

Limerick Prison  
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## **Limerick Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report 2009**

We the members of Limerick Prison Visiting Committee are pleased to present our annual report. The committee held monthly meetings in conjunction with interim meetings and other visits to the prison. We met with individual prisoners, both male and female at various locations throughout the Prison, with an average of three/four offenders presenting themselves to the committee per month. The following is a list of the issues which were of concern to offenders and which were discussed at the meetings:

1. Offenders dissatisfaction with the quality of medical attention,
2. Loss of privileges/restoration of lost remission,
3. Temporary Release applications,
4. Concern of offenders re: visitors being denied access under the new search procedures,
5. Family visits,
6. Transfer of offenders to other prisons and places of detention ,

## 7. General complaints,

### Infrastructural Projects

Yet again, following on from previous recommendations, the committee calls on the Irish Prison Service to continue with their plans to upgrade and provide new infrastructure and facilities at the prison. The committee recommends that in-cell sanitation currently in C, D and E wings be extended to the two remaining wings, which are without same at present i.e. A Wing and B Wing. The committee again recommends this, as we did in last years report, as a matter of priority and urgency.

### Female Prison

The committee has yet again noted that the bed capacity in the female prison has been exceeded on many occasions. We again recommend that the capacity of the female wing be maintained at 12 in order to ensure less pressure on staff and offenders in this confined area or alternatively extra accomodation should be made available. We would hope that the proposed additional cells would become available in early 2010 and that the cells which become available be used as single cell units only.

### Catering

Members of the committee visited the catering department on many occasions and found the food to be of high quality and the catering facilities to be of the highest standard for cleanliness and hygiene.

### New Screening/Search Procedures

The committee welcomes the improved situation of having a sniffer dog on a daily basis when visits are taking place. This will ensure a more comprehensive detection of contraband items and drugs which might otherwise have entered into the prison.

### Psychiatric Service

The committee is of the view that a number of offenders committed to prison, have psychiatric problems and should be treated at a central mental unit/facility, where the necessary treatment/counselling should be made available, rather than within the mainstream prison environment.

We would again reiterate our hope that imprisonment is not being used as a containment area for such ill persons who could be better treated in the community setting.

We also recommend that continued treatment should be made available to offenders with mental health issues, post release from prison.



### Visit to Shelton Abbey.

The committee visited Shelton Abbey and held their monthly meeting there on 1st September. Following the meeting the members of the committee were given a tour of the prison and gardens, which was both interesting and informative and offered the members the opportunity to gain an insight into the running and management of other prisons and view the practices which are occurring there. The members were pleasantly surprised with the excellent conditions for offenders at Shelton Abbey. The committee would like to extend their gratitude to Governor MacLennan, Assistant Governor Corcoran and the staff at Shelton Abbey.

### Employment/Education.

The committee has visited the prison workshops and education unit on a number of occasions and are very pleased with the number of offenders who are using the facilities. We strongly support the principle of offenders being employed within the prison and also the use of the education facilities. We acknowledge the tremendous work being done by the teachers, instructors and staff.

### Persons committed to Limerick Prison on Fines

The committee are still of the opinion that the committal to prison of persons on fines/debts are putting a huge strain on the resources and facilities at Limerick Prison. We again call for some other alternative measures to deal with such offences, rather than imprisonment, particularly in the current economic climate and its resultant effect and pressure on families.


### Healthcare

The Committee members are gravely concerned with the many offenders who continue to present themselves at our meetings and constantly complain of many problems with the prison doctor, regarding the removal of prescribed medication etc.

### Condolences

The members also would like to express our sincere sympathies to the families of staff, committee members and offenders who passed away during the last year.

In conclusion, the committee would like to express their thanks and gratitude the Governor and staff at Limerick Prison for their help and assistance throughout the year.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. J. McNamee', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

Chairman.