



ANNUAL REPORT

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

HMP BELMARSH

1 JULY 2010 – 30 JUNE 2011

1. Statutory Role of the IMB

- 1.1 The prisons Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.
- 1.2 The Board is specifically charged to:
 - satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release;
 - inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has;
 - report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in custody.
- 1.3 To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to prison records.

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3. Description of the prison

- 3.1 Belmarsh opened in April 1991. It occupies about 60 acres of what was previously the Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in South East London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall.

- 3.2 It is a local prison as well as a high security establishment. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and Magistrates' Courts in South East London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial.
- 3.3 The Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 799 and the Operational Capacity (the maximum population it can safely and decently hold) is 910.

4. Executive Summary

Chair's Introduction

- 4.1 I am pleased to present the 2011 Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Belmarsh. This is the third and final Report under my Chairmanship and, as noted subsequently, it reflects a generally satisfactory situation.
- 4.2 This is, and has been throughout my five years of service on the Board, a well managed prison, operating within the reasonably resourced High Security Estate of the Prison Service. The Prison's management has coped well with imposed budget constraints and the regime for prisoners has remained broadly satisfactory. Generally speaking, prisoners are safe, treated humanely and fairly and, to the extent allowed by funding constraints, prepared for release at the end of sentence.
- 4.3 Our report identifies the principal matters that should be addressed by Government and National Offender Management Service (NOMS). For the past year, the Prison's High Secure Unit has been designated a Special Secure Unit where, at 30 June 2011, two prisoners were held in isolation from other prisoners. While appreciating the need for this and recognizing that the Unit is operated in accordance with Prison Service Regulations, we are concerned for the long term mental well-being of the individuals held there and urge that consideration be given to measures which might allow at least periodic association with others, within security criteria.
- 4.4 I have been fortunate to have served on the IMB at Belmarsh during a period when both the Prison's managers and members of the Board have been of such high calibre. Belmarsh is a complex prison but the task of chairing the IMB has been made easier by the willing cooperation of Management and the dedication and effort of my Board colleagues. I also thank the Board's Clerk for her hard work and loyalty.

Overview

- 4.5 Throughout 2010/11, Belmarsh operated at close to its Operational Capacity. In most respects it performed well and prisoners were treated humanely and fairly. Resources are managed tightly and expenditure is prioritised carefully, with good forethought and planning. As yet, financial constraints have not had any seriously negative effects on prisoners.
- 4.6 Although relatively modern, important systems (such as heating and alarms) installed when the prison was built are reaching the ends of their lives and need replacing. As well as the cost, the necessary physical installation work will be seriously disruptive and have the potential significantly to restrict the regime available to prisoners for prolonged periods. The Board believes that current local managers have the skills to negotiate the challenges, but the risks are real.
- 4.7 The accommodation for prisoners is decent and satisfactorily maintained. It can become hot in summer but even in the exceptionally cold weather during the winter of 2010/11, it was generally warm enough.

- 4.8 The daily regime for prisoners runs smoothly. However, Belmarsh's unusual status as part of the High Security Estate yet with a high proportion of local and remand prisoners means that many individuals experience a stricter regime than they would in a more normal Local prison. There is an element of institutional unfairness in this, which local managers cannot change.
- 4.9 When reporting, IMBs are asked to raise '*only those matters that give Boards concern and need to be addressed or are examples of such excellence that they ought to be commended and perhaps replicated elsewhere*'. The Board nevertheless wishes to record that Belmarsh staff do a great deal of good, routine, day-to-day work that is not reported or even touched on here.
- 4.10 In the body of this Report, we discuss the significant issues that arose during 2010/11 relating to arrival and induction (section 5), general conditions for prisoners (sections 6-10), purposeful activity and preparation for release (sections 11-12), and discipline and security (sections 13-15).
- 4.11 A full unannounced inspection of Belmarsh by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) took place in April 2011. The Chief Inspector published his report (HMCIP's Report) on 13 September 2011. The inspectors' findings are generally consistent with the IMB's observations throughout the year. The issues that concern the IMB most are summarised in the points for the Minister, the Prison Service and Belmarsh Management listed immediately below. The Board does not underestimate the intractability of some of them. At the root of many is the need for more 'joined-up' working between staff in different areas and less demarcation (see HMCIP's Report, HP18, page 13). They are unlikely to come easily but are nonetheless keys to developing a better prison.

