



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

At

HMP LANCASTER CASTLE

ANNUAL REPORT

**FOR PRESENTATION TO THE
SECRETARY OF STATE**

For the period

01.02.09 – 31.1.10

2009 REPORT

This report covers the period 01.02.09 to 31.01.10 (“the 2009 report”)

Membership of the Board

Mrs S.E.J Hargreave - Chairman
Mr R Skelly JP - Vice Chairman
Mrs S Clarke
Mrs J Huddart
Mrs W Lane
Miss J Norris
Mr J W A Price
Mr M Smith MBE
Mr G R Ward

Mr J Price is also an independent interviewer for national IMB appointments.

Mr G R Ward is a member of the National Disciplinary Group and the local cluster speaker group.

Mrs S Hargreave is a member of the Diversity Working Group.

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:

- (1) 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.
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- (3) **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 prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

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Description of the prison

3.1 Lancaster Castle is a Category C training prison with certified normal accommodation (CNA) for 159 male prisoners and an operational capacity (op cap) of 243. The prison occupies the major part of Lancaster Castle, a Grade 1 listed building, which is on lease from the Duchy of Lancaster. The prison is in the town centre, conveniently placed between bus and train stations but with wholly inadequate parking for staff and visitors. Courts are held in the rest of the Castle and that part of the building is open to tourists. The prison consists of ancient buildings of irregular plan. Development is severely restricted as it has to take place within the high surrounding wall and must comply with the demands of English Heritage.

3.2 There are three wings: A, B and C, one of which has five landings. There is still some dormitory accommodation on two of the wings but the majority of men are housed in what should be single cells. With the present state of overcrowding in prisons these are usually occupied by two men. There are no dining rooms and men are eating their meals in cells, within a few feet of the in-cell lavatory. Meals arrive in heated trolleys from the kitchen to the ground floor serveries on the wings. Some prisoners will have to carry them up five floors to their cells.

3.3 The wings surround a hard exercise yard with a few bench seats and there is a further yard for use by prisoners in the segregation block. Education, chapel and library are situated in the Norman keep. The kitchen is in a single storey portacabin which is in a poor state of repair. An administration block is situated in the outer wall of the castle and further office accommodation is down the hill in Church Street. Every square metre of space has been creatively used, so that there is now a further collection of one and two storey portacabins. There are two handkerchief sized pieces of garden which are made to look as attractive as possible, but there is no area of grass which could be used by prisoners for sport. There is a well equipped gym.

3.4 The Visitor's Centre is situated outside, immediately opposite the main gateway. This is a hall leased from the nearby Priory church for the purpose. Education is provided by Lancaster and Morecambe College. North Lancashire Primary Care Trust provides the Healthcare.

Executive Summary

4.1 Issues for the Minister

There are issues which have been raised before. IMB understand that in the present economic climate little can be done about them; nevertheless they are important and should be brought to the Minister's attention.

- We reiterate our concerns about the need to replace the dormitory accommodation with individual cells (3.2). We have mentioned this each year since 1999.
- Overcrowding is an issue (3.2). Prisoners should not have to eat in a cell in close proximity to the lavatory, it is neither humane nor decent.
- Over the weekend of 26/27 September 2009 a remand prisoner was transferred from HMP Liverpool to the prison.

4.2 Issues for the Area Manager

- We believe that there is a demand for a wider scope of purposeful activity, reflecting the requirements of outside employees.
- The prison kitchen is really getting to the end of its useful life.
- IMB recognise the need to move Governors but this should either lead to the immediate appointment of a permanent new Governor, or that detached duty should be for a clearly stated period of time not an indefinite period which is unsettling for staff.
- Too many prisoners are transferred to the prison without OASys attachments.

4.3 Issues for the Governor

- Prisoners from minority groups should be spread equally across the wings so that other prisoners do not think that grouping them together is positive discrimination.
- IMB are concerned that it is difficult for prisoners trying to come off drugs in a prison where other prisoners are in possession of their own medication – this needs closer monitoring to see that medication is neither lost or sold (ref from Healthcare report).
- We are pleased to see the progress with the Visitors Centre and hope that links with the community can be strengthened with more young volunteers.
- The Governor and Senior Management Team need to work together to avoid slippage over small details such as punctuality and litter and encourage all staff to take a pride in raising standards.

