



HMP BEDFORD

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

**ANNUAL REPORT
2010-2011**

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork – replacement for F2052SH
BME	Black & Minority Ethnic
CARATS	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Throughcare Scheme – drug & alcohol team
CC	Cellular Confinement – a punishment
CNA	Certified Normal Accommodation
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline – Segregation under Rule 45/49 (historically GOAD)
HCC	Health Care Centre
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges – Prisoners can be on Basic, Standard or Enhanced
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
LSC	Learning & Skills Council
MDT	Mandatory Drugs Testing
NOMS	National Offender Manager Service – amalgamation of the Prison & Probation Services
PSI	Prison Service Instruction
PSO	Prison Service Order – see www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/resourcecentre/psispsos/listpsos
SIR	Security Information Report
SSU	Separation and Support Unit
RIRF	Racial Incident Reporting Form
SMARG	Segregation, Monitoring and Review Group
SMT	Senior Management Team
VDT	Voluntary Drugs Testing
VPU	Vulnerable Prisoner Unit

Section 1

THE STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Minister of Justice from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- Satisfy itself as to the humane treatment of those held in custody within its prison, and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
- Inform promptly the Minister for Prisons, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- Report annually to the Minister for Prisons on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it, and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner, to every part of the prison, and also to the prison's records.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

HMP Bedford Independent Monitoring Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity that encompasses and promotes interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds, including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age. The Board recognises that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cut across such social and cultural categories, as for example, mental health and literacy.

The Board integrates this approach to diversity within its recruitment and development practices, to increase its repertoire of skills and to promote awareness amongst its members of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within the prison.

All members of the IMB at HMP Bedford endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is accessible to everyone within the establishment, regardless of their background or social situation. The Board monitors the experiences and interactions between staff, prisoners and visitors, to establish that these are fair and without prejudice.

REPORTING PERIOD

1st July 2010 to 30th June 2011

Section 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Bedford is a Category B Local Prison taking sentenced and remanded male prisoners mainly from Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire courts. The prison takes a number (up to 46) of Young Adults. The operational capacity is 506 (324 being its Certified Normal Accommodation), although the roll rarely reached capacity during the year. The addition of a responsibility to service St Albans Court during the year has increased the number of prisoners who come to Bedford. The average length of stay is 39 days, though some categories of prisoner (VPs, recently-sentenced lifers) tend to stay longer while their paperwork is sorted out.

The prison has been on the present town-centre site since 1801. It is an aging facility that still serves a useful purpose. Upgrading of the prison infrastructure has continued during the year, with a particular emphasis on improving work areas. It comprises:

Main Wings (A/E, B and C Wings radiate from a central hub) were built in the mid-19th century:

- A Wing holds 140 prisoners with 44 single cells for high-risk prisoners;
- B Wing holds 78 prisoners with 1 four-man cell and is currently the VDT wing;
 - B1 Landing (subterranean) is the Separation and Support Unit with 6 furnished and 2 unfurnished cells;
- C Wing has 108 places and is the Induction wing. There are 2 four-man cells, one of which is used when necessary for Vulnerable Prisoners when there is no space on the VP unit. The Listeners have a dedicated cell on C2;
 - The C1 Landing (also subterranean) is currently the First Night Centre, with seven double cells and one single cell;
- E Wing, an extension of A Wing, has 38 prisoners who have enhanced status.

Other blocks

- D-Wing was built in 1992, has 100 prisoners and is the drug treatment wing;
- F Wing dates from the mid-19th century and is currently the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (Rule 45 prisoners) with 30 places;
- The Health Care Centre (1992) includes a gated cell, a safer cell and an anti-ligature cell; in all 9 single cells and a 4-bed dormitory;
- The Gatehouse (1992) also includes a spacious, but inadequately ventilated, Visits Hall and the overcrowded Reception Suite.