Points for the Minister

- 4.12 In any future review of the national prison estate, reducing the unfairness of holding many local and remand prisoners in a high security prison should be given due weight (para 4.8).
- 4.13 The Board has not yet seen any reduction in the long delays between deaths in custody and inquests (see the 2009/10 report and para 6.9).

Points for the Prison Service

- 4.14 The protracted isolation of prisoners held in the Special Secure Unit poses potential risks for their long term mental health (para 15.2).
- 4.15 Whilst the Board recognises that well managed central contracting can achieve significant savings, there is *prima facie* evidence that in some areas (e.g. IT services, catering) it increases costs for Belmarsh (para 10.1).
- 4.16 Delays in security clearance for new staff (and, incidentally, IMB members) damage the prison's capacity to function efficiently: an example, in 2010/11, was the impact on recruitment of staff required to improve healthcare (para 8.4).
- 4.17 Mobile phone usage is problematic in Belmarsh, as in other prisons. The Board recognises the technical difficulties of achieving perfect blocking of the signals, but believes that even a less than 100% effective system to disrupt mobile phone use is worth thorough investigation.

Points for HMP Belmarsh Management

- 4.18 Aspects of the physical layout of Reception are unsatisfactory – in particular, (i) the lack of an area where confidential information can be obtained from arriving prisoners without the risk of it being overheard and (ii) the poor ventilation in the holding area (para 5.3).

- 4.19 There are too many instances when prisoners are separated from their possessions, sometimes including their medication, longer than is necessary when moved in the prison (para 5.2).
- 4.20 In the continuing absence of permission for the listeners' rota to be used at night, some prisoners are at increased risk (para 6.6).
- 4.21 Diversity training, and its take-up and appreciation by *all* staff, are not satisfactory (para 7.6).
- 4.22 The level of provision of advice and guidance on careers and employment is insufficient to meet the demand for it (para 12.2).
- 4.23 There is a continuing need to improve the effectiveness of the encouragement given to prisoners to engage in purposeful activity (para 12.4).
- 4.24 Practice in enabling prisoners to attend their Good Order or Discipline Reviews is variable and the prison lacks a clear and consistent policy (para 14.4).
- 4.25 Optimising the benefits of the Managing Challenging Behaviour Strategy is being hindered by inadequate recording of observations and attendance at some meetings, which weaken communication (para 14.5).
- 4.26 The Board is not confident that all delays in moving prisoners on from the Segregation (Separation and Care) Unit quickly are justified because it has sometimes proved impossible to obtain accurate information about the reasons for delay (para 14.6).

5. Reception

- 5.1 Belmarsh, as a local prison serving a range of Courts in London and the South East, has a high number of prisoner movements (well over 20,000 per annum). Reception and the First Night Centre in Houseblock 3 are at the sharp end of this action. The treatment prisoners receive is generally fair and humane but there are two unsatisfactory aspects to report.
- 5.2 Handling prisoners' property correctly and reliably is a considerable challenge that the prison does not always meet, as reported by the Board in 2009/10. The situation has improved and the backlog of possessions waiting to be processed has been substantially reduced. The prison is taking steps to reduce the volume of property that has to be held but a range of problems persist (see e.g. para 14.3) and the Board continues to receive a large number of Applications from prisoners about the handling of their possessions.
- 5.3 The Board still has reservations about how private and potentially difficult conversations are managed for those arriving at the prison for the first time. We do not share the concern of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) about having prisoners stand a short distance from the counter behind a yellow line. This is simply a 'reaction' space in case a prisoner tries to assault an officer who is bent over the paperwork. But the arrangements to protect personal and confidential information from being overheard by other prisoners remain unsatisfactory.

6. Safer custody and violence reduction

Prisoners at risk of self harm

- 6.1 Although the statistics can be misleading when the same prisoner self-harms repeatedly, the incidence of self-harming appears to be reducing. Cutting and scratching predominate and the Healthcare Centre is where most incidents of self-harm occur. Peak times (11.00 – 12.30 and 17.00 – 17.30) are the periods immediately prior to the lock up of prisoners in their cells.