4.4 Overall Judgement

The IMB find much that is good at Lancaster Castle. It is a centre of excellence for rehabilitation and resettlement and it is building good links to help prisoners to settle back into the community on completion of their sentences.

The IMB recognise that changes of staff are inevitable but feel that the deployment of a Governor for a long and indeterminate period of detached duty is unsettling for staff and has a serious effect on morale. This is particularly unfortunate when other senior members of staff change at the same time as a result of further detached duty, resignations or retirement. A

change of Governor can be accepted and a new team quickly built, but a temporary appointment of uncertain length can lead to a situation where staff adopt a laissez-faire attitude and delay decisions until a permanent appointment is made. Staff concentrate on running their own department and do not always work so well as a team so that standards can slip imperceptibly.

Areas that must be reported on

5.1 Diversity Statement

5.1.1 The IMB at Lancaster Castle is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses and promotes greater interaction and understanding from people from different backgrounds, including race, religion, gender, nationality, marital status, disability and age. We recognise that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cross social and cultural categories such as mental health, literacy and drug addiction.

5.1.2 The Board values this approach to diversity and within its recruitment and Board Development practices aims to increase its repertoire of skills, and members' awareness of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within Lancaster Castle.

5.1.3 All members of our IMB will undertake their duties in a manner which is accessible to everyone in the establishment, regardless of their background or social situation. The Board will monitor to establish that the experiences and interactions between staff, prisoners and visitors are fair and without prejudice. If this is not the case the Board will alert appropriate authorities and individuals, including the Governor, Senior Management, Area Manager and the Prisons Minister.

5.2 Diversity Report

The various departments in the prison have worked steadily to try and ensure fair treatment of all prisoners, especially those who belong to minority groups. In addition to aiming to make this an inclusive prison they have coped with 'ticking the boxes and meeting the targets'. This happens in all prisons but the time spent on paperwork would sometimes be better spent on helping the actual prisoners. The new single Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was introduced at the end of August and this has simplified paperwork somewhat. It requires managers to test their new and existing policies for any unfairness towards all people from minority groups.

DREAT meetings are held bi-monthly and attended by Heads of Departments and prisoner representatives from each wing. IMB and Community representatives are welcome but sometimes find it difficult to attend when meeting dates are changed at short notice. Prisoner representatives work with new prisoners on induction. They also liaise with the Racial Equality Officer and report any problems. There are not many racial incidents and they are usually verbal abuse. They are carefully recorded and investigated. An external scrutineer checks the forms.

There is a Foreign Nationals Prison Co-ordinator. Currently 10.5% of prisoners are black or from other ethnic minorities. If non English speakers arrive, literature and translation services are found to help them. The prison has two translating telephones and staff are being trained to use them. A less obvious problem occurs when prisoners speak good English but do not necessarily read it or understand everything that is said to them. One prisoner commented to IMB that it would be useful to have more pictures, particularly when making his menu choices.

The largest ethnic group is usually Asians. Initially they were put into the dormitory accommodation during Ramadan to facilitate their need to eat after sundown instead of

following the same pattern of meals as other prisoners. However, this group of prisoners stayed together after Ramadan and occupies two dormitories rather than being spread over three wings, which has always been the policy with foreign nationals. This is perceived by some of the other prisoners as being unfair. We are concerned that all minority groups should be seen to be treated equally. We are pleased at the contribution Muslims make to the life of the prison and the kitchen now employs a full-time Muslim caterer. A Muslim prisoner has recently gained an NVQ in the kitchen and all prisoners are more aware of the need to keep halal food and utensils separate, with training being given to orderlies who work on the serveries.

Links with the local community are good. Cakes and some prisoners' artworks were donated for sale at the Fairfield Association Summer Fayre. A Scottish themed tea party, complete with a pipe band was held for Cancer Care volunteers and carers. Staff and prisoners worked to raise money for National Breast Cancer Awareness week. A member of the Morecambe Chinese community attended the Resettlement Fair at the prison.

