

# *Irish Prisons Inspectorate*

## *PORTLAOISE PRISON*

*Portlaoise Prison Inspection :*

*6th - 10th November 2006*

**Note: Parts of this Report have  
been deleted on security grounds**

***Role of the Irish Inspector of***

## **Prisons and Places of Detention**

The Office of the Inspector was established by an order signed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the 21st February 2002. There is a statutory provision in the forthcoming Prisons Authority Bill for the establishment of a Prisons Inspectorate. The following are the terms of reference for the Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention.

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

To -

- (a) Inspect and report, as the Inspector considers appropriate, to the Minister on prisons and places of detention under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- (b) Report in particular on conditions in those institutions and on the regimes in place for prisoners and detainees.
- (c) Investigate and report on any specific issue referred to the Inspectorate by the Minister.
- (d) Submit to the Minister an Annual Report on the activities of the Inspectorate.

### **GUIDELINES:**

In carrying out an inspection of any prison or place of detention the Inspector will, in general terms, have regard to such matters as:

- (a) the quality of the regime
- (b) the attitude of staff and inmates
- (c) the health, safety and well-being of prisoners
- (d) the condition of the buildings
- (e) questions of humanity and propriety
- (f) any general pattern which may indicate possible inadequacies in the management of the prison.

As the terms of reference provide, the Minister may also request the Inspector to investigate and report on specific issues or incidents connected with the running of any prison or place of detention. Furthermore, the Inspector may raise issues of concern, arising out of an investigation or an inspection, either with local management, the Director-General of the Prisons or the Minister. To facilitate the Inspector in carrying out his functions, he may consider complaints from prisoners but only to the extent that such

complaints are relevant to the functions of the Inspector. The Inspector will, not later than four months following the end of each calendar year, submit a written report to the Minister on his activities during the year.

It is intended that the annual report will be published. The Inspector will also furnish the Minister with such information relating to his activities as the Minister may require from time to time.

The functions outlined above will also apply to any child detention centres and remand centres designated by the Minister under Section 150 of the Children Act, 2001.

These terms of reference may be further refined in the forthcoming Prisons Bill in the light of the experience gained in the interim. The Inspector will also be entitled to report and make recommendations, in the light of experience gained, on the contents of the legislation which will eventually make statutory provision for the Prisons Inspectorate.

Any enquiries or comments about the Inspectorate should be directed in the first instance to:

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## COMMENCING THE 6th NOVEMBER 2006 TO 10th NOVEMBER 2006

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 From the 6th to the 10th November 2006 an inspection of Portlaoise Prison was carried out by the Inspectorate Team which consisted of:

Mr. Justice Dermot Kinlen                      Inspector of Prisons and  
Places of Detention

Mr. James Woods                                  Special Adviser  
Prisons Inspectorate

Dr. Jim Ledwith                                  Consultant

- 1.2 The purpose of inspection is to identify issues and take note of any areas of concern or good practice which may pertain.

Date:    Mr. Justice Dermot Kinlen  
Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention

### 2. Background

2.1 Portlaoise Prison is one of the oldest prison establishments in use in the service having being built over 100 years ago. It is located on the Dublin Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The site where the present two cellular wings are located also had 36 acres of land attached which were used to grow vegetables, potatoes, etc for the prison's use. The farmland ceased operation in the early 1970's and is now the site of the Prison Service Training Centre (Beladd House) and the Midlands Prison.

The prison was designated a convict prison in 1923 and it held prisoners serving sentences of penal servitude there until 1973. Its use was changed in 1973 to accommodate subversive prisoners, and the "ordinary" prisoners held there then were transferred to other prisons, but mostly to Mountjoy. The Gardai and the army took up duty at Portlaoise prison to augment the prison staff when the prison's status was changed to a top security prison.

2.2 The prison consists of two cellular blocks known as "D" and "E" with the usual ancillary buildings attached consisting of visiting areas (mostly Portakabins), kitchen, administration offices, stores, visitors' waiting room area, control room, etc.

2.3 The "D" block is a three-storey building and mostly holds "ordinary" convicted prisoners who are transferred there from other prisons to perform work tasks in the kitchen, and painting, cleaning, at waste management and grounds maintenance etc.

2.4 The “E” block is a four-storey cellular building which holds various categories of subversive prisoners on “E2” “E3” and “E4” while the ground floor “E1” holds “ordinary” prisoners who are mostly deemed high security risk. The various groupings of prisoners don’t mix with each other and are separated by locked gates and steel grids separating each of the landings. The fact that each of these groups is separate necessitates similar services such as education, food serveries, craft/workshops, laundry, etc being replicated to accommodate each sector. The use of the gyms, exercise yards, library, etc are scheduled for different groups at different times throughout their period of unlock. This also involves staffing schedules to supervise the prisoners in their various areas during their continual hours of use.

There is a new cellular block being erected at present to replace the existing accommodation. It is due to be completed in early 2008.

The last full inspection of the prison by the Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention, took place in December 2002.

The prison’s cell capacity is 154 and there were 116 prisoners in custody on the 1st day of our inspection. It operates at 58% - 60% capacity.

### **3. Governor's Briefing**

- 3.1 The Governor warmly welcomed the Inspectorate team consisting of the Inspector, Dr. J. Ledwith and J. Woods on arrival on the first morning of our inspection. He introduced his senior staff and offered the entire gathering tea/coffee, etc. A nice touch which was appreciated by the Inspector was a bowl of Canderal and fresh fruit compote as a jam for diabetics. He also provided diabetic marmalade jam as well as a full bowl of fresh fruit. Later in the week the Governor also welcomed Mr. M. Kelly, another member of the Inspectorate team. The Governor presented the inspectorate with a 3-page document outlining developments at the prison since our last inspection. A great deal has been done, a great deal is being done and there is a great deal more to do.
- 3.2 The Inspector spoke of his delight at the new main entrance gate, the removal of the old buildings (some Portakabins) that were at the outside of the old gate area and the redevelopment of the entire old gate complex. When work is complete at the front of the prison, it will be a wonderful change from the original appearance of the prison from the Dublin Road end.
- 3.3 The Governor stated that he had 116 in custody on that day, that his cells accommodate 158 prisoners and that the prison operates at 58-60% capacity. He understands that it costs approx €240,000 per prisoner per annum. He outlined the plans for the new cell block which is being erected at present, known as the "C" block. It will be 4 storeys high and it's at the 4th floor level of construction at present. It will have full in-cell sanitary facilities

including a shower. The education and medical staff's requirements will be facilitated within it. There will be a large gymnasium and a large sports hall, part of which will be closed off by sliding shutters so that church services can be provided when required for that use. When the church services are finished the shutters can then be drawn and the area returned to normal sports hall use.

- 3.4 The Governor gave a breakdown of the military presence at the prison. They perform shift duties and operate independently of the prison staff. They have their own accommodation, their own cooks and medical personnel.

The Inspector enquired about the medical and psychology services. He was informed that a doctor has been appointed since the last inspection and that she gives an excellent medical service. When she is unavailable, her husband, who is also a doctor, does locum for her. So the GP services have improved 100%. Regarding the psychology service, the psychologist who was attached to the prison has left and has not been replaced, so there is no psychology service and one is needed very badly. The Governor said that a psychiatrist attends the prison a half-day per week and is attached to the staff of the C.M.H. in Dundrum in Dublin.

- 3.5 The escorting of the prisoners is provided by an escort corps which is not attached to this prison.

The prison kitchen has achieved the “Q” mark for the past four years which is the pre-Leonardo course and they operate to certified standards. The kitchen has been given a major overhaul with the floors being retiled and almost all of the equipment being replaced over the coming months. The military kitchen has also been upgraded.

3.6 The previous inspection report outlined the need for staff developmental training in view of the difficulties staff encountered over the years in dealing with high security situations and issues. In line with the Inspector’s views, the Governor established a staff Welfare Programme which is delivered over two days. It is available to all staff especially those working in the prison since the 1970’s. The course facilitates 10 staff in a group and is delivered in a venue outside the prison. Further days’ training is available to individual staff if the organisers feel the need for same.

3.7 The Governor then gave an outline of the various developments that have taken place since the last inspection.

(A) The new staff annualised hours agreement in which staffing posts have been reviewed at the prison. A new system was introduced concerning static posts within the prison.

(B) New anti-bullying policy introduced lately.

(C) A new T.L.O. (Training Liaison Officer) has been appointed to the prison in recent weeks. He has drawn up a very comprehensive training programme which will commence in the coming weeks. The training will include hostage awareness, drug awareness, practical decision-making, suicide awareness, intercultural awareness, human rights, security, C&R, B.A., computer training, training in the "Pris" computer system, PMRS training, manual handling, etc.

(D) The commencement of the new waste management project whereby all of the waste within the prison is disposed of in accordance with the environmental waste management guidelines. The prisoners working in this area will hopefully be trained up to certificate standard in waste management.

(E) Staff facilities within the prison have been upgraded. The redevelopment of the old main gate area which is now fitted out with meeting rooms, kitchen, rest/TV rooms, offices, a boardroom, etc. There are new staff locker rooms as well as new gyms, new showering and toilet facilities.

(F) Draft plans for a new prisoners' visiting facility which will be a solid structure, (not Portakabins) three storeys high and should cater for the entire prisoner population.

The Inspector asked if the "Connect" project was operating to which the Governor replied that it wasn't. He felt that generally speaking, the clientele held here were not suitable to such projects. The Governor was asked

about the Probation Service and he informed the Inspectorate that there is one Probation and Welfare Officer who works a 3-day week. There was a Senior Probation Officer assigned to the prison in the last 2-3 weeks but he also supervises out in the community and is based in Portlaoise town.

- 3.8 The Governor outlined that there is now a full complement of (eleven) Visiting Committee members. They were short of that number for quite a while but are now at full strength.

Regarding the “D” block, it was recommended in the last Inspector’s report that it should be knocked, but it is still in full use containing mostly prisoners on transfer from other prisons for workparty purposes.

The different categories of prisoners held in the prison was then raised and it was outlined that there are seven different groups. They are the real I.R.A., continuity I.R.A., provisional I.R.A., group of concerned republicans, I.N.L.A., non-aligned republicans and of course the “ordinary decent prisoners” (O.D.C.), some of whom are classified as high security.

- 3.9 The Governor was asked if there were sentence management systems in operation to which he replied that there were none. Discussions took place in relation to the various “non-educational” courses that take place in the educational area. The Governor said that they were very helpful and beneficial to the prisoners even though they were not “strictly” on the education curriculum. He was very pleased with the work the teachers put

into delivering these programmes. This concluded our meeting with the Governor.

#### 4. Statistical Information

##### 4.1 Sentence Profile

Serving sentences of up to 3 months	0
Serving sentences of 3 - 6 months	0
Serving sentences of 6 - 12 months	2
Serving sentences of 1 year - 2 years	9
Serving sentences of 2 - 4 years	29
Serving sentences of 4 - 7 years	32
Serving sentences of 7 - 10 years	14
Number serving over 10 years	21
Number serving life sentences	<u>5</u>
Total	112
For Trial	<u>3</u>
	115

##### 4.2 Age Profile

The number of prisoner aged 16, 17, and 18	0
19 years to 21 years old	2

22 years to 25 years old	22
26 years to 30 years old	25
31 years to 35 years old	18
36 years to 40 years old	18
41 years to 45 years old	15
46 years to 50 years old	5
51 years to 60 years old	8
61 years and older	<u>2</u>
Total	<u>115</u>

#### 4.3 Foreign Nationals

There are 4 foreign nationals in the prison. One from Spain and 3 Chinese.

#### 4.4 There is a staffing level of 298 from Governor to officer grade attached to the prison as well as other staff as shown here under.

1	R.C. Chaplain (full-time)
1	Probation & Welfare Officer (part-time)
1	Doctor (3 hours daily Mon - Fri)
11	(Teachers full-time)
15	(Teachers part-time)
1	Psychiatric nurse (2 hours per week)
1	Optician - when required
1	Dietician - when required

1 Senior Probation and Welfare Officer (part-time)

5. The Inspectorate team met the management and discussed the prison's business plans for 2006.

Strategy 1: Implement the agreed proposal for organisational change.

**Target 1.1 Operate the prison on the basis of new staff attendance arrangements w.e.f. Feb 2006 and achieve authorised staffing numbers by grade.**

1.1.1 Operate the prison on the basis of new staff attendance arrangements w.e.f. mid-February 2006 and achieve authorised staffing numbers by grade.

Result: Done

1.1.2 Provide adequate staffing levels to fill all agreed rosters.

Result: Still outstanding vacancies for 2 A.C.O.'s.

1.1.3 Appoint Chief Officer class 2 for detail duties.

Result: Done.

1.1.4 Identify need & prioritise the allocation of annualised hrs.

Result: Ongoing and done.

1.1.5 Establish & hold weekly meetings of monitoring committee.

Result: Being done.

1.1.6 Evaluate during & at end of each quarter as to level of usage of overtime.

Result: Being done.

1.1.7 Ensure that staff surplus generated are used for annual leave and for tasks.

Result: Yes, being done for annual leave only, not tasks.

1.1.8 Evaluate end of year annualised hours usage & provide adequate reports to the National Monitoring Committee.

Result: Will be done at year end.