- 6.2 The introduction of in-cell/in-possession medication has been generally successful, with the caveat that on at least one occasion a prisoner removed to the Segregation Unit suffered an interruption in the provision of his medication because in-cell possession would have been inappropriate in the Unit. Alternative arrangements should always be put in place without delay because interruption may risk negating the efficacy of treatment.
- 6.3 Safer Cells permit constant or intermittent observation of prisoners *in situ*, without the need for transfer to the Healthcare Centre, allowing them to be observed whilst continuing to benefit from opportunities for association. The Board is pleased to note that the Segregation Unit and (very recently, since the end of our reporting year) the Special/High Secure Unit now each have an additional Safer Cell. Depending on funding, it is intended to provide an additional such cell in Houseblock 1.
- 6.4 During 2010/11, the frequency with which staff opened Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork documents (ACCTs) remained at a similar level to the preceding year. The Board commends Officers for being proactive in this area, and for identifying appropriate interventions following Safer Custody Team guidelines.

Listeners

- 6.5 On 30 June 2011, there were 30 prisoners trained as listeners. Listener rooms on the Houseblocks are well stocked with tea and coffee and are properly available for their intended use. This is an improvement on the situation in 2009/11, when they were sometimes taken over for use by Dedicated Search Teams. The work of the listeners in the First Night Centre is particularly valuable.
- 6.6 Unfortunately, there has been a shortage of trained listeners, particularly in the Healthcare Centre and Houseblock 2. In response, the prison has introduced a rota for listeners, who can be moved as required to the areas of need. The Board commends this good use of the available listeners, and the widening of the support they receive. However, permission for the rota to be used at night has not yet been granted.
- 6.7 The Samaritans continue to train and support the listeners in Belmarsh and the Board commends the work they do. However, security clearance for listeners can cause delays and there is a continuing drain on numbers as trained prisoners sometimes have to be transferred to another establishment to comply with sentence planning.

Deaths in custody

- 6.8 There were five deaths in custody during the reporting year, each of which is being investigated and awaiting an inquest. Reports have been received from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for three and investigations are in progress for the other two.
- 6.9 The Coroner and Ombudsman have been discussing how to shorten the time lapse between a death in custody and the ensuing inquest. A second coroner is to be appointed, which should expedite the inquests. This would benefit grieving families and staff, lessening stress. The Board will monitor the dates for the inquests arising from the five deaths during 2010/11.

Violence reduction

- 6.10 Recorded statistics show a reduction in violence compared to 2009/10, probably a consequence of adoption of the Tackling Anti Social Attitudes (TASA) approach. Belmarsh is to be congratulated on the success of TASA, which is being used as a model throughout the prison estate. An improved system for recording and analysing violence reduction and safer custody statistics is being designed, to give greater depth of information, which should underpin further improvement.

6.11 The Board, in its 2009/10 report, noted that it was too soon to say whether the prison's Managing Challenging Behaviour Strategy (MCBS) was proving successful. This year we can report modest progress, though there is still more to do (see para 14.5).

7. Diversity

7.1 Belmarsh management is alert to equality and diversity issues and addresses them in a range of ways, some of which are exemplified below and in later sections of this report (see e.g. para 9.1 and para 10.2). Where developments, such as an ageing prison population, can be predicted to raise new challenges, advance thinking and planning take place.

7.2 The Measuring the Quality of Prisoner Life (MQPL) survey of December 2010 did not identify particular diversity or equality related issues, though in general Muslim prisoners held more negative views than others. Prisoners felt about as safe in Belmarsh as they do in most comparable prisons. A small proportion, about 5% altogether, of the Applications received by the Board from prisoners during 2010/11 concerned racism, discrimination, bullying, and complaints about staff. On investigation, few of them prompted deep concern.

7.3 In 2009/10, the Board reported that the Diversity Department had become reactive rather than proactive, suggesting that diversity was 'undervalued'. This situation has improved, a judgement confirmed by HMIP after the unannounced inspection of Belmarsh in April 2011 (see HMCIP's Report, HP 21, page 13).

7.4 The Diversity Group is now better established. It has efficient administration and is well supported by the prison's management; thus confidence and attitude have improved. Meetings have been reorganised to suit the 'protected' characteristics of the prison population better. The Group has for some time worked to promote the need for some cells to accommodate prisoners with impaired mobility. The prison has made strenuous efforts to respond and building modifications are in progress. Outdated posters have all been removed and written information on diversity throughout the prison is being updated. Racial Incident Reporting Forms have been improved and Discrimination Incident Forms have been issued for all forms of discrimination. A new software package called '1 Point' is being trialled. It is programmed in 14 languages and is intended to help prisoners with poor literacy or language difficulties, and with some physical disabilities, to communicate their needs.