Contractors and Agencies delivering services to the prison include:

Ark Handling	(return-to-work skills)
Asda Magic Workshop	(return-to-work skills)
Bedford Borough Council	(library)
Bedford College	(delivers NVQ1 vocational training)
Bedford Primary Care Trust	(provides health care)
CARAT	(drug team)
Citizens Advice Bureau	(debt advice)

CRSP	(Community Resettlement Support Project: through-the-gate mentoring support)
F1 Training	(NOMS Serco welfare-to-work project)
Groupama	(return to work Skills)
Job Centre Plus	(benefits, community care grants and job searches)
Learn Direct	(courses)
Luton Rights	(debt advice)
Milton Keynes College	(education contractor)
Miracle Church of God	(listening service and financial support)
Nacro	(pre-release support in education, training and employment)
OrmistonTrust	(manage the visits centre, crèche in visits hall, parenting programme and Story Book Dads)
Prison Fellowship	(bible classes, weekly workshop)
Samaritans	(training and support for Listeners and Insiders)
Shannon Trust	(Toe by Toe literacy scheme)
St Mungo	(housing needs)
Tribal	(information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment both in prison and in the community)

Section 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Bedford reports, in this document, on the significant issues arising from its monitoring of the prison during the twelve months from the beginning of July 2010 to the end of June 2011. The Board reports primarily by exception; it does not aim to give a synoptic picture of the prison, its workings and context. The report does not mention those issues discussed and resolved with the Governor and his staff during the year.

A prison is intrinsically difficult and stressful to run – incidents can develop at a moment's notice and without apparent warning; and a predominantly nineteenth century facility can seem physically unattractive and unsuited to modern norms. Nonetheless the senior management team lead a dedicated, professional, cheerful, polite and respectful team in running what seems to be as near to being a stable and contented establishment as one could imagine in the circumstances, even though they do so at the lowest indexed cost in the country. An unannounced follow-up inspection by HMIP was carried out from 2 to 5 May; the full report is expected at the end of September.

The Board is aware that the Governor and his Senior Management Team have driven costs down such that the prison has the reputation of being amongst the most financially efficient establishments in the country. As a result, the impact of budget cuts on HMP Bedford has been minimised in the reporting year. However, the Board is concerned that further cuts in the coming year might not be implemented evenly across departmental budgets: some will always be deemed essential while others, from the prison's perspective, are more elective. Seen from the perspective of society as a whole, this may be short sighted. The Board is very concerned that if extreme pressure is applied to prison budgets, the casualty will be efforts to assist prisoners with rehabilitation and resettlement, without which these individuals will inevitably cost society more in the long term in dealing with them and future victims.

The Board extends its sincere sympathy to the families and friends of the four prisoners who have died in HMP Bedford this year.

Commendations

The Board would like to commend the management and staff of HMP Bedford for the following specific points:

- *Planning, and securing finance for, developments to cater for disabled prisoners (see 4.1)*
- *the impressive library facilities run on a slender budget and the gymnasium programmes for furthering the health, fitness and motivation of prisoners (see 4.2)*
- *the development and enhancement of the Healthcare Centre, in particular the welcome improvement in mental healthcare provision (see 4.3)*
- *the work of the stand-in CARAT manager (see 4.3)*
- *the Safer Custody team (see 4.4)*
- *the plans to create an improved First Night Centre (see 4.4)*
- *the SSU team, who often deal with urgent and conflicting demands created by difficult long-term prisoners (see 4.5)*
- *refurbishment of the physical environment (see 5.3)*

- *the kitchen team who feed nearly 500 prisoners every day all year on a daily budget of £2.10 per head and whose meals the prisoners notwithstanding rate as “good” (see 5.4)*
- *the resourcefulness of members of staff who conceive, and source external funding for, initiatives that help prisoners acquire experience in preparation for release (see 5.6)*
- *Members of the Board are grateful for the time already busy members of staff routinely take to help them do their job (see 5.10).*

Concerns

The Board has raised the following specific points of concern, namely that:

- *there remains much work to do to cater suitably for the needs of disabled, particularly wheelchair-bound, prisoners (see 4.1)*
- *the Education department has struggled to deliver the scheduled timetable (see 4.2)*
- *lack of computers, office and storage space in Healthcare continues to be a problem, and dentistry continues to be overwhelmed by demand causing a long waiting time for treatment for some prisoners (see 4.3)*
- *there is disparity between the increasing number of elderly Category C sex offenders needing Level 3 healthcare, and the availability of such care in Category C establishments (see 4.3)*
- *the useful practice of placing a 6-month transfer-hold on trained Listeners is proving increasingly impracticable (see 4.4)*
- *F-Wing is too small to serve as an appropriate location for up to 30 segregated men, some of whom stay at Bedford for lengthy periods (see 4.4)*
- *the SSU, from the point of view of physical infrastructure and facilities, is the least satisfactory area of the prison (see 4.5)*
- *overcrowding is such that prisoners are still required to eat most of their meals locked in their cells with their cell-mate, immediately adjacent to an open WC (see 5.3)*
- *there is a deficit in ventilation in certain locations which can result in objectionable heat and stuffiness (see 5.3)*
- *the premium charged by the Canteen contractor over external commodity prices is unjustified; it is hoped that NOMS might bring pressure to bear on the contractor, or adjust the contract, to bring pricing policy more nearly into line with external pricing (see 5.4)*
- *the First Night Centre is unable to house all new prisoners on account of the policy of locating overspill from the SSU and the VPU in the facility (see 5.5)*
- *there is a need for NOMS to referee more vigorously a level playing field for prisoner transfers (see 5.6)*
- *many prisoners come to the end of sentence, and are released back into the community from HMP Bedford: a prison that is inadequately equipped in staff, resource or space to provide prisoners with adequate pre-release preparation (see 5.6)*
- *there is a problem of continuity at the Visitors’ Centre Advisory Committee as different members of staff attend each time (see 5.8).*

ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

From the Minister

What answers can the Minister offer to the unhygienic and uncivilized practice of crowding two men into a cell built 160 years ago for one man, with an unscreened and open WC, and requiring them to eat their meals there? (see 5.3)

From NOMS

Is NOMS satisfied that Education and Healthcare contractors can deliver the required services within the budgets they finish up with, after the tendering process? (see 4.2, 4.3)

Will NOMS secure that the Canteen Contractor charges no more for items sold to prisoners than they would pay in a supermarket? (see 5.4)

Can and will NOMS exert its power and influence to limit the game-playing between establishments and establish a properly level playing field for transfers, the main objective of which is the interest of the prisoners concerned? (see 5.6)

Can NOMS secure either that HMP Bedford gets the resources it needs properly to prepare prisoners for release, or ensure that they are released back into the community from other prisons that do have the necessary resources? (see 5.6)

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

HMP Bedford is a well-run prison that currently causes the IMB little real anxiety. Despite the antiquated physical estate, prisoners generally rate HMP Bedford as a decent prison. There are issues, but the Board generally finds that it is working in the same direction as the Senior Management Team. The stamina and cheerful politeness of the staff, to the IMB as to the prisoners and each other, is remarkable.

Section 4

ASPECTS OF THE PRISON THAT MUST BE REPORTED UPON

4.1 Diversity / Equality and Inclusion

Diversity continues to be carefully managed by staff at Bedford, a prison with a high percentage of BME prisoners. The Bedford Equality Action Team members meet monthly, a meeting that is normally well attended by staff and prisoner diversity representatives, whose role it is to voice prisoners' concerns. A paid diversity orderly meets and talks to new prisoners at Induction and helps them where possible. Focus groups are held for older and disabled prisoners bi-monthly and there is a support group for gay prisoners. There are telephone amplifiers for the hearing-impaired. RIRFs (now replaced by Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms) are carefully investigated.

The needs of disabled and particularly wheelchair-bound prisoners remain an issue of concern. This is mainly due to the fabric of the Victorian buildings. However a two-man cell designed and fitted out for disabled prisoners on the main wings, the first of its type in the country, may ease this problem to some extent. This has been part-funded by the King's Fund and has resulted in the prison achieving a prestigious award from the healthcare organisation, 'World Projects'. Plans for further facilities for the disabled are in the pipeline. ***The Board commends the prison for planning and securing finance for these developments.***

There is a high proportion of Foreign Nationals in the population. Their needs are well looked after by a full-time coordinator who has significantly reduced the number of sole detainees in the establishment at any one time. The cases of the remaining individuals are being carefully managed, though some prisoners' cases seem to take a long time to reach a resolution. The Foreign National Manager sees all foreign national prisoners, especially sole detainees, regularly. Immigration Officers come into the prison on a weekly basis. In addition there is a bi-monthly meeting of Foreign Nationals where issues of concern are discussed.

4.2 Education, Learning and Skills, the Library and Workshops

The Education Department endeavours to provide prisoners with education, skills and qualifications that can be taken with them on transfer. The high turnover dominates what can be achieved. Assessment reports show that 75% of prisoners have a reading age below the national standard for 7 to 9 year olds. There is a similar issue with numeracy, so a significant proportion of training is necessarily 'remedial'. **The Board is concerned that the department has struggled to deliver the scheduled education timetable.** A revised timetable incorporating a reduction in teaching hours will be adopted from August 2011; this should provide an increase in efficiency and effectiveness of training delivery, though the Board deeply regrets the reduction in hours. Toe by Toe and Listener training sessions are increasing in popularity, fuelled by the enthusiasm and hard work of the training teams.

