her imprisonment regretted not having done so:

I decided not to tell my son (who was six years old) when I went into prison because I felt that he would suffer if he knew. He thought I was working in Dublin and saving money for our future. I only told him last year why I went away (when he was 12 years old). When I went to prison he could not understand why I did not say good-bye. He took it as rejection. I should have told him. It is a full-time job coping with him now.

If children are not told they can become mistrustful or confused by the discrepancy between what they are told and what they see themselves.

Even if children are told there is so much shame and secrecy in some families about having a parent in prison that the difficulty for children, who know that their father is in prison, is not knowing 'who can be told'.

The above examples illustrate the need for support for parents in making a decision about how, when and what to tell their children about their fathers' imprisonment.

Impact on Children

Families are acutely aware of the emotional impact which imprisonment can have on children:

Sometimes my son wakes up screaming for his dad. He lives in a world of his own. Kids want to be with their father. His father being away tore my small son apart.

My daughter is finding it very hard now. She was three when he went in. She is now 13 years.

Children can have a range of feeling about their father or other relative who is in prison:

She is angry and bitter at what he has done, yet she loves him.

My daughter went to school and everyone was talking about what my son had done. She felt ashamed and she never finished her education. I tried to encourage her to continue but it was too much for her to cope with.

Children are often ridiculed at school by other children's disparaging remarks:

Someone has let it be known at school that "Justin's father was in prison". The young fellow who sent out the rumour, as it happened, had ADHD and did not really mean it. He said that he was sorry for saying that about Justin. It would be good if teachers had training in this area.

Many mothers choose not to tell the teachers at the school about the imprisonment for fear that teachers will not know how to react. If it is known in school, they fear that the child will be laughed at or that other mothers would distance their children from the children affected by imprisonment:

Teachers do not know about her father being in prison. I feel some teachers would not know how to deal with it and if it got out, other children would take it out on her.

Some mothers reported that teachers were very supportive when they are aware that a parent is in prison:

In school they were making a card. She started to cry. The teacher was great. She encouraged her - write a letter to your Daddy and I will post it. There is a Rainbow Club in school, which is great.

My eight-year-old daughter is showing signs of distress in school and the school is referring her to a psychologist.

Children Visiting Prison

The art and play materials for children provided by the Bedford Row Hospitality Service in the reception area is appreciated by families. They also value the support given by the

staff to parents in managing children. However, when the reception area is crowded children have to play with their toys on the floor. Also, there is no crèche for young children.

The tense atmosphere and restrictions on the movement in the visiting room were concerns voiced by children interviewed. One young girl interviewed explained:

In the visiting box, it is difficult to hear and there is no space. If you stand up to hear, you are told to sit down. The screws are listening to everything that you say. There was a fight in the visiting box last week between a man and woman. She was firing a locker key at him.

Visits are often stressful for older children who are striving for maturity and independence, while also striving to maintain a relationship with their father. It can be difficult for a father, whose daily life is routinised and monotonous, to understand the realities of the life of a teenager in a fast changing society:

I look forward to visiting my father. Sometimes he expects too much. He thinks he can have a say in my life even through he is not at home. He does not understand me anymore. I will tell him I have to get on with my life.

Families recognise that children experience many difficulties when they are visiting relatives. These include the fact that:

- Children cannot hug their father.
- Children have to sit quietly on a bench for the half hour.
- The visiting room is generally very crowded.
- It is difficult to hear their father or to talk to their father with the clattering of voices.

Family visits are important so that children can have quality time with their father. Castlerea Prison is one of the few prisons which accommodates family visits:

We get about three family visits a year. This is because he is doing a long sentence. There are two rooms, a little coffee table and two armchairs. The doors are locked. It is great for the kids. It is brilliant. It would be good to have this facility in Limerick.

Special visits for children in a more informal atmosphere need to be available in all prisons. Limerick Prison used to have family visits in the presbytery. These have been discontinued because of alleged abuse of them. One of the young people interviewed for this study said that she would love to have the family visits continued:

I visit my father every Saturday. I would like more time with him and for it not to be so crowded. I would like a 'church' visit, where the prison officer stays outside. My father is delighted when I visit. I look forward to the sweets he gives to me. We also write letters to each other.

For ordinary visits, it was considered important that there were good quality crèche facilities and activities for children.

Having a child can be a strong motivation for the prisoner to stay out of crime:

The child woke me up. I never want to be away again. I never want to be away from the child.

Ray lives for his daughter. That relationship is what keeps him going. He went to the governor and said that he should be allowed to play with his child as much more contact was allowed in other prisons.

3.3 EX-PRISONERS

General

Eleven ex-prisoners told of their experience of being in prison. They ranged in age from 18 to 58 years.

Some had served long sentences, including life sentences, while others had been in and out of prison on several occasions for short periods of time. Offences ranged from disturbance of the peace to murder, sex offences, theft, and assault and carrying drugs.

Liam was in and out of prison for assaults and other offences:

When I was 16, I spent time in St Pat's. I was a passenger on a stolen motor bike. The day I left St. Pat's I met some Dubs downtown in Dublin on my way to the train. They started slagging me and I lashed out at them. I was put back that evening into St. Pat's. I reached Limerick one time, but met a fellow who drove up beside me and said get in. I did not know that it was a stolen car. I got 18 months. All in all I have spent eight years in and out of prison.

Andy was sent to prison for carrying drugs:

I owed money and agreed to collect a package in Dublin. I was used. I was not a drug dealer. My life was threatened so I had to do it.

Andrew spent time in prison for drink related assaults and robberies:

I was in prison for eleven years altogether. I was living my life in prison. I was in for stupid things. The first time I was in, I was in a fight. I got twelve months.

One ex prisoner went to prison when he was only 15 years of age:

I first went into Limerick when I was 15 years. There was no other place for me to go.

Childhood

Many people interviewed had tragic and in some cases abusive childhoods:

I was in care since I was six years. The care system failed me. I got thrown out of care and then I was booted into prison. I tried to commit suicide twice in prison. The system has failed me. It has let me down.

I had a difficult childhood. My father was violent and my mother was depressed. I left school early. This was my first and only offence and I feel I was treated harshly.

Ronan's father is an alcoholic and left the family home when Ronan was about 9 years. This was a shock to Ronan who idolised his father. At ten years of age Ronan was diagnosed with ADHD. He is now 17 years and has been out of school since he made his confirmation at the age of twelve. The problem was that there was no help for children with ADHD.

Joe's father was very violent and he saw all the violence. He used to scream at his father to stop beating his mother. At 11 years he was diagnosed with ADHD.

Some had very difficult experiences, which intensified their involvement in crime. Sean robbed and crashed a car. His best friend died on top of him, in his arms.

I was shaking my pal to wake up. I was never right after that.

Life in Prison

Life in prison is tough and sometimes very unpleasant:

There is a hierarchical system in prison made up of cliques of screws and prisoners. If you don't stand up for yourself in prison they (prison officers and prisoners) will mess with you. If you assault a screw, they destroy you. You end up in a block in Cork. There are often sex assaults on weaklings. There are pornography books all over the place.

A lot of status is given to people who commit serious crime:

The more the time, the bigger the man you are thought of.

For many prisoners, life in prison is in crucial ways not safe:

I got stabbed with a blade the first day I was in prison.

Prison is dangerous. You have to know how to protect yourself.

It is not a safe place. I have nightmares about jail still. There are drugs and people get raped. I got an education in crime when I was in jail. You have to prove that you are not a fool. When I went in first I said, "who is the hardest man here". I went up to him and knocked him out. I got my privileges taken away, but I had little trouble with other prisoners.

To survive in prison, prisoners accumulate items they can barter. One prisoner was ingenious in the goods he produced for exchange. He explained:

People develop currencies in prison. Mine was alcohol made from seven up, water, peach juice and yeast. People addicted to drugs need a currency such as clothes, chocolate or cigarettes or else they build up a debt for when they get out of prison. I myself am not addicted to drugs, but I used the alcohol to trade for cigarettes and food.

Prison Officers

Some prisoners had positive attitudes towards prison officers:

Prison officers are very nice – you have to earn their trust – if told what to do – you do it – if you look for trouble you will get it.

A lot of the prison officers are sound. Some are ok.

There are some very fine prison officers, but they all need more training.

Some perceived that, like the prisoners after a time, prison officers were worn down by a routinised and degrading system:

Some are ok when they start. After six months the system kicks in and you can see the change. The main training they get is in riot control and restraint. If you do something bad, you hear the jangling of keys and seven or eight prison officers come with helmets. The prison officers' union is strong. A few of them are ok. When the shit hits the fan they are altogether.

For some (prison officers) their nerves are gone. They should have training in how to deal with people. Most prisoners have problems.

Tempers can flare up easily if the needs of prisoners are not responded to:

Simple things in prison can become big things if not seen to. I had a pain in my leg. The prison officer came and put an ice pack on it. If he had refused there would have been trouble. Everything is bubbling over.

Idleness

Idleness and long periods of purposelessness and of lock-up grinds prisoners down. To relieve the boredom simple games are thought up. One young man explained:

Mountjoy is filthy there are cockroaches in the cells and people keep mice as pets. We painted the shells of the cockroaches and played with them. This makes the time pass.

I didn't attend classes, but slept most of the time while I was in Limerick Prison. The problem with prison is that there are no incentives to do things.

Many receive an advanced education in crime in prison:

You learn a lot in prison. I learned all about laser cards. You learn about robbery in the yard.

Two ex-prisoners agreed with the sentiments and concerns expressed by many families (and documented earlier in this chapter) regarding the lack of challenge to prisoners while in prison. Both ex-prisoners had been in a number of different prisons:

I feel that there is need to demand much more of prisoners. They should be in work or in education and not allowed to stay in their cells during the day.

I have been in a few prisons. The best place was the Curragh prison. I got work in the Curragh as a cleaner and €14 a week. Prisoners should be able to work and get paid.

Prison Cells

Prison cells can be haunting and unsanitary places to be in, particularly in the old wings of prisons:

The cells were brutal. They were like dungeons. I tried to keep it as clean as possible. In Limerick Prison I slept most of the time.

The old wing is filthy. The chamber pots are awful. The toilet you empty the pot into is filthy, full of shit. I asked for a brillo pad to wash out the bowl, but did not get one. The toilet was outside the cell overflowing with water.

There are bad facilities. It is degrading having to piss in front of other people. The cell was like a dirty piss pot. I shared a cell and we used the same piss pot. The toilet was opposite and the water used to flow into the cell.

The worst thing about prison is the slopping out. If you want to do your number 2 in the middle of the night, most prison officers won't let you out. They say they have not enough security.

Mountjoy is dirty. There were 100 on the landing I was on, with 6 toilets. The chamber pots are unreal. The smell from the urine was awful. If you want to do your number 2 at nighttime you have to ring a bell. It depends on who is on whether or not you get out. If you don't get out you can do it in a newspaper and push it out the window. The "bomb squad" (people on protection) clean it up the following day.