7.5 Prisoner diversity representatives provide valuable help to other prisoners in various ways. The recruitment and training of new representatives to replace those who are released or moved to other prisons is a constant challenge for Belmarsh.

7.6 Briefing of all prison staff and members of the IMB in diversity matters through the '*Challenge it Change it*' training programme is not satisfactory. Numbers attending have improved substantially since 2009/10 but the mode of delivery has not always been effective and some attendees have not taken it sufficiently seriously. This highlights the single most important diversity-related issue currently for Belmarsh, ensuring that *all* staff recognise the subtlety and complexity of the issues that can arise and reliably adopt best practice. Many already do so, but some do not.

Healthcare

8.1 In previous Annual Reports, the Board has articulated considerable concerns about the quality of healthcare in Belmarsh. However, in 2009/10 there were signs of progress and some optimism was expressed because innovations were underway or planned that were

intended to address weaknesses. It is good to report that such optimism was reasonably well founded.

- 8.2 There have been tangible improvements. For example, the problem regarding non-prioritisation of outpatients' appointments, noted in last year's report (7.17), seems to have been resolved using the IT system, System 1, and this has resulted in an improved attendance at clinics. An appointment card system has been introduced in the dentist and physiotherapy clinics which will, if successful, be extended to other clinics. Nevertheless, with over 20% of all Applications to the Board during 2010/11 relating to healthcare, reaching almost 35% in June, there is clearly still much to do. For instance, inspection in April 2011 found that staff vacancies were affecting service delivery and that some specialist healthcare needs further development (see HMCIP's Report, HP27, page 14).
- 8.3 The most significant development in the reporting period has been the transfer, in February 2011, of responsibility for healthcare to Harmoni for Health, a private provider. After an unsettled period prior to the changeover, healthcare in the prison is in transition, with many positive developments under way, the bedding down of already initiated changes (such as the use of System 1) and active planning for further improvements. This progress has been helped by the Head of Healthcare transferring to be employed by Harmoni. The strong communication link between the Board and staff responsible for provision and delivery of healthcare should enable effective monitoring of planned improvements over the coming year.
- 8.4 The recruitment of suitable nursing staff has been a key issue for some time. Harmoni has started recruiting more Band 6 nurses, who will be able to deliver a higher level of healthcare on each houseblock. The pharmacy team is being enlarged, with the appointment of four pharmacy technicians and a clinical pharmacologist. In general Harmoni's recruitment is effective but the length of time taken for security checks remains a serious problem and means that use of agency nurses must continue in the interim.
- 8.5 Prisoner access to general practitioners (GPs) and the operation of the triage system have been cause for continuing concern, which there are now plans to address. Harmoni is phasing out agency GPs by using their own and is currently recruiting one further GP, with a view to having four to cover Belmarsh and Isis prisons. Houseblock 3 now has an improved GP service, with daily weekday surgeries, to serve the needs of this group of prisoners. With the use of Band 6 nurses on the houseblocks in the future, it is envisaged that the whole triage system will work more effectively. This remains to be seen.
- 8.6 Many prisoners in Belmarsh have mental health problems and, for a proportion of those in the Healthcare Centre, they may be serious. This presents many challenges to medical and discipline staff, which they handle humanely, especially when several prisoners are on multi-unlock status. Although it may take over 12 weeks to transfer a prisoner to more suitable secure hospital accommodation, 20 prisoners were transferred in 2010/11, 17 within 8 weeks, which is a positive trend. The Head of Healthcare monitors the situation each month.
- 8.7 The prison's CASS Unit, providing individually designed occupational therapy care in small groups for prisoners with less extreme mental health problems, is valued by the Board, as an example of good practice, and prisoners themselves (according to the prison's user satisfaction survey). The Board is pleased to report that there have been significantly fewer cancelled sessions than in 2009/10. A positive development since Harmoni's arrival is a contractually agreed link with SLAM (South London and Maudsley), which will provide doctors and access to their research.
- 8.8 It is proposed to develop a Primary Mental Health Service in the prison. Although a start has been made, there is a long way to go with this important initiative, aiming as it does to

recognise mental health difficulties early, before referral, and thereby reduce the need for the In-Reach Team to be involved. It is hoped to include the training in mental health awareness of discipline staff in key areas of the prison (e.g. Segregation Unit, First Night Centre, Reception, Special/High Secure Unit). The Board will report on the impact of the service and on the progress made in the 2011/12 Annual Report.