Diversity events are held throughout the year so that different groups can celebrate their religious and cultural festivals. This year Lancashire Day was celebrated. An African evening was very enjoyable, with good food and music. All departments are involved in these events with good displays and art work from Education and some varied and interesting menus. The Education Department showed two films on Holocaust Day, 'Schindler's List' and 'The Killing Fields', followed by discussion. The Diversity Manager attended the Gypsy Roma Summer Conference at Woodlands, near Chorley. Representatives from all the Local Authorities in the area were present but Lancaster Castle was the only prison represented. The event celebrated Traveller achievement and provided a forum for discussion on engaging with the Traveller community.

The Disability Officer keeps good records. There is now a Prisoner Carer Scheme set up to help elderly or disabled prisoners. A cell is to be converted for use by such prisoners and a shower has been designated for their use. Lancaster Castle is not a suitable prison for prisoners with mobility problems as it is a listed building with many steep stone steps. English Heritage has to approve even minor alterations. Recently a prisoner found difficulty accessing the chapel and discussion is ongoing about surmounting such problems. Personal evacuation plans are also in place for disabled prisoners who might need them. The largest group of prisoners declaring a disability are those with learning difficulties, particularly dyslexia. There is screening available on induction and help is given in the Education Department.

A draft of a new Decency Policy is being reviewed by managers and staff. The Equal Opportunities Policy is taken seriously and there has been a slight increase in female staff in the last two years. The staff remain predominantly white British, reflecting the population in the area.

There is a new Sexual Orientation Policy. The prison has also introduced the training for 'Challenge It, Change It' – a course designed to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace and training is also planned for prisoner representatives. The GALIPS representative attended a North West Meeting in Manchester.

5.3 Learning and Skills

Learning and Skills are provided by Manchester College (previously Lancaster and Morecambe College), which holds the contract for Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) at Lancaster Castle and at a number of other prisons in the North West. When prisoners arrive at the Castle some of them only have a very short time left to serve so they are assessed to see what courses are relevant to their needs and can also be completed within the time available. They get an individual learning plan (ILP). Unfortunately with the current overcrowding in

prisons many prisoners find themselves suddenly moved to another prison and so courses are not always finished. Paper records of achievement sometimes get lost in transit and prisoners who need to do a particular course arrive at a prison where it is not available. Hopefully when C-NOMIS gets fully under way records will be transferred more easily.

All prisoners are screened during the education part of the induction process. If difficulties are picked up then, or prisoners self-refer, a more specific dyslexia screening takes place. Dyslexia support staff are involved in a referral to a specialist tutor. The dyslexia tutor comes in once a week and will see 4-5 prisoners in one day. Other support staff may see prisoners, depending on when these prisoners are available. A prisoner who has learning difficulties will usually be seen once a week for 35 minutes by support staff. There is a writer in residence who works with prisoners of all levels of ability on creative writing, poetry and a magazine. She also helps them to write and illustrate 'Storybooks for Dads' to be sent to their children. She is made aware of strategies to help those with learning difficulties, special equipment, use of tape recorders, drama etc. Some excellent and imaginative work is produced.

The average length of stay for a prisoner at the Castle is three months. Courses are provided in basic literacy and numeracy and in personal and social development. Learners can study at different levels and there is an Open Learning Centre which can accommodate higher level learners. Provision is of good quality and some useful skills are taught. The industrial cleaning course leads to a Level One in Industrial Cleaning and is divided between learning practical skills half time and putting them into practice by spending the other half of their time cleaning in the prison. This has improved the cleanliness of the prison considerably, although prisoners and staff are not very litter conscious. It must be discouraging for the cleaners to see how quickly litter is dropped again. Painting and Decorating are taught with places for 8-10 prisoners and 5 prisoners work in the laundry. Laundry is no longer sent out to Haverigg since extra machinery has made it possible to do it all in-house, which is more cost effective. Sign making has started and two prisoners work on this. Prisoners working in the library do a Customer Relations Course and are also encouraged to do an IT Course; those working on the serveries do a Food Hygiene Course. Working in the kitchen is also popular and NVQ courses are full. Staff have the expertise to help more prisoners obtain catering skills but money was not available to equip the necessary classroom and there is insufficient space to accommodate more teaching in the kitchen. Waste Management provides employment and can lead to a Managing Environmental Resources Course.