Not having a toilet in the room affected my bladder. I am on medication now for bladder problems.

The cells were horrible. I got permission to paint my cell with left over paint. I decided it was not a cell. That is how I coped. I would pull my door in before the officers closed it at night so as to keep some control myself.

Prisons lack basic facilities:

In prison you are just a number. Losing freedom is enough punishment. There is no need to punish us further. There should be facilities. It is not a caring place.

The introduction of television and a kettle in the cells in 2003 has improved conditions enormously:

The kettle and television are great.

In many of the prisons there are now modern gyms. Some prisoners also make good use of the yard:

I had a routine out in the yard each day and did four miles of a run.

Food

In prison prisoners collect and eat their meals in their cells. Views on the quality of the food varied from ok to very poor. The very poor assessment by some prisoners could be more to do with unfamiliarity with the food as opposed to the food not being of high quality. The prison kitchen in Limerick Prison received the Excellence Ireland Award for Hygiene. Many prisoners supplement meals with cakes, biscuits, milk and juices.

Drugs

Poor material conditions in prison are aggravated by the fact that many prisoners are heroin addicts. The extent of the drug problem is immense (O'Mahony 2000a). One ex-prisoner stated:

There are more drugs in prison than outside.

There is no medical unit with detoxification facilities in Limerick Prison and drug treatment that is available is considered to be totally inadequate by prisoners. One prisoner explained that:

I was in a cell with a person on methadone. He was left short. He went haywire and snapped. They gave him sleeping tablets. He went back on the heroin. He would keep you awake all night talking, strung out on heroin.

I was on methadone when I was in prison but it was a different brand to what I was on before I went in. It did not hold. Every night I asked for a painkiller. I did not find the doctor helpful.

There are a lot of lads going around in a daze, mostly young fellows, raving and kicking doors.

It is not surprising that how to smuggle and conceal drugs preoccupies prisoners who are addicted.

Contact

Contact with the family in the form of visits and letters is much appreciated:

It is good that they took a day out to visit me. I was visited by my mother, sister and girlfriend.

It was great to see her (his partner) visiting. She would come in with a smile and break the ice. It is nice to know that someone is thinking of you.

My wife visited me most weekends. It is great to have a visit from the family.

Prisoners had similar views on the visiting area as the families:

The visiting facilities are brutal. Someone alongside you is listening with a big block in between.

During visits it is crowded. You hear conversations you do not want to hear. You hear the arguing.

The visiting area is very bad. There is no space and it is very difficult for children. You are all on top of each other and you cannot talk.

Letters are an alternative means of keeping in touch for some people:

My children did not visit me. I was glad, as prison is not a place for children. They get searched. I wanted them to know that I was thinking of them. I used to write to them. My daughter has written a book about her experiences of me being in prison. My heart was broken when I read it. She is my counsellor. She is everything to me. She reminds me of what I have done. I have seen her angry. It is my daughter who keeps me out of jail. I have a job now.

Families Suffer

Some prisoners realise the negative impact that their actions have had on people they love:

The family is punished for a crime they did not do.

My daughter visited me when she was 10 years. She said to me everyone is calling me a prisoner's daughter. It got to me. I said to myself never again. The fact that her father was a jailbird, that used to kill me.

I have seen my mother all shook up. It broke my mother's heart. I saw her holding back the tears. Seeing me out of jail means a lot to her. I do not want my ma to have to go through this again.

My son saw me kill a man. He did not visit me in prison.

It costs a lot to have someone in prison – 30 to 40 cigs a day and food. Families have to find the money.

Counselling

There is a culture of resistance to taking up any form of counselling, which is seen as 'soft' and not in keeping with the macho image of prison life:

If you look for a priest or a counsellor you get a lot of slagging. If you do the crime you should be man enough to do the time if you get caught.

Up until recently there was not sufficient access to counselling. ALLJEF counselling service is now providing an addiction counselling service in the prison. The more people avail of the service the fewer stigmas there will be attached to availing of counselling.

Education, Training and Work

Prisoners interviewed were strongly of the opinion that much more needs to be done to make time in prison more productive, particularly in relation to education, training and work. There is an education service, but the facilities for education are poor in Limerick Prison:

In Limerick, there are not enough rooms for the 300 prisoners. There is need for better facilities; the school is up in a heap.

Many of the long-term prisoners settle in prison and pursue education:

I got junior cert., leaving cert. and social science degree. School is a good outlet. It gets you away from the prison system. The teachers do their best.

I did my time well. The education system worked for me. The fitness instructor helped to stimulate my brain. I did computers, maths, music and art. I did yoga as well. All the teachers were great. I became rehabilitated.

If you kept your head down and wanted to do something, you could do it.

One ex prisoner expressed the difficulties felt by some prisoners who could not read or write:

There is one level of education for those who can read or write. Those who cannot read or write are paranoid to come out with it.

In Limerick Prison, gangland feuds can also be an obstacle to attending classes. Tensions are high in the prison. Prisoners from different gangs reside in different wings of the prison to avoid feuding between gangs. Prisoners in the new wings have to go to the old wings to attend classes. At times it is not safe for them to go there.

Mental Health Services

O'Mahony (1997) estimates that 20 per cent of prisoners have been in a psychiatric hospital and prisoners experience mental and emotional problems ranging from personality disorders to self-harm and addiction. Services for these prisoners are under-developed:

There is little help there if you are in a bad way.

Pre -Release

Although there are now procedures in place for the release of prisoners who are homeless, these are informal. Many prisoners who are homeless are not identified as such by the prison system. Those who are identified as homeless are generally released into homeless hostels, which are totally inadequate to meet the needs of prisoners.

Declan who was a heroin addict and suffered from a personality disorder was released into a homeless hostel. It was his experience that such hostels are badly equipped to deal with the needs of prisoners:

I was in and out of hostels - you get bed, dinner and supper. You are around the town all day. I would rather stay out on the street than go into hostels. Just as society has a duty to punish us and take away our freedom, it has a duty to re-integrate us.

Ken was also released in a homeless hostel with very negative results:

I was released to a hostel where there was drink and drugs. I did not last long before I was back in prison. When you come out you need a job and somewhere to stay.

Justin would have been accommodated in a homeless hostel, except that Justin's sister agreed he could stay with her:

I was homeless the last time I was in prison. I was told I had to have an address to be left out of prison. The only accommodation I was offered was in a hostel. Because I had nowhere to go, my sister let me stay with her. They did not care where I went. You should not be thrown out on the street. I need a job out of the city where I am not bumping into my mates and I need somewhere to stay.

The feelings of prisoners on being released range from being very nervous to being on a high:

I was looking forward to getting out but I was very nervous. I was used to the routine in prison. When I first came out after two years in prison everything was strange; crossing the road was strange. You would need a course before you come out to get used to doing the ordinary things like going shopping. It is hard but I am slowly but surely coming back to my own way.

When you get out first the buzz is better than a drug, it stays inside you. It is a great feeling when you meet your family. You are looking at what has changed; the houses that have been built; the shops that are new. It takes time to slowly work your way back to reality.

Long-term prisoners are generally well catered for. They are transferred to the Training Unit in Dublin where there is a very defined pre-release training and work programme for them:

Before release I attended the Training Unit. I went out to Walkinstown and Ballyfermot. I was allowed home once a month to my daughter. Then I got out on Licence and signed on each month. I had contact with the Probation and Welfare Service. I used to see them once a week.

The point was made that long-term prisoners need transitional housing as many are institutionalised in the prison system and find it difficult to settle:

I went to my daughter's. She found it very difficult. There should be some form of accommodation for people coming out of prison.

Although there are some improvements on how ordinary prisoners are released and no prisoner is released now without some money, the experience of some prisoners interviewed was very negative. Coming out of prison is hard for prisoners:

You just get fucked out the door with a black bag. You get nothing coming out of jail. When I got out of prison I broke into a car to get home. I got caught and went back in.

You are told to pack your kit and you have nothing to pack. Prisoners should have medical cards and be linked to FÁS.

Many of us cannot read or write. There is need to make sure that we have support, that we have the dole, a medical card and accommodation before we leave.

I got out unexpectedly. I was not prepared for the outside world. You would need more advice when coming out. The prison chaplain helped me to get a flat and Sr. Eileen helped me a lot.

You don't know when you are getting out. You could be out in the yard and called in and told to pack your bags. I was called in one day from the yard after being in for four years. I left with a bag in my hand. Everything was different. I did not know who to call on. You will call on the lads you knew before you went in. At least there should be somewhere to go. You are entitled to money to get yourself back on your feet when you get out, but no one knows this.

When I got out the gate, there was no work. Nothing. I ended up dossing. There were 20 to 30 others hanging around the area. When people get out they should be linked to the Probation Service and linked to a workshop.

When you get out of Pat's or Mountjoy you get a train ticket.

Prisoners felt the need to:

- Be linked to work and training.
- Have access to a range of accommodation options. (e.g. Specialised accommodation for people addicted to drugs and alcohol, to supported housing in the private rented sector, to local authority housing).
- Have criminal records expunged after a period of time.
- Have a mentor, so that a prisoner on release would have a key person with whom he could keep in touch.

3.4 BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT

Bedford Row Family Project (BRFP) was highly praised. Families interviewed assessed the project as 'brilliant', 'fantastic' and 'a great support'. The best way to illustrate the impact of the project is to document what families said about the various supports offered.

Families described the project as welcoming and safe:

When I came down here I felt safe. I knew that what I was saying would not go anywhere else.

There are not many places where families and ex-prisoners feel welcome. At Bedford there is always an open door and a friendly smile. Families and ex-prisoners would have nothing without this place. It is a place they can talk about what they have been through.

Bedford Row is good for the whole family. All the staff are great. I did the computer classes. My mother learned that it not her fault that her son is in prison. She is not the only mother out there, who has a son in prison. I learned that there are lovely people that have people in prison. I was prejudiced even though I had a brother in prison. Things happen to people, drugs have a lot to do with it. Everything stopped when my brother started to smoke heroin.

My mother would be dead except for Bedford Row. If you feel depressed you can come to Bedford Row and have a coffee. You can have one to one attention. Everyone is the same; no one looks down on you.

Bedford Row gave me my life back. I was under the ground both mentally and physically. I did some courses and that got me started. I got out of the house. That was the beginning of me coming back. I was at death's door inside and out. I am a different person now. I have a life.

The project leader helped me. If I had not got her I would have done away with myself. The social worker was a great help. There is always a smile on the receptionist's face, a welcome and a cup of tea. They are number one on my list. Recently I phoned the project leader when I was really upset. She consoled me over the phone. I came in that day and went home more confident. Bedford Row is confidential and they understand what you are going through. If you cry, you feel all right.

Bedford Row is a great help. I am in counselling at the moment and it is great. It helps me to grieve. I have lost my son and you can't talk about it. There is a stigma attached to having someone in prison. People feel that there must be something wrong with you. The worst thing is the guilt. In Bedford Row you are accepted as a person.

I need support at the moment. I am getting that support in Bedford Row.