- 8.9 The In Possession Policy (IPP) for prisoner medications has been implemented across the prison. It is estimated that 90% of all medication is now 'in possession' and the Healthcare Centre's view is that this can be further increased. IPP and, more significantly, the future plan to use pharmacy technicians to dispense medicine on houseblocks should lead to savings in nurse time. Risk assessments need to be reviewed regularly and the Board will monitor continued implementation of the policy to check that it does not increase risks for individual prisoners.
- 8.10 The Long-Term Conditions Service has been running under the supervision of a part-time specialist nurse. However, this provision is now in transition and will change as more Band 6 nurses are in post on the houseblocks and the System1 is used to apply 'clinical codes' to those prisoners who are found, at primary health screening, to have a long-term condition. This early identification should enable the system to provide an easily accessible model care plan for nursing staff to follow, and so lead to improved care for the prisoners concerned. The Board will monitor the impact and, it is hoped, success of these planned changes.

8. Chaplaincy

- 9.1 The support and spiritual help offered to the prisoners at Belmarsh by the Chaplaincy team is a success story. The team itself is diverse, exemplifying that tolerance and understanding between religions can be achieved and harnessed for the greater good. All major religious festivals are celebrated and classes run throughout the year for prisoners to expand their knowledge. Team members often deal with prisoners when they are at their most vulnerable, coming to terms with their sentences and facing the consequences of their actions; also when family issues, such as bereavement or illness, highlight the helplessness of their situation.

9. Kitchen

- 10.1 During 2010/11, the cost of food rose by more than the prison's budget to buy it. The challenge this creates is exacerbated by the central contract that requires purchases to be made from a single supplier. Whatever the system-wide benefits this may bring, it creates inflexibility and (the prison believes) additional costs for Belmarsh, as reported by the Board for several years now.
- 10.2 Nevertheless, the operation of the kitchen is a credit to the prison. Over 900 meals are provided three times a day, supporting all dietary requirements and diet choices (including for Ramadan) as the prisoners move around the prison. Special meals are provided for religious festivals and there are now generally five menu choices.
- 10.3 The number of prisoners working in the kitchens has increased but staff numbers have, at times, been four below full strength. This had improved slightly by 30 June 2011.
- 10.4 The prison received just 18 Requests and Complaints about the kitchens during its reporting year 2010/11: 13 were about the food. The Board receives few formal Applications about meals but members are often accosted on the houseblocks and told of small sized portions.

Monitoring shows that portion sizes vary but are usually adequate and that the food, when tasted, is acceptable or better.

10. Reducing reoffending

- 11.1 Action to reduce reoffending potentially touches almost all parts of the prison and there are many ways that prisoners can be helped to be better prepared for their life after release. In its 2009/10 report, the Board noted that although Belmarsh had a detailed strategy for reducing reoffending there was 'no visible governance of the work being undertaken and no cohesion to all the important work that is being carried out'.
- 11.2 It is good to record that there have been significant changes during 2010/11 and, in particular, much improved governance and coherence. A range of initiatives have been introduced and there is a clear plan for further improvements in 2011/12 and beyond. For example, collaboration with housing associations and other trusts providing support for housing and drug services now starts with offenders when they are in Belmarsh and continues after they have left prison. New therapy areas have been provided in Houseblock 4 and are used for courses and programmes run as part of the Independent Drug Treatment Scheme (IDTS). The IDTS is working well and was rightly commended following the inspection in April 2011 (see HMCIP's Report, HP13, page 12).
- 11.3 More work experience opportunities have been obtained (the prison has been awarded a contract with the British Legion to supply poppies, providing a further 64 prisoner work places) and more are planned (a new rag-cutting workshop; an 8-chamber wormery with 20 work places and the opportunity to obtain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)). It is hoped to set up a radio station providing facilities for prisoners to gain NVQs in broadcasting.

