



# **HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE**

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**1 JULY 2010 – 30 JUNE 2011**

### **SECTION ONE**

#### **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 Home Secretary 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 and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison 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 concerns it has; and
- 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 its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every offender and every part of the prison and to the offenders' records.

## SECTION TWO

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## SECTION THREE

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

- 3.1 Blantyre House is a category C/D semi-open prison. Following the announced plan to close HMP Latchmere House, it will be one of only two establishments in England and Wales that are given over entirely to the provision of a comprehensive resettlement programme for adult male offenders. Since January 2008 the prison has been jointly managed with the resettlement open prison and young offenders' institution for women at East Sutton Park (ESP) under the title of The Weald of Kent Resettlement Estate.
- 3.2 The establishment's Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 122. The cap on the number of life sentence offenders within that total has recently been removed and is currently over 60, more than half of the total population, and is expected to increase. Close contacts are maintained with feeder prisons and men must meet Blantyre House's criteria for acceptance, namely, no adjudications in the six months prior to transfer, and no convictions for arson, sex offences or terrorism. There is a long waiting list of men wishing to go to Blantyre House, and the prison is always at or close to full occupancy. Determinate sentence offenders are drawn from prisons within in the South East with life sentence offenders coming from a wider catchment area. However, these men will either have family in the area or have expressed a wish to resettle in the South East of England.
- 3.3 The Home Office bought the site in 1952, it was previously a training farm set up in 1911 by James Fegan for boys rescued from the streets of London. It was a Young Offenders Unit until it was re-rolled in 1987, when it became the first Resettlement Prison to be established in the UK. Many of the original buildings remain and the impressive two-storey house block with its clock tower and inner courtyard provides accommodation in 116 single rooms and 3 doubles. Each offender has his own room key and once he has settled into a single room he is allowed to decorate it.
- 3.4 The house block also accommodates the Healthcare Suite and offices for Probation, Offender Management Unit, Counselling Assessment Referral and Throughcare Service (CARATS), Mandatory and Compact Based Drug Testing (MDT and CBDT), Integrated Drug Strategy System (IDTS), and a Cardio-Vascular Exercise Suite. The suite was set up in the house block so that it could be used when the gym was not available. Offenders have to be in the house by 20.30 hrs, and in their rooms by 22.00 hrs. There is a room where snooker and billiards can be played. The courtyard with its ornamental fishponds and planters is another area for relaxation and association.
- 3.5 The other prison buildings are single storey and the grounds surrounding them are extensive. The full size football pitch is used to host Sunday League matches. The Blantyre House team includes both offenders and staff. A compound with farm sheds and poly-tunnels, as well as apple orchards, is only used by offenders if supervised by officers. Elsewhere offenders are able to move freely from one area and one building to another.

- 3.6 Peer support in the form of Insiders is provided in the early days following arrival at Blantyre House. Peer tutors assist in the Job Club/Information Advice and Guidance room as well as the classroom. Listeners do not operate at Blantyre House. The offenders have telephone access to the Samaritans if required.
- 3.7 For the year under review, West Kent PCT has had full commissioning responsibility for Health services available at Blantyre House. The GP team is contracted to the PCT with the two nurses employed by the Prison Service. The Healthcare Manager has responsibilities covering Maidstone Prison, East Sutton Park and Blantyre House, and she visits Blantyre House regularly to provide clinical and managerial support. An Alcohol Awareness course is run at the prison and men are allowed to attend Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings at the appropriate stage in their sentence. CARATS assist and support offenders who have experienced or have issues surrounding drugs. Men sign a compact agreeing to comply with the drug and alcohol free regime and tests are carried out frequently.
- 3.8 Education is provided by the Manchester College. There has been close monitoring of the education contract by the Head of Learning and Interventions with regular meetings being held with the regional contract manager. Resources within the department include two IT suites, a library, art room, workshop and independent classroom facilities.
- 3.9 On arrival, having signed a compact, which includes agreement to participate fully in the regime and take an active part in the preparation and delivery of their sentence plan, offenders undertake a two to three week Induction Pathway course. This course is linked to the NOMS seven pathways to reducing re-offending. The Induction Board, which takes place about six weeks after arrival, sets the targets for the remaining months of the six-month "lay down" period and focuses on the needs of the individual as identified through Pathways. Enrolment on external college courses is subject to a successful Risk Assessment Board at which times all issues concerning ROTL are considered.
- 3.10 Reparation work in the local community is an important part of the resettlement programme. Once risk assessed, groups of four to six offenders, supervised by a prison officer, go out to work on projects. These have included the painting and decorating of local primary schools in the school holidays and Scouts' and Brownies' huts. Other beneficiaries have included parish councils and charity shops. After the initial period of supervision, the offenders go out alone to continue working in the community until they become eligible for paid work.