It was safe for me to open up because they (staff in Bedford Row) understood where I was coming from and that helped a lot.

You know that you are not on your own. If I am feeling down, I call in for a cup of tea. If you are breaking down, there is somewhere to go. People feel that they cannot open up in local projects, as they would not feel comfortable opening up.

Advice and Information

Families appreciate the help and the practical advice and information, which they receive:

Bedford Row was the place which gave me the information and the right contacts.

The following are examples of help given to families:

Séamus had a son on remand in Germany. He did not know whom to call on for help. The big problem for Seamus was making contact with the German prison. A project worker talked to a religious sister in Dublin who knew a chaplain in Germany who agreed to find out how his son was. The priest in Dublin contacted the chaplain and told Séamus how to get items such as soap and underwear to his son. Bedford Row invited Séamus to their premises and gave him use of the phone to ring Germany. When the charges were dropped against Séamus's son and he was released, Bedford Row supported his return to Ireland.

When Joan's son was sent to St. Pats in Dublin she did not know what she could bring, how many visits she could have. Bedford Row made all the phone calls. When she wanted him to be moved to Limerick, the project worker got involved

and put the case to the Limerick Prison authorities. Joan found that having the support of Bedford Row made it easier in times when she had little support and no one to turn to. She considers Bedford Row a great service and one that is badly needed.

The project worker is very good. She is helping to get my son transferred from England to Limerick.

They helped me in every way. They got me information about the Curragh Prison and how to get there.

When Cathal came out of prison, it was two months before he knew about the Community Welfare Service. A project worker put him in touch with the service and he got money for clothes.

The project leader gave me a lot of support. She is a great listener. She is working with me now trying to get a counsellor for my brother. She is a diamond.

Education and Supports

Many people affected by imprisonment have few or no formal qualifications and many have left school early. In the supportive environment of the project, many people increase their literacy and computer skills. Some people gain the confidence to 'name their world' and to describe how they feel about the effects of imprisonment of a family member. Sometimes this is achieved through writing poems. Basic education is important:

I would not have got the job I am in now except for the classes. The project leader got someone to teach me how to spell. Bedford Row gave me brilliant confidence.

I would love to do reading and writing. I loved school but I missed a lot of school. I will do some of the courses in Bedford Row.

In school I was told I could not learn. I was told to go home. I had a stammer and the teacher put a ruler down my throat. I did not know about computers or anything. The project leader said give it a try. Bedford Row has the best tutors. Caroline is out on her own. She never pushed me. Seán is a great help with spelling and writing.

Bereavement and grief are everyday realities of the life of women and children affected by imprisonment. Families praised the social and emotional support provided by the project and appreciated the time and space which they were offered to reflect on what was happening in their lives. Sometimes this was achieved through informal conversations, sometimes through counselling sessions and sometimes through the support groups or life skills programme. These sessions and programmes were life-changing experience for many people as family members began to come to terms with their anger and the fact that they were not responsible for the prisoner's behaviour:

In the Life Skills course I came on in leaps and bounds. It was really truly mind-blowing. I said what I felt; no one was looking at me. I felt really good. I understood how I took on the role of mother at a young age. I am more confident.

The life skills course helps you to understand the way you are feeling and why things happen.

The life-skills course was excellent. It was great to share with others. It brings back a bit of balance.

Éamon realised the difference between aggressiveness and assertiveness:

I was very angry at society over what had happened. They taught me to relax, to take deep breaths and said, “try not to talk to the prison governor like that”. They taught me to say what I wanted to say without being aggressive.

The Wednesday night women’s club, sometimes referred to as the social club, gives an opportunity for women to go out and have some fun, learn some skills and support one another:

I started going to the women’s club. It is brilliant. We might cook, knit, talk or have a cup of tea. From that I started to go out more and to get more confidence. We have gone to Killarney, Galway and Killaloe.

The club is great. The women are lovely and great crack. It is a time away from worries.

The social club is great. I never went out anywhere. I look forward to the club on a Wednesday. You can discuss anything and you have good fun.

A social worker employed by the project provides outreach support to families in their homes. Often women are so over burdened and depressed they are reluctant to leave home. They value having someone to support them through this stage:

The social worker visited me at home. She carried me through a lot when my husband was ill. I love to see her coming.

I suffer from depression. I did not go outside my house. The social worker encouraged me to get out of the house. Then I started Life Skills. It was brilliant. I learned a whole lot. I did it for 11 weeks and would love to continue.

The social worker visits since Paul has been locked up. It is very very helpful.

I know a social worker. She calls on me. I find her advice very helpful. I began to live again. She brought us on day trips to Fota Island and on a picnic. They were great.

As well as visiting families in the home the outreach social worker accompanies families to court, provides them with advice, information and referral to other services. Sometimes people get to know about the outreach service through the hospitality service in the prison, where the outreach worker attends during some visiting hours. She also meets people in the Bedford Row centre and it is an invaluable support for staff in the project, who also refer people to her.

Families valued the Hospitality Service run by the Bedford Row at Limerick Prison indicating that this service plays an important role for families:

The hospitality is great. They explain to you about the prison and how things work, what you can do and cannot do. They are there if you need them. The first visit, people are petrified and worried sick. New people really are very vulnerable.

The first time I went to the prison I was scared. It was great to have someone to talk to and to get a cup of tea.

Having them there makes visits easier.

Children

Many families were very appreciative of activities for children, which the project was developing. Bringing children together on day-outings from similar situations and of similar ages so that they could heal and learn from each other was considered very important. It was also important to involve adults and teenagers, who have been through similar experiences, as leaders. Families would like to see this activity continued.

Policy Influencing Work

Families appreciated the fact that the project was taking on a policy-influencing role, aimed at highlighting the impact of imprisonment on families, and effecting change in service delivery. Central to the project is the involvement of families who are affected by having a relative in prison. Families are a key driving force of the project and are centrally involved in developing policy. In particular many family members mentioned the importance of the *Help is at Hand* conference and how it gave them an opportunity to outline the concerns from the point of view of families. They were given an opportunity to speak and they felt that they were listened to. Families also appreciated that the project was involved in new partnerships arrangements with other agencies as this would widen the impact of the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLICY CONTEXT: FAMILIES AFFECTED BY IMPRISONMENT

The Whitaker Committee carried out a wide-ranging critical analysis into prison accommodation, services for prisoners and prison management in 1985 (Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System 2005). However, O' Donnell (1999) and other commentators point out that the report was largely ignored until a decade later as the 1980s and early 1990s were not conducive to constructive debate on the prison system.

The latter part of the 1990s and early 21st century, however, witnessed a major change in thinking and an overwhelming consensus developed in official reports and through public consultations by the National Crime Council on the need to restructure the prison system into a modern service and to develop systems more conducive to the rehabilitation of prisoners. This debate was however paralleled by a law and order debate within what was known as a 'zero tolerance' approach to crime and, despite the fact that crime was decreasing, there was a failure to promote greater use of alternatives to prison. This 'zero tolerance' approach was partly in response to the murder of the well-known journalist Veronica Guerin in 1997.

Implementation of progressive reforms has been slow. In relation to policies and programmes aimed at re-integrating the prisoner into the community, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) draws attention to the disjuncture between policy design and the lack of coherent implementation mechanisms or models to be followed (NESF 2004). Other reasons for lack of progress include limited resources, institutional pessimism, bureaucratic inertia and industrial relations (Heylin 2001; O' Donnell 2002). John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison has drawn attention to the lack of public support and political will to reform the prison system (Healy 2006).

4.1 THE IRISH PRISON SYSTEM

The *Irish Prison Service Strategy Statement 2001-2003* lists 17 prisons and places of detention. These include large buildings such as Castlerea, Co Roscommon and the Midlands Prison in Portlaoise, Co Laois, which are relatively new, a new prison at Clover Hill, which is specifically a Remand Prison and a high security prison at Portlaoise. There is also a modern women's prison, Dóchas Centre, on the Mountjoy complex in Dublin.

The older prisons include Limerick Prison, Cork Prison, St. Patrick's Training Unit in Dublin and Mountjoy in Dublin. These cater for the vast majority of prisoners passing through the system and have by far the worst conditions (O' Mahony 2000). The older wings of these prisons do not have in-cell sanitation and 30 per cent of prisoners (960) 'slop out' on a daily basis. In 2004, almost 400 personal injury claims were received by the Irish Prison Service from prisoners alleging that the slopping out practice violated their human rights (Irish Prison Service 2004).

The Curragh place of detention and Fort Mitchel Prison on Spike Island closed in 2004. Staff have been transferred from Fort Mitchel to Limerick Prison. There are plans to replace Mountjoy Prison and Cork Prison. Mountjoy is to move to Thornton Hall in north Dublin and Cork Prison is to be moved to a new prison on Spike Island (with a new bridge adjoining the mainland). Thornton Hall when it opens in 2012 will accommodate 1,200 prisoners. The building of large prisons has been criticised from a civil liberties

perspective in that they can lead to an over-emphasis on security issues and create difficulties for families visiting. This is not conducive to maintaining prisoner-family ties and community ties, which is important to the rehabilitation of prisoners.

In 2004, the Irish Prison Service had an annual budget of over €300 million, a staff of 3,400 and the average cost of keeping an offender in prison in 2004 was €3,800. While in prison, prisoners receive €2.50 a day and can get a bonus of €2.50 for additional work which they carry out in prison.

As this Report is concerned primarily with Limerick Prison it is appropriate to include a brief description as hereunder.

Limerick Prison is one of the oldest prisons in the country and two of the five wings of the prison built at the turn of the century (1815 and 1821) still remain today. These wings hold 110 male prisoners. Conditions are poor in these wings. They do not have in-cell sanitation and prisoners slop-out on a daily basis. Also due to cutbacks in staffing, there is no staff assigned to let prisoners out of their cells after 8 pm to use the toilets (Irish Prisons Inspectorate 2004). As Chapter Three illustrates, these conditions are extremely difficult for prisoners. C and D wings have been demolished and have been replaced with two new wings. The old female prison has also been demolished and replaced with a refurbished building, E Wing.

Staff in Limerick Prison consists of 216 staff employed by the Irish Prison Service, one and a half Probation Officers, sixteen whole time equivalent teachers in the Prison Education Service and the services of other professionals including chaplains, a prison doctor, a psychiatrist, two psychologists, nurses and a number of counsellors. It should be noted that the psychology service, made up of one Senior Clinical Psychologist and one Counselling Psychologist, have as part of their service objectives, participation with others in the preparation and implementation of both sentence planning and pre-release programmes.

A number of changes have been introduced by the prison service in Limerick Prison that have improved conditions for prisoners and their families. All cells have electric power points and each cell is fitted with electric kettle, television and provision for other music or educational equipment. There is greater availability of addiction counselling services.