11. Learning and Skills

- 12.1 As reported in 2009/10, learning and skills provision (including the gym and the library) in Belmarsh is well managed and of generally good quality. It was subjected to a full Ofsted inspection during 2010/11, as part of the unannounced inspection of the whole prison by HMIP. No aspect of the provision was adjudged 'inadequate' and a number – notably in the areas of learner outcomes, guidance and support for learners, and the application of self assessment leading to improvement – were graded 'good'. This is an encouraging improvement on Ofsted's findings when it inspected the prison in 2007 and is consistent with the Board's own monitoring throughout 2010/11.
- 12.2 In 2009/10, the Board reported a significant mismatch between the availability of advice and guidance on careers and employment and the demand for it. Staffing has been strengthened and the number of prisoners receiving advice has increased. Nevertheless, the annual Education and Employment Survey of prisoners (January 2011) again indicated that more is needed if every prisoner who wants advice prior to release is to receive it.
- 12.3 Further support for prisoners looking to obtain sustainable employment has been available throughout 2010/11 from the PIANO (Providing Innovation And New Opportunities) project. This two year initiative, co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), built up commendable momentum in Belmarsh during 2010/11, engaging with a significant number of prisoners. Cause and effect cannot be demonstrated, but it is good that, according to the Education and Employment Survey, more prisoners had a job to go to on release in 2011 (33%) than in 2010 (27%).

- 12.4 There have been developments in the provision of opportunities to gain vocational qualifications through the workshops (see para 11.3). Nevertheless, the Board still has concerns about the amount of time prisoners spend on purposeful activities. Those who spoke most positively in the independent Monitoring the Quality of Prisoner Life (MQPL) survey conducted in December 2010 highlighted the areas of education and work. There are inevitably constraints on what can be done within a prison such as Belmarsh, but take-up of even what is available is not always good, despite the continuing efforts of staff to match what is offered to what is wanted.
- 12.5 The roots of the problem lie in the areas of communication and collaboration. Information about what is provided in Education and the workshops is available to any prisoner who looks for it. Education and library staff, in particular, make considerable efforts to supply information by themselves visiting the houseblocks and other residential units. But many prisoners are reluctant participants who would benefit from consistent encouragement and persuasion from all the officers and managers with whom they come into contact. If the Personal Officer system were stronger (see HMCIP's Report, HP18 and HP19, page 13) it would probably help.
- 12.6 The Board recognises that security and other considerations mean that information often has to be provided on a 'need-to-know' basis. Nevertheless, joined-up working by all staff is required to promote educational and other purposeful activities and to provide feedback on their impact to those responsible for delivery. Without it, prisoners will continue too often to miss out on worthwhile opportunities to prepare for their release. This is not fair to them.

12. Substance Misuse

- 13.1 Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) continues to show low levels of drug detection and the Board believes that as much as possible is done to keep the levels of illicit drugs in Belmarsh to a minimum.
- 13.2 The Board understands that 44% of prisoners have alcohol misuse issues when they arrive in Belmarsh. New courses have been established to help combat this problem.

13. Segregation (Separation and Care) Unit

- 14.1 The Segregation Unit is generally well run. Committed and well-trained staff develop good relationships with most prisoners. The atmosphere is usually calm. Occupation was relatively low during 2010/11. The regime and access to purposeful activity are necessarily restricted with only 30 minutes exercise each day. Even this is sometimes disrupted when several prisoners are on a multi-unlock regime. Access to in-cell education and library books have been improved. Use of force statistics are high because of the number of prisoners on a multi-unlock regime. There was only one dirty protest during 2010/11, although some prisoners with such issues have been held in the Healthcare Centre, and special accommodation was used for only two prisoners for short durations of two hours or less.
- 14.2 There was a death in custody in the Unit at the end of the last reporting year (2009/10). The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman report (still awaited) and inquest may address some of the safer custody issues that arise where prisoners are moved from the Healthcare Centre to the Unit. The Board is aware of only one prisoner being held in the Segregation Unit on an open ACCT during 2010/11. This occurred in exceptional circumstances. No other suitable location was appropriate after other options had been tried. Listeners from Houseblock 1 attend the Unit.