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Particular Issues requiring a response

- 4(a) Please would the Minister investigate the prescribing of the opiate-based pain killer Tramadol within the closed estate, to establish whether it is being over-prescribed and creating a problem of addiction and/or trading?

- 4(b) Please would the Minister enable NOMS to provide re-offending figures for those establishments which release fewer than 50 offenders per annum, so that the effectiveness of the Blantyre House regime can be properly evaluated?
- 4(c) Please would the Minister consider whether the expertise in Resettlement work at Blantyre House might be established as a template for good practice? In this way, training and advice could be offered to other establishments and assist in developing effective approaches to the rehabilitation of offenders.
- 4(d) Please would the Minister consider allowing travel costs to be met before deductions for Victim Support under the Prisoners' Earnings Act? Blantyre House's rural location necessarily entails high costs for men attending paid work (see 4.4).
- 4.1 During the year under review, Blantyre House has continued to offer a safe and purposeful environment for men who are within about two years of release. The prison maintains a consistent approach to encourage offenders, some of whom have no previous experience of paid work, to believe that they have talents to use in the furtherance of a crime free life. The men are treated with respect and are on first name terms with all members of staff. A relaxed and friendly atmosphere pervades the prison. IMB members receive positive comments from the men about the dedication of staff in assisting them with their resettlement plans, and this year approximately 90% were released into paid employment and 94% into settled accommodation. These are outstanding results.
- 4.2 The work undertaken in the Education department to ensure that the individual needs of each man are assessed and catered for is exemplary. With the energetic guidance of the Head of Learning and Interventions, numeracy, literacy and computer skills are brought up to Level two wherever possible, and some men go on to Level three. External courses are sourced for those requiring training for future employment, while within the prison, painting, decorating, plastering and tiling are taught to City and Guilds Level 1 by a gifted and enthusiastic tutor. Art classes are taught to a high standard, and a number of awards have been won from the Koestler Fund.
- 4.3 Similarly, the staff in IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) are once more deserving of the highest praise for their patience, hard work and ingenuity in assisting offenders to find jobs in the most difficult economic circumstances. All this has taken place with low staffing levels and great personal commitment. During the year under review, the number of men in paid work has varied from month to month between 21 and 36; while between 10 and 20 men have been unemployed. Delays in obtaining security clearance for work placements have reduced, as efforts have been made to streamline the employment process. There has been an uphill struggle with a small number of men who were reluctant to accept either the principle of working or the practice.
- 4.4 At the time of writing the Prisoners' Earnings Act, which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011, obliges all the men working outside the prison who earn in excess of £20 a week to make a contribution of 40% of their net earnings after tax and National Insurance to Victim Support. No allowance is permitted for travel costs or food, with the result that almost all of the 28 men currently in paid work are facing a deficit from their modest incomes. However well-intentioned the legislation, we are concerned that it will act as a disincentive to work for a population who are seriously in need of resettlement. It will also place a burden on families, who might be asked to lend money to subsidise travel and food costs. Local work is being sought for men who can no longer afford to travel to London, which is regrettable for those who will resettle in the capital.

- 4.5 The prison continues to manage the risks associated with the challenges of a population which is no longer selected by interview, but sent from other prisons if they meet Blantyre's criteria. There has been a marked shift in prisoner attitude, and the problems noted in last year's annual report continue to cause concerns. The number of Adjudications has increased from the same period last year. In the year under review, there were 38 Internal Adjudications and another 7 referred to the External Adjudicator. Last year's figures were 27 and 2 respectively, indicating an increase of 50%. As most of the prison's risks are being managed in the community, this is a disconcerting trend and indicates a need to review the staffing and organisation of the Security Department, particularly in light of serious offences committed by men on ROTL.