**Target 1.2 Have Training Liaison Officer appointed to the prison.**

1.2.1 Seek appointment of T.L.O. by end April 2006.

Result: Done and in place.

1.2.2 Seek required training for the T.L.O.

Result: Done - training at present.

1.2.3 Request the T.L.O. to formulate training programmes.

Result: Yes, done and submitted to Governor.

1.2.4 Detailed & accurate records must be maintained.

Result: Yes when fully up and running.

1.2.5 All staff to receive required hours of training.

Result: Has not happened. T.L.O. appointed only one month ago.

**Target 1.3 Introduce new planned preventive maintenance arrangements for all plant & equipment by the end of 2006.**

1.3.1 Put in place maintenance contract for electrical services.

Result: Yes, done.

1.3.2 Put in place maintenance contract for mechanical services.

Result: Yes, done.

1.3.3. Put in place maintenance contract for water services.

Result: Yes, done.

1.3.4 Devise system to deal with all statutory checks.

Result: Being done locally at present. Discussions on-going on this matter.

**Target 1.6 Enhance Regimes services available to prisoners within the prison.**

1.6.1 Identify locations for the various regimes.

Result: Yes, identified.

1.6.2 Offer all prisoners the opportunity to participate.

Result: Yes, in "D" block only.

1.6.3 Enlist the assistance of other agencies in promoting education.

Result: Yes, liaison meeting weekly - promoted from there.

1.6.4 Provide a positive learning environment for students.

Result: Yes, in security block and education area.

1.6.5 Prioritise literacy provision.

Result: Yes. Depending on the need in "D" block.

1.6.6 Produce physical education development plan for 2006.

Result: Yes, a local one. Hope to get involved in national programme.

1.6.7 Review and report outcomes each year.

Result: Yes, being done.

**Target 2.3 New prisoner accommodation at the prison.**

2.3.1 Secure the site from the rest of prison by Jan 2006.

Result: Completed.

2.3.5 Request computerised ID system from main contractor.

Result: Yes, in place.

2.3.6 Ensure that all personnel entering the site wear appropriate clothing.

Result: Yes, in place.

2.3.7 All contractors must be security cleared prior to working on site.

Result: Yes, done and ongoing.

**Target 3.2 Strengthen physical barriers countering the trafficking of illegal drugs to prisoners.**

3.2.1 Install new sign to advise visitors of the prohibition of attempting to bring contraband into the prison.

Result: Yes. New signs in waiting room and search area.

3.2.3 Maintain policy of “appropriate personal contact” on visits.

Result: Policy in operation.

3.2.4 Ensure that staff are vigilant on visits, escorts, courts & reception.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

3.2.5 Report all prisoners endeavouring to procure or use prohibited substances.

Result: Yes, reported.

3.2.6 Deal with all reported incidents in accordance with 1947 prison rules.

Result: Yes, being dealt with.

**Target 3.3 Extend the “Mountjoy Prison” visitor identification system to this prison.**

3.3.1 Put in place that all visitors have photographic ID.

Result: Yes, in place.

3.3.2 Consult & communicate system to visitors & prisoners starting in D block.

Result: Yes, done.

3.3.3 Display signs in visitor reception area one month prior to introduction.

Result: Yes, done.

3.3.4 Implement appropriate system.

Result: Yes, ongoing and in place.

3.3.5 Monitor and review monthly.

Result: Yes, being done.

3.3.6 Extend new system one month after successful introduction in D block.

Result: Yes, will happen when D block is sorted out.

**Target 3.6. Enhance drug treatment provisions for prisoners (for 2007)**

3.6.1 Establish committee to introduce drug counselling services to the prison.

Result: Yes, done.

3.6.2 Liaise with agencies, internal & external as to the best practice methods.

Result: Yes, done.

3.6.3 Provide medical treatment & care programmes to all substance-addicted prisoners.

Result: No programmes at present.

3.6.4. Establish the feasibility of a drug-free area within the prison.

Result: No, not at present.

3.6.5 Review IPS Drugs Policy with a view of local implementation.

Result: Still awaiting policy.

3.6.6 Make recommendation on actions / initiatives for the prison.

Result: Yes, made recommendations.

3.6.7 Implement recommendations by October 2007.

Result: Yes happening to some extent.

3.6.8 Review progress of the committee on an ongoing basis.

Result: Yes, happening.

**Target 3.7. Target drug treatment / interventions for prisoners testing positive in mandatory drug tests. (For year 2007.)**

3.7.1 Establish medical committee for prisoners testing positive.

Result: N/A - no mandatory drug testing yet.

**Target 3.8 Record quantities of all drugs seized.**

3.8.1 Introduce procedures for recording drug seizures by Jan 2006.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

3.8.2 Provide secure lockup for all drug seizures.

Result: Yes, in operation

3.8.3 Label & date all drugs as to where located.

Result: Yes done.

3.8.4 Identify drug type, where possible.

Result: Yes, whenever possible.

3.8.7 Alert Gardai to seizures if necessary.

Result: Yes, done.

3.8.8 Record all arrests by gardai at the prison.

Result: Yes ongoing if and when it happens.

3.8.9 Report monthly & annually the amount & type seized.

Result: Yes. Done locally only at present.

**Target 7.1 Fully implement the computerised accident, assaults, & incidents of self-harm.**

7.1.1 Continue to convene quarterly multidisciplinary meetings to review current and new suicide prevention measures and implement as appropriate.

Result: Yes ongoing.

7.1.2 Implement recommendations as appropriate of the National Steering Group on death in custody .

Result: Yes, in place.

7.1.3 Convene special meeting of the committee within 24 hrs in the event of a death or serious suicide attempt.

Result: Yes, would happen.

7.1.4 Implement recommendation when approved by the Governor.

Result: Yes, done.

7.1.5 Examine the feasibility of introducing the Listener Scheme.

Result: Looked at but found not suitable for this prison.

7.1.6 Record all incidents on the computerised database.

Result: Yes, on computer.

7.1.7 Record all incidents in the journal provided.

Result: Yes, done.

7.1.8 Report all incidents to the Governor & Prisons Ops as soon as possible.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

7.1.9. Ensure that all incidents investigated are concluded.

Result: Yes, done.

**Target 8.1 Implement new prison rules.**

8.1.1 Establish committee to implement the new prison rules.

Result: Yes, when new rules are approved by Minister.

8.1.2 Provide information booklets to all the staff.

Result: When appropriate.

8.1.3 Provide staff training.

Result: When appropriate.

8.1.4 Seek guidelines from Prisons Operations.

Result: Whenever needed.

**Target 8.3 Co-operate with prison inspection by the Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention and the CPT.**

8.3.1 Provide all documentation as requested.

Result: Yes, done.

8.3.2 Provide suitable venue within the prison.

Result: Yes.

8.3.3 Keep accurate & detailed records as required.

Result: Yes, done.

8.3.4 All the various inspectors to visit all parts of the prison.

Result: Yes. No problem.

8.3.5 Co-operate with the inspectors.

Result: Yes.

8.3.6 Review the recommendation of the Inspector of Prisons.

Result: Yes.

8.3.7 Prioritise & agree areas requiring attention.

Result: Yes, when arises.

8.3.8 Implement change.

Result: Yes, if possible.

8.3.9 Evaluate and review.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

**Target 8.4. Maintain a formal prisoner complaints register and make available to inspection bodies.**

8.4.1 Record all prisoner complaints in the journal provided.

Result: Yes. Being done.

8.4.2 Update the journal as may be required.

Result: Yes, when required.

8.4.3 All complaints should be investigated with urgency.

Result: Yes, whenever arise.

8.4.4 Outcome of the investigation should be advised to the prisoner concerned.

Result: Yes, prisoner informed.

8.4.5 Governor & Prisons Operations should be made aware of all complaints.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

**Target 10.4 Improve information to prisoners on prison regimes, rules, entitlements and services using written & electronic media in 2007.**

10.4.1 Install electronic signs in prisoner congregation area.

Result: Not done. Electronic sign at entrance to E1 level.

10.4.2 Update messages daily.

Result: Target for 2007.

10.4.3 Install noticeboards in various locations.

Result: Yes, noticeboards installed.

10.4.4 Provide dedicated prison education television channel.

Result: Not until 2007.

10.4.5 Review as may be required.

Result: End of 2007.

**Target 10.5 Endeavour to achieve a minimum score of 80% in the annual external catering audit and grade C in the annual external hygiene audit for 2007.**

10.5.1 General upgrade / improve facilities in line with HACCP requirements.

Result: Done.

10.5.2 Maintain all cleaning & maintenance schedules.

Result: Yes, in place.

10.5.3 Training programme to be improved & broadened. "I and E" learning.

Result: Extended programme but "E" learning not included.

10.5.4 Implementation of the Leonardo Programme.

Result: By 2007.

**Target 11.3 Implementation of the pharmacy services plan with the intention of securing new control of medications.**

11.3.1 Await the delivery of the plan from the Health Care Directorate.

Result: Plan not delivered.

11.3.2 Establish committee to review plan & make recommendations to mgt.

Result: When plan arrives will set up one month afterwards.

11.3.3 Implement the agreed pharmacy plan recommendations.

Result: Plan not to hand.

**Target 11.5 Smoking policy implemented by the end of 2006.**

11.5.1 Agree unified smoking policy with HQ and Governor.

Result: Yes being done.

11.5.2 Set up team to evaluate and implement.

Result: Yes, done.

11.5.3 Implement new smoking policy.

Result: Yes, in place.

11.5.4 Review operation of new policy.

Result: Yes, ongoing.

**Target 15.1 Complete the roll-out of the information system to track prisoner participation in work and vocational training by end of 2006.**

15.1.1 Review various systems to access the suitability of Vocational Training Programmes at the prison.

Result: Yes in place with Head Teacher. (Kitchen is the only work training area).

**Target 15.2 Increase the number of available work-training courses with recognised certification levels by the end of 2007.**

15.2.1 Review various systems to access the suitability of Vocational Training programmes at the prison.

Result: Reviewed and hope to get cleaning and laundry areas involved.

**Target 16.1 Provide continuing support for appropriate services provided by prison visitors' centre.**

16.1.1 Put in place the support required.

Result: Yes, ongoing. The Vincent de Paul are involved with tea/coffee facility plus a creche facility.

**Target 19.2 Put in place practices and procedures on harassment, bullying and review periodically.**

19.2.1 Receive report from Operations in HQ.

Result: Yes. Report to hand.

19.2.2 Appoint internal team for implementation.

Result: Yes. Done and ongoing.

19.2.3 Implement guidelines & launch policy.

Result: Yes. Awaiting feedback from committee.

19.2.4 Review policy.

Result: Yes, at end of year.

**Target 22.2 Continue to develop management & staff partnership structures at central and local level.**

22.2.1 Continue partnership as per guidelines.

Result: Yes. Partnership and Labour Relations meetings regularly.

22.2.2 Seek further information from I.P.S. HR Directorate.

Result: As and if required.

**Target 25.2 Full roll-out of health & safety management system by first qr. 2007.**

25.2.1 18001 management system review.

Result: Awaiting the system.

25.2.2 Training & development review team.

Result: When the management system in place.

25.2.3 Introduce management systems locally.

Result: When applicable.

25.2.4 Evaluate the system.

Result: End of 2007.

25.2.5 Phased introduction of 18001.

Result: Yes at later stage.

## **Part B: Targets for 2006 (specific to Portlaoise Prison. )**

### **Strategy 1**

#### **Target 1.1 Construction of new high security cell block (to be completed by 2007)**

1.1.1 To have building completed by the end of 2007/early 2008.

Result: Yes on target.

1.1.2 Carry out staffing review of new accommodation when handover completed.

Result: Yes, in 2007.

1.1.4 Install electronic signs at all levels where prisoners congregate.

Result: Yes, is taken into account now when the erection of building is in progress.

1.1.5 Ensure smooth transition of prisoner from E block to the new C block.

Result: In 2007/2008.

#### **Target 1.2 Appointment of a Training Liaison Officer.**

1.2.1 Seek appointment of Training Liaison Officer.

Result: Yes, done.

1.2.2 Seek required training for the T.L.O.

Result: Yes, in training at present.

1.2.3 Request the T.L.O. to formulate training programmes.

Result: Yes, done.

1.2.4 Detailed & accurate records must be kept.

Result: Yes, when fully established.

1.2.5 All staff to receive training.

Result: Yes, when T.L.O. fully established.

**Target 1.3 Multidisciplinary programme for offending behaviour.**

1.3.1 Establish multidisciplinary committee.

Result: Yes, established.

1.3.2 Committee to identify programme requirement.

Result: Yes, done.

1.3.3 Personnel with appropriate training to deliver training.

Result: Sought experts, psychologist, counsellor, etc, but no response.

1.3.4 Prisoner participation must be encouraged.

Result: Yes, if programmes there for delivery.

**Target 1.4. Environmental Management Systems. (EMS)**

1.4.1 Establish environmental management & implementation by mid 2006.

Result: Yes, done.

1.4.2 Environmental implementation team to complete initial environmental impact assessment in line with agreed procedures.

Result: Yes, team assessing same at present.