Inter-agency work by Limerick Prison service has been strengthened in recent years and there is now greater liaison between the Limerick Prison service and a number of agencies. The multi agency weekly meeting of prison staff is an important mechanism to provide a more co-ordinated response to the issues arising for staff and prisoners. The partnership arrangement with Bedford Row Family Project to provide a Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison is also significant. The links with the Homeless Persons Centre and the recognition that prisoners should not be released at weekends or when other services dealing with income maintenance and accommodation are not open is also noteworthy.

In addition, a number of positive commitments by Limerick Prison Service have been made including the commitment to provide family visits for long-term prisoners and for all prisoners on special occasions, such as First Communion.

4.2 PRISON POLICY

4.2.1 Modernisation Programme

Part of the restructuring and modernisation of the prison services involved a move to create an independent prison service. *Tackling Crime*, a progressive and wide ranging discussion document published by the Department of Justice in 1997 pointed to the need for an independent prison board. This was also raised by the Whitaker Committee in 1985. An Expert Group in 1997 set out the legislative framework for such a board in *Towards an Independent Prison Agency*. Although an interim prison board was established in 1999, this has not been put on an independent footing to date and the delay remains a continuing concern to members of the interim board (Irish Prison Service 2004).

As well as proposing an independent prison board, the Department of Justice established an Office and the position of Inspectorate of Prisons and Places of Detention in 2002. This was set up on a non-statutory basis. The terms of reference of the Inspectorate are to inspect and report on the conditions of each prison and place of detention, the regime in operation and the treatment of prisoners. Judge Dermot Kinlen was appointed as Inspector. To date, Judge Kinlen has issued two annual reports, which are highly critical of many aspects of the prison system, claiming that the system is inhumane, lacks a rehabilitation focus and is ineffective in reducing crime. He is also critical of the fact that the Office and the Inspectorate is not on a statutory basis. Many of the criticisms were made in previous reports going back as far as the Whitaker Report in 1985 and more recently by O'Mahony (2000).

In order to bring about a more responsive and cost effective prison service, a key focus of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) in recent years has been its negotiations with the Irish Prison Officers' Association (IPOA) on a programme of modernisation and organisational change in the prisons. This involves negotiating a more enhanced role for prison officers while also capping the number of staff and prison overtime. It also involves the outsourcing of prisoner escorts and the closure of Fort Mitchel on Spike Island, which catered for young offenders, and the Curragh place of detention, which catered mainly for sex offenders. The implementation of changes has led to the disruption of educational and training programmes and the curtailment on visiting hours in some prisons. The changed programme is being implemented under the partnership agreement, *Sustaining Progress: Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005*.

4.2.2 Positive Sentence Management

As far back as 1994, the Department of Justice published a five-year plan, *The Management of Offenders*. This report reviews prison services and the management of offenders and charts progress made on the recommendations since the Whitaker report. It raises issues relating to prison conditions and most importantly it promotes Positive Sentence Management (PSM) and the need to establish a Positive Management Committee in each prison. The formal values, aims and objectives of the prison service also affirm the need for Positive Sentence Management (PSM) and more recently PSM is proposed by the National Economic and Social Forum Report, *Re-integration of Prisoners* (NESF 2002).

The emphasis of Positive Sentence Management (PSM) is on active sentence management and requires that a tailored plan be developed around the needs of individual prisoners by a multi-disciplinary team. These tailored plans, developed in consultation with the prisoner and where appropriate, the prisoner's family, would cover a range of issues such as substance abuse, parenting, offending behaviour, vocational training, education, health and family support. Positive Sentence Management (PSM) requires cross agency co-operation and co-ordination.

The CONNECT Programme (a programme funded by EU Integra funding), established in Mountjoy Prison and Training Unit in 1998 piloted an approach to positive sentence management (Lawlor and McDonald 2001). The objective of the programme is to create effective pathways from custody to employment for prisoners after release. A number of agencies are involved including the Prison Service and the Probation Service (PS) as well the National Training and Development Institute (NTDI).

Substantial funding is allocated under the *National Development Plan for Ireland 2000-2006* to mainstream CONNECT throughout the prisons system (Irish Prison Service 2001; Aylward 2002). The National Training and Development Institute (NTDI) is to continue to be the external trainer and CONNECT 2000-2004 was formally launched by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2000. It was anticipated that CONNECT would be introduced in the Limerick region. However it has not been rolled out due to the lack of resources. This is a great disappointment to many agencies.

The prison service recognises that Positive Sentence Management has not been implemented due to resource difficulties and over-crowding in the prisons (Irish Prison Service 2004). The implementation of PSM also depends on a successful modernisation programme being implemented in the Irish Prison Service. Improvements in education and work and training facilities, and an increased number of offence-focussed programmes, drug treatment programmes and out of cell activities is a prerequisite for Positive Sentence Management to operate effectively (Irish Prison Service 2004).

4.2.3 Reforms Implemented

Despite the lack of comprehensive reform, significant progress has been made in a number of areas (NESF 2004) and include:

- The recruitment of a Director of Regimes, which will have an important role in balancing the care/rehabilitation and custodial functions of prison.
- The establishment of a Scoping Group on Positive Sentence Management and the finalisation of a report on Positive Sentence Management by this Group.
- Multi-disciplinary teams are in place in each prison and these will provide the mechanism for implementing Positive Sentence Management at local level, which will include an integrated approach to prisoner rehabilitation and re-integration.
- The establishment of a Co-ordination Group on Offender Integration (COGI), which is comprised of senior officials from Departments and other statutory agencies.
- The establishment of the Homeless Offenders Strategy Team, (HOST) based in the Probation Service (PS).

- The establishment of in-reach services in a number of prisons, which target accommodation and income maintenance aimed at improving prisoner integration.
- Visiting conditions in some prisons have been improved and an independent review has been undertaken to inform the management and development of Visitors' Centres.
- Short-term prisoners and remand prisoners can continue to receive rent supplement for a maximum of 13 weeks under the Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance (Amendment), (No. 4) Regulations, 2003. This change is aimed at helping to preserve private rented accommodation for such prisoners and avoiding them becoming homeless while in custody. The new Regulations also provide for time in custody to be counted towards the six months qualification period for access to rent allowance.
- Prisoners are now entitled to apply for local authority housing nine months prior to release.
- Research and data deficit issues are being addressed.

Other actions include the involvement of Area Development Management (now known as Pobal) and local area partnerships and community groups in proactive work with offender/ex prisoners, and a commitment by the Minister to consider any recommendation made in relation to expunging criminal records (NESF 2004).

4.3 THE PRISON POPULATION

For the year 2004, 8,820 people were sent to prison. Of the total annual prison population, 43 per cent (3,756) of prisoners were on remand and 57 per cent (5,064) were sentenced by the courts. About three-fifths of all committals under sentence are for six months or less, indicating relatively minor offences. At the other end of the scale 29 people received life sentences in 2004 (Irish Prison Service 2004). The case has been made by several commentators that alternatives to prison should be used more extensively for less serious crimes (Connolly 2006).

The daily average number of people in custody was 3,199. Eighty-three per cent (2,660) are sentenced prisoners. Of the sentenced prisoners, 66 per cent (1,766) are serving sentences of two years or more. Forty-six per cent (1,216) are serving sentences for offences against the person or against property with violence.

Twenty-one per cent of the annual prison population (1,804) were non-Irish nationals, comprising 11 per cent (949) who were detained on immigration matters and 10 per cent (848) on other matters (Irish Prison Service 2004).

Limerick Prison caters for both male and female prisoners and for remand and sentenced prisoners. The male prisoners are committed from the courts from the counties of Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, while female prisoners are committed from courts throughout the Munster region. On any one day, the prison holds 280 male prisoners and 18 female prisoners.

The profile of the Irish prisoner population is one of multiple disadvantage and social exclusion (Bacik and O'Connell 1997; O'Mahony 1997; Kelleher Associates 2000; National Economic and Social Forum 2002). The NESF (2002) report states that:

There is an over-representation of economically deprived communities in our prison population, there is a concentration of drug problems in our inner-city communities and some of our most marginalised communities experience chronic crime problems.

The majority of prisoners are from lower working class backgrounds and families of prisoners experience chronic unemployment, low income, poor educational achievement and come from communities where there is poor housing and where there is a high level of drug addiction. Many prisoners themselves have alcohol or heroin addictions or psychiatric problems. One-third had never attended a school higher than primary level and 80 per cent left school before they were 16 years of age (O' Mahony 1997). A significant number (52 per cent) of prisoners have virtually no literacy skills (Morgan and Kett 2003). Given the link between educational achievement and work it is not surprising that 88 per cent were unemployed just prior to imprisonment and 44 per cent had either never worked or else never had a job that lasted more than six months (O' Mahony 1997). Fifteen per cent of prisoners had a father in prison and 44 per cent had a brother or sister who had been to prison and 89 per cent of prisoners were acknowledged recidivists.

An increasing number of prisoners are from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Irish Prison Service 2004). This is not surprising given the increasing ethnic diversity of Irish society and the fact that many are concentrated in low-income sectors of the economy. Although data is not recorded on the number of people from the Traveller community in prison, informed sources reveal that there is a significant number of Travellers in prison. McCullagh (1996; 2002) points out that not only working class people commit crime. The main point he makes is that middle class crime or 'white collar crime' goes unnoticed or unpunished.

4.4 PRISON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK

The Prison Education Service is a partnership between the Irish Prison Service and a range of educational bodies and in particular the Vocational Education Committees and the Public Library Service. The Education Service has developed within the framework and principles outlined by the Council of Europe report, *Education in Prisons*, 1990 (Irish Prison Service 2004). It is underpinned by an adult education philosophy and provides a range of adult basic education programmes. Morgan and Kett (2003) point out that a significant number of prisoners (52 per cent) have poor literacy skills and a priority concern of the Prison Education Service is the provision of literacy and numeracy programmes for prisoners. The terms of reference of the service include the provision of pre and post-release programmes and addiction, health education and family programmes.

The current strategy statement of the Prison Education Service is *Strategy Statement for the Prison Education Service 2003-2007*. At the end of 2004, 51 per cent of all prisoners were involved at some level in education services, while 24 per cent were involved for more than ten hours per week. In Limerick Prison 47 per cent were involved in educational service at some level and 33 per cent were intensively involved (Irish Prison Service 2004). This level of participation is high by international standards.

Limerick Prison provides programmes in adult education. The main focus of the education service in Limerick is on adult basic education and the promotion of core skills. Complementing the basic education are personal development courses and a wide

range of formally validated programmes including leaving certificate, junior certificate, trade exams, FETAC, city and guilds and open-university.

However, there is no one education centre as such and classes take place in a number of different rooms dispersed throughout the prison in cramped conditions. It is planned that an education unit, which includes a library, will be in place by 2007. A critical factor to its success is the availability of adequate support staff (Limerick Prison Service 2006). The Education Service in Limerick prison aspires towards the provision of a high quality, broad and flexible programme that helps those in custody cope with their sentence, achieve a level of personal development, prepare for their release and be open to the possibilities for continuing learning post release.