- 14.3 There are often seemingly inexplicable delays in moving property and clothing from the houseblock when a prisoner is taken to the Unit, especially following a Dedicated Search Team (DST) search. This is unfair. More seriously, there have been delays in the transfer of medication (see also para 6.2), although they were resolved relatively speedily.
- 14.4 Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) Reviews are generally conducted fairly and well. There are sometimes problems with late attendance and the quality of the contribution from Healthcare varies. Prison rules (PSO 1700) envisage that prisoners have an input in these meetings, especially where goals have been set, and it is undesirable for a Review to take place in their absence. However, as noted in 2009/10, Belmarsh has yet to adopt a consistent policy for the conduct of a scheduled Review when the prisoner is at court or elsewhere and hence unable to attend. This risks unfairness.
- 14.5 Significant efforts are made to encourage prisoners to achieve their goals and move back to normal location. The Managing Challenging Behaviour Strategy has made a major contribution to this in seeking to co-ordinate the care of some of the most difficult and demanding prisoners. Input is received from mental health, psychology, probation, education and others. However, progress can only be effectively monitored if staff record their observations (positive and negative) properly. Too many meetings are not attended by houseblock staff, which hinders the communication necessary to enable particular prisoners to be properly managed on normal location.
- 14.6 There have been a number of long-term residents of the Unit during 2010/11. Their progress is reviewed in quarterly Segregation Monitoring and Review Group Meetings. A few prisoners were in the Unit for as long as five months, one for six. Some are held pending lengthy security or police investigations. Such enquires are not straightforward and must be thorough. However, it often proves difficult for the Board to obtain accurate information on progress and hence be satisfied that delays are justified. Staff leave should not be used as a reason for delay. This is unfair.
- 14.7 Once various interventions have failed within Belmarsh, the decision may be taken that a prisoner needs to be moved to a specialist unit (for example a Close Supervision or Medium Secure Unit). Such prisoners are usually centrally managed. The Board has observed lengthy delays in performing the necessary assessments and sometimes, despite the best efforts of those concerned, further delays in implementing transfer to the appropriate Unit (much of which is outside the prison's own control). It raises the question whether more resources need to be allocated to this area of the prison system.

14. Special/High Secure Unit

- 15.1 Occupation of the Special/High Secure Unit (SSU/HSU) gradually declined throughout 2010/11, as sentenced prisoners were released or transferred to dispersal prisons, and was as low as 8 at the end of the period. Part of the SSU/HSU has to be available in the event of contingencies but the Board, bearing in mind the general pressures on prison populations, hopes that the Prison Service will consider carefully how to optimise use of space in the Unit in the future.
- 15.2 The facility was designated a Special Secure Unit to house a small number of particularly high risk prisoners in June 2010 and there seems to be little prospect of that changing soon. They are held on their own spur and the Board has concerns as to the long-term psychological effects of such prolonged isolation. The sooner these prisoners can be reintegrated into the general population, the better.

15.3 The professional and well-trained staff in the SSU/HSU manage the few individuals that they hold well and deal effectively with day-to-day issues. The SSU/HSU Segregation Unit was rarely used during 2010/11. The use of force is low, which reflects well on the staff. The Unit, however, remains an oppressive and demanding environment. Association and exercise are rarely interrupted but the provision of purposeful activity is limited (a the gym and religious observance). Prisoners can pursue outreach education courses and request library books, but cannot attend education classes or access the workshops because of their high risk status.

16. Applications to the Board

Topic	Number	(2009/10)	%
Healthcare	123	(77)	21
Property	84	(100)	14
Visits (including legal visits)	33	(44)	5
Transfers	32	(27)	5
PINs/Telephone access	29	(30)	5
Category and Sentence Plan	28	(31)	5
Resettlement	26	(29)	4
Regime issues	24	(27)	4
Discipline issues	17	(11)	3
Personal finance	16	(24)	3
Canteen	16	(21)	3
Home detention curfew	15	(1)	3
Racism/discrimination	14	(10)	2
Alleged assaults	10	(16)	2
Accommodation	10	(18)	2
Bullying	9	(31)	2
Kitchen/food	8	(19)	2
Licence recall	8	(10)	2
Mail	7	(11)	1
Drugs/DST	7	(3)	1
Parole/probation	5	(5)	1
Maintenance	4	(-)	1
Foreign nationals	4	(1)	1
Adjudications	4	(11)	1
Complaints about staff	4	(17)	1
Immigration issues	2	(-)	0.5
Bail	1	(-)	0.5
Others	47	(61)	8
Total for year	587	(635)	