1.4.3 Provide a set of prioritised environmental objectives & targets as identified under impact assessment procedure.

Result: Yes. Being done.

- 1.4.4 Pilot prison locations (3) EMS to be developed for first internal audit and for accredited external standard by mid 2007.

Result: Designated as a centre and audit due 2007.

- 1.4.5 Annual environmental review completed & EMS maintained to accredited standard by the end of 2008.

Result: Will do in 2008.

- 1.4.6 Provide relevant training for the nominated personnel & critical staff members.

Result: Yes. Ongoing (posts should be industrialised but not approved yet by HQ).

## **6. Tour of Inspection**

- 6.1 The tour of inspection to the cellular areas consisted of 2 separate wings or blocks known as “D” and “E” block. The “D” block is where the “ordinary” prisoners are located and are generally the “working” prisoners for the entire prison. They work at cooking, cleaning, painting, etc while the prisoners

located on “E” block generally perform no prison work except to keep their own individual landing clean.

The “D” block was the first area inspected and it consists of a 3-storey building, over 100 years in use, which had been condemned as being unsuitable for cellular accommodation a few years ago. In fact, on our last inspection in 2002 it was condemned at that stage but it is still in full use. It has all the hallmarks of an extremely old building, long past its lifespan. The cell doors are low, and very narrow as are the landings except the top floor landing which has flooring across the entire width of it. The stairs leading from one landing to the other are very narrow and the cell windows are also very small compared to the modern cell windows. They have no in-cell sanitation facilities and chamber pots are still in use. The sanitary/showering facilities on each landing are directly over each other. If there is an overflow of water, etc from the toilets or showers on the upper level landings, then such seeps through the floor to the lower landings causing dampness in the ceiling underneath resulting in water stains and the paint flaking off. It was evident that there had often been such leaks. All of the cell windows have had a frame attached to the walls on the inside of the cells and two sliding perspex shutters fixed inside the frame. So the prisoners can open or shut the shutters to adjust the air flow into the cell. Most of the glass within the old window frames is broken.

## 6.2 “D1” and “Strip Cell”

This ground-floor-level landing consists of six cells, one of which is a “strip” cell, which has a cement-base bed raised about 9 inches off the floor with a wooden surround. It has a mattress, a duvet cover and a chamber pot. The window was covered entirely with a perspex sheet with tiny holes to allow air pass through it. The staff said that it is very seldom used. There were no separate records retained there of its use except in the officers’ duty book in which there was a reference that the cell was occupied by a prisoner on the 5/11/06. There need to be records maintained of its specific use. Records outlining the name of the prisoner, who authorised his transfer to this cell, who was present when placing him in the cell, if there was a medical staff member present, who in authority visited him while there, time and date of his arrival, and time and date of his removal from the cell should be maintained. It is recommended that forms with details as outlined are put into use immediately. A record in book form should be maintained there and a copy of the form placed on the prisoner’s file in the general office.

The other cells were occupied by 3 prisoners who had been on other landings but transferred here because of disputes with other prisoners or because they were not accepted as part of the others’ organisation. All of the cells have a bed, mattress, duvet, TV., chamber pot, etc. The call bell when activated within the cell, displays a red light outside the cell door and also on a panel on the landing. The cells are quite small and kept reasonably tidy although most of them appeared to have too many materials within them to allow for neatness or tidiness. Most of them had posters,

magazine or paper cuttings attached to the cell walls as well as personal photographs or drapes.

There is a small gym on this landing which is equipped with modern gym fittings. There is a small kitchen area plus a laundry facility. The prisoners' meals are brought by bain-marie from the kitchen and served directly from the bain-marie to the prisoners occupying this landing. The landing, cells, etc were reasonably clean and tidy but again the overall surrounds reflect an extremely old building.

Each of the 3 landings has a class officers' office which is also used for "governor's parade" or meetings with chaplain, welfare officer, etc. The offices are fitted with a computer, desk, chair, as well as record books, report books plus other materials for the management of the landing.

### 6.3 "D2"

This landing consists of 14 cells, and 18 prisoners were occupying them on the day of the inspection. The cells are identical to those described on D1 landing as is the class officers' office. The toilets and shower area are at the end of the landing.

The landing has a stainless steel fitted food servery area with fridge, counters with shelving underneath them, microwave oven, toaster, etc. The officers with the assistance of a few prisoners serve the meals to the prisoners from this area. The bread, tea bags, sugar, milk, breakfast cereals,

jams, sauces, etc, are stored within the servery area and served out as required.

The showers have stainless steel divides between each one and the area also has 3 wash-hand basins. The floor of the shower area is tiled. The wash area has 3 stainless steel sinks and also a storage facility for vacuum cleaners, polishers, bins, (refuse) etc. There are 2 slop hoppers at the end of the landing, one of which was constantly flushing. The area is tiled and was reasonably clean. One set of toilets at the end of the landing was most unhygienic and in need of cleaning. The cells were reasonably clean. Very few of the bedclothes were folded or beds "made up". The landing walkways were clean and the walls painted but they could do with a repainting. The unclean toilets should be brought up to an acceptable standard.

#### 6.4 "D3"

There were 16 prisoners occupying 14 cells on this landing. The cells, class office, toilets/shower areas and food servery area are identical to those already described on D2. The only difference on this landing is that the walkway extends across the entire width of the landing and there are roof windows overhead which provide the landing with much greater natural light and is brighter as a result. The landing has been freshly painted, potted flower plants are placed at intervals along the landing and assembled jigsaws in frames are hanging on the walls, so it gives a much better appearance than either of the other two landings. The toilets, wash areas,

shower areas with tiled floors and walls, were all reasonably clean and tidy. The cells were also tidy with the usual posters, photographs, newspaper cuttings, etc attached to the walls. While it is an old building, this landing is an example of how it can be maintained to a reasonably good standard of hygiene and maintenance despite its age.

### 6.5 *“E” Block*

The “E” block is much larger than “D” block with 38 cells on each of the four landings. Some of the cells have been changed or converted for different use such as laundry facility, classrooms, craft shop, etc. Each of the landings operate independently of each other and generally the prisoners don’t mix with each other. Consequently services such as kitchens, laundries, classrooms, craft shops, library, etc are duplicated throughout the entire block. Three of the landings house prisoners who allege they belong to subversive organisations, (on one of the landings there are prisoners of 2 different organisations) while the ground-floor landing contains “ordinary” prisoners some of whom are classified as high security. The “ordinary” prisoners have the same facilities on their landing as the others have on E2, E3 + E4 with their kitchen, gym, library, workshop, classroom, etc. For the areas that are shared such as the exercise yards or some gyms, etc, the times of their use are scheduled and each group know when these facilities are available to them. Each of the landings is almost identically laid out with kitchens, classrooms, gyms, craft shops, and servery areas at one end of the landing while the toilets, showers, washrooms are at the opposite end of the landing. Like the “D” block, the toilets, showers, wash areas are directly over

each other and a spillage on the top floors may seep through the floor and ceiling of the area underneath. There is evidence that this happens at times with stains and paint flaking off the ceilings, but not as bad as the “D” block. The shower, toilet, wash areas have tiled floors and the walls are covered with white rock material. So overall the sanitary/wash/shower areas of the 4 landings are maintained at a satisfactory level of hygiene. Infact some were highly maintained for an old building.

#### 6.6 E1

This landing had 25 prisoners on the day of inspection. It has a food servery area just off the landing. It also has a kitchen with 12 hotplates, presses, 2 milk containers, pots, pans and boiling water (Burca boiler) facility. The floor is covered with lino and the walls tiled ½ way up. There is a laundry with 2 washing machines, 2 drying machines, shelving with baskets for clothing and an ironing board. There are two other cells being converted for another laundry at present. There are also classrooms and a small library on this landing. If a particular book is sought which is not in stock on this landing, it can be obtained from the main library. The cells were reasonably tidy but again a lot of them appeared cluttered with the amount of belongings within them. None of the cells inspected had the beds “made up”. They looked as if the inmates were just after getting out of bed.

Just off E1 landing there is a fully fitted gym which is divided in two sections. The first section has a stepper, 2 exercise bicycles, a treadmill and 2 rowers. Between the 1st and 2nd section there is an office area for the staff. In the

other section there is a pec deck machine, leg extension machine, leg curve machine, treadmill, shoulder press machine, leg press machine, 4 weight lifting benches, free weights and dumb-bells.

The gym operates with 4 gym officer instructors plus a P.E. teacher. It is open Monday to Friday and prisoners taking part in it do not have to have medical clearance prior to commencing gym work in it. The officers were in situ at the time of inspection but no prisoners. They were asked as to where the prisoners were to which they responded, "They haven't arrived yet." It appears to be up to the prisoners to come to the gym whenever they feel like it.

#### 6.7 E2

There were 13 prisoners on this landing and all in single cells, similar to the other landings throughout the block. This landing has the same facilities as the others such as food servery area, 2 small classrooms, laundry facility with 4 washers and 5 dryers, craft shop, large classroom, fully fitted gym with modern equipment. The opposite end of the landing has the toilets, w.h.b's, slop hoppers, showers, etc. The walls of these areas were covered with white rock material, and there were stainless steel divides between the shower cubicles. All of the areas were clean and tidy. Paint was flaking off the ceiling as a result of dampness from the floor above or from the steam off the showers.

While inspecting this landing a complaint was received from prisoners that

pigeons were nesting in empty cells and on checking cell 18, there were young pigeons in a nest between the internal frame and the outer window. There was evidence of the pigeons having been inside the cell as well as at the window. The cell was unoccupied.

#### 6.8 E3

This landing contained 18 prisoners and again all in single cells. It is laid out similar to E2 with a servery at entrance (the food comes from the kitchen in bain-maries and delivered via lift). It has a craft shop and there was a woodwork teacher giving instructions, a domestic science room with a teacher giving instructions on preparing cakes. An aerobics class was in another room and a fully fitted gym. A laundry with 2 washers and 2 dryers which has shelving attached to the wall and washing powder/ liquids stored there. The opposite end of the landing had the same sanitary/shower facilities as described on E2. There is a staff ladies and gents toilet just off the landing. There is a room with 2 telephones on the desk and a chair at both sides of the desk. The phones are for the prisoners' use and when they request to make a call the officer dials the number and asks the person if they are willing to receive a call from this prisoner. If agreeable, the prisoner is then given the phone and the officer listens to the call via the 2nd phone. There are also class officers' offices on each of the landings which are fitted with a computer, desk, chair, etc. The officers can get into the "Pris system" on the computer but the Inspectorate got the impression that it is seldom used. The landing, toilet/shower/wash areas, etc were clean and tidy .

## 6.9 *E4*

There were 17 prisoners on this landing and again it is similar to E3 with the servery area at the entrance. It also has 4 classrooms, craft shop, a recreation hall which is also used at times for art/painting, fully fitted gym, kitchen, laundry - some of the washers and dryers are not working and in need of repair. There are toilets off the gym and off the large recreation hall which were clean. The opposite end of the landing contain the toilets, showers, washrooms, slop hopper areas, all of which were clean and tidy. The ceiling in the shower area is in need of repainting.

## 6.10 *Library*

There is quite a large library on E4 landing which is used by prisoners from E2, E3 + E4 landings. Its hours of opening are 10.00 am - 12.15 pm, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm and 5.15 pm - 7.15 pm. It is open 7 days per week. It supplies 2 national newspapers every day free of charge and there are limited reading facilities within it, although 3-4 prisoners were reading there at the time of inspection. They have a stock of over 2,000 books as well as a selection of videos, DVD's and a photocopying service. They have law books and if someone requests same, they photocopy the section that they request or at times they may give them the book. Generally they have very little damage done to the books especially from the prisoners on "E" block. They are under the auspices of the Prison Libraries/ Dublin City Library and get a change of books every 3-4 months. The books are well displayed on shelving around the walls and they have a number of computers on desk tops in the centre of the floor as well as the reading facility. They have 2

free-standing stands filled with information leaflets on prison info, education, and health matters. The stock and lending transactions are on computer and the officer stated that it is well used with approx 70% of the prisoners using some aspects of it.

#### *6.11 Overall impression of E Block*

The "E" block still has prisoners' clothing hanging from the railings and footwear on the landings which gives an overall impression of untidiness. Management informed the Inspectorate previously that lockers were being provided to store such items but apparently they are not used. The wire mesh separating each floor is quite dusty and could be improved with cleaning. The control or prevention of the pigeons from the prison's ledges would also improve the overall hygiene as they are resting on window sills, roofs, and cables and leaving their droppings on walkways, exercise yards etc.

#### *6.12 Exercise Yards*

There are two exercise yards and a 3rd yard and is quite small with no toilet facilities within it. The front compound yard is reasonably large with a row of seating along one side of it. The seating is attached to cement supports, some of which are broken. There is a small sheltered area in one corner where prisoners can sit in inclement weather. There are two toilets, 2 wash-hand basins and 2 hand dryers within the toilet block. They were reasonably clean and tidy but neither hand dryer was working. The yard is surfaced with tarmacadam-type material.