A limited range of work and training opportunities are available in Limerick Prison. However, the two new workshops in Limerick Prison are not yet open due to lack of staffing. The result is that many prisoners are left with little to do and there is an absence of vocational training and preparation for work. The point was made by a number of people interviewed that there is need for targeted vocational training linked to employment opportunities and there is need to provide an incentive for people to attend training courses and work. Examples of skills, which could be developed, are skills to work in the construction industry, painting and decorating and in driving heavy goods vehicles (HGV).

4.5 THE PROBATION SERVICE

The Probation Service (PS) is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and is independent of the prison and courts services. It has an important role in conducting offence-related assessments and in helping prisoners to address offending behaviour, engaging prisoners in individual counselling and group programmes, helping to maintain links with family and community and in preparing offenders for eventual release.

In Limerick Prison there are one and a half Probation Officers for the 280 prisoners in the prison at any one time. This limited number of staffing positions is of major concern to the service providers in the region and to families. Due to the inadequate staffing level of the PS, time given to offence-related assessments is insufficient. Group programmes, for the most part relating to offending behaviour, are confined to long-term prisoners and women and there is not sufficient time for staff to liaise with families. If a programme of Positive Sentence Management (PSM) is introduced, the PS in Limerick would need additional staff to participate. Also, the point was made that service-level agreements need to be developed between the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and the Probation Service (PS). This issue is being addressed under the modernisation programme within *Sustaining Progress 2003-2005*.

To complement the work of the Probation Service (PS), the Linkage Programme was developed. Linkage is a national programme and is managed by Business in the Community Ireland in partnership with the PS. Linkage employs Training and Employment Officers (TEOs) to prepare, plan and implement training and employment placement for offenders referred to them by PS and other agencies and to place them in full-time employment, accredited training, further education or Community Employment (CE) schemes. Currently there is one person employed in the Mid West region. There is need for an additional two workers. Through the Probation Service, the Bedford Row Family Project has referred a number of people to Linkage, who as a result have accessed

training and employment opportunities. The work of Linkage is highly valued by the Project.

4.6 THE COMMUNITY WELFARE SERVICE

The Community Welfare Service (CWS) is administered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The main role of the CWS is to provide income maintenance to individuals and families in need and to alleviate financial stress. In addition, the CWS in Limerick City provides financial assistance to families for travel and subsistence costs for visits to prisons outside of Limerick.

The Community Welfare Service (CWS) is important to prisoners on release from prison, in that, if given advance notice it can ensure that a medical card and basic income payments are in place when the prisoner is released from prison. In addition, it can provide rent allowance or payment for hostel accommodation. This works well in relation to prisoners leaving Limerick Prison on Temporary Release at Christmas time when the service is notified by the Probation Service (PS) of the impending release of a prisoner. However, at other times some prisoners are released from prison without prior arrangements being made for income maintenance payments and medical cards.

The cross-agency initiative developed in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin by the Homeless Persons Unit of the Health Service Executive and the Probation Service is an example of good practice. The partnership involves a regular in-reach clinic to the prison by special designated officers of the Homeless Persons Unit. During 2004 the in-reach programme resulted in 295 prisoners receiving direct assistance and advice from the Homeless Persons Unit while still in custody and supported through-care following release (The Irish Prison Service 2004).

4.7 THE LIMERICK LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The Limerick Local Employment Service (LES) provides a broad spectrum of services designed to meet the needs of people who are long-term unemployed. LES helps unemployed people to take practical steps towards getting a job by providing access to a range of professional services in employment, training and educational opportunities.

A key element of the service is the provision of local, community-based contact points that act as gateways for both long-term unemployed people and potential employers. Through these gateways, clients can access a full range of employment and alternative options.

Limerick City has a number of community-based Contact Points:

- Limerick Jobs Centre
- St. Munchin's
- Moyross
- Our Lady of Lourdes
- Southill
- St. Mary's

Prisoners are one of the target groups of LES. However to avail of the services they have to be drug free. LES have had referrals from the Probation Service (PS). They see the need for integrated service plans for prisoners and are anxious to work with programmes such as CONNECT when they are rolled out.

4.8 DRUG DEPENDENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Poor prison conditions are aggravated by the fact that drug dependency among prisoners and drug misuse in prison is high. O'Mahony (1997) found that 66 per cent of prisoners in Mountjoy had used heroin and that a large majority of these were polydrug-users. Opiate users, however, tend not to be convicted for drug related crimes *per se*, but for property crimes motivated by the need for money to purchase drugs. It is now generally acknowledged that there is a pervasive heroin and injection-based prison drugs culture, with very serious negative implications for the physical and mental health of prisoners in most of the large prisons. The level of drug use has impacted on prison life in a number of ways and this has caused a huge management problem within prisons. One in five prisoners, who inject drugs, claimed that their drug use started in prison (McCullagh 2002). Also, from the early 1990s onwards, there is increased surveillance and security of prison visits, increased use of closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) and searches of prisoners and their cells (Aylward 2002). Finally, the presence of drugs and drug addicts in the prisons has impacted on the working conditions of prison staff and has created difficulties in terms of the risk of them being attacked with infected syringes. Also, a number of staff reported malicious damage to their homes and suspect devices were found in front gardens of the homes of two officers.

In 1999, an *Action Plan on Drug Misuse and Drug Treatment in Prisons* was published. The plan provides for the expansion of detoxification facilities, the creation of more drug-free areas, the provision of addiction counselling support services and the provision of methadone maintenance (Aylward 2002). The *National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008* also aims to expand prison based treatment and rehabilitation services (Government of Ireland 2001). The most recent drugs policy and strategy statement, *Keeping Drugs Out of Prisons*, was issued by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in February 2006. It is centrally concerned with supply elimination and proposes more stringent measures to curb supply. It also proposes that a range of treatment options be available for prisoners. However the policy has been criticised for its 'hard line' approach, is not costed and has not been negotiated with the government's own advisory body, the National Drugs Strategy Team (Lines 2006).

Over the last few years there has been an increase in hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine and E and powder substances in prisons (Irish Prisons Inspectorate 2004). Despite the commitments in policies, drug treatment services in prisons are poor. In Limerick Prison there is no medical unit with drug addiction treatment beds and the numbers of prisoners receiving methadone treatment is small. For the year 2004, there were only three people receiving methadone treatment in Limerick Prison (Connelly et al. 2005). There is also no drug free unit, where prisoners who are drug free or where prisoners who want to stop using drugs, can be detained. On the positive side, ALJEFF counselling service has commenced a service for prisoners to provide addiction counselling. ALJEFF was established in 2000 in remembrance of Alan and Jeff Roche who committed suicide and were drug dependent. ALJEFF is of the opinion that having a drug-free landing available would assist prisoners who are in recovery. There are plans to open a medical unit in Limerick Prison with a new waiting room in 2007.

Also, consideration should be given to introducing a drug court programme to Limerick. Such a programme was first established in Dublin's north inner city in January 2001 and Farrell Grant Sparks Consulting (2002) recommended that the pilot phase be extended. The link between drugs and crimes such as theft from the person, burglary, larceny, tax evasion, intimidation and homicide are strong in Ireland (O'Mahony 2004). This programme seeks to divert non-violent offenders from prison on condition that they

attend a supervised treatment programme. Research indicates that, when a crime is directly linked to the use of drugs, treatment is more effective at reducing re-offending than imprisonment (Connolly 2006).

Alongside the large number of prisoners with addiction problems, a significant proportion of prisoners have mental health problems. O'Mahony (2002) estimates that 20 per cent have been in a psychiatric hospital. A recent report by the expert group on mental health, *A Vision for Change* (Department of Health and Children 2005), acknowledges the need for mental health services in prisons to be person-centred, recovery oriented, and based on integrated care plans. Given the extensive co-morbidity pattern between mental health and addiction problems, there is need for greater linkage between mental health services and addiction services (Department of Health and Children 2005). Other issues identified by the report are the need for training and education for personnel working with prisoners on the mental issues of prisoners and the need for measures to ensure that prisoners with mental health difficulties do not become homeless.

From such reports it is evident that there is a major challenge to deliver programmes on drug addiction and mental health and an urgent need for the Irish Prison Service with the Health Service Executive to provide adequate resources to develop a multi disciplinary approach to treatment.

4.9 COMMUNITY POLICING

Research on the relations between the police and young people and marginalised communities consistently document high levels of harassment, confrontational policing styles, overt misconducts and other behaviours that emphasise control rather than the service aspects of policing (Mulcahy and O'Mahony 2005). In the Irish context, the Whitaker report of 1985 drew a clear link between social marginalisation and antagonistic relations with the Gardaí. The lowest levels of confidence in the Gardaí were consistently found among young males from working class backgrounds (quoted in Mulcahy and O'Mahony 2005). Mulcahy and O'Mahony (2005) report that accounts of serious police misconduct circulate widely within marginalised communities in Dublin. Although they are not in a position to validate the allegations of misconduct by the Gardaí, they document that these allegations were widely held in communities and these perceptions have implications for police-community relations.

In response to the ineffectiveness of traditional policing strategies in marginalised communities, combined with a new emphasis on community crime control, a one-year pilot programme was established in Dublin's north east inner city in 1999 (Connolly 2002). This sought to overcome the historical tensions between the Garda Síochána and the local community and to create a sustainable model of community policing. It built on the work of the Inter Agency Drugs Project and, in particular, the informal police community links which had been developed between local community representatives and individual Gardaí.

The primary aim of this new initiative, now known as the Community Policing Forum (CPF) is to improve dialogue between the community, the Gardaí and the local authority as part of a proactive strategy against drug dealing and anti social behaviour (North East Inner City Community Policing Forum 2005). There are 28 local committees representing residents of flat complexes in the north east inner city communities. The residents' committees arrange meetings attended by the Gardaí and Dublin City Council officials as issues arise in their communities. Measures are agreed to address the issues of concern to residents. More general forum meetings are held every three months and

attended by delegates from all the local areas. Senior Gardaí including the chief superintendent and city council officials representing the city manager attend, as do most public representatives. Full reports are given at the forum meetings of action taken by the Gardaí and Dublin City Council in response to issues raised at local meetings. The message is that these agencies must be held accountable to the community and there is some evidence to suggest that the local community is having an impact on the way in which policing resources are being deployed in their areas (Connolly 2005).

Mulcahy and O'Mahony (2005) point out that if Community Policing Forums are to be established in marginalised communities they would need to be adequately resourced, codes of practice developed to facilitate effective and efficient operation of the Forums and adequate training provided for those involved.

4.10 HOMELESSNESS

There is a high risk of homelessness among adult offenders and in 2003 the Probation Service (PS) commissioned the Centre for Social and Educational Research at Dublin Institute of Technology to undertake research into homelessness among offenders (Seymour and Costello 2005). This study found that around 10 per cent of offenders referred to the (PS) Service by the courts in Dublin were classified as 'homeless'. A quarter of those in custody in Dublin prisons were actually homeless on committal and 54 per cent of those in custody had experienced homelessness at some point in their life. Added to this is the fact that one-third of the homeless population are problematic drugs users (Lawless and Corr 2005). The link between crime and drug abuse is also raised by Hickey (2002).