The library runs an impressive regime, with an annual budget of only £6800. Attendance averaged 54% of the prison population over the year. Due to increased demand, the number of library sessions for A and D wings was increased from 2 to 3 per week. Prisoners in Healthcare also received increased access.

There are two main workshops available to prisoners on the Main Wings: bricklaying and painting/decorating. There are sufficient spaces in an industrial cleaning workshop to ensure that all wing cleaners, servery workers and other orderlies are qualified with a British Institute of Cleaning Science award. Prisoners on F wing continue to do basic assembly work in a segregated workshop.

The gymnasium staff is committed to furthering the health, fitness and motivation of prisoners, and continues to introduce new initiatives. 55% of prisoners complete the induction course and approximately 1000 hours of recreational sport and courses are carried out per week.

4.3 Healthcare, Mental Health and Drugs

Staffing levels and turnover in Healthcare have stabilized in comparison with last year. This has resulted in a more positive working environment, and has created a better 'whole team' understanding of the various areas of responsibility. As a consequence, the professionals have been enabled to give a better service, with known objectives, and improved prisoner care. Refurbishment of the in-patient unit, completed this year, has had a positive impact on both staff and prisoners. **The Board commends the attention given to these developments.**

During the year:

- A robust secondary patient-screening process has been introduced, which follows on from the Induction procedures. This has resulted in better care plans that are carried through to, and to some extent after, discharge.
- The Care Programme Approach has been introduced and has won an award for excellence.
- The Treatment Effectiveness Programme has been introduced, resulting in more time being spent with the prisoners and less time form-filling and target-chasing. Staff members are pleased with this programme and are working hard to push it forward.
- **Lack of office and storage space, and of computers in Healthcare continues to be a problem. At the present time Mental Health are working with one computer whereas three are needed.**
- A 'walk-in bath' of the type used by the elderly/disabled would be a further useful addition to the Healthcare Unit. The Kings Fund has indicated that it may be able to assist.
- Better data collection in Healthcare and Drugs has resulted in accurate figures being submitted to both local and national agencies, which has had a beneficial impact on staffing and budget control.
- **Dentistry clinics continue to be overwhelmed by demand and this has caused long waiting times for some of the prisoners needing treatment.**

The number of elderly sex offenders imprisoned nationally has increased for several reasons. Many need Level 3 healthcare, which is not typically available in Cat C prisons, and so many are allocated instead to expensive and limited spaces in Cat B establishments, where by contrast they often cannot undertake the courses appropriate to their offence and sentence plan. **The Board believes this situation needs review.**

The Board's concern, relayed in last year's report, about what it felt to be a deficit in medical attention to prisoners with mental health conditions, has been largely allayed by the recruitment of two extra CPN nurses. This is a difficult area and the demands on staff are high. Communication Control Assistance has been introduced, with consequential benefits in staff training.

The IDTS treatment system continues to be fine-tuned and operates well. New fingerprint recognition technology has been found to be more accurate than iris recognition technology and is now being used on the wing. There are a number of prisoners who attempt to divert prescribed drugs, and MDT/VDT testing does indeed indicate that prescribed drugs are being traded. Intelligence suggests, however, that the problem is well managed through staff vigilance and systematic use of drug detection dogs.

The SDP team continues to meet its targets for course starts. Drop-out during the courses is also relatively low, reflecting the high quality of the staff and course material. The appointment of a Team Manager was appreciated by both the Board and team workers.

The experienced and self-motivated CARAT team continues to do a first-class job working with some of the more difficult prisoners in the establishment. Team members will appreciate the return of the team manager from secondment. ***The Board has appreciated the work of the stand-in manager.***

4.4 Safer Custody

The Board commends the staff who display an inspirational caring and professional approach to Safer Custody issues. The Safer Custody team maintains close scrutiny to ensure that procedures are followed, and there are generally strong relations between staff and prisoners. Major features of the work included the following:

- Detailed reports are presented to and discussed at monthly Safer Custody meetings, which are well attended, including by the IMB;
- There were a total of 594 violent incidents reported, an 11% increase on the previous year;
- Gang-related activity is monitored closely and well controlled.