Retention is always a problem but time spent on purposeful activities has increased this year. The aim of OLASS is to increase employability, with consequent reduction of re-offending, as well as improving life skills. Courses run include an Introduction to Computing, New CLAIT and CLAIT Plus. With Open Learning prisoners can access courses in Business Management, Interior Design, Counselling, Parentcraft, Citizenship – to name but a few. Prisoners speak well of their tutors and in a recent survey 97% of prisoners said that teaching on their course was good. They take a pride in the certificates they gain. Education also takes place in courses run in the Chapel and Gym, which is particularly popular. One of the advantages of a small prison committed to resettlement is that personnel in different departments know each other and the prisoners in their care well and there is a smoother tie up with the Offender Management Unit (OMU). Achievements in learning and skills are considered on Progress Boards and specific education courses are recommended on sentence plans.

5.4 Healthcare and Mental Health

Healthcare is provided by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). As mentioned in the last two reports the healthcare accommodation is very cramped. Last year we expected a new Healthcare Centre in June. There was some slippage as costs escalated but it is now due to materialise in

our next reporting year. It is encouraging to see portacabins being taken down to make space for the new building and to see the plans and the involvement the healthcare team have had in working out how to make maximum use of every metre of space in the new building. This year the Healthcare Team have managed to provide an excellent service to prisoners and staff despite the restricted space. The Healthcare Manager came to give a presentation at one of our Board meetings and we receive regular informative reports.

Board members have observed meetings of the newly formed Health Improvement Group, the group concerned with setting up the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS) and the Prison Partnership Board Meeting; we alternate our attendance at the latter with the representative from Lancaster Farms prison. Attendance at these meetings helps us to be more informed about new developments and we hope improve the quality of our monitoring of the service delivered to the prisoners.

A new dentist was appointed at the beginning of the year and he now has two sessions each week instead of one. There is still a long wait for the dentist, although it compares favourably with the average wait of forty weeks for an appointment with a National Health Service dentist in the community outside. Emergency dental treatment is given as required. An optician and a podiatrist attend regularly. The contract for supplying medicines has gone to a local Lloyds Pharmacy, which is giving a better service than the previous provider. The PCT pharmacist completes a monthly audit of medication and all staff have received additional training on medicine management. This is very necessary as some patients are now 'in possession' of their own medication. Safes for medication have been fitted in cells and cell checks are made. There are problems to be overcome. As in the outside community there is always the temptation to sell medicine and tablets can go missing. In a prison which does a great deal of rehabilitation and resettlement prisoners have to learn to take more responsibility for their treatment. Prisoners who are trying hard to come off drugs with the First Steps Programme find it difficult to be in a prison where there are others who may have access to drugs. At the end of our reporting period 160 of the 242 prisoners were on prescription drugs so healthcare staff are extremely busy.

A good detailed contingency plan was produced for the expected Swine Flu epidemic, which fortunately did not materialise. A new GP commenced work in October on a twelve month contract. The medical staff are predominantly female but there is a male doctor and one male nurse, which is important for some prisoners from different races and cultures who dislike being treated by a woman. The prison is also fortunate that the Healthcare Manager specialises in ethnic minority health issues. The prison is starting to receive some older prisoner and concerns were raised around an older prisoner deemed possibly unsuitable for this establishment because of his social needs. An assessment by an occupational therapist was requested but the prison was told the wait might be up to 18 weeks, despite it being an urgent referral. The prisoner was eventually transferred to a prison better suited to his needs. The Healthcare staff are to be commended for good practice managing the treatment of a terminally ill prisoner. He also received a high level of care from all officers and prisoners until he was released on temporary licence because of his worsening condition. After his death the prison received a letter of thanks from his family, they had much appreciated the care he received.

There has been some good preventative work on smoking cessation with both prisoners and staff. Remedial gym has had a good attendance and has included sessions for the over 40s. Well being days for staff proved popular. The PCT has paid for costs incurred when prisoners have had to be escorted to hospital for treatment and when staff were deployed on bedwatch for in-patients, but there are hidden costs. If staff are deployed on an outside escort it leaves the prison short staffed and other activities sometimes have to be curtailed.

5.5 Safer Custody

There have been no deaths in custody at Lancaster Castle since January 2003. ACCT training is good and staff are very vigilant. Any prisoner placed on an ACCT is carefully monitored and concern is shown by staff for all prisoners who show any sign of distress. On induction new prisoners are given helpful advice on the support services available and how to access them. At a prisoners' Committee Meeting members reported a general feeling of safety among prisoners in cells and on association. If threats were made it was usually verbal abuse. Cell sharing assessment is through the TABS Scheme (Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour) and is working well.