The second exercise yard is larger than the other one described above. It has no seating facility for the prisoners nor any shelter if it is raining. Its surface is tarmacadam and it is big enough to play a 5-a-side football match. The yard contains a toilet, wash-hand basin, urinal and hand dryer. The sanitary fittings are of stainless steel material and are fairly clean but could be improved. There were 2-3 plastic chairs in the yard as well as a number of footballs in a drainage gully. There were a lot of pigeon droppings along the cell side of the yard as well as pigeon down/feathers. This section of the yard was in need of sweeping and cleaning.

#### *6.13 Chief Officers' Office*

This office is shared by 3 chief officers. It is a quite large office, clean and tidy for a working office.

#### *6.14 Kitchen*

The kitchen is managed by an industrial supervising officer , 6 assistant industrial supervising officers and 14 prisoners. The staff operate a shift back-to-back roster and when one group is off duty they are replaced with the others. So there is a continuity of staff. All of the staff and prisoners were wearing whites with caps and special shoes. The floor and walls are tiled and all of the equipment is of stainless steel material. The cooking area is an "island" design with all of the cookers, fryers, boilers in the centre of the floor and the worktops, sinks, preparation areas, around the walls. The kitchen is divided into various sections such as the salad/fruit area, raw meat

section, vegetable preparation section, pastry area, raw fish area and cooked meat section. A bay or outlet off the kitchen is the wash area with stainless steel sinks and high pressure water hoses. Just off this area is the storage facility for the bain maries where the meals are placed, wheeled to the nearby lift and distributed to the servery areas on each landing. The meals are plated for the “D” block prisoners and “bulk” served in “E” block. The kitchen staff serve out the meals on “E1”. The equipment is in the process of being replaced with a more modern design and this replacement is due to be finalised in the next 6 months. The floor has already been retiled with non-slip tiles. Areas off the main cooking area contain fridges, cold rooms, fridge freezers, walk-in freezer and dry food stores. The raw food is first delivered to the stores which are situated away from the kitchen area and then delivered in the prison’s refrigerated vans from there to the kitchen. The officer in charge stated that he knows the source of all the vegetables and meat supplied and that they carry out spot checks on them in their premises from time to time.

The kitchen has achieved the “Q” mark award from Excellence Ireland for the past 4 years and they have the certificates proudly displayed on the window of their office. They operate the national 28-day cycle menu as well as the vegetarian one. They run a cooking programme (training course) every Monday night in conjunction with the prisons’ education section on basic cooking and hope to achieve the Fetac/Leonardo standard of certification from this training.

It appeared to be a well organised, good working kitchen and with everyone therein doing his own particular task. Like all prison kitchens, some were busy preparing the next meal while others were washing and cleaning after the last meal. The Inspectorate team sampled the midday meal each day of the inspection and found it to be well presented, hot and very tasty. So good credit to all concerned.

#### 6.15 *Basement*

There were 5 prisoners housed here in 5 single cells. They had been located on various landings in “E” block but owing to disputes with other prisoners or owing to not being accepted by “their” organisation they were transferred to this location. It is a self-contained area with a small kitchen which contained a microwave oven, a hotplate holder, toaster, pots, pans, etc. Just off this area there is a fridge and a fridge freezer. Another annex leads to a shower, a toilet, w.h.b. and a slop hopper, all of which were clean and tidy. There is a very small mesh-covered exercise yard just off the area. There is a very small class officer’s office at the entrance which contains records, telephone, etc but no computer. This is a very confined area under ground level but kept well by those occupying it despite the fact that it is so old and underground.

#### 6.16 *Main Gate*

The old main gate entrance has been replaced with a new modern entrance. The officers’ central station/observation area has a vehicular entrance on

one side and a pedestrian entrance on the opposite side and is designed with large horseshoe-shaped windows which allow great vision to see pedestrians or vehicles approaching the gate area. Are also in operation. The gate officers' control room is quite large, bright, spacious and a wonderful improvement on the old gate lock which had its many doors and gates to be operated manually.

#### *6.17 Console Control Room*

The console control room is fitted with all modern security technology and observed constantly by staff working therein. It is a fresh new building and a pleasant area to work even though the staff were extremely busy working there.

#### *6.18 Staff locker room and other new facilities.*

The staff have been provided with refurbished staff locker rooms and a gym which is fully equipped with modern gym equipment in a large airy space with 5 big windows which allow in plenty of light. There are also offices within the same area. The male staff have two fully fitted locker rooms with lockers all along the walls as well as free-standing in aisles down the centre of the floors. There are 4 showers, 3 toilets 4 w.h.b. and a hand dryer in each of them. There is seating fixed to the front of the lockers. The male locker rooms, shower and toilet areas were clean and tidy. In fact a lady was in the process of cleaning the area at the time of inspection.

### 6.19 *Visitors' waiting room*

This waiting room is also part of the new gate lock building and is located adjacent to the main gate entrance. It is bright and cheerful with seating for 60 people, with the chairs placed around a number of small round tables. There is a visitors' tea station/serving hatch area which is operated by an employee of Campbell's catering, and supplies tea, coffee, biscuits, etc. There is an area in the corner of the room divided off with a low partition in which children can play. There are a few toys in it but it looks sparse and there is no qualified childcare person there to look after the children. The children can go into it and play on their own with the few toys, story books/paint books that are provided. It could be much improved.

The visitors' entrance corridor to the waiting room has a reception officer in an office and the officer takes the names of the visitors, checks their I.D (photograph) and the prisoner they wish to visit. (The visitors' names, address and photographs are generally forwarded by post to the prison prior to the day of the visit.) The officer then informs the A.C.O. in charge of visits within the prison of the visitor and whom they wish to visit. The ACO then arranges for the prisoner to be collected and brought to the visiting room within the prison. The visitor is given an admission document and then proceeds to the main gate to gain entry to the prison. The entrance corridor to the waiting room has also got a number of lockers in which the visitors must place their handbags, mobile phones, etc. They are not allowed bring anything into the prison with them. The officer issues the visitor a key for a locker and the visitor keeps that key with them during the visit. They return it

to the officer when they remove their belongings from the locker at the end of the visit. The officer in the reception office also accepts clothing, runners, footwear, magazines, newspapers, money etc on behalf of prisoners. All such clothing, footwear etc is passed through an X-ray machine before being sent into the prison . The visitors on entering the prison at the main front gate are directed into a search room where they receive a “rub - down” search. If a baby is being brought on the visit, the baby’s nappy is checked. The visitors are then checked over with two different types of detectors and if nothing is found, they proceed to the next room where their shoes/footwear are removed and placed in an X-ray machine. They then pass through a metal detector and if clear they are then escorted to the visiting area.

#### *6.20 Censor Office*

The censor office was being operated by two officers on the day of inspection and all of their records are on computer. No book or ledger records were maintained. They stated that they receive about an average of 100 letters incoming per day and about 60 letters per day outgoing. They often receive money/postal orders in the post which have to be processed through the general office where they receive a receipt for same. The office was bright and cheerful and had a new look about it. There was no backlog of letters either coming in or going out and they were working on a small number of letters which were part of that day’s transactions.

#### *6.21 Staff search room*

This area is a wonderful improvement on the old facilities. Every member of the prison staff from Governor to officer, all other personnel such as

teachers, doctor, chaplain, contractors, etc are searched on entering and leaving the prison. All briefcases, wallets, etc are also searched and mobile phones, keys etc are contained in a safe or wall locker in the search room and collected on exiting. Hand-held detectors are also used in the staff search room.

#### *6.22 Refurbishment of old buildings/staff facilities*

Some of the old delapidated buildings have been refurbished and renovated to a high standard some of which are for staff facilities. They consist of meeting rooms, small kitchen fitted with microwave oven, cooker, presses, worktop, table and chairs. There are two TV/restrooms with armchairs. The areas are painted in a bright colour and all of the walls have been replastered. It is kept clean and tidy and is a comfortable amenity for staff which is long overdue.

There is a 2-storey portakabin building which in its ground floor level contains a staff snooker room with arm-chairs around the walls. There is a set of toilets and wash-hand basins off same which were clean and tidy. Upstairs on the 1st floor there is a TV room with small tables and several armchairs. Just off this room there is a small kitchen area which is fitted with a Burco boiler, microwave, sink unit, work top and a few presses. The whole area was clean and tidy.

#### *6.23 Waste Management Depot Building*

These new building facilities are shared by both the Midlands and Portlaoise prisons. Previous to its operation, all waste materials were placed in several

skips and disposed of in a landfill site. Now everything is recycled, even the wet waste such as kitchen offal, cooking oils, etc which goes for biogas production. The waste is segregated at source, on the landings, kitchen, canteens, etc, is then collected and it is further segregated by the collecting workers. Old prisoners' clothing, old uniforms (with insignias and buttons removed) are also passed on to the Enable Ireland Company who supply the Third World countries with same. The W.E.E. Regulations (waste electronic equipment) are fully complied with as bulbs, fluorescent tubes, batteries, white electrical goods, plastics, are all separated and disposed of in accordance with the regulations. Cardboard, papers and dry reusables are packed, baled in bundles and forwarded to Oxigen waste company for recycling. The heating system in the new waste management building is ECO friendly and is fitted with a pellet burner.

The upstairs section of the building has a prisoners' training room, a meeting room, showering facilities for both prisoners and staff, a restroom and a tea-making facility. The management and education staff are considering operating a Fetac course for the prisoners involved in this work. They could reach certification level in certain aspects of waste management which may be of benefit to them on release for employment in this type of work.

#### 6.24 *Visiting Boxes*

The visiting facilities are in dilapidated Portokabins with a table and chairs in each of the cubicles for the "E" block prisoners. The "D" block prisoners

have a bench-type table with a divide about 9 inches high down the centre, Chairs are on both sides of the counter and can accommodate 4 visitors at a time. Most of the cubicles have heaters installed but a lot of the windows are poorly fitting resulting in the heat escaping. Some of the roofs of the Portokabins are leaking.

The professional visiting area consists of a table with a number of chairs in a cubicle within the same row of Portakabins. The staff can observe the professional visit through a perspex sheet in the door from a corridor outside the door but cannot hear the conversation.

#### 6.25 *“Closed-in” visiting box*

There is one “special” visiting box which is closed off with perspex sheeting from tabletop to ceiling and there is no physical contact between the prisoner and the visitor. There are holes in a grid in the table-top to allow conversation through. The officer stated that this particular visiting box is very seldom used. The officer supervising this box is enclosed in a small area at the end of the room and can observe both the prisoner and the visitor from that location. The space for the officer to observe the visit is extremely small and cramped.

#### 6.26 *Prisoners’ “visiting box” search room*

All prisoners going to and coming off visits are searched in a small room provided for this purpose which is located at the corner of “D” wing. The

prisoners have to remove their shoes which are put through a scanning machine, they receive a rub-down search and then pass through a “walk through” scanner. The same procedure applies when coming off their visits before being escorted back into the cell block.

*6.27 Portakabin for the supply of tea/coffee on visits*

There is a Portakabin building adjacent to the visiting Portakabins which has a Burco boiler facility for boiling water, tea bags, coffee, milk, sugar, plastic cups and spoons. The prisoners if they so wish, can go into this Portokabin before the visit, obtain tea/coffee etc for visitors and themselves and bring it into the visiting area. The officer supervising the visit takes a note of the tea/coffee used and the cost of same is deducted from the prisoner’s account. The prisoners can also purchase biscuits, cakes, chocolates, sweets, crisps, etc from the tuck shop while on the visit and share the “goodies” with their visitors. They request the officer supervising the visit to purchase these items for them. The officer places the order in the tuck shop, collects the items and returns them to the prisoner in the visiting area. He signs for the goods and the signed document is returned to the tuck shop where the costs are deducted from the prisoner’s account.

*6.28 New visiting facilities ground floor level of education area.*

There are 6 fully furnished visiting rooms in a new Portakabin building in the education section of the prison. They are furnished with a round table and 4

chairs in each of the rooms and are fitted with C.C.T.V. cameras. One of the rooms is intended as a professional visiting facility. The rooms are very comfortable, they are freshly painted and of a much higher standard of visiting facilities than are being used at present. Apparently these rooms were intended for use by the E1 prisoners but their spokespersons refused to allow them be used as they allege they are smaller than they have at present. So they are idle, finished to a very comfortable standard and the prisoners are still using the dilapidated Portakabins with the roof leaking in some of them. They also have a toilet facility which the others don't have and it appears ridiculous that these new facilities are not being used.

#### *6.29 Staff toilet facility in entrance yard*

This facility consists of 2 toilets, 1 urinal, 2 wash-hand basins and 2 hand dryers. The floors are tiled and the walls painted. The toilets were in need of cleaning and there was a foul smell from within the area. Management should have these facilities brought up to an acceptable level of hygiene and the walls repainted.

#### *6.30 Staff toilet facilities in the staff canteen*

There are 3 toilets, 2 urinals, 3 wash-hand basins and 2 hand dryers in the male staffs' toilet area of the canteen. The floors and walls are tiled and they are maintained at a reasonably good level of hygiene but could be kept tidier as there were papers on the floor.