The IMB notes the extra work undertaken by Security to try and counter the large number of DVDs smuggled into the prison, with between 20 and 40 finds a month. Although relatively petty, this is another indicator of offender attitudes. The IMB has concerns about whether other, more worrying items are also entering undetected

- 4.6 Alongside the failure to comply with prison rules indicated in the rise in Adjudications, the "pro-offending" attitudes shown by some offenders continue to cause concerns. Men arrive at the end of long sentences still in denial of the effects of their crime and lacking victim empathy. This might be consistent with "prison culture", but does not offer reassurance about the effectiveness of courses aimed at addressing these issues.
- 4.7 In its last Annual Report, the IMB stated that IDTS is not suitable for Blantyre House, as it is against the ethos of the prison and undermines the prison's strategy of placing men in paid employment. Despite the fact that the prison has a drug free regime, a budget of £153,000 was allocated in 2010, which was wholly disproportionate to the prison's needs. From January 2011, two agency nurses travelled on a daily basis from London although there were no users of IDTS and it is unlikely that there will be any uptake of this service. At a time of budget constraints, when parts of the prison were hard pressed to maintain services at an acceptable level, the waste of money on staffing and the construction of a secure pharmacy to hold methadone supplies is of great concern. The work already undertaken in relapse prevention by CARATS is sufficient to meet the needs of the men, who can also access Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous if needed.
- 4.8 It came to light that twelve men, or 10% of the population, had arrived at Blantyre House with prescriptions for Tramadol, an opiate-based pain killer. It was initially suggested that this was being taken to control pain associated with weight lifting, but the IMB has subsequently been told that the drug is being traded widely in the prison system. This raises questions about prescribing policy in the closed estate.
- 4.9 Whereas last year there were a number of men whose release was delayed by the slowness of the Parole Board, the backlog has now been cleared. It remains the case that men who are serving indeterminate sentences for public protection are in all cases over tariff.

## **SECTION FIVE ISSUES THAT MUST BE REPORTED ON**

### **5.1 Diversity**

The IMB pays tribute to the hard work and dedication of the Diversity Manager, and hopes that in the future Blantyre House will be able to maintain the high standards he has established.

As last year, no diversity issues of serious concern have occurred. Three Discrimination Incident Forms were submitted during the year (compared to none last year). One related to a complaint from a member of staff about an offender's offensive language and the other two, by the same offender, alleged race discrimination by staff. No evidence was found in one and the second is subject to on-going investigation by an external Governor.

During the year the regulations governing the monitoring of diversity changed following a new PSI (32/2011). This saw a further widening of the areas of diversity requiring monitoring and management. The Diversity Manager and others are in the process of working through the implications of this, identifying risk areas and establishing appropriate audit systems to suit local conditions. In the meantime, the existing systems, which already encompassed the key areas, are being maintained. Monthly Diversity meetings are now conducted by video link with ESP. This makes it easier for staff and offender representatives to attend and saves time and money. However, it does not necessarily improve the quality of discussion.

Last year there were a number of issues which arose over the needs of Moslem, disabled and elderly offenders. Efforts have been made during the year to remedy them

#### **BME and Moslem issues**

The BME proportion of the prison has remained fairly constant at 35%. The KPT for Race Equality (prisoners) scored 82.1% at the end of March 2011 (90.9% end March 2010).

The issues for Moslem offenders largely concerned food, in particular the serving of Halal meat and preparations for Ramadan. These all now appear to be satisfactorily resolved. However, the HMCIP inspection in summer 2010 did highlight negative perceptions among BME and Moslem offenders about their treatment. Personal letters and questionnaires were sent out, with the assistance of the Imam, to all BME and Moslem prisoners seeking their opinions. However, these have elicited very little response. At the time of the inspection there was one fairly vociferous Moslem offender at Blantyre House who was returned to closed conditions shortly afterwards. While it is hard to prove, he may possibly have been responsible for stirring up discontent among other residents. In order to make sure there are no underlying issues of concern a full Equality Impact Assessment is to be carried out in the coming months on the regime for BME offenders.