5.6 Segregation

At the beginning of the reporting year there was a sudden increase in the amount of paperwork. While board members appreciate the need to comply with regulations there did seem to be an excessive amount of time spent on ticking boxes, which would have been better spent working with the prisoners. We are pleased to see that there is now less paper but good records are still kept. Staff are very good listeners and often extract useful information in apparently casual conversations. At the beginning of the year there were few prisoners in segregation but there was a spell later in the year when drugs were coming in. Prisoners were being caught with drugs and mobile phones, while others came down to segregation on 'Own Protection' because they owed money to others for drugs and feared reprisals. Security worked hard to counteract these problems and any prisoners found to be a security risk were swiftly transferred.

Members of the Board attended adjudications taken by a Governor or by the Judge, who visits monthly. In all cases prisoners were given the opportunity to state their case fully and were treated fairly; there were, however, several occasions when healthcare staff were not present at reviews. Board members were able to communicate freely with prisoners and are satisfied that treatment is humane and just. The emphasis is on returning prisoners to normal location as soon as possible.

Areas of Excellence

6.1 Catering and Kitchen

The work in the kitchen is an area of excellence. The Catering Manager and his team do a superb job. Prisoners are regularly surveyed about their likes and dislikes and a very good choice and variety of food is supplied. The daily food allowance is £1.87, the lowest in the North West, where the average is £2.06 and this is beginning to affect the quality of food which can be purchased. The kitchen is well run and the Catering Manager has produced a useful handout for prisoners to receive on induction on Basic Hygiene Awareness. In October the Regional Catering Manager reported "This is a well run kitchen which is a credit to the Manager and staff". The kitchen building, however, began the year as an area of concern. IMB members on visits continually reported wet floors and a leaking roof. Remedial work was done to both floor and roof. Water continued to be a problem on the floor and new tilting kettles were ordered. This improved the situation. More work was done on the floor and walls were painted. The freezers were out of commission for about 4-5 weeks and there were major problems trying to store frozen food. This was a health and safety issue and should have been remedied much more swiftly. The roof and floor have both now been attended to and freezers are again operational. The Regional Catering Manager visited and described the kitchen as "old and tired, but well equipped and maintained". A great deal of money is spent on continual repairs and it is fast reaching the point where a new kitchen would be more cost effective.

6.2 Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy continues to do valuable work. A new Roman Catholic Chaplain was appointed this year. Catholics and Anglicans have weekly services and the Imam visits Muslim prisoners for Friday prayers. Provision is also made for the occasional Buddhist prisoner and for any Pagans. A priest was found for one Russian Orthodox prisoner who was at the Castle for a short time. The Chaplaincy Team is augmented by a Free Church Minister and Salvation Army members. The latter organised an excellent Harvest Festival Service. Prisoners were joined by guests for the annual Carol Service and listened to some fine solo singing by one of the prisoners. A talk by an ex-prisoner who had turned his life around was an inspiration for other prisoners present. Courses run by the Chaplaincy Team have included an Alpha course, Stress Management and Meditation Courses. During Drugs week a memorial service was held for those who had died as a result of drug abuse. In September our attention was drawn to a newspaper article in which reformed prisoners praised the good work of the chaplaincy and the drugs programme available at the establishment. It is pleasing to see so many activities going on in the chapel but the team are very busy and it is important that there is time for prayer and spiritual matters and a chance to talk to a Chaplain without being in a rush at the end of a course.

6.3 Gym

This is an area of excellence. The exercise yard is so small that there is no space for football or any team games and the gym is the only satisfactory method of keeping fit and releasing surplus energy so it is very popular. Exercise is combined with learning new skills which could lead to employment. There is also helpful advice on getting fit and paying attention to diet.