There were a total of 237 self-harm incidents reported, a 6% decrease on the previous year. The Listener scheme and the local Samaritans continue to make valuable contributions within the prison. **Maintaining a full complement of Listeners is a significant and growing challenge as the historic practice of placing a 6-month transfer-hold on trained Listeners is proving increasingly impracticable.** The local Samaritans Branch has increased the number of training events to try to reduce the length of time that a less-than-full service is available

Compliance with ACCT procedures is given a high profile in HMP Bedford and the Safer Custody team undertakes regular and thorough checks of ACCT documents, with any shortcomings highlighted and appropriate coaching given. Detailed reports are presented to the Governor weekly and to the Safer Custody meeting monthly. IMB Board members review randomly-sampled ACCT documents as part of weekly rota visits.

There have been 4 deaths in custody in the reporting period of which 3 occurred within the last 4 months. On each occasion the IMB was informed promptly and given assistance to monitor the prison's response. In all cases prisoners and staff were offered appropriate and timely support. Immediate internal and external reviews were undertaken with no major shortcomings identified. Minor recommendations for adjustments to procedures and practices were implemented immediately. Formal reports from the Ombudsman were still awaited at the time of writing. In July 2011, as a result of this apparent cluster of incidents, the Offenders Safety, Rights and Responsibilities Office (formerly Safer Custody Office) conducted a detailed review of Safer Custody procedures at HMP Bedford. Amid generally positive comment, the review indicated satisfaction that there was nothing more the prison could have done to prevent these unfortunate deaths. Inquest dates are awaited for four of these deaths.

The Vulnerable Prisoner wing (F) has an operational capacity of 30 and appears well run. A restricted range of work, education and association activities are maintained, subject to the limitations that segregation imposes. At times, there is pressure on the capacity, and overspill accommodation is made available in the subterranean C1 landing, formally the First Night Centre. While this is not ideal, officers make efforts to include out-placed prisoners in the activities of the Unit. For much of the year, F-Wing has been under scrutiny by the Senior Management Team to see if anything can be done to improve the environment and to see if there can be greater integration of prisoners within prison life. As a start, prisoners who wish to attend a religious service in the Multi-faith Room have been encouraged to do so rather than have a service on the wing. **The Board considers F-Wing to be too small to serve as**

an appropriate location for up to 30 segregated prisoners, some of whom stay at Bedford for lengthy periods before they can be relocated.

4.5 Separation and Care

The SSU is located in a basement below the Main Wings. It has virtually no natural light (the cells being the exception) with low ceilings and artificial lighting. The main entrance is past an open shower and hand basin, with uneven, frequently wet flooring. Care has to be taken on entering as prisoners may be using the washing facilities at any time of day. The flooring covering the remainder of the Unit is good and clean with the exception of the administration area, which is covered in carpet that is worn below desks and chairs. Immediately adjacent to the shower is the gate and staircase leading to the exercise yard, a small, damp area littered with waste thrown from cell windows above and mess left by pigeons.

Facilities for officers to store personal belongings, equipment and records are poor with only a single built-in cupboard. The only place to make hot drinks for the prisoners and staff is a small, cramped area which often has other items stored there. There are no local toilet facilities for staff, which leaves the one remaining officer on duty reliant on cover from elsewhere if a prisoner needs to be unlocked. The area used for Reviews and Adjudications seems adequately furnished and appropriate, with a number of small lockers for officers' personal belongings. A small selection of books is available for prisoners to borrow, but requests may be made to the librarian to obtain specific reading matter.

The Board considers the SSU to be perhaps the least satisfactory area of the prison, from the point of view of physical infrastructure and facilities. It is hoped that there will be funding for much-needed renovation and modernisation.

Board members attended almost all reviews and many adjudications. There have been difficulties with informing Board members about the arrival of prisoners in SSU, but new protocols have improved the situation. Officers always introduce the Board member at Reviews and the member and prisoner are given the opportunity to converse. Prisoner records are checked and signed by the Board member in attendance. Board members can speak to segregated prisoners at any time, and do so when in the prison.

The responsible Governor, Healthcare and Chaplaincy staff, and a Board member attend monthly Separation, Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG) meetings.

The Board commends the work carried out by the officers assigned to the unit, (usually for two or three years). There are frequently conflicting demands on them, and the unit has many visitors, all with urgent requirements. The staff deals with this, and with difficult long-term prisoners, with admirable calmness and fairness.