#### *6.31 Tuck Shop*

The tuck shop is located in a Portakabin and there were two officers operating same at time of inspection. They carry the following stock for sale:- tobacco, cigarettes, biscuits, sweets, minerals, crisps, and cigarette papers. The staff can purchase items in the shop but these sales are accounted for separately. The officers i/c receive a printout of the prisoners' cash and gratuity accounts each morning from the general office and the "D" division prisoners' accounts are deducted daily while the "E" block prisoners' accounts are deducted weekly. The tuck shop's computerised till is not linked to the computer with the prisoners' account records in the general office. This results in some duplication of work as well as not having an up-to-date record of "E" prisoners' accounts in the general office as they are only "written off" weekly.

The tuck shop staff issue each landing each afternoon with books in sheet form which outline all the items the prisoners can purchase. These sheets are in duplicate. The prisoners make out their required orders on these sheets which are collected by the tuck shop staff the following morning. The staff then collate the orders and a list is formed for the local supermarket. (about 80% of the daily orders are not carried in stock in the tuck shop). They then go to the supermarket and collect the goods ordered. (This may also include going to the newsagent, florist, etc) The supermarket issue a detailed receipt of all goods purchased and the price charged for same. The staff then issue the prisoners with their orders with each item priced and the total costs signed off. They can purchase meat (fresh and cold), tinned fish, fresh fish portions, fruit, stationery, etc in addition to the items available from

the tuck shop. The receipt issued from the tuck shop till is attached to each of the prisoners' orders in "D" block order book and left into the general office daily to be written off their account. There is a mark-up price of 10% for goods purchased in the supermarket while the goods purchased directly from the tuck shop are sold at the recommended retail price. (The order books issued each p.m. display the prices of the items.)

The Portakabins from where the staff operate the tuck shop are quite dilapidated, in fact in one area there is a flooring problem. There is an urgent need to have them replaced or the shop relocated to a more solidly structured building.

#### 6.32 *General Office and Personnel Office*

The general office deals with prisoners' cash, gratuity, files warrants, appointments, discharges, court appearances, bails, etc. It is a normal working office. The personnel office deals with all staff matters i.e files, travel and subsistence, increments, promotions, transfer request, sick leave. There were 7 staff seeking transfers out of the prison and we were informed that it was mostly for geographic reasons relating as to where they live. The Inspectorate were informed that all of the phone calls and stamps for prisoners' letters are paid for by the State. It is a normal working office with the usual phones, computers, etc being operated by the staff present.

**7. Health & Safety (especially Fire aspects of Health and Safety)**

7.1 The Inspectorate met the senior staff with responsibilities for health and safety matters in the prison. We also met the staff's representative Health and Safety Officer. The management staff produced the fire plans for the prison and also the "fire register" in which is recorded the checks and

services carried out to the emergency equipment and fittings by both local trades staff and outside contractors.

7.2 There is a double mains ring water supply surrounding the prison which has 7.2 bar pressure on same. The domestic supply line has much less pressure (3.2). There are 15 hydrants attached to the mains supply and there is a storage tank facility which holds 350,000 gallons for use in an emergency situation. The supply is attached to the local town council's water mains. There are wet risers within the prison which reach to the furthest height required on each landing. The fire plans outline the location of the hydrants and the covers of them are painted yellow with an "H" sign close by so they are easily recognisable. There are 230 hand-held fire extinguishers distributed at strategic locations throughout the prison. The officers are issued with a pocket-size booklet outlining their areas of responsibilities while on their various posts. This booklet also outlines a section of the fire plan applicable to the particular post and what to do in the case of discovering a fire within their area of responsibilities. This also includes any "outside" people such as contractors, etc who may be working in that area. There is provision for additional hydrants on the mains around the new "C" block being erected at present.

There are emergency break-glass units installed throughout the prison which can be used for both fire or emergency/security purposes. The general alarms are located in the control room and if activated can sound throughout the prison and indeed the general surrounding areas. There are locations outlined under each beacon identifying the area the beacon represents.

There are also emergency exits from all of the other areas occupied such as school, offices, administration areas, stores etc. There are assembly point notices displayed in various areas and exercise yards.

7.3 The “E” block is fitted with a smoke extraction system and a clean air replacement unit. It works very satisfactorily and has a tremendous “draw out - suck in air” facility. This extraction system is checked weekly by the local trades staff. There is no smoke extraction system installed in the “D” block and this was highlighted in our last inspection report. If this wing fills with smoke the emergency exit doors are opened to allow it out. The B.A. (breathing apparatus) equipment is checked and maintained by the local trades staff every fortnight while an outside contract company services them quarterly. The last service was carried out on the 20/7/06. There is also a compressor available to replace the empty cartridges.

7.4 The electric lighting (wiring) has been replaced in all of the cells and the prison is fitted with emergency lighting throughout. The emergency lighting has battery back-up and the prison is fitted with 3 emergency generators. The electrical fittings that are accessible to prisoners are vandal-proof. The entire electrical emergency equipment is contracted to be serviced by an outside contractor every quarter and the last such service is recorded as having taken place on 28/9/06. There are fire-proof doors with magnetic fittings installed in the new building at the gate lock area and these are connected to the central control panel systems. They close automatically in the event of fire. There are heat and smoke detection units installed

throughout the prison which are attached to local panels and also to the central control system in the control room.

- 7.5 The fire brigade personnel come into the prison on familiarisation tours quite often and the last recording of such visit was June 2006. They have brought in their largest fire tender to ensure it can reach all areas of the prison in the event of an emergency. Furthermore, if there are any changes to buildings, the local fire officer is informed and inspects same. Local management state that they have a good rapport with the local fire service and find them very co-operative and helpful.

Four fire-drill evacuation exercises took place at the prison in the past 18 months. On the 12/4/05 "E" block was evacuated (which included 8 teaching staff who were teaching in the classrooms on the landings at the time) at 11.05 a.m - 11.12 am. There were 64 prisoners involved, 11 staff plus the 8 teachers. On the 9/11/05 the "D" block was evacuated in which there were 6 staff and 18 prisoners involved. It commenced at 11.17 am and was completed at 11.30 am. The stores staff and trades officers areas were also evacuated but the records for this evacuation are held in the Midlands Prison as almost all of the staff are attached to that prison. The "E" block was evacuated on the 13/10/06 at 11.00 am. There were 68 prisoners and 14 staff involved. It took 3 minutes 45 seconds to have the block evacuated. During this exercise 3 prisoners remained in their cells due to their medical condition. Staff were informed of their situation and were detailed to carry them out by mechanical aids (stretcher and medical chair) but this was not

executed owing to their ill health. The stretcher and chair were brought to the cell doors.

7.6 No fire-drill evacuations have taken place in the office/administration areas, the classrooms outside of the cell block areas or of the visiting box areas. These areas should have such exercises carried out. The time involved in the exercises that were carried out appears long and should be improved on. Praise is due for organising the evacuations as “practice makes perfect”.

7.8 The “D” block is still a concern to the Inspectorate with no smoke extraction system installed and the difficulty in operating a stretcher in such narrow landings. The manoeuvring of a stretcher from the top floor landings down narrow winding stairs with sharp bends makes the exercise extremely hazardous as well as compromising the safety of the person on the stretcher. The sooner this block is unoccupied from a health and safety point of view the better.

7.9 *Meeting with the Staff Health and Safety Representative*

The Inspectorate had a meeting with the staff Health and Safety Representative who stated that health and safety matters generally were quite good. However, in the past 12 months there was a general slow-down in getting things done especially on the maintenance/repair side and that was due to staff reduction. The trades staff are not available to do the work they previously did and this has a knock-on effect on health and safety issues. If a new, even small, job needs to be done now, it may require management to

get an outside contractor to do it. Previously the local trades officers did it but now it takes so much longer.

- 7.10 He outlined the great co-operation he gets from management and that management meet the demands/requests put to them as soon as possible if it is within their remit to grant same.

## **8. Meeting with various groups and individuals**

### *8.1 Meeting with the Chaplain*

The Inspector met the R.C. chaplain who is full-time attached to the prison.

He is a few years working in this prison. He stated that he is in regular

contact with prison management and attends the weekly meeting of heads of service which is chaired by the Governor.

He provides one Mass at 11.30 am each Sunday, and the different categories of prisoners are willing to accept each other's company in the one room for the duration of the Holy Service. The attendance generally would be low. Confessions are heard on request and it's an individual arrangement between himself and the penitent. Regarding civilian support, the St. Philip Neri group visit prisoners in the "D" block only.

The chaplain feels that relationships with families is the key to success in dealing with prisoners but he would never visit a prisoner's home without getting prior permission to do so from the prisoner.

He pointed out that there was no psychologist attached to the prison and he felt that there was an urgent need for one. He outlined that A.A. group attend the prison but there is no N.A. group. There is a need for drug-free areas within the prison. The whole question of imprisoning people with a medical condition such as drug addiction was discussed and it was felt that prison is an improper place to hold such people.

Other matters raised related to the release of long-sentence prisoners and the fact that there is no process or structure to release. The frustrations that can arise with the legal system in relation to long sentences, the decision on security ratings and whether such ratings are reviewed in accordance with

the amount of sentence served, the weighing of risks, etc all lead to frustration and a sense of hopelessness.

The medical services for prisoners especially their psychiatric needs was also mentioned. The need for a structured pre-release programme, help for drug addicts and the provision of a drug-free prison (if such is possible) were also raised. The chaplain outlined that he is to be provided with a chapel in the new "C" block being built at present. It will be an area off a large hall which will be closed off with shutters when not in use for church services. This will be welcomed.

## 8.2 *Meeting with "Heads of Functions"*

The Inspector and his special adviser met the "heads of function" (senior staff responsible for the operation of the various sections of the prison). The staff include the Deputy and Assistant Governors, the Chief Officer, the Clerks grade I, Chief Trades Officer, Officers responsible for detail duties/rosters, the Officer responsible for staff training and the Officer with responsibilities for the kitchen and the prisoner training therein.

The Inspector welcomed them to the meeting and gave a run-down on his own role as prisons' inspector. He wishes, and has constantly requested, to be made statutory. He has been promised that he will be but he will just have to wait and see.

Each member of the group spoke of their particular areas of responsibilities and various issues were discussed arising from their presentation. The main items raised were as follows:

(a) The unhygienic condition of the staff toilets in the entrance yard to the prison. The meeting was informed that these toilets were no longer the main toilet facility for staff as the toilets in the staff canteen are now back in use. The canteen toilets had tiles off the walls and a contractor (outside) had been working there, replacing them, so while that work was taking place, the toilets were out of use for staff, consequently the toilets in the yard were then being fully used. There are also perfectly clean new toilets for staff in the prefab and over the old gate refurbished area. They said that the toilets in the yard are seldom used with all of these additional facilities now available to staff. However, it did not remove the fact that when the toilets were inspected they were filthy and smelly.

(b) The fact that there are no toilet facilities for visitors in the visiting area and that if a child's nappy has to be changed, the visitor has to bring the child back out to the waiting area and change there. On return they must pass through all the searching and security procedures which they already had passed on their way to the visit when they first entered.

(c) Furthermore the trades are linked in theory with the Midlands Prison but in practice this is not working as there is no co-operation between the two prisons. They are separate institutions but on paper they are all one. It does not make sense that perhaps, for example, an outside electrician could be

escorted by a trades officer (who is a qualified electrician) and he is standing there watching the contractor working at a job that the officer himself is qualified and able to do.

It was said that the annualised hours needed time to settle in. There are also industrial relations issues in regard to environmental allowance payments which the Portlaoise staff receive but for which Midlands staff don't qualify. So where there is a crossover of staff to do work in either prison, it raises demarcation issues which apparently have not been solved. This same problem arises with stores staff where staff from the two prisons are working in the one area.

(d) It was stated that the annualised hours were working well and that they were living within their budget. There were problem areas especially the visiting box supervision on Saturdays as this was the busiest day on visits. They were trying to reduce the number of visits on Saturdays and to spread them out over the week but this plan has been meeting opposition from the prisoners. There is also a problem at times with providing a driver to collect and deliver goods from and to the stores which is outside of the main prison complex.

There were discussions on staff training and an outline of training that was going to take place over the coming year. Various modules of proposed training were explained. These figures appear quite high for the number of staff attached to the prison.

The staff printout of payments, time recording, allowances, etc is checked in the detail office on its receipt from the financial services centre in Killarney who issue the pay cheques. Originally these checks were carried in the prison's personnel office.

Regarding multidisciplinary meetings, it was stated that with the introduction of the new working hours, it is almost impossible to get all of the personnel involved in such meetings together on the same day or at the same time.

This concluded the meeting and the Inspector thanked them for their attendance and their full contribution to the discussions.

### 8.3 *Meeting with the Visiting Committee*

The Inspector met the entire prison Visiting Committee and the Clerk who acts as their secretary on the 7th November. The new chairman of the VC outlined their concern. The Inspector had the Visiting Committee annual report of 2004 but did not have the one for 2005. He was then provided with the 2005 annual report and also the Portlaoise Prison Education Unit 2005 annual report. The Inspector was informed that there had been a suicide on 21st October 2005. No inquest has yet been concluded. This is a worrying fact and requires an explanation.

The Inspector was distressed to hear that not one prisoner had asked to see the Visiting Committee during the last year, a fact that speaks volumes. The

V.C. is seen as irrelevant. The Inspector then referred to the draft Prisons Bill providing appeals from Governors and also the three ghastly sections which are not replaced. It's a shocking sinister development.