It is not surprising that the staff at Bedford Row Family Project and other service providers have identified the issue of homelessness among people leaving prison in Limerick as a significant problem.

Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy (2000) and *Homeless Preventative Strategy* (2002) produced by the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness focused attention on the need to prevent homelessness among people leaving institutional care, including prisons and places of detention. One of the first actions outlined in the preventative strategy is that prison management and the Probation Service (PS) will, through sentence management and a pre-release review, ensure that prisoners are released with appropriate accommodation being available to them. The preventative strategy states that a specialist unit will be established by the PS to assist with offenders who are homeless and additional staff will be provided.

Following on from the government's integrated and preventative strategies, the Homeless Persons Centre was established in Limerick in 2003. This is a joint initiative between Limerick City Council and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The Centre coordinates the provision of homeless services for the Limerick City area; staff of the Centre include workers in post settlement and tenancy sustainment, youth homeless (HSE), public health, psychiatric health and community welfare.

The Homeless Centre has a major role in responding to the needs of homeless people in the Limerick region. Staff of the Centre at the request of the Probation Service (PS) staff or prison staff visit the prison and carry out an assessment of accommodation and income maintenance needs of a prisoner prior to release. Many prisoners who are homeless are not identified as such, as current practice is informal and depends on the self-disclosure and self-referral of prisoners to prison staff or probation staff, acknowledging that he or

she is homeless. A system of Positive Sentence Management or a pre-release programme would ensure that the needs of prisoners are comprehensively assessed and that there is an effective co-ordination between agencies.

Prisoners, who are identified as homeless on release from prison, are placed in hostels for homeless people. This practice is contrary to the government's preventative strategy and illustrates the need for a range of accommodation responses to the needs of prisoners who are homeless, including high support accommodation, tenancy sustainment and mainstream local authority housing. The inappropriateness of emergency hostels for ex-prisoners was also illustrated in Chapter Three.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, agencies working with families and prisoners value the work of the Centre.

At a national level, the Homeless Offenders Strategy Team (HOST), established in 2002 with Ministerial approval have provided important opportunities for improved inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination (Guerin 2004). HOST is a Probation Service-led initiative and has a national remit. It is represented on the Co-ordinating Group on Offenders Integration (COGI) and the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness (CDTH). HOST published a three-year (2004-2007) Strategy in 2004. Its work to date has involved:

- Participation on the Department of Social and Family Affairs-led committee, that published a Prisoner Information Booklet.
- Securing of agreement that prisoners should be included in local authority housing strategies.

Dublin City Council (DCC) second staff to HOST who work alongside members dedicated by the Probation Service (PS) to prevent homelessness. The Access Housing Unit of Threshold organisation in-reaches into Mountjoy Prison and ensures that private rented accommodation for prisoners is available on release. Access Housing also provide post-release support in sustaining tenancies, thus helping ex-prisoners to remain in their tenancies.

4.11 DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Poverty is deep-rooted in Irish society and there is a sharp divide between the rich who have benefited from recent economic prosperity and the poor who are increasingly more marginalised. Although consistent poverty has been reduced in Ireland, inequality in terms of the distribution of wealth and income has been increasing. (United Nations 2005).

The unequal access which people in marginalised communities have to health and education and the run-down nature of some local authority housing estates emerged throughout interviews.

Using data from the Central Statistics Office, the Paul Partnership have identified five locations where social disadvantage and social exclusion are particularly concentrated.³ (Paul Partnership 2002) Within these communities the rate of unemployment is substantially higher than that for Limerick city or for the state as a whole. In 2002, when the national unemployment was at 8.8 per cent, the unemployment rate in the five disadvantaged communities ranged from 15 per cent in one community to over 20 per

³ These areas are Southill, St. Munchin's, St. Mary's, Our Lady of Lourdes and Moyross.

cent in three communities to a high of 30 per cent in the remaining community. Given the unemployment rate, the following comment made by one mother is apt:

If you got a job in our area it is a big deal. It is bigger than a fellow going to college in another area is.

Many young people leave education early with few work prospects. Despite a decrease in early school leaving between 1996 and 2002 in all five targeted communities, the issues of early school leaving remains a problem. In 2002, for the state as a whole, 24.4 percent left school before the age of 15 years; in Limerick city the percentage was 26.9. The percentage leaving school before the age of 15 in the five target areas ranged from 29 percent to 51 percent and the average was 42.3 percent.

Early school leaving is linked to unemployment, which is crucially linked to crime, and in areas where unemployment is high there are a disproportionate number of people who use intravenous (IV) drugs. McCafferty (1998) draws attention to the role which a poor physical environment plays in the social and economic deterioration of such communities. It is therefore not surprising that there is a concentration of prisoners from the five areas targeted by the Paul Partnership. Approximately 150 prisoners of the 280 prisoners in Limerick Prison are from Limerick City. Although the population of the five areas make up 39 per cent of Limerick City population, they comprise 75 per cent (113) of the Limerick City Prison population (Appendix B). An additional 13 per cent are from Limerick city centre. Only 3 percent are from other areas of Limerick city.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ISSUES ARISING

This chapter gives an overview of the findings relating to the three main areas considered by the research:

- Policy Context.
- The Experiences of Families.
- Future Direction of the Bedford Row Family Project.

Based on an analysis of these three areas, issues arising from the research are identified and outlined.

5.1 POLICY CONTEXT

Important changes in thinking took place in government and academic discussion in the late 1990s and early 21st century and there was overwhelming consensus on the need to put in place a modern prison service and prison programmes more conducive to the re-integration of prisoners into the family and community. This came after a decade of silence following the publication of the wide-ranging critical analysis of the Whitaker Committee (Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System 1985).

Central to this thinking was the recognition that prisons and the rehabilitation of prisoners is a cross cutting issue that requires the coming together of the many different government departments and agencies which have a brief for prisoners and their families to provide a co-ordinated and integrated response. Important initiatives, which have been taken include the establishment of the Co-ordination Group on Offender Integration (COGI) and the Scoping Group on Positive Sentence Management (PSM).

A second key tenet of the thinking is the need to develop sentence planning around the individual needs of the prisoner aimed at the integration of the prisoner into community and family. The term Positive Sentence Management (PSM) is used to describe this process. Families expressed the view that they should have an important role in sentence planning.

Progressive developments in Limerick Prison include the enhancement of multi-agency work through a number of measures:

- Weekly multi-agency meeting of prison staff.
- The Bedford Row Hospitality Service, which is an effective partnership between the Limerick Prison Service and the Bedford Row Family Project.
- Liaison with the Homeless Persons Centre to accommodate prisoners who are identified as homeless.
- Liaison with the Community Welfare Service.

The work underway in Limerick Prison with respect to developing a co-ordinated pre-release programme (Chapter 2.6) has been commented on favourably by families and they report that both prisoners and families would further benefit from progression of this programme without delay. A parallel programme developed for families in Bedford Row

Family Project would be of great benefit also, as when prisoners are being released from prison, families need support to rebuild relationships and to adjust to the change.

Although many reforms have been put in place, interviews with families indicate that reforms have not been sufficient to significantly improve the conditions of prisoners or visiting conditions for families. These family perspectives are outlined in 5.2 below.

Reasons put forward by commentators for the slowness of progress at national level in implementing reforms include limited resources, lack of coherent implementation mechanisms, bureaucratic inertia, industrial relations difficulties and lack of political will (O'Donnell 2002; Heylin 2001; National Economic and Social Forum 2004; Healy 2006).

5.2 THE EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIES

As part of this research, interviews were held with 52 family members. Families experience anxiety, shame and grief as they journey through the criminal justice process of arrest, bail, trial, appeal, imprisonment and release. Attending court is challenging and stressful for family members and often made more difficult because of the unwelcome intrusion of the media. For families with little support, having a support worker to accompany them to court can ease the trauma of the court.

For many families, the experience of imprisonment aggravates underlying problems that are already putting strains on family life including poverty, lack of childcare provision, health problems, substance misuse and the threat of homelessness (Loucks 2004). Children can experience guilt and insecurity when a parent is taken into prison and can encounter difficulties when visiting parents in prison (Buist 1997).

The vast majority of imprisoned parents are male, as, world wide, women account for only a small minority of the prison population. Women for the most part carry the responsibility of caring for the family, visiting the prison and the cost of supporting a relative in prison.

Domestic violence and sexual violence emerged in discussions as a key issue for some women and practical and emotional supports need to be available to partners of prisoners affected by domestic and sexual violence. Measures need to be informed by a risk assessment on the safety of women and must aim to empower women to gain control over their lives.

5.2.1 Visiting and Involvement of Families

Visiting conditions was a key issue raised by families as good visiting arrangements are seen as fundamental to maintaining family relations and supporting both the person in prison and the family. The Hospitality Service in the reception area of Limerick Prison is staffed by the Bedford Row Family Project and is highly valued by families. However, the lack of an activity room for teenage children while waiting and the absence of a crèche for young children are of concern. Staff of the Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison recognise the need for an additional room to be made available where there is privacy to discuss issues that may arise for people visiting the prison. Staff also noted the need for training in crisis counselling and conflict management. Consideration should be given to expanding the service to include counselling and support as many families for a variety of reasons do not make their way to the centre in Bedford Row.

The need for family friendly visits was a key issue identified by families. The lack of privacy for adults and the difficulty of having private conversations in the visiting room (visiting box) makes visiting difficult. The visiting room is noisy, overcrowded and people have great difficulty carrying on conversations. Also, getting to prisons outside of Limerick is difficult and expensive for families.

As stated above families identified the need for a designated family contact person in prison for prisoners and their families. Given the importance of the prisoner-family relationship for the rehabilitation of prisoners, families, where appropriate, should be consulted and involved in both sentence planning and pre-release preparation.

5.2.2 Prison Conditions

Families and prisoners are concerned about the conditions in prisons and the long periods of idleness and lock-up that, they state, ‘grinds prisoners down’ and allows prisoners to ‘drift’. They state that more needs to be done to counteract boredom and to make time in prison more productive, particularly in relation to education, training and work. They identified two new training workshops in Limerick Prison which are not open due to lack of staff, and felt strongly that they should be opened and that an education unit, with adequate support staff be put in place also. Also, better mental health and addiction services need to be developed, as well as further programmes on parenting, relationships and offending behaviour. Prison cells in the old wings of Limerick Prison are unsanitary and awful places to be in. These wings were built in the early 1800s, do not have in-cell sanitation and prisoners in these wings ‘slop-out’ on a daily basis.

There is need for a range of options to meet prisoners’ accommodation needs, and the practice of them going straight from prison to a homeless hostel is not helpful towards their rehabilitation. Also, there are only one and half Probation Service (PS) positions for the 280 prisoners in the prison at any one time. Finally, great disappointment was expressed that the CONNECT programme, which is concerned with active sentence management, has not been sustained.