Section 5

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PRISON THAT THE IMB WISHES TO REMARK UPON

5.1 Security

Security is always a high priority, particularly as the prison is located in the town centre. The number of SIRs dealt with by the department has again increased this year. Resources have been better utilised in the latter half of the year by developing an intelligence-led searching commitment. Members of staff have responded positively, achieving good results. It is hoped that increasingly robust intelligence will lead to more contraband seizures and improved MDT results.

5.2 Discipline

Board members have regularly monitored adjudication hearings. The papers relating to adjudications in the period January to March 2011 have been reviewed in detail, though prisoners' views have not been surveyed:

- There were some 145 adjudications in this period. These related to: drugs (26); possession of an unauthorised object (mobile phones / medications not belonging to the prisoner in possession) (20); threatening behaviour (21); disobedience (18); damaging property (16); and fighting (13). Nine cases were referred to an Independent Adjudicator.
- A plea of Guilty was entered in just over half of the cases. Where the plea was Not Guilty, the charge was found Not Proven or otherwise dismissed in about half the cases.
- 53 hearings were adjourned, generally to allow the prisoner opportunity to obtain legal advice/representation, and sometimes to enable the Reporting Officer to attend for questioning. It was noted that in some cases there was a further adjournment (sometimes as many as 5 adjournments) before the case was determined.
- Adjudications were heard by seven different governors and there was substantial consistency between them as to penalty; the penalties (including those imposed by the Independent Adjudicator) appeared proportionate to the charges and circumstances.

Incentives and Earned privileges

- The local policy was re-written during this reporting period.
- As at the end of the reporting period, there were 4 prisoners on basic regime.

5.3 The physical environment

The prison conducted an experiment ('dining-out') whereby prisoners were allowed to eat certain meals outside their cells at communal tables. Despite some initial apprehension from both staff and prisoners, this proved successful and is now the norm, with prisoners 'dining-out' on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. **There remains a concern that prisoners are required to eat most of their meals locked in their cells with their cell-mate, immediately adjacent to an open WC.**

The digital upgrading of all cells was completed during the year, allowing a choice of 9 TV channels. There has been a rolling programme of painting, decorating and re-flooring that has helped create a much cleaner and brighter environment. It has been good to see, in the areas where tables used for dining-out can be left set up, that they tend also to be used for

socialising at other times. New Focus Groups have been started to look at wing facilities, and there is good prisoner participation.

Two trusted prisoners have been allowed to work in the outside areas of the prison, with consequential improvement in the standard of cleanliness in the yards. Flowering baskets and two raised flowerbeds have lessened the severity of the first visual impact the prison might have, on a prisoner or visitor.

Nevertheless:

- Sentenced and remand prisoners continue to share cells;
- Shortage of single cells means that only prisoners classed as 'high risk' can be placed in one;
- There is a significant problem of poor ventilation at various points in the prison: for example, certain cells with non-opening windows, the upper landings of the Main Wings and the Visits Hall in hot weather. **The Board hopes that the prison will give high priority to solving these issues as the heat and stuffiness can be objectionable to prisoners and staff alike.**

Keeping the physical estate serviceable and appropriate to modern expectations requires constant attention from the able and streamlined Works team, under purposeful leadership and championship from the Governor. **The Board commends this close attention to every aspect of the physical environment.**

5.4 Catering and Canteen

The Kitchen is now running smoothly and the Catering Manager continues to display resourcefulness and imagination in supplying meals on a budget of only £2.10 per prisoner per day. A recent Focus Group of prisoners described the meals provided as "good". **The Board finds this achievement remarkable.**

An NVQ Level 1 in Catering is offered to prisoners working in the Kitchen, provided that they are serving a sentence of sufficient length to complete the course. Other prisoners, not working in the Kitchen, are given the opportunity to take modules of an NVQ Level 2 in Food Hygiene.

Provision of the weekly Canteen continues to generate dissatisfaction, although the number of complaints has reduced. The contractor rarely supplies staff numbers at the upper end of their service agreement (six) with the prison. Instead DHL depends on the help, support and goodwill of duty prison officers to ensure the smooth and speedy distribution of canteen. The main issue raised is the higher cost of items compared to 'outside', an issue whose resolution is beyond the control of a single prison. **The Board hopes, if it is the case that this complaint is widespread within the prison estate, that NOMS might bring pressure to bear on the national contractor to bring its pricing policy more nearly into line with prices outside.**

5.5 Reception, First Night, Induction

Although the size of the Reception area is inadequate, a recent change of layout has improved the speed, efficiency, and to some extent the privacy, of the reception process. All prisoners are seen by Healthcare on their arrival and vulnerable prisoners are separated at all times.