Health referrals have three sessions a week, two are for the over 40s and one for prisoners on the integrated drugs treatment scheme. Body conditioning is very popular and numbers have grown to eighteen, the maximum number that can be catered for. A condition of the course is that participants must also go to education sessions. The Personal Trainer Course has had to be suspended owing to staff shortages but hopefully should start again soon. Manual lifting and handling are taught. Weightlifting is always popular but unfortunately the upstairs gym had to be closed because the weight was too much for the beams in the Norman Keep. An emergency bid had to be put in to have the floor strengthened. Some equipment was transferred temporarily to visits. A 10 week Gym Instructor's course is currently running with twelve students and there are 4 early bird sessions a week which are well attended. There are four fitness sessions a week which are extremely popular. Well Being days have been popular too and staff as well as prisoners have been getting fitter. The PE Officer and a Senior Officer took a group of staff to Kentmere on a 10 mile hike in preparation for the 18 mile challenge in aid of "Help the Heroes" which they plan to attempt shortly. In a nation where obesity is becoming a problem Lancaster has had great success in encouraging prisoners to exercise and eat a healthy diet, with one prisoner succeeding in losing five stone in weight over a 9 month period.

6.4 Library

It is noticeable that there are now very good links between education and the library. A Toe by Toe Course is due to start shortly, encouraging poor readers to learn with peer mentors. The library has now been fitted with a camera, allowing one librarian to run the library alone on most days. The contract has been varied to allow increased opening hours. There are more than 300 visits per week to the library and CDs and DVDs are popular. The Librarian is enthusiastic about her work and helpful in assessing prisoners' needs. The shelf for 'returned books' indicates that prisoners are reading widely and have a good range of books to satisfy their needs.

6.5 Offender Management Unit (OMU)

It has been encouraging during the year to see closer co-operation between departments under the umbrella of Probation/Offender Management Unit to reduce re-offending and to see initiatives such as a Resettlement Fair, Road to Recovery Day, Tackling Drugs Week and involvement with the Visitors' Centre.

The IMB are satisfied the department is addressing the issues of risk management in a consistent and professional manner, in line with a recent HMCIP report which proposed a series of changes.

One of the most significant developments in OMU/Resettlement has been the firm implementation of review, progress and resettlement boards. Partnership working has expanded with a view to delivering improved resettlement services plus a significant development in drug strategy and interventions.

During the past year the department conducted a resettlement needs analysis and the findings are implemented in the Reducing Reoffending Action Plan and development work under the resettlement pathways.

Public protection/MAPPA functions are compliant with the new national public protection procedures recently introduced. Prisoners have clear guidelines and are able to focus on their offending behaviour prior to HDC or release into the community.

Since the introduction in March 2009 MAPPA work has continued to develop and be refined. There is noticeable determined involvement of Offender Supervisors in MAPPA cases to change offending behaviour (Offender Supervisors manage a minimum caseload of 50) and the introduction and commencement of ViSOR management within the establishment.

There is a genuine opinion amongst the highly motivated OMU staff, that their one-to-one interventions are having a significant effect on offenders. (One-to-one interviews are challenging and the offender is not in a position to show off and be macho in front of his contemporaries).

MAPPA procedures are now incorporated into a single Public Protection procedure this should be a significant focus for the future in the OMU. Probation staff remain closely involved with interventions, particularly with work in the area of drug services designed to assist offenders in their recovery and rehabilitation.

We are pleased to report the Probation Department has been truly integrated into the mainstream business of the establishment and their contribution is highly valued. Thankfully long gone are the days when seconded probation staff were seen as Welfare Officers.

Areas of Improvement

6.6 Visitors Centre

In the 2008 report (6.6) the Board stated that the Centre had been closed owing to lack of available prison staff and suitable volunteers and because of lack of help from a valuable Diocesan project called Grassroots, which was cut because of lack of funding.

At the start of this reporting year the Centre was still closed but it is pleasing to note that it re-opened in July. A committee was set up, in partnership with signposts – a multi-agency resource centre working to empower the community. Links were made with Sure Start Childrens' Centres and Probation to extend and build relationships with prisoners' partners and children. This would provide a link between the Castle and the community, since 74% of visitors are from Lancaster.

Successful Family Days were held. A survey indicated that visitors were generally satisfied with the Visitors' Centre and appreciated having lockers, where mobile phones and valuables could be stored safely while they visited the prison. Some children arrived after long journeys and needed time to relax at the Centre before the visit.