One particular issue highlighted by the SMART monitoring system in recent months has been the consistently lower number of ROTLS granted to BME offenders. This is also to be investigated.

Complaints received in recent months were also disproportionately from BME offenders. However, this was almost entirely a result of complaints received from

one BME offender (12 out of 14 in one month). This particular offender (who also submitted the two Discrimination Incident Forms mentioned above) has now left Blantyre House, and following his departure it is highly likely that equilibrium will be restored. His case is now subject to external review.

### Disability

Last year there were issues over disability access, particularly for one offender with multiple sclerosis. Various adaptations were recommended, which have now been completed. The only concern is the time it took for the works to be carried out. It was so slow that the offender in question had already been released by the time some adaptations (including a wheelchair ramp into the dining room) had been completed.

### Elderly offenders

About 20% of Blantyre House's population is over 50. (24 offenders are now over 50 and two are past retirement age; in June 2010 there were 16 over 50s.) During the year, the Diversity Manager sent out questionnaires to all older prisoners to see if they had any particular concerns. In response to their feedback, contact has been made with Age Concern which is now providing the prison with literature on issues such as pension entitlements and retirement. Arrangements are also in place for offenders to visit the charity for further advice if necessary. In addition, age related concerns have been added to the prison's central disability log to help with the management of older offenders.

### Cultural activities

Last summer saw a series of special events to coincide with the football World Cup, which proved very popular. While it is not always easy to get offenders actively involved in cultural activities, occasional cultural meals are welcomed and there are plans for music quizzes and other activities to coincide with Black History month in October.

### External Links

An ACA Standard 48 audit conducted last year felt there should be more community involvement with Diversity issues and external representation at Diversity meetings. The prison already has good links with the local community, particularly through its project work. The Diversity Manager has also joined and attends meetings of the Kent Equalities Network and the West Kent Minority Ethnic Forum. However, external representation at Diversity meetings continues to be a challenge.

## **5.2 Learning and Skills**

Under the leadership of an outstanding Head of Learning and Interventions, supported by a small but very dedicated team of tutors, Education and Training for Employment is a very strong suit at the prison. Always bearing in mind the needs of potential employers and the requirements of self-employment, the prison offers a range of courses. These include ITQ (Information Technology Quality) – the latest qualification recognised by employers; functional skills (including literacy and

numeracy) which have a direct application to the workplace; courses dealing with budgeting, business enterprise, self-employment skills and preparation for work. A new City and Guilds course covering painting, decorating and tiling is very popular and is taught by an exceptional tutor. There is a possibility of a brick laying course being introduced and the Board would welcome this addition.

Several good candidates are pursuing NVQ courses in catering and one has a placement in the renowned Clink restaurant at HMP High Down.

With the opportunities available and the hard working staff in IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) it is disappointing to report that some offenders are not engaging in community work or in retaining or seeking external paid employment. This development leads to job placements being lost. Clearly this is against the ethos of the prison and those who are failing to engage are depriving other offenders of an opportunity to better their chances of resettlement.

The contract with the Manchester College seems to be working more satisfactorily than at the last report, and it is noticeable that fewer men arrive at Blantyre House needing entry level Literacy or Numeracy teaching than was the case just a few years ago. In fact, the men tend to arrive with quite a lot of qualifications, and Basic Skills Assessments are rarely required.

### **5.3 Healthcare**

The Prisons Clinical Governance Group is now constituted as a Standing Committee of NHS West Kent Quality Committee.

The purpose is to ensure consistency in reporting mechanisms, standardise approaches to clinical governance and enhance NHS West Kent's engagements with the Prison Service within West Kent.

The healthcare team at Blantyre House continue to provide an excellent service to the men.

The IMB did have some concerns about the length of time that the prison was without a counsellor. Several men with real need who had been waiting a long time to see someone requested assistance from the IMB. A counsellor was appointed, but the changes in the Healthcare contract mean that she is no longer in post and the needs of the men are not being met.