The First Night Centre is a subterranean space that the Board considers to be an unsuitable location for the most vulnerable group of prisoners, new to prison. Efforts have been made to brighten the unit up but it remains unsatisfactory. To make matters worse, the Unit is also used as an overspill:

- for the SSU, when prisoners who need to be separated cannot be housed in B1;
- for the Vulnerable Prisoners' Unit, F Wing.

Inevitably this leads to circumstances when the First Night Centre is unable to house all new prisoners, a situation that the Board finds deeply unsatisfactory. The Senior Management Team is working on solutions for this problem.

The Induction programme is frequently reviewed in an attempt to meet the changing needs of the transient population. It has also been overhauled (with significant changes to content and modes of delivery) in response to critical comments made in the last HMP Inspection Report. Prisoners acting as Information and Guidance workers serve as peer-group advisers.

5.6 Offender Management and Resettlement

The Board notes that:

- HMP Bedford does not find it practicable (due to lack of resource in the face of the high churn-rate) to achieve proper sentence planning for remand prisoners and those convicted for under a year; instead, immediate needs are assessed on arrival and reviewed before discharge;
- cross-deployment of staff is making offender management difficult more generally; allocation and sequencing of prisoners' moves within the estate are driven by availability of courses and proximity to home.

End of Custody License was scrapped and probation funding to the prison curtailed during the year. The prison is now served by probation officers in the community, which seems to be working well.

Many prisons seem to have adopted informal restrictive protocols and criteria to filter out difficult prisoners, hampering the completion of sentence plans and the transfer of recalcitrant prisoners to the most suitable prison. Consistent use of CNOMIS would invalidate such practices. The Board suspects that increasing competitive pressure on and between prisons, driven at least in part by market testing and the target-culture, may lie behind this apparently unhelpful breakdown in cohesive team spirit, and increase in institutional self-interest across the prison system. **The Board considers that there is a need for NOMS to referee more vigorously a level playing field for prisoner transfers.**

All the resettlement agencies in the prison, together with Health Care representatives, now attend Discharge Board meetings with prisoners. The plan, through NACRO, to assist prisoners to open a bank account, is on hold awaiting a PSI on the subject. Significant effort has been put into working with the local Employers' Forum to provide training and employment. HMP Bedford was short listed for the 'Business in the Community Right Step Award'. ASDA (retail), Groupama (insurance) and Ark Handling (logistics and packing) have all supported prisoners, running short courses in the prison to assist them to prepare for employment. The Virtual Campus is now implemented though there have been software problems at the national level that have inhibited its use. Job Club with Job Centre Plus has also faltered from lack of staff and finance. A notable success was an intervention by the Princes Trust to offer a Level 1 Coaching Certificate in football for 12 prisoners. HMP Bedford is well suited to such short interventions, though there are unlikely to be many repetitions of this particular formula as significant private sponsorship was needed to fund the involvement of the Princes Trust. **The Board commends the resourcefulness of staff members who 'go the extra mile' to conceive and source external funding for this and similar initiatives.**

While the Board acknowledges that the primary function of HMP Bedford is to serve the local courts, it is concerned that many prisoners come to the end of sentence and are released back into the community from HMP Bedford, a prison that is inadequately

equipped in staff, resource or space to provide them with adequate pre-release training and preparation.

5.7 Chaplaincy

Since the departure of the full-time Chaplain over a year ago, the other members of the multi-faith team have worked hard to provide a supportive and comprehensive service. A full time chaplain has been appointed recently and had taken up her appointment before the publication of this Report. The support offered by the chaplaincy team to those affected by the deaths in custody has been much appreciated.

5.8 Contact between prisoners and their support networks

The e-mail system of booking visits has settled into a smooth operation. Wednesday morning visits are popular with children of school age in particular. Weekend visits had in the past enabled some prisoners to receive two visits; this has been reduced to one visit per prisoner in line with Prison Service Orders. The Comments/Complaints system introduced this year for visitors enables their concerns to be addressed by the Advisory Committee which meets quarterly in the Visitors' Centre with the IMB represented. **The Board notes that whilst there is normally a member of prison staff in attendance, there is a problem of continuity as a different member of staff attends each time.**

5.9 Engagement between prisoners and staff

In the main the Board is satisfied that relations between staff and prisoners are respectful, the atmosphere is thus mostly calm and unthreatening. Members of staff have only rarely to resort to control and restraint techniques, which seem to be judged by the prisoners, in the main, as legitimate.