The Committee have been very critical about the general conditions which prevail in the prison. The lack of in-cell sanitation especially where more than one prisoner shares a cell with another is degrading. "D" block which was condemned as being unfit to house prisoners over 40 years ago is still being used for that purpose. The committee have been recommending for years that it be closed down with immediate effect.

They are pleased that the new "C" block is being erected and that it should be completed within 18 months.

They agreed that a psychologist was urgently needed for the prison. There had been a Dr. Duffy who provided an excellent service but he has left the Prison Service. They also feel that there should be an addiction counsellor. In the opinion of the Inspector these are very important and urgent matters requiring immediate response as previously expressed.

Another point of considerable concern was the question of compassionate leave. If a prisoner suffered a bereavement or if there was a family event such as a wedding or a christening, the Governor has no power to grant temporary release, so the request is sent up to the "Minister". Frequently there is no reply or there is a unconscionable delay in providing a reply. The

Inspector pointed out that Portlaoise was a particular type of prison where there are subversives and very dangerous big-time criminals. However, there is no doubt that there should be a clear line of command and there should be one person somewhere who can give an instant decision. The obvious person seems to be the Governor. A Governor should be allowed to govern. However, if it has to be somebody in the Prison Service Headquarters or in the Minister's Department, he or she should be clearly identified. There should also be a substitute available in case the person with this power of decision is not readily available.

Two members of the committee visit some days other than the monthly meeting and are available to prisoners to discuss any grievances or points they may have. However, as already explained the perception of the power (or lack of it) of the Visiting Committee does not encourage the prisoners to use what should be and could be the most useful safety valve and protector of human rights.

The committee expressed great support and praise for the education unit despite the existing poor classrooms which are available. The education staff work in very difficult and very scattered classrooms but the committee strongly commends the work of the VEC. The courses are varied and the prison population here make full use of them. The committee state that great credit is due to the teaching staff who work in such difficult circumstances.

They also strongly commend the kitchen in Portlaoise Prison. They frequently sample the food and have received no complaints from prisoners in recent years. They express the hope that the Catholic chaplain will have a designated area in which he can conduct his services which is presently lacking as pointed out in the last full inspection. The committee are pleased with the new full-time doctor and also with the dentist, nurses and the medical orderlies.

A member of the Visiting Committee who is a horticulturist pointed out that at one time Portlaoise had a farm when it was a penal institution for people doing penal servitude. He would like if some horticultural work could be carried out as it was here previously. However, the Inspector said that in the best tradition of the Prison Service now, whenever there is a space one builds on it or at least puts a Portakabin on it. There are lots of such temporary accommodation visible. There appears to be very little land available for such project

The Visiting Committee appear to be very dedicated and anxious to play a very pro-active part in the prison. The Visiting Committee stated that the Governor is fully supportive of the idea of having horticulture work restored. He has confirmed that. Certainly activity in the fresh air leading to rehabilitation is basically a wonderful idea. A farm may be impracticable but a small garden (like in Wheatfield Prison) would be a welcome addition.

The Inspector met the Probation officers. There is only one probation officer assigned to the prison and a Senior. She works three full days per week and has two days off as a form of parental leave. Her superior who is based in Portlaoise town has only recently arrived from Waterford. They both praised the Governor and said he was extremely approachable and heeded what they said. The current officer has been here since 2003. She regards the Probation Service as adequate for the moment. However, she agrees that the group programmes need at least two officers, therefore there are no group programmes for anger management which are normally conducted by the Probation staff. They are conducted here by the teachers. This situation is unsatisfactory.

They confirmed the great need for a psychologist and for an addiction counsellor. They agreed that there was a potential for development in this area. In the opinion of the Inspector they will certainly need increasing numbers because of the complexity of this particular prison's population meaning that each programme will have to be repeated several times. They stated that there had been an excellent psychologist available, a Dr. Duffy, and that he had now left the service.

They also stated that they had a new overall Head of Probation and there is intense internal discussion on the role of Probation Staff in prisons. They are primarily working in the community. The Inspector stated that he has always wanted to see them established as being totally independent of the ever-growing prison establishment. They should be established as a totally

independent organisation who should be able to make available to judges the alternatives to prison.

They raised the point about a prisoner who wanted to attend a course for drug addiction in Mountjoy as he was coming to the final few months of his sentence. However, in order to be accepted on the course in Mountjoy he has to be drug-free. The methadone treatment is not available in Portlaoise Prison, [both officers looked slightly bemused when I suggested that it was a drug-free prison]. By extraordinary coincidence, while the Welfare Officer was meeting the Inspector she got called outside to see the doctor. She returned overjoyed. The doctor had agreed on a once-off basis to put this prisoner on methadone so that he could be certified as drug-free before he was transferred to Mountjoy. Subsequently the Inspector met the doctor and thanked her. She expressed concern but said that in the special circumstances she was doing it and that there was really no methadone programme in Portlaoise. The Inspector is aware from his visit to Switzerland that methadone is very addictive and has many side effects so much so that the Swiss prefer to give prisoners heroin rather than methadone in the two centres which he visited.

There is no integrated sentence management system and it is apparently regarded as inappropriate in this particular prison.

#### 8.5 *Meeting with individual staff members*

The Inspector and his Special Adviser saw a number of staff who had requested to meet the Inspector. It was pointed out to each person at the beginning of the meeting that the Inspector was forbidden by his contract to take up individual cases either for staff or prisoner. However, he was willing to hear from them and perhaps their concerns related to general prison operational/regime matters and if so he would be delighted to hear what they had to say.

(1) The first officer felt he is being discriminated against as others have been facilitated with transfers ahead of him even though he feels he has longer service than those transferred. The transfer of staff from one prison to another is based on (a) a vacancy in the prison to where the transfer is sought and (b) seniority if there are more than one seeking a transfer. He was an officer in Shanganagh Castle when it closed and he sought a transfer to Shelton Abbey but was transferred to Portlaoise Prison. There were 7 vacancies on the discipline roster in Shelton Abbey at the time of the closure of Shanganagh and there were 28 officers seeking a transfer there. The 7 vacancies were not filled immediately by the authorities in Headquarters. They waited for the introduction of the new annualised hours roster before filling the vacancies. Staff in Shelton Abbey were redeployed from the clerical and trades areas to discipline roles, consequently they skipped the queue of being placed on the vacancy panel. The staff who were redeployed had less service than he has and therefore should not have been facilitated ahead of him. He feels they skipped the queue and he has more years' service than they had.

He also raised the point of two officers on temporary transfer for 10 years and he states such transfers are only supposed to be for a short duration to overcome some family or domestic situation. He was offered a job-sharing position when someone who was job-sharing there retired but he wants a full-time posting.

He states that the union does not “want to rock the boat,” and that he is extremely frustrated driving 130 miles each day when others unfairly jumped the queue ahead of him and got their transfers.

The Inspector felt sympathy for him but explained that he cannot get involved in any industrial dispute. He advised him that he should take it up again with the Governor, the union and indeed with his politician.

(2) The second officer who met the Inspector and his Special Adviser had 27 years' service. He claims that some prison officers were creating overtime but it was more common prior to the annualised hours. He also felt that there were “moles” among the officers. He was stopped and searched by the army personnel within the grounds despite having been searched on entering the prison a short while earlier. He said that he is very unhappy in the job and that the Minister is acting like a “schoolboy bully” enforcing change without agreement. There is no motivation within the job and it is soul-destroying. He thinks everyone is anti-officer, and the press are too. The media concentrate on a few who may have done wrong but the majority

of officers are doing a great job. He claims only wasters get promoted and that people are afraid to speak out because it might affect their chances of promotion.

It was suggested to him that if things are so bad here why he did not seek a transfer to another prison? He replied that he would not go anywhere else. There are great staff in Portlaoise. They are most supportive and with you every step if you are in trouble. It was also suggested that he might talk to the union but he said that he had little time for that organisation. He came primarily to speak to the Inspector because there is no proper machinery for complaints or to air grievances.

There should be a proper structure or independent body to deal with complaints of staff and indeed of prisoners. The Inspector cannot take up his case. However, he feels that there should be an independent psychological service for both staff and prisoners.

(3) The third officer who requested to meet us complained of prisoners smoking in areas that are deemed “smoke-free zones”. He stated that some staff also smoke in prohibited areas. He said the main complaint relates mainly to the visiting areas, landings and recreation halls. He stated that he also suffers from asthma and has an inhaler.

He was asked if he ever placed those prisoners who were smoking on disciplinary report (P.19) for breach of prison rules to which he replied that it

was the responsibility of management to stop them smoking. The Inspector suggested that he should take the matter up with the union and he said that he had but that it fell on deaf ears. He had no suggestions as to how this problem could be overcome.

The matter was raised with the Governor and he said that it was the first time he heard of such a complaint. There were several avenues open to the officer to complain re this matter but to the best of the Governor's knowledge he had not done so. The Governor said the smoking ban is being implemented quite successfully. He had never dealt with a misconduct report from any officer reporting a prisoner for smoking in a prohibited area.

#### *8.6 Meeting with individual prisoners*

The Inspector and Mr Woods saw a number of prisoners individually who had requested to see the Inspector. It was outlined to each at the start of the meeting that the Inspector has no authority to take up individual cases, in fact it is part of his contract that he is prohibited from doing so. However, he could take up general issues affecting the management or regime of the prison.

The discussions were broad-ranging but their general main points of concern were as follows:

- . Toilets in basement area (sewerage system generally) gets blocked when there is heavy rain.

- . No toilets available for visitors or prisoners in the visiting areas. If on a visit a visitor or child has to go to the toilet, they must leave and go back out to the waiting room and on return go through the whole search procedures that they already had to endure on entering.
  
- . The food is good especially since the notice of the Inspector's pending inspection.
  
- . A fight between prisoners on E2 landing and prisoner separated as result states that all "at peace" now but still not allowed return to the landing by the Governor. He is being discriminated against.
  
- . There is no education for those "living in confinement". There is only an hour's education in economics and 2 hours per week in the gym. The exercise yard is available at any time.
  
- . The criteria for temporary release is not being applied to prisoners who are not on the main landings. If segregated or living in a separate area from main prison block, then applications for T.R. to attend funerals, first holy communions, etc are being refused. These prisoners are not seeking segregation, in fact want to return to the main landing but are also deprived of the same concessions extended to those on the landing. They feel it's a form of discrimination.

. A prisoner complained that he is being charged for the 2nd time for the same offence. He states it is a form of internment by the back door.

He intends taking his case to the European Courts.

. He feels that he along with some others who are separated at present should have a landing of their own.

. Visitors' toilets not available and there is no nappy changing facility.

. A prisoner complained of almost daily 23 hour lockup and not allowed go to mass on Sundays.

. His exercise time is allocated for 8.30am - 9.30am and on his own. This time is most unsuitable and a person needs company.

. He cannot use the library and there is no classroom time for him either. He states that the prisoners from whom he is separated will allow him use their library and go to Mass with them but this is refused by local management.

. He receives a very high level of security going to and from visits (far too much according to him) and this level of security affects his visitors plus the quality of his visits.

. Another prisoner complained of the refusal by the Department to allow him an escorted T.R. outing to see his sister's remains in a funeral home. He feels such a refusal is very unfair. Some others are approved for such outings while he is refused. This is discrimination.

. A prisoner complained of being sent to the Central Mental Hospital against his will. He also complained of no sentence plan regarding his release or no structure in the preparation for his eventual release. Temporary release is granted, then withdrawn, so it is most frustrating.

. A prisoner explained that he was a "guest" on E3 landing but as a result of a dispute with others on the landing he is now separated and living on his own. He requested a transfer to another section of the prison but was refused. He complains of being locked up most of the day. He stated that his cell is full of insects, beetles and cockroaches which all come out of a gully trap that is in his cell. The hygiene is terrible with no toilet and no running water to wash his hands after using the chamber pot. He only gets to the exercise yard when it is not in use by others. He stated that he had an accident prior to arrival at the prison and he gets physiotherapy in Portlaoise Hospital but missed some his appointments as there were no Gardai to assist the escort. He stated that while in hospital he was forced to take down his pants during a search. This is not tolerated by republicans. They don't do drugs. The cell he states does not have proper air vents. He is very

concerned about his health in general but no complaints about the prison's doctor.

He was asked if he would consider applying for a transfer to another prison as he was not accepted by "his organisation" here and as a result was on his own. He said that he would not mix with other criminals such as drug addicts. He is a republican. His cell was inspected by the Inspectorate and there is a gully trap or grid covering in the floor but no insects were visible at the time of inspection. The cell is small but it is very cluttered. If the prisoner were more organised the place could be tidier and neater. Management stated that insect spray is applied to the grid opening quite frequently.

#### *8.7 Meeting groups of prisoners*

The Inspectorate met two separate groups of prisoners, each of whom stated that they were spokespersons for their particular organisation, one being C.G.R.P. (Concerned Group of Republican Prisoners) while the other were P.I.R.A (Provisional Irish Republican Army).

The following is an outline of their main concerns

- . Not all the prisoners are returning to academic work on release. The education here should be more orientated towards Fetac or Fas/City and Guilds type programmes where bricklaying, tiling,

plumbing, and general construction-type work should be taught along with the other academic work.