### **5.4 Safer Custody**

Meetings are held every three months by special permission, as the incidents of self-harm and other risks of harm are considered to be low. No ACCT documents were opened during the year, and the one paper threat of harm was dealt with appropriately. The offender was monitored carefully before being transferred out for other reasons. Some anti-bullying measures were required, and Insiders performed a valuable role in support of vulnerable prisoners.

There is a concern that no ACCT document has been opened since 2008. Staff training is up-to-date, but there is a significant risk of complacency because of the low incidence of risks of harm.

## SECTION SIX

### OTHER AREAS MONITORED

#### 6.1 Security

During the past three years, the IMB has become concerned at the increased risk profile of the men held at Blantyre House and the need for the Security Department to be staffed and managed in a way which is proportionate to managing the higher level of risk. We note that internal security is failing to deal with the large number of DVD's being brought into the prison; between 20 and 40 are being found during area searches each month. This raises a question of whether other, more worrying items are being imported, and whether the perpetrators are solely offenders. There has been an increase in serious offending by men on ROTL, and although the number of instances is small, this suggests that much closer attention needs to be given to decisions made at the Risk Boards and the monitoring of offenders on return to and outside the prison.

The number of Adjudications has increased from the same period last year. In the year under review, there were 38 Internal Adjudications and another 7 referred to the External Adjudicator. Last year's figures were 27 and 2 respectively, indicating an increase of 50%. The Board does not attend more than a very few internal Adjudications, but does monitor the process and outcome of each adjudication through the paperwork, as well as noting the number of appeals made, which were none - both in this and the previous year.

As a dedicated resettlement prison, Blantyre House needs to spend much of its time assessing, and reassessing, changes in risk. Apart from the scheduled Risk Boards, the prison has developed extraordinary Boards (Special Circumstance Risk Boards, SCRBs) to deal with the changing risk particularly as it relates to the disciplinary process. Since October 2009 there has been a protocol to ensure proper authorisation for any changes to the Sentence Plan, with the additional benefit of increased transparency around the decision.

During the reporting year, there were 78 SCRBs. The vast majority followed Proved Adjudications, or information received. In these cases, the SCRB decisions related to managing risk if prisoners were to continue within the resettlement regime. Thus, they do not have a punitive aspect and, although perhaps requiring a prisoner to postpone a couple of town visits, college or work activities might be allowed to continue.

16 of the total were in response to the need for prisoners to be allowed to have educational or work opportunities slightly before the due time. Typically college or work placement dates could be brought forward this way. Not all applications were approved, depending on the assessed risk; thus 1 of the 10 educational and 1 of the 4 work requests were not allowed.

## **6.2 Pathways**

From the start of 2011, the IMB has undertaken the monitoring of the Pathways laid down at the Sentence Planning stage by Blantyre House.

This has been done as a way of trying to evaluate the efficacy of the regime, and its outcomes. Sadly, the most important measure, the re-offending rate, is not available as NOMS does not collect statistics for prisons releasing fewer than 50 people a year

## **6.3 Accommodation**

The prison puts a high priority on finding suitable accommodation for prisoners before they are discharged. Key performance targets have been high, currently 95%, and as high as 100% (achieved) in one recent year. The reporting year's outcome figure of 94% reflects the 3 prisoners (of 51) who could not be found properly settled accommodation.

Although this shortfall is unfortunate, the Board has been particularly impressed by the prison's efforts and, largely, success in this area.

## **6.4 Debt & Finance**

Men in need of assistance with financial management are identified at their Sentence Planning Board when they first come to Blantyre House. Having all spent time in other prisons, they have almost always, if required, had some assistance already, for example with freezing credit card payments. Some may also have had basic training in money management.

If further input is deemed necessary, men are offered further training or one-to-one advice. Blantyre House's Education department offers an accredited OCN course in Budgeting and Money Management. The numbers attending are low; four attended in July 2010 (all passed) and five in June 2011 (awaiting results). The course is particularly useful for men who have been in prison for some time and may be unfamiliar with modern banking. The tutor is able to tailor the course to some extent to cover the needs of her students. For example, she was recently able to provide advice on Sharia-compliant financing options to Moslem men attending. The course is, however, not specifically targeted at the prison population and focuses solely on practicalities, rather than attitudes to money which may perhaps have triggered offending behaviour in the first place.