5.10 Staff

Members of staff at all grades remain a cohesive and dedicated work force; the levels of patience and tolerance shown at times are exceptional, especially in the SSU and HCC. They always seem to 'rise to the occasion'. Training is a constant part of the workload and is undertaken diligently. **Members of the Board are grateful for the time and care members of staff take to help them do their job: tasks that necessarily add to their own workload.**

Section 6

SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE BY THE IMB IN THE REPORTING YEAR

The past year has been demanding on Board members, who started the year three members short. When five new members were recruited in November it required an immense effort to ensure that training, and monitoring the prison, were both carried out satisfactorily. Members performed their mandatory duties, as well as attending meetings, focus groups and chapel services, better to understand the workings of the prison. The Chair thanks them all for their hard work.

The appointment of five new Board members placed an enormous workload on the Board Development Officers, one who retired in April after 13 years service, and the other who took over in January 2011. The Board is grateful to them for devising and facilitating training programmes that were well structured and gave the new members a solid induction. The appointments also required a great deal of time from the mentors. The Board is also grateful to many members of prison staff for their active involvement in these training programmes. One member of the Board went to the IMB Annual Conference.

BOARD STATISTICS

Recommended complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period	12
Number of new Members joining during the reporting period	5
Number of Members leaving during the reporting period	2
Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	581
Total number of applications received	299
Total number of Segregation Reviews attended	54

APPLICATIONS

Within the prison system:

- Overall, the pattern of applications was the same as in the previous year;
- There were 1844 applications under the Prison Complaint and Request Procedure. As with applications to the Board, the greatest number (236) related to Healthcare. Most applications were resolved at stage one of the procedure;
- There were 146 applications under confidential access: 104 to the Governor; 27 to the Regional Manager.

In terms of applications to the Board:

- There were 318 applications to the Board – a slight fall on last year;
- There were 15 ‘confidential applications’ to the Chair of the Board;
- The issue that attracted by far the most applications (as last year) related to prisoners’ healthcare: 65 (49 last year);
- Applications in respect of prisoners’ property remained high: 46 (excluding those relating to Canteen which is counted within the group “Property”) and, once again, most of these concerned problems in the forwarding of property on transfer from another prison;
- Applications relating to prisoners’ Mail (34 of the complaints grouped under “Family & Visits”) have now increased for two consecutive years;
- Applications over the course of the year revealed no significant peaks or troughs, with the exception of a peak in June in relation to cell quality on one wing, and these applications all related to a blocked shower that was out of use for a few days.

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2010/11	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	TOTAL
A Accommodation													
A1- cell quality	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	9	15
A2- wing/cell allocation	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
B Adjud & seg													
B1- adjud internal	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
B2- adjud external	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B3-R45/49; separation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Diversity													
C1- racial issues ref'd to staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2- racial issues not ref'd to staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3- other racial issues	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
D E/T/E & regimes													
D1- education/employment	3	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	3	16
D2- IEP	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	7
E Family & visits													
E1- visits	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	3	1	1	0	1	14
E2- resettlement issues	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
E3- mail/pin phones	6	4	4	1	1	2	3	5	6	1	1	0	34
F Food & kitchen													
F	2	0	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
G Health													
G	5	3	8	5	6	3	2	5	8	5	5	10	65
H Property													
H1- previous prison	4	1	3	2	2	3	5	3	2	1	3	0	29
H2- current prison	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	3	0	2	3	17
H3- canteen/facilities list	0	1	3	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	10

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I	Sentence related													
	I1- basic sentence inc. remand	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
	I2- HDC	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
	I3- immigration/deportation	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	I4- categorisation	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	6
	I5- police days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	I6- ROTL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
	I7- Parole Board	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	Staff/prisoner													
	J1- about staff	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	2	0	1	1	12
	J2- about prisoner	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	J3- from staff	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
K	Transfers	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	10
L	Misc	4	1	2	0	0	8	5	4	2	3	8	2	39
M	Multiple	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
N	Wrong form	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	27	15	30	17	25	31	26	37	29	14	28	39	----- 318