5.2.3 Lack of Preventative Services

Prisons can sometimes be termed a ‘dumping ground’ for many people who have been failed by a whole range of services such as education services, psychiatric services, psychological services and drug treatment services and most importantly by a society which marginalises the marginalised in segregated housing estates with few facilities. Regeneration programmes are needed in marginalised communities where people are empowered and centrally involved in decisions.

5.2.4 Criminal Records

Many family members stated that having a criminal record is a substantial barrier to gaining employment on release from prison. A criminal record often affects the employment opportunities of family members and in some situations access to services. Having a criminal record is not one of the nine grounds currently protected under equality legislation. The Equality Authority should progress the commitment in *Building an Inclusive Workplace* (2004)

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) report (2002) recommends that legislative change should be introduced to allow the criminal records of adults in certain situations to be expunged. This would happen after a period of time to be determined by the seriousness of the offence, the length of time since it occurred and the absence of subsequent convictions. The issue is seen by NESF as a human rights issue in that once a person has completed a sentence of imprisonment s/he should not continue to experience discrimination for that crime. That a criminal record should continue in a 'blanket and indiscriminate manner for all ex-offenders in Ireland at the beginning of the 21st century appears, at best, anachronistic; at worst, calculated and wilful' (Kilcommins and O'Donnell 2003). The Equality Authority might consider the commissioning of a Position Paper outlining a specific legal framework for removing prison records.

5.2.5 Children

Under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* adopted by the UN in 1989 and signed by Ireland in 1990 and ratified in 1992, children's right to family life is paramount. Separated children have a right to maintain personal relationships and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis except where it is contrary to the child's best interests. Having a parent involved in crime is a strong risk factor for the child becoming involved in criminal behaviour. This further emphasises the need to support children and teenagers when a parent goes into prison in order to interrupt the cycle of intergenerational criminal activity.

Parents interviewed told of the difficulties in telling children about the imprisonment of the other parent. The hardest decision for parents when telling their children is when and how much to tell them. Parents need support and guidance on how to tell their child about the imprisonment of a parent or other family member and in how to support the child.

In Ireland, there are no reliable statistics on the number of children who have a parent or relative in prison. In Europe, it is estimated that approximately 800,000 children are separated from their imprisoned parent each year (Wolleswinkel 2002).

The four children interviewed for this study all shared a great sense of loss, have visited their fathers in prison and have strong attachments to their imprisoned parent. Both families and children felt the need for more child-friendly visits. Between them, the four children received some help from Barnardos and the Health Services Executive. Services for children who have a parent or close relative in prison are as yet under-developed and there is a lack of awareness about the effects of imprisonment among professional groups, such as counsellors and teachers.

Services for children of imprisoned parents such as bereavement counselling, self-help groups and activity-based group events, such as excursions, are also important. Putting these services in place helps children to come to terms with imprisonment and helps the mental health conditions of children of imprisoned parents.

The Bedford Row Family Project is one of the few projects working with children and young people affected by the imprisonment of a parent or relative. The project is planning to develop work in this area.⁴

5.2.6 Bedford Row Family Project

All families interviewed highly valued the support given by the Bedford Row Family Project. They described the project as ‘brilliant’ and ‘fantastic’. For many families, the support given by Bedford Row was crucial in helping them to deal with the trauma resulting from the imprisonment of a relative. Many individuals spoke of how Bedford Row helped them to deal with their anxiety, depression and desperation following such an event. Most importantly families were listened to and their experience and knowledge of what support families need helps to shape the direction of the project.

5.3 FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT

5.3.1 Brief General Overview

The Bedford Row Family Project has developed an impressive integrated response to the needs of families affected by imprisonment. The project welcomes and respects all who avail of its services and supports and values them as shapers of the project. The staff of the project includes members of families affected by imprisonment, along with volunteers and workers with professional qualifications in social work, counselling and education.

The project has several inter-related elements, which are outlined in Chapter Two:

- Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison
- Information, Advocacy, Support
- Outreach Service to Families
- Education and Development
- Group Work and Counselling
- Support to Ex Prisoners
- Inter-Agency Work

Through its inter-agency work, the project has contact with a large number of organisations and has high visibility and credibility with the community sector and agencies in Limerick City. It has been successful in raising awareness about the effects of imprisonment on families.

Based on the experience of families and knowledge of relevant government policies, the project engages in policy-influencing work aimed at making services more responsive to the needs of families affected by imprisonment.

⁴ Important lessons can be learned from the work of the European Action Research Committee on Children of Imprisoned Parents (Eurochips), which was established in 1993 to provide a voice for children of prisoners and to explore innovative, children centred approaches to maintaining the child-parent bond in different European countries (Wolleswinkel 2002). In Scotland, the report, *More Than a Box of Toys* (Buist 1997) highlighted the experiences of children visiting prison. This led the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families to develop the good practice guide on children visiting prisons (Morrison et al 1998; 2005). In the United Kingdom, Action for Prisoners’ Families, which is a national federation has undertaken important initiatives in this area, including producing a pamphlet, *Telling the Children* (2003).

Families report that, in the Bedford Row Family Project:

- Staff understand the effects that imprisonment has on families, are non-judgemental and listen to what families have to say.
- Accurate and practical information on issues that affect families such as welfare entitlements, how to get to prisons and visiting times is provided.
- A person-focused approach is adopted, which is empowering and a range of interrelated programmes are offered to individual family members from education to individual counselling and peer support and mentoring.

Central to the success of the project is:

- The dedication and range of skills of the staff.
- The leadership given by the project leader across all areas of the project and her ability to work at both a practical hands-on level and at a strategic planning and policy level.
- The commitment of the Board of Directors and the executive committee.

Due to the responsiveness of the project to the needs of families and ex-prisoners, activities and programmes have expanded rapidly. This has resulted in increased staffing, administrative and management demands. The consequences of this are that the project is sustained by the long hours and heavy workload of the project leader and other core staff. One of the main challenges facing the project is to put systems in place so that the project can operate effectively without undue pressure on staff. Also, there is need to consider how the open-access nature of the project can be more easily combined with the more structured programmes.

5.3.2 Staff Needs

As part of the re-structuring of the organisation, there is need for a review of staffing including:

- Staff roles.
- Job descriptions.
- Pay structures.
- Staff training needs and up-skilling.
- Supervision and support structures for staff.

There is need to identify the additional staff and skills required for the expanding programme of the project.

5.3.3 Review of Programmes

Programmes need to be reviewed and there is need to:

- Identify the additional resources required for the children's activity programme. The Project is planning to develop its work with children and young people and examining international best practice with regard to children affected by imprisonment.
- Reflect on the possibility of extending the Hospitality Service to offer counselling at the prison.
- Consider whether or not the advanced Life Skills programme should be extended to meet its objective in developing mentoring skills to enable participants to support other families and where this programme fits with the overall strategy direction of the project. The Life Skills programmes are highly successful and life changing for many participants.

There is also need to consider whether the project should expand in the following areas:

- Outreach to communities affected by imprisonment.
- Structured programmes for ex prisoners.
- A court accompaniment pilot project.
- Training programmes on the effects of imprisonment on families for agencies such as the Gardaí, the Health Service Executive, schools and prisons.

If a decision is made to expand, a broad range of skills will be required, including skills in managing offending behaviour, risk assessment, skills in developing and delivering training modules and community development skills.

5.3.4 Involving Additional Families

One of the main access routes to the project is via the Hospitality Service in Limerick Prison. It is likely that there are large numbers of families of prisoners who do not visit the prison as is evident from international research. Also, because some families have only limited time in the reception area, it is not possible for the Hospitality Service to inform all families of the Bedford Row Family Project. Other referral pathways to the Bedford Row Family Project need to be identified.

Paralleling the increasing numbers of immigrants to Ireland, the number of people from ethnic minority groups in prison is increasing. To involve immigrants in the project and to be responsive to their needs, there is need for training and support for the staff of Bedford Row so that cultural competence underpins the work of the Bedford Row Services.

In order to ensure that families affected by imprisonment continue to have a strong voice in the project, at least two additional members who have experienced the effects of imprisonment on families should be appointed to the Board of Management. All board members need training in order to maximise participation of members.

5.3.5 Project Protocols and Procedures

Staff identified the need to further develop a range of protocols and procedures already in place in a number of areas such as responding to people in crisis, managing violent behaviour, dealing with young people who are high on drugs and referrals to counselling.

5.3.6 Funding of the Project

The main statutory agencies that fund the Bedford Row Family Project are:

- The Irish Prison Service, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- Limerick City VEC.
- The Department of Family and Social Affairs.
- The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- FÁS, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform currently provide annual funding of €105,000. However the project needs one-quarter of a million each year to fund current activities. Accessing funds is time consuming and requires negotiation with a large number of agencies and charitable organisations, each of which has their own remit. It also makes long-term planning difficult.

Going forward a commitment should be given to provide long-term funding by the main government departments. This should be based on a Three Year Service Plan.

Finance raised through funding-raising could be used to expand other innovative project development activities.

5.3.7 Moving Forward

In going forward and developing new structures to respond to the growth of the project, there is need to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are taken into account. In balancing the needs of all stakeholders, it is important that the project retains its responsiveness to the needs of families affected by imprisonment and that families continue to have a strong role in shaping its direction.

5.4 POLICY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE STUDY

Based on analysis of policy, interviews with families and service providers and the experiences of the Bedford Row Family Project, the following needs have been identified:

5.4.1 Families

a. Contact Person

A designated person in Limerick Prison whose brief is to work with families. This person would provide information to families, liaise with families regarding the progress of the prisoner and make provision for families to participate in sentence planning and in pre-release preparation. Families should also be consulted in relation to broader policy issues.

b. Pre-Release Preparation

A pilot pre-release preparation programme for families in Bedford Row Family Project to parallel any pre-release programme for prisoners that may be developed in Limerick Prison.

c. Visits

Family friendly visits and extended children's visits (which would take place fortnightly or monthly) in a child friendly environment and where the visit is child-parent focused. There is need for an activity area for children and crèche facilities for young children in the reception area.

d. Room to Discuss Issues

An additional room available to the Bedford Row Family Project where there is privacy to discuss issues that may arise for people visiting the prison would be very beneficial.

- e. **Training – Family Ties**
Training for all prison staff on the importance of family ties for prisoners and the need to foster a family-friendly environment for families including children.
- f. **Complaints**
An ombudsman process for family related complaints.