The courses are only run when there is sufficient demand. There is occasionally a risk that men miss out because the course is only full enough to run after they have started paid work, making it difficult for them to attend. This is inevitably a problem in smaller establishments like Blantyre; ways of avoiding such problems through careful timetabling are being explored.

Further advice and support on money matters is provided through IAG, though requests are infrequent. A debt advisor used to visit the prison once a week to offer advice, but this system has now changed. The prison now has an agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for financial advice. An application has to be submitted and then a slot is booked with the CAB advisor for a telephone advice session. IAG also provide assistance with opening bank accounts, if required, six weeks before men start paid work. The staff member who used to deal with financial queries and bank accounts has recently left and has not yet been replaced; other members of staff are taking on her workload in the meantime. The new system will

be monitored to ensure that the quality of provision does not diminish as a result of these changes.

## **6.5 Drug & Alcohol Awareness**

Men arriving at Blantyre House are required to be drug free and to sign a compact agreeing to abstain from drugs and alcohol. Many have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse, and in some cases this is linked to their index offence, so great emphasis is placed on relapse prevention through CARATS. All men are breathalysed on return from ROTL and MDTs and CBDTs are frequently carried out.

During the previous year to July 2010, there was only one positive MDT, but in the past year there has been a large increase. Unfortunately, the method of recording MDT results makes it impossible to establish the exact number, in that positive MDT's resulting from tests carried out "on suspicion" are not counted in the overall statistics.

The changing population at Blantyre House means that the men are much more likely to "push the boundaries" and there have also been fairly constant problems with the smoking of Spice, an illegal cannabis substitute, and the use of Steroids. In both cases testing is problematic, but the drugs are very harmful. It also transpired that twelve men arrived at Blantyre House as regular users of Tramadol, an opiate-based pain killer. The Healthcare nurses took action to deal with the problem swiftly, but the IMB is concerned about inappropriate prescribing policies in the Closed Estate and that these drugs are being traded.

There was some annoyance amongst the prisoners over the introduction of IDTS as they stated that they had succeeded in dealing with their own addiction problems, and would not be happy to have Methadone users in their midst. Despite the enormous expenditure on creating a secure pharmacy and employing two agency nurses during the first six months of 2011, IDTS has not had a single client and remains unlikely to do so. Its work has been merged with that of CARATS.

## **6.6 Family Ties**

Immense care goes into improving family bonds in preparation for release, and there are excellent facilities for family visits. Release on Temporary Licence allows men who have been risk assessed to visit approved friends or family at the weekends, and so ease the transition to release.

Six Family Days are held each year and they are scheduled for the school holidays. These days are for offenders who are not eligible for town visits so that they can have the opportunity to spend a whole day with their children and adjust before they have town visits. Offenders usually have access to two family days before their risk board.

The days are carefully planned with the offenders so that their children's interests, ages and activities can be successfully targeted. The number of offenders participating at each Family Day varies and depends on how many in "lay down" have children who are able to attend. Usually between five and twelve offenders invite their children and a maximum of two or three adults.

The Librarian does "Storybook Dads" and offers it to all offenders when she meets them at their induction.

## **6.7 Health and Fitness**

New arrivals are seen in Healthcare, and given whatever advice is needed concerning diet, physical and mental health. Referrals can be made if necessary to the volunteer counsellor or to external medical professionals. The objective is to ensure that in the two years prior to release the men deal with any issues which could harm their ability to live and work in the community. Healthy lifestyles are taught, with emphasis on smoking cessation, drug and alcohol awareness, physical fitness and diet.

Plans to improve physical fitness are agreed with the Physical Education Instructors (PEI's) and any special dietary requirements communicated to the kitchen. Regrettably, the staffing levels in the gym have been reduced due to the shared arrangements with East Sutton Park, but the grounds provide good opportunities for exercise and the cardiovascular suite is available in the evenings.