The Centre opens for three visiting days a week and volunteers have established good relationships with visitors. The present volunteers are very committed but there is a great need for more young volunteers as the average age of prisoners is 30.7 years and partners tend to be between 20 and 30 years. Staff are monitoring the number of adults and children visiting and how many are on their first visit to the prison. This identifies gaps in provision and is improving the service provided. Information is available about organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Debt Counselling and help with alcohol and drugs problems. In one month 81 visitors came to the prison for the first time and needed support and encouragement. A visitors survey showed that visitors, both social and professional, felt they were treated well and with respect by staff. Members of the Board feel a good start has been made and the Centre is trying hard to keep families together and make them aware of local agencies which can help the whole family when a prisoner is released back into the community.

6.7 Canteen

Last year we reported complaints about prices for items prisoners wished to buy at canteen and some problems with supply of certain products. We are pleased to see that the service has improved, although we are aware that prisoners' pay has not increased in line with retail prices. Our Catering Manager undertook a survey of prices to see how canteen compared with four different shops. He found that some were more expensive and some were less than in the shops. DHL had taken note of certain items that prisoners regularly requested and the range had improved.

Areas of Concern

6.8 Loss of IPP Status

The main areas of concern of the Board are covered in Section 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 of this report. In addition the Board is disappointed that the prison lost its Investors in People status during the reporting period.

The Work of the Independent Monitoring Board

Lancaster Castle IMB has a very long serving and committed team. This year one member tendered his resignation after many years service. A new member was appointed and has just completed her probationary year. We also interviewed another prospective Board member and have just had confirmation of his appointment. We have tried unsuccessfully to attract a slightly more diverse membership of the Board and would particularly like younger members but prospective candidates have all decided not to take applications further. Some are told it would be difficult to have time off work; others are told they can have time off but it would affect their career prospects. The message that this type of voluntary work can actually enhance members' skills still does not seem to have registered with employers.

Rota visits have taken place at least once a week. Board meetings were held monthly, two of which were attended by the National Council representative, who gave us feedback on current issues. We invited speakers to some of our meetings as part of our training. These included the Chaplain, the Healthcare Manager and two representatives of the YMCA. An Away Day was held when we discussed the findings of our Performance Review and did some forward planning. We looked at our monitoring for the first six months of the year to see what issues were emerging and where there were gaps in our visiting. Members have areas of special responsibility and this has made producing the annual report easier. Two training visits were made, some of the Board going to Liverpool and others to Kennet. Two members of the Board attended the National Conference at Keele. Our new member attended the New Members Course at York. The Chairman attended four meetings for the Chairs of Boards in the North West area and also attended bi-monthly meetings of the Diversity Working Group in London.

Priority has been given to attending reviews and adjudications. We still find it difficult to get to reviews at short notice and we have sometimes been kept waiting when we arrived at the appointed time. Where possible, committee meetings have been attended, although these are sometimes cancelled or altered at short notice. This is extremely irritating as people who become Board members usually have other voluntary commitments. Those who are in employment have to plan for time out well in advance. During the year we have tried to observe at least one of every kind of meeting. It gives us an insight into the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to make sure a prison runs effectively. Two members attended one hostage taking exercise and another two attended a second one. This was less well organised and made us realise the need to keep training up-to-date. We were involved with the making of a C&R video.

We had a new Clerk at the beginning of the year and as she changed her role within the prison we now have another new Clerk. We thank them both very much for their services. We are also grateful that we now have an adequate office computer.

8.1 Board Statistics

2009

Recommended Complement of Board Members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Number of new members jointing within the reporting period	1
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Average number of Board meetings attended by each member during reporting period	9.4
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	30
Total number of visits to the prison/IRC (including all meetings)	248
Total number of applications received	30
Total number of segregation reviews held	56
Total number of segregation reviews attended	40

8.2 Applications to the Board

Code	Subject	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
A	Accommodation	2	6	0	1
B	Adjudications	2	0	0	0
C	Diversity related	0	0	0	0
D	Education/employment/training	1	0	0	0
E	Family/visits	4	3	3	3
F	Food/kitchen related	0	0	0	1
G	Health related	1	4	2	0
H	Property	1	19	8	9
I	Sentence related	3	7	3	5
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee related	2	0	0	0
K	Transfers	8	5	4	4
L	Miscellaneous	7	4	0	7
	Total number of applications	31	48	20	30