5.4.2 Prisoners

In relation to Limerick Prison families have reported that prisoners would benefit greatly if the following were implemented:

- a. **Data**
Recording of (1): the number of prisoners who have children in order to facilitate the effective planning of services, and (2): the number of prisoners who do not have visits from family or friends.
- b. **‘Slopping Out’**
Improvement in prison conditions and the discontinuation of the practice of practice of ‘slopping-out’.
- c. **Positive Sentence Management**
A positive sentence management programme for each prisoner, ensuring that an assessment of need was carried out for each prisoner and relevant programmes put in place, including medical and drug treatment programmes and programmes in desisting from offending behaviour.
- d. **Workshops**
Opening of Workshops in the prison and targeted training for employment in the building industry and in driving heavy goods vehicles as well as providing opportunities to engage in self-employment, for example, such as painting and decorating.
- e. **Drug Court**
Extension of the drug court (piloted in Dublin) to Limerick.
- f. **Complaints**
An ombudsman for prisoners to promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of prisoners and to examine and investigate complaints of prisoners.
- g. **Homeless Persons Centre**
The in-reach service to Limerick Prison by the Homeless Persons Centre needs to be put on a more formal basis and regular clinics held in the prison. The practice of accommodating people leaving prison in hostels for the homeless is contrary to the government’s preventative strategy on homelessness. In parallel with this there is need to develop a range of alternative accommodation options for people leaving prison. This could be initiated by an agency designated to take responsibility for the through-care of prisoners.

5.4.3 Miscellaneous

a. Security

Checks to be undertaken on everyone entering the prison including prison staff and other professionals such as solicitors and chaplains.

b. Code of Practice for the Media

Guidelines for media reporting of crime, prison, etc. taking into account the trauma created for families.

c. Probation Service

The number of Probation Officers in Limerick Prison needs to be increased from their current number of one and a half positions. Consideration needs to be given to introducing the HOST (Homeless Offenders Strategy Team) programme to the Limerick region.

d. The Gardaí

In order to foster more positive policing at local community level, consideration should be given to piloting a Community Policing Forum, similar to the forum developed Dublin's north east inner city. This would be located in one of the Local Drugs Task Force Areas in Limerick City. There is need for training for Gardaí on the effects of imprisonment on families. In particular, there is need for Gardaí to be aware of the trauma for children when entering a family home to search the home or arrest a suspect.

5.4.4 Wider Governmental/Statutory Policies

a. Irish Prison Service

This Research has highlighted the need for statutory agencies such as the Irish Prison Service to consider putting extra resources into voluntary organisations representing families of prisoners. This is in line with IPS Service Strategy Statement 2001-2003. Resources so allocated would involve building on already established formal funding arrangements that are working well that directly support families affected by imprisonment.

b. The Irish Prison Service and the Office for the Minister for Children

Some of the issues arising from this study relevant to the Irish Prison Service and the Office for the Minister for Children⁵ include the need to:

- Draw up guidelines for parents on informing children about a parent's prison sentence.
- Provide resources to make specialist support workers and counsellors available to families. Further research needs to be undertaken with parents and children on other specific supports required for children and teenagers.
- Make books and other forms of information available to help children to understand the effects of imprisonment on the family.

⁵ The new Office of the Minister for Children brings together relevant staff working in the three departments in areas such as childcare, child protection and welfare, juvenile justice and early years education.

- Ensure that the children of prisoners are given attention as a specific target group of the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS).
- Recruit qualified, experienced, staff to develop and implement programmes that work involving children who have ADHD and who have relatives in prison, recognising the link between ADHD and offending behaviour.
- Incorporate issues for children and young people affected by having a parent or sibling in prison into existing training programmes for teachers, social workers, Gardaí and prison officers, health workers and voluntary agencies.

c. Equality Authority

Many family members stated that having a criminal record is a substantial barrier to gaining employment on release from prison. They also pointed out that in many situations it affects the employment opportunities of family members.

Legislation should be introduced to allow criminal records of adults to be expunged after a period of time. Also, the rights of prisoners and families of prisoners should be enshrined in equality legislation.

d. Social Exclusion

Families of prisoners experience chronic unemployment, low income, poor education achievement and come from communities where there is poor housing and where there is a high level of drug addiction. There is need for a programme of regeneration in these communities based on a community development approach, which involve people in decisions that affect their community.

Families affected by imprisonment should be a specific target group of the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS) currently being reviewed. They should also be included in National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Inclusion (NAPs/Incl),

EPILOGUE

It is always a difficult and challenging task to balance the security aspects of prison life, (seen as necessary by the families themselves, as we read in the Research Report above), with the humanitarian aspect, i.e. enabling families to be together, and fostering family contact through visits, appropriate temporary release, etc. while the prisoner is completing his/her sentence.

The development of facilities to support prisoners within Limerick Prison is ongoing, and the Prison continually seeks out and supports initiatives which can be implemented that will work for prisoners while keeping in mind the necessary balance mentioned above.

It is recognised by Staff at Limerick prison that, at any one time, a significant number of prisoners may have a multitude of difficulties (that might include severe alcohol and/or drug addiction problems, depression, suicide ideation, ADHD and other debilitating conditions) which the Prison authorities, the prisoners themselves, and their families find challenging to address. Some, for instance, despite the constant encouragement of Prison Officers, Probation Officers, Education Staff, Chaplain, etc. will not be interested in attending programmes or classes that might be of assistance, preferring to remain in their cells for long periods instead. Engaging such prisoners in a meaningful way will always be a significant challenge for all concerned.

Notwithstanding the above, many prisoners do avail of support structures, and since this Research began in late 2005, I am happy to report that a new psychiatric team has been put in place in the Prison. This service is complemented by the employment of a new psychologist to address Anger Management. Both, it is felt, are working well and are welcomed by prisoners who avail of them as a support.

Over the period of July – September 07, a new Industrial Area is in the process of being initiated, along with a new Education Facility. On receipt of a number of additional Staff, these will be fully operational.

Families stressed the need for Positive Sentence Management in the Report. This has been in operation in Limerick Prison for the past 12 – 18 months, and the Prison looks forward to the challenges of more widespread implementation of this scheme for prisoners as time goes on. It is envisaged that Bedford Row Family Project will have an important role to play in this initiative also, to augment any supports put in place within the Prison.

To conclude, the publication of this Research is welcomed by the Governor and Staff of Limerick Prison who see the Bedford Row Family Project as having an important role in:

- supporting families of prisoners,
- enhancing the quality of contact with prisoners during their time in detention,
and
- facilitating the reintegration of prisoners to the community on release from prison.

It is hoped that the Research will act as encouragement to all involved with Bedford Row (families, management, staff, funding agencies) to continue the good work undertaken to date and to use that work as a springboard for future development in supporting families of prisoners.

Tadhg O’Riordan,
Governor,
Limerick Prison

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PERSONNEL FROM AGENCIES INTERVIEWED

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Billy Fox | ALJEFF Counselling service |
| Camilla McGourty | Head Teacher, Education Centre, Limerick Prison. |
| David Meade | Homeless Persons Centre, Limerick |
| Eamonn Mullane | Irish Prison Service |
| Eddie Murphy | Superintendent Community Welfare Officer |
| Frank Gunter | Linkage Programme |
| Geraldine Lambert | Limerick Local Employment Service |
| John Conway | Irish Prison Service |
| Margaret Griffin | Probation and Welfare Service |
| Mary Cooney | Department of Social and Family Affairs |
| Paudie Twomey | Assistant Governor, Limerick Prison |
| Pat Laffan | Governor of Limerick Prison |
| Tadhg O'Riordan | Deputy Governor of Limerick Prison |
| Seamus Sisk | Irish Prison Service |
| Vanessa Cullen | Homeless Persons Centre, Limerick |

APPENDIX B

LIMERICK CITY PRISON POPULATION

Approximately 150 prisoners of the 280 prisoners in Limerick Prison are from Limerick City. The population of the five target areas of the Paul Partnership areas made up approximately 39 per cent of the Limerick City population.

LIMERICK CITY PRISON POPULATION BY AREAS OF RESIDENCY, June 2006

| | Population of Five Areas, 2002 | Population of Five Areas as a Percentage of Limerick City | Numbers from Five Areas in Limerick Prison | Population of Five Areas as a Percentage of Limerick City Prison Population | Prisoners in the Five Areas Per 1,000 Population |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Our Lady of Lourdes | 4377 | 8.7 | 23 | 15.3 | 5.2 |
| St. Munchin's | 4288 | 8.6 | 15 | 10.0 | 3.4 |
| Moyross | 4110 | 8.2 | 24 | 16.0 | 5.8 |
| Southill | 4006 | 8.0 | 32 | 21.3 | 7.9 |
| St. Mary's | 2760 | 5.5 | 19 | 12.7 | 6.9 |
| Total; Five areas | 19541 | 39.0 | 113 | 75.3 | 29.2 |
| Limerick City | 50023 | | 150 | | |

(Source: Census of Population, 2002 and information provided by the Limerick Prison Service)

The concentration of prisoners from the five areas targeted by the Paul Partnership is illustrated by the fact that although the population of the five target areas make up 39 per cent (19,541) of Limerick City population, they comprise 75 per cent (113) of the Limerick City Prison population. With 7.9 prisoners per 1,000 population, the prison population is disproportionately concentrated in the Southill area, followed by St. Mary's with 6.9 per 1,000 population.

Thirty-seven prisoners are from areas outside the five target areas. Nineteen of the remaining 37 prisoners are distributed throughout a range of addresses and reside predominantly in the private rented sector, local authority houses and homeless hostels in Limerick's inner city, while 18 prisoners reside in other parts of Limerick City.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Semi Structured Interview Schedule: Family Members

Introduction: The Bedford Row Family Project has asked us (*kelleherassociates*) to carry out research on the experiences of families affected by imprisonment. By gathering this information we hope it will help the Bedford Row Family Project in planning its work over the next few years. We would like to assure you of complete confidentiality. Your name and any details, which might identify you, will not be used. There are a number of areas we would like to cover but if you feel that there are specific issues that you wish to raise please feel free to do so.

1. How did you get to know about the Bedford Row Family Project? What involvement do you have in the project? What difference has the Bedford Row Family Project made to you?
2. How are you related to the person who is in prison?
3. Could you tell me about your family and where you are living?
4. What are your memories of the pre-trial period, including arrest? (if relevant). What was your experience of the court trial? Was there media coverage?
5. What prison is/was (name person) in? What is/was the experience of prison like for him?
6. Did you visit him while he was in prison? How often? What was your experience of visiting the prison?
7. Could you tell me something about the impact which imprisonment of a family member has on families, e.g. emotional, health, financial?
8. How is imprisonment affecting the children involved? What advice would you give to mothers or other carers on how to deal with the impact of imprisonment on children? (If relevant). What supports do children need?
9. How do/did you feel about the (name person) being released?
10. Could you tell me why do you think that (name person) got involved in crime? What would help young people remain out of crime?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED FOR YOUR HELP

APPENDIX D

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Jim Sheehan | Chairperson, Board of Directors |
| Regina Kelly | RSM, Company Secretary |
| Pádraig MacNulty | Chairperson of the Management Sub-Committee |
| Anita McNamara | Independent Consultant |
| Billy Fox | ALJEFF |
| Breda Wallace | Bedford Row Family Project |
| Camilla McGourty | Head Teacher, Education Centre, Limerick Prison. |
| Caoimhin O'Laoide | OFM |
| John Reilly | Community Garda |
| Philip Forker | OFM |
| Tadhg O'Riordan | Governor of Limerick Prison |
| Teresa O'Neill | RSM |

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