During the year, there have been a number of angry complaints in the Comments book in the Dining Room, particularly when on two occasions, food ran out and some men went without an evening meal. The problems were quickly identified and resolved, at the same time the quantity of food was increased generally. Overall, the kitchen managers are to be commended for the quality and variety of food produced. Great efforts go into periodically providing ethnically diverse menus.

Concerns were highlighted by the IMB earlier in the year around hygiene and cleanliness in the dining room. We are delighted to report that many of the issues have been dealt with and the dining room and kitchen have had a deep clean. This has resulted in a 5\* award during the recent Environmental Health Inspection. Part of the ongoing agreement with the men is that tables are cleared once a week to enable thorough cleaning. This requires close monitoring.

Menu changes this year caused some anger with the men but this has settled down and the IMB's observation is that they still have excellent choice and quality at all meals, though complaints about portion size are not unusual.

The IMB is keen to encourage the use of home produced fruit and vegetables in the dining room, and hope that the lower compound will be put to better use. The introduction of bee hives and commercial production of apple juice from the orchard are both excellent initiatives.

## **6.8 Training for Employment**

The challenges faced by IAG in securing employment for the men have been immense. The economic downturn has reduced the number of jobs available and the competition for every job has become intense. To assist the men with the challenge of job interviews, a course has been offered to help them address presentation skills, including disclosure of their criminal record. Historically, Blantyre House has released over 90% of offenders into full time paid employment, but the effects of the recession and the Prisoners' Earnings Act will almost certainly reduce this. The target for employment on discharge is 80%, and the prison has so far managed to exceed it.

## **6.9 Chaplaincy**

Blantyre House offers worship and ministry of various faiths to meet the religious needs of offenders. Services are held regularly and care is taken to respect the festivals of different faiths.

The main body of the Chapel is open and welcoming to all and provides flexibility of use, allowing the space to be used for secular purposes when appropriate, for example, on Family Days and for groups to watch major events such as the Royal wedding on TV. At the rear of the Chapel, there are offices where those wishing to speak in private can be received.

During the past year, the Imam has acted as Co-ordinating Chaplain, while the appointment of an Anglican priest has been awaited. Given that the previous Chaplain departed in June 2009, the slowness in appointing a successor is frustrating, but at the time of writing we are told that interviews have been held and a new Chaplain is soon to be in post. In the interim, the lay chaplaincy team has worked hard to ensure that the spiritual needs of all are attended to, and access to ordained clergy of various denominations is facilitated. The Imam has been helpful in advising the prison on practical steps for those observing Ramadan. The Chapel contains an area of worship for Moslems, who number about 20. The Imam also offers classes in Arabic to assist in the study of the Koran.

## **SECTION SEVEN**

### **THE WORK OF THE IMB**

- 7.1 Membership of the IMB has been at full complement of ten during the year, with two resignations and two new appointments.
- 7.2 Applications were up from three last year to twelve. There was no pattern to the issues raised, which were highly diverse and none was of a worrying nature.
- 7.3 Members sit as observers at all meetings and observe the Sentence Planning Boards and Risk Boards. The former in particular is a valuable training experience for new members to learn about the way in which the prison works and to introduce themselves to some of the men.

### **IMB STATISTICS**

Recommended Complement of Members	10
Number of members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of members at the end of the reporting period	10
Number of members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within reporting period	2
Total number of attendances at meetings other than IMB meetings	228
Total number of visits to the prison (all meetings)	330
Total number of applications received	12
Total number of segregation reviews held	0
Total number of segregation reviews attended	0

- 7.4 Eight members of the IMB visited Ford Open Prison in September 2010. In January 2011, there was a Serious Incident Training day for Blantyre House IMB members, taught by a National tutor. Although members of staff were invited, only one was able to attend. A joint meeting was held with the IMB of East Sutton Park.
- 7.5 Two members attended the National Conference in September 2010. The two new members took part in the Foundation Course in April this year, and other members attended Chairmanship, Vice Chairmanship and Board Development Officer training

***Jane Day***  
***Chairman***  
***Independent Monitoring Board***