- . Safepass - already done and passed the exams.
  
- . Driving course - but in order to get practice it will require temporary release but the granting of such temporary release should not be taken from the temporary release programmes already granted for family occasions.
  
- . The female visitors were over-energetically searched on entering the prison by female staff. They feel it was overdone. They were asked if they reported this to the Governor and they said that they had and the Governor outlined that he would pass the matter on to the Gardai for investigation if there was anything improper. He has not done so. They also stated that the security detector machine used when the visitors are entering the prison is oversensitive and an abuse of power.
  
- . The lack of toilet facilities within their cells - no wash-hand facility in cell and they feel they should be supplied with hand wipes at the public expense.
  
- . Toilets in exercise yard only cleaned for Inspector's arrival as previously they were in terrible state of hygiene.

- . No toilets in visiting areas - visitors having to return to reception then searched on returning to the visit.
  
- . General maintenance not being carried out by local trades such as repairs to electrical appliances, replacing glass in cell windows, leaking taps, etc - states that it is a result of reduction in trades officers.
  
- . Good education but need more Fetac-type courses which would be of more benefit on release.
  
- . Temporary release applications are very rarely granted but may never get official reply - just word of mouth from chief officer.
  
- . Visits have been a problem in the past few weeks. There are 12 boxes or visiting areas and no space to extend so they try to curtail the visits. The management want the visits spread out to other days during the week to overcome the Saturday crowding but their visitors work during the week and Saturdays are the only days they are free.

The prisoners on E2 (republican prisoners) made a written submission to the Inspectorate, the particulars of which are as follows:-

- (1) Emergency hospital visits - prisoner who suffered a heart attack at 3.00am in 2002. It took 2 hours to get the prisoner to the nearest hospital which is only a few yards up the road from the prison due to the delay in mobilising the special branch Gardai and army personnel to accompany the

prison staff on the escort. Undertaking given by the prisoners that they guaranteed that no escape attempt would be made in such circumstances if the armed escort were withdrawn. No policy change and concerned as two of their members have heart and blood pressure medical problems at present.

(2) Restricted access to healthcare - no full-time doctor in the prison, only one hour's service per day Monday - Friday and no weekend service. The restricted access is inappropriate and in need of redress.

(3) Substandard visiting facilities. The visiting facilities for this group of prisoners in Portakabins which are in a dilapidated state and they state not fit for the purpose. There are holes in the roof of two of them resulting in pools of water on the floors, the windows are ill fitting and poor heating within them. Mice have often been seen in the vicinity and there are no toilet facilities. Visitors who wish to use the toilets must return to reception and then on return pass all the searching procedures they already have passed through which also wastes visiting time.

(4) No in-cell sanitation is a problem and the process of "slopping out" is unhygienic and degrading.

(5) Pest control. Pigeons are nesting in empty cells which they can enter from the outside as panes of glass are broken in the cell windows. Pigeons,

they state, are known disease carriers. Vacant cells should be kept free from nesting pigeons and their presence within the prison is inappropriate.

The group also gave a very comprehensive report on the medical treatment received by a prisoner in Portlaoise Prison from February to March 2002.

#### *8.8 Observations regarding complaints raised by prisoners*

The management of the prison confirms that there is a problem lately with the sewerage system and rainfall outlets in the basement area of the prison. It is an ongoing problem and they have had outside contractors look at same including putting a camera down the pipes. So far the problem has not been solved but they are still working on it.

The toilet for visitors in the visiting area has been out of order for renovations for the past number of months. The Governor assured us that it would be re-opened before Christmas. There is no baby-changing facility within it.

Plans are ready and contract papers have gone out to builders for the erection of new toilets (which will be part of the new visiting facilities which will replace the present Portakabins) for visitors. They will contain a baby-changing facility. The contract is to be completed within six months of commencement of the building. So management expect that next July/August 2007, the visiting/toilet facilities will be in place.

Some prisoners in segregation or "living in confinement" will not mix with ordinary prisoners, therefore they are restricting themselves. The teachers

will facilitate those in that area as best they can but the prisoners cannot return to the main landings for their own safety.

The granting or refusing of temporary release is not a matter for local management. All such applications are forwarded to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/Prison Service Headquarters and the decisions are made at that level.

Regarding a person being charged the 2nd time for the same offence, that is a matter for the courts. The question of their own landing is a matter of space and not having sufficient landings for every individual group. Safety and security is another issue in these considerations.

It is a medical decision whether a prisoner is transferred to or from the Central Mental Hospital. Regarding sentence plans for prisoners' release, very much depends on the category of prisoners, security status, etc and in some cases such plans are hard to achieve.

Prisoners who are removed from a landing because of internal problems with other prisoners find it almost impossible to be accepted back onto the landing. This prisoner refuses to mix with other prisoners (not merely those he had the dispute with) which confines him further. He has both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and the exercise yard. He has refused to go to the school because the "ordinary" prisoners use the classroom. So there is little more can be offered him if he refuses to mix with other prisoners,

according to management. An outside contractor comes into the prison and sprays gullies, traps, etc to control the spread of insects. This is done on a regular basis.

The Governor undertook to discuss the Fetac-type courses with the head teacher. However, the facilities for doing such work as carpentry, tiling, plumbing, construction type work, in the prison are limited as a large workshop/shed would be required. No such building is available at present. When some of these types of works were done previously it raised security issues. In fact, the carpentry/timber had to be discontinued. The provision of a workshop that would be shared by all groups at different times was another issue. But management are prepared to look at it.

The test for driving licence applications (theory at present) is done on the day that temporary release has already been granted for family socialisation. If other days out were required, then fresh applications for temporary release would have to be applied for.

Regarding the searching of female visitors, the Governor informed the Inspectorate that he offered to pass the matter over to the Gardai to investigate or they could contact the Gardai themselves to make the complaint but did not do so. The machine used in the search area will detect iron buttons, or zips, etc and visitors have been requested not to wear clothing with such type of metal attached. Some have complied with the

request while others have not. So if the machine “beeps” the clothing has to be searched for security reasons.

The new cell block being built at present will have in-cell sanitary facilities including a shower thus eliminating the present unsatisfactory position of chamber pots “slopping out” etc.

Temporary release applications are submitted to the Prison Service Headquarters/Minister for consideration. When a decision is made it is forwarded to the Governor who requests the Chief Officer to inform the prisoner of the result. That is the practice that has been in operation for years.

The visiting facilities are a problem particularly on Saturdays which is the busiest day for visits. No visits so far have been curtailed. The Portakabins used for visits are dilapidated and beyond their lifespan. That is why they are being replaced next year. Local management are in discussions with prisoners to see if their visitors could come on Sundays and whether they would alternate their Saturday/Sunday visits which if agreeable would help the situation. This would be on a trial basis and start in early December 2006.

The hospital visits are a security issue regarding the escorts. Management state that it does take time to get a patient out to hospital if it's outside of working day hours as the Gardai and army personnel have to be contacted.

The prison authorities have to wait until the other services arrive before they leave the prison.

There is now a full-time doctor who attends the prison for 3 hours per day and is available on call at week-ends. This complaint may have been relevant in 2002 but not now.

The visiting facilities are as already described and will be replaced next year. A toilet for visitors' use will be operational from early December 2006.

A new modern wing with sanitary facilities is in the process of being built which will replace the current cell accommodation.

Pest control is applied regularly and if an empty cell is found to have pigeons in it, the glass in the window is replaced and the cell cleaned, according to local management.

### *8.9 Meeting with the Doctor*

Dr. J. Ledwith of the Inspectorate met with Dr. Siobhan Chidley who visits the prison every day for about three hours though some days she would spend four to five hours there.

The prisoners are self-referred or by the prison staff or the Governor. She tells me that some prisoners have sports injuries, some have HIV, some have diabetes, some have hypertension and others have back pain.

She has one prisoner on methadone.

There are some problems with escorts to her service from the staff.

The lack of a psychologist is a major problem for her as is the lack of an addiction counsellor.

There was a psychologist who was doing excellent work and she misses this person enormously.

Dr. Chidley informed me that the prison authorities were extremely co-operative and helpful at all times and they could not do more for her.

She does however miss the presence of a psychologist.

She tells me that there are no management problems.

Drugs she informed me are a significant problem so there is all the more reason for an addiction counsellor to be present.

She informed me "hooch" is still being made in the prison.

Dr. Paul O'Connell from the Central Mental Hospital visits once a week for three hours and Mary Fitzgibbon, a community psychiatric nurse, visits for two hours once a week.

The psychiatrist does see people with psychiatric problems and refers them to the CMH if necessary.

She herself does not see the psychiatrist but they communicate via e-mail and she feels that this is a good working arrangement. However, when the psychiatrist is on leave there is no cover as the registrar does not attend. This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

If someone becomes psychiatrically very disturbed and they cannot be transferred to the Central Mental Hospital, as they have no padded cells in Portlaoise, they have to be transferred to another prison which again is another problem.

Many of the prisoners do have psychiatric problems she informed me including addiction problems. There is no treatment for their addiction, though AA does attend once a week. The "political" prisoners are not allowed attend AA by their own commanding officers.

She tells me she gets on very well with "political" prisoners on the whole. Dr. Chidley informed me that "political" prisoners are not available to be seen unless the commanding officer agrees. This has caused problems on occasions. Nurses give intramuscular injections.

Dr. Chidley informed me that she gets an excellent service from Portlaoise General Hospital and she believes a new unit has been developed there where prisoners can stay overnight.

There is a problem where prisoners especially “political” prisoners are most uncomfortable because they have so many staff around them that they are not allowed speak in confidence to us. (In outside hospitals)

Dr. Chidley believes that there is a secure unit being developed so that prisoners could be seen without escort.

She informed me that there was a suicide in 2005. She believed that medication in blister packing is coming. Dr. Chidley informed me that a number of prisoners were looked after in Dublin in different hospitals but again she insisted that the local services were very good.

If prisoners wished to see a male doctor they could. This was usually her husband.

On occasions prisoners have been able to avail of the purchase fund and be seen privately. She was involved she informed me with the diet of prisoners especially those with diabetes and those who needed weight loss. Dr. Chidley informed me that she had no problem with the security while seeing prisoners. The surgery she informed me was being improved and there was a new floor being put in.

Dr. Chidley informed me that she worked in a prison in South Africa and services were infinitely better here in Ireland.

Computerisation of prisoners' records is taking place and she hoped that eventually all files would disappear. She believed that there was a problem with stretchers in the prison and that prisoners would have difficulty in going downstairs on a stretcher over the years.

She has no problem in obtaining medication from Uniphar and also medication can be obtained if necessary from a local pharmacy.

STI screening by a GP on a regular basis is done.

Minor surgery, that is in-growing toenails and warts, takes place within the prison.

#### *8.10 Meeting the Dentist*

Dr. Ledwith met the prison dentist, Mr. Enda Whelan, on the 6th November. He had informed me that he had not been told that he was to be seen for interview by the Inspectorate. He came into the prison at lunchtime from his own private practice which was very much appreciated.

He comes once every two weeks and spends a half day from 2pm until 5.30pm. He brings his own nurse. The patients are referred by the nurses

and with regard to referrals, high security prisoners are given priority. He can refer prisoners to Dublin Dental Hospital but it can be very slow he told us. The equipment needs to be updated and the water supply to his dental chair is by mains water and it needs to have its own water supply. He is very anxious to have this as soon as possible. He apparently works on a fee per item and he informs us that he would like to work all the time from 2.30pm to 5.30pm. This does happen on occasions but on other occasions he is told at 4.30pm that there is nobody available to escort patients to him. He does not know why this cannot be sorted out with a proper staff roster but it causes him problems.

Mr. Whelan informed us on occasions his dental surgery is used for other activities and is not cleaned up properly after use.

He does see emergencies if required. He informed us that the dental chair is old and it is difficult to get new parts for it. Basically he told us that he needs a new chair.

#### *8.11 Meeting with the Medical Orderlies*

Two medical orderlies were seen with Dr. Ledwith and Mr. Justice Kinlen. There are three nurses, two female and one male, and one female nurse on maternity leave. There are five medical orderlies but two are on long-term sick leave.

Two are on duty at any one time working a twelve-hour shift from 8.00am to 8.00pm. They work seven days out of fourteen.

In the morning they issue medications to the different units and they find that there is a problem here, as, on occasions, the prisoners want to talk to them and they do not have time to do so.

The doctor arrives between 9.30am and 10.00am and stays until about 12.30pm. All prisoners are brought to the doctor by one staff member except for one prisoner.

One officer remains in the consulting room with the doctor and another outside the door can observe what is going on inside.

We were informed that the staff canteen was “not great”. In the afternoon they look after the psychiatrist, dentist and the psychiatric nurse on different days.

At about 7.00pm, night medications are given but they informed us that the night nurse gives out medications after 8.00pm. There is TV in all cells.

There is no in-cell sanitation so that prisoners have to “slop out”.

Intramuscular injections are given by the medical officer.

There is a problem with regard to leave because of the new system. One apparently has to give fourteen days notice in advance before taking leave. This used not be the practice. They think a bigger surgery is necessary.

The dentist we were informed should not be upstairs as there could be a problem taking prisoners downstairs from the dental unit.

