

**Seirbhís Phríosúin na hÉireann  
Ceanncheathrú**

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Bóthar Bhéal Átha na Lao  
An Longfort  
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## **Establishment of New Community Return Unit**

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Michael Donnellan, has announced that a new Community Return Unit has been formally established and commenced operation in June 2012. The Unit, which is comprised of an official from the Irish Prison Service and a Probation Officer, is located at the Probation Service Headquarters in Haymarket, Smithfield, Dublin 7 and has taken on responsibility for the management of the Community Return programme nationally along with the co-ordination of the several local interagency projects - in Dublin, Cork and Limerick'

Community Return is a recently introduced initiative whereby carefully selected prisoners can be granted temporary release in exchange for agreeing to partake in unpaid community work for a set number of weeks. The type of work involved is intended to assist the community and the scheme is involved with a large number of charitable organisations and local community groups. The work takes place in a supervised group setting and carries out practical tasks such as painting, gardening or graffiti removal.

As announced with the launch of its new three year strategic plan, the Prison Service, in conjunction with the Probation Service, intends to increase the number of prisoners benefitting from this structured form of release over the course of the next three years. The Prison Service will work towards the placement of 400 prisoners per annum serving sentences of 1 to 8 years. It is envisaged that there would be no more than 150 prisoners participating in this scheme at any one time and all prisoners will be carefully assessed before being approved for the scheme.

The establishment of the Community Return Unit is one a number of initiatives introduced in order to ensure a greater level of interagency co-operation with the goal of delivering an improved level of public service.