They both informed us that “drugs” were a big thing amongst the prisoners.

They informed us that there was good attendance at the gym but not so good at the classes. Smoking was a problem they informed us and that it was not being tackled.

We were informed that the medical orderlies had done a CPR course some years ago but they have been told that this method is different nowadays. They have not had a Samaritan course or a bereavement course and their CPR courses need updating.

## **9. Recommendations**

1. That a record in both book and forms style be maintained in D1 area outlining the use of the “strip” cell with full particulars of the prisoner placed

there, the time of placing, the time of his removal, who in authority visited him while there etc. A copy of the form with particulars thereon should be placed on the prisoner's file. (6.2 page 32)

2. That the toilets on D2 landing should be brought up to an acceptable level of hygiene. (6.3 page 34)
3. That the broken washing and drying machines on E4 landing be repaired and that the ceiling in the shower area should be repainted. (6.9 page 39)
4. That the wire mesh separating each landing on "E" block should be cleaned and efforts made to eliminate or reduce the number of pigeons living around the prison buildings. (6.11 page 40)
5. That the back compound exercise yard surface should be swept and cleaned. (6.12 page 41)
6. That the new visiting facilities (under the educational classrooms) should be brought into use as a matter of urgency. (6.28 page 52)
7. That the staff toilet facilities in the entrance yard to the prison should be brought up to an acceptable standard of hygiene and repainted. (6.29 page 52)

8. That the Portakabins which contain the tuck shop should be replaced or in the tuck shop be relocated to a better building. (6.31 page 54)
9. That if the “D” wing is to remain in use to accommodate prisoners, then a smoke extraction system should be installed. (7.3 page 56)
10. That fire evacuation drill exercises should be carried out in the office administration areas, classrooms outside of main blocks and visiting areas, and tuck shop area of the prison. (7.6 page 58)
11. That the staff training be brought up to date as soon as possible, which should include refresher/up to date training for the nurses/medical orderlies in medical matters. (7.7 page 58/59 and 8.11 page 94)
12. That a psychologist and an addiction counsellor be appointed to the prison. That Prison Service Headquarters arrange for these appointments as a matter of urgency. (3.4 page 9, 8.3 page 66, 8.4 page 69, 8.9 page 87)
13. That an additional Probation and Welfare Officer be appointed to the prison (8.4 page 69)
14. That there should be a replacement psychiatrist when the regular psychiatrist is absent on leave, sick, court attendance etc. (8.9 page 88)

15. That the dental chair in the dentist's surgery be replaced with a new one and the necessary dental equipment including water supply to dental chair be updated (8.10 page 91)
16. That staffing be provided for the dentist in order for him to work until 5.30pm on the days of his attendance. (8.10 page 91)
17. That a record be maintained of all prisoners' disciplinary hearings (P.19's) before the Governor even if the prisoner is transferred immediately after the hearing otherwise local disciplinary records are inaccurate. (10.11 page 103)

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1 The prison has had many improvements carried out since the last full inspection by the Inspectorate in 2002. The new entrance, gate lock, visitors' waiting room facilities, etc plus the refurbishment work is a wonderful

improvement. New facilities have been provided for the army personnel and a new cell block to replace the existing cellular accommodation is being erected. The small stand-alone cellular buildings at the rear of the prison which was under the control of the Governor of the Midlands is now coming under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Portlaoise Prison. It was built at the same time as the Midlands Prison and its intended use was to hold disruptive prisoners. There are still a considerable amount of buildings in use which are sub-standard. The visiting facilities and the tuck shop building are of Portakabin type, leaking and with flooring problems. The “D” block was condemned as being unsuitable to accommodate prisoners a few years ago and is still in use. The last inspector’s report highlighted this fact as did the various visiting committees’. The “E” block while in better condition than “D” is also over 100 years old. In view of the poor cellular accommodation, the new cell block with its modern sanitary facilities within is most welcome. The prison lacks open space around it and despite the fact that it is located on the outskirts of the town there are no green fields or greenery to be seen anywhere with every bit of open space being built upon.

- 10.2 The prison is operated as a high security prison and therefore the emphasis is on security and containment with very little in the line of rehabilitation programmes. There is a good education system in place. The “E” block prisoners practically do no prison work or any work/training programmes. Their time is spent at education, gym or exercise yard, a few at craft shop work or just remaining in bed watching TV. Their time out of cell is not very structured and they very much do their “own thing”. Prisoners on each

landing have their own spokesperson and all communications and interactions with prison management are done through their representatives. Many “agreements” or “understandings” cannot be changed or altered without full consultation and a new agreement. These “arrangements” were agreed with the “subversive” prisoners but the “ordinary” prisoners held on E1 landing are also enjoying the same status/regime. The present management has inherited most of these agreements but one wonders at their retention in view of the peace agreement when such subversive prisoners are supposed to be no longer in existence. There are elements within the subversive group who do not agree with the present peace process but for them to be given such prison status and regimes is questionable. That the “ordinary”, mostly high-security, prisoners detained on E1 landing who do not belong to any subversive organisation but are well organised within the criminal underworld should receive the same status/regimes as the others on the wing is also highly questionable. These are issues for the Prison Service H.Q and the Minister.

- 10.3 Some of the “subversive” prisoners on “E” wing expressed a wish to get involved in work/training type workshops such as carpentry, tiling, plumbing, construction work, etc. If such were to be introduced it should be linked into the Fetac certification standard and training programme. However, there appear to be no facilities within the prison at present for such training and the new cell block being erected does not appear to have any plans for such type of workshops. Some of these types of training workshops were in operation previously but had to be discontinued for security reasons as the

incoming raw material was used to smuggle illegal substances into the prison. So all of these factors would have to be considered if the workshops were to be re-introduced, but something to occupy and train prisoners would be better than what's happening at present where they spend a considerable amount of time doing nothing.

10.4 The "ordinary" prisoners on "E1" landing have practically no structure to their day time out of cell. Some may go to the education or gym or to the exercise yard while others spend their time lying in bed or remaining around their cells. They keep the landing, toilets, shower area clean but otherwise do not perform any prison work. The ordinary convicted prisoners throughout the other prisons have to perform prison work (if available) but these prisoners are exempt from same. The lack of workshops and of work/training programmes contributes to their idleness but boredom must be a problem for them.

10.5 The prisoners detained on "D" wing are described as "work party" prisoners who perform cleaning, cooking, recycling, painting, etc throughout the prison. Those involved in the kitchen work follow the required accreditation cooking standards and it is hoped that the prisoners involved in the recycling waste management work will also be brought up to certificate standard.

10.6 The medical services are provided by a doctor who attends the prison for 3 hours daily and at weekends in emergencies. There were great praises for her work. The dentist attends once every 2 weeks for three and a half hours

per visit. The psychiatrist from the C.M.H attends once per week for 3 hours as well as a community psychiatric nurse who visits two hours per week.

There is no psychologist attached to the prison. There is no one attached to the prison and one is urgently needed. There are no addiction counsellors and there is a great need for both of these services.

- 10.7 There is only one Probation and Welfare Officer who works a three-day week. A new Senior (supervisor) Officer has been appointed to be Portlaoise District Office which also includes the prison. It is impossible for one officer to make any impact on prisoner programmes etc if they are only there for a 3-day week working with a population of 115 - 120 prisoners. "Fire Brigade" service is all that can be provided in such circumstances.
- 10.8 The chaplaincy is provided by a full-time R.C priest and outside clerics are invited into the prison for those prisoners who request same and are of different persuasion to R.C. The prisoners and staff both commented on the good work the chaplain was doing even way beyond the chaplaincy role.
- 10.9 The relationship between prisoners and staff is very good and a lot of staff are on first-name terms with the prisoners. The staff training welfare programme is very welcome and appears to be quite effective from our observations of the interactions between staff and prisoners. The new annualised hours agreement has removed a lot of staff off static posts which is welcomed. The management are operating the new agreement within their allocated budget, however they are experiencing difficulties operating

the visits with their present allocation of staff. The trades section and some of the clerical work (stores) are “pooled” with the nearby Midlands staff and this arrangement does not appear to be acceptable to staff as there appear to be demarcation lines drawn. There are human resources/union issues here which need to be resolved by Headquarters in order to have happy working relations on the ground. Fire-drill evacuation exercises have taken place which is welcomed. Eight staff have applied for transfer and management state that these are for geographical reasons to get nearer their home. There were two staff disciplinary hearings before the Governor in the past year, one of whom received a punishment arising from the hearing. There were no escapes from the prison or from escorts outside of the prison in the past year. Three staff are involved in further education in the areas of counselling, occupational health, safety and public administration. There are four staff involved in personal development courses such as staff services, library, administration, etc while a senior member is involved in a waste management degree course. The overall morale among the staff appeared fairly good.

- 10.10 The prisoners’ hygiene facilities and overall facilities are quite good. They all have their own personal clothing. Laundry facilities are on each landing so they can wash and dry their clothing as often as they wish. The same applies with the showers; they are on each landing and inmates can use them as frequently as they wish. There are no restrictions on the number of letters they can receive and the telephones are available to them on request. The letters are censored and their telephone calls are monitored. The tuck

shop supplies practically everything that is ordered and there is a good library service. The gyms are open for use from 9.15am - 7.30pm daily including weekends and there is a P.E teacher attached to the prison. Each cell is fitted with a television set and they have a wide range of TV channels. They also have an electric kettle. They are allowed a radio, a Play Station and some have a computer in their cells. They can receive two visits per week and the "E" block prisoners' visits takes place in a room, sitting around a table without any barriers between prisoners and visitors. The "D" block prisoners' area has a counter with a 9" barrier divide down the centre of the counter between the visitors and the prisoners. The general conditions of the visiting facilities are poor. There are new visiting boxes provided for "E1" prisoners but they have refused to take their visits therein. They are modern, comfortable, warm rooms with toilet facilities and are lying idle because the prisoners refuse to use them. This in the Inspector's opinion is a disgrace.

- 10.11 The prisoners' discipline appears very good with only 24 disciplinary reports (P.19's) in the past 6 months. This is extremely low number of reports compared to other prisons. Arising from those reports one prisoner forfeited loss of remission while 3 forfeited evening recreation for longer than 3 weeks. There were no reports of smuggling or attempting to smuggle illegal substances or articles into or out of the prison. There were no reports either of assault on staff but there were six reports of assault on fellow prisoners. Part of the reason that there were few misconduct reports (P.19's) was that some prisoners were transferred immediately after the disciplinary hearing before the Governor to another prison and the record of whatever

punishment was imposed was transferred with the prisoner's file. So there was no record locally of such report or of punishment having been imposed.

10.12 There was a death in custody 18 months previous to the inspection dates and apparently there still has been no inquest into his death. This is a worrying fact which required an explanation. There are no recordings of any attempted suicide at the prison in the past six months.

10.13 The educational needs of the prisoners are very well catered for with 11 full-time and 15 part-time teachers who are attached to Laois V.E.C and co-ordinated by the Prison Service's co-ordinator of education. There are new (Portakabins) classrooms outside of the main cell blocks as well as a considerable number of classrooms within the landings, so the classrooms are fragmented. The teachers are looking forward to the education facilities within the one area in the new cell block being erected at present. The full range of curriculum subjects is available to the prisoners as well as the Open University and a large range of other subjects/courses such as those Fetac based, in horticulture, health-related fitness, music appreciation, food and nutrition, French communication, computer applications, computer literacy, E.S.O.I personal and interpersonal development, personal effectiveness and information technology. Several pre-release programmes are also run which at times entail outside speakers. These courses include anger management, thinking out, goal setting, confidence/self esteem, alcohol awareness, job preparation, health and medical issues, road haulage, environmental food hygiene, Safepass, Fetac work experience, driver theory test and European

Computer Driving Licence. The following is an outline of the number of prisoners who completed accredited examination in 2005. Junior Cert 10, Leaving Cert 7, Fetac 30, Open University 14, Open College for the Arts 1, Other correspondence (Oscail ACCA) 2, Trinity Guildhall 3, ESOL and Teft 7, Scrudu Ceol Tire Comhaltas 22, Royal Irish Academy of Music 3, First Aidir/CPR 8. So one can see there is a broad range of subjects available to those who wish to participate. It was also good to note that there was an increase in the number of prisoners attending classes for more than 10 hours per week from an average of 18 in 2004 to 38 in 2005. The average participation in education in 2005 was 75.5% of the prison population. The Inspectorate were very pleased with the interest and enthusiasm shown by the teachers we met during our inspection and of the broad range of subjects/courses available to the prisoners.

10.14 So to summarise, it appears to be a well run prison in relation to security and containment. There has been a lot of building work done and there is more to do. The hygiene levels are reasonably satisfactory but could be improved. The work/training for prisoners is very limited. Staff training needs to be brought up to an acceptable level. Records of those detained in special cells should be maintained. The appointment of a psychologist, additional Welfare Officer and an addiction counsellor are urgently needed.

10.15 The Inspectorate are grateful to the Governor and staff for the welcome and assistance given throughout the inspection. We are grateful for the facilities that were put at our disposal and the co-operation received during our tour of

inspection. Thanks also to the “outside” consultants who gave of their time to assist the Inspector which is much appreciated.