



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

HMP MAIDSTONE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 28 FEBRUARY 2010

S1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an Independent Board appointed by the Justice Minister from members of the community in which the prison 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 Justice Minister, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate any concern it has;
- (3) report annually to the Justice Minister 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 also to the offenders' records, with the exception of medical information.

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S3 DESCRIPTION OF MAIDSTONE PRISON

HMP Maidstone was re-rolled in 2003 from a Category B establishment to a Category C Training establishment. The prison has continued to use its resources on programmes, education and training with the purpose of preparing prisoners for release with a reduced risk of re-offending.

At the start of the reporting year the prison's capacity was 482 divided into 3 Houses. Medway House had a capacity of 104 prisoners and Kent House had a capacity of 204 prisoners with 30 cells having double occupancy. Thanet House held 174 prisoners most of whom are sex offenders attending or awaiting treatment programmes.

Weald House re-opened in March 2009 following an extensive refurbishment and modernisation with an increased capacity of 149, 35 cells being designed for double occupancy. This raised the prison's capacity to 600.

During the 3 month period from March to June the prison's population changed. Medway and Thanet Houses became a specialist sex offender treatment resource for Kent and Sussex delivering Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTP) and related courses. Kent House reverted to 176 cells, all for single occupancy housing Foreign National prisoners. Weald House is an Induction House for prisoners new to the prison with an integrated population of Sex Offenders and Foreign Nationals.

With the re-opening of Weald House the prison commenced fully integrated regimes which meant that for the first time sex offenders and those convicted of other crimes live, work and learn along side one another.

There are nine English Heritage listed buildings in the estate including the outer wall and main entrance, the Roundhouse, the Rotunda, the Theatre, the old Roman Catholic Chapel and the Church of the Good Shepherd. The English Heritage listing states that all these listings form a group. The Roman Catholic Chapel and the Church of the Good Shepherd are comprised within the same building. The main part of the church is adapted to form a Multi Faith Centre when required.

There are many later additions on the site. Where fixtures and curtilage buildings form part of the land and have done so since 1st July 1948, they are treated as part of the listing for listed building control, although they do not necessarily appear on the English Heritage listing.

S4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board Report for 2009/10 is one of a successful transition by the prison to become a Sex Offender Treatment Resource for 350 prisoners from Kent and Sussex but which also houses 250 Foreign Nationals with an integrated regime. Previously reported improvements following a very poor HMIP report in 2007 have at least been maintained and in many areas improved further.

The change of population has resulted in a far more stable atmosphere which is evidenced by a reduction in serious incidents requiring the use of force and of the Care and Separation Unit for punishment by Adjudication for breaches of prison rules.

Drug usage has significantly reduced, as measured by Mandatory Drug Tests, but the possession and use of Mobile Phones is an issue and regular sweeps are made to detect phones and punish the users.

The Board will comment on elements of the three year strategy issued in November 2007 which has the objective of protecting the public by:-

- (1) maintaining a safe, decent and secure prison that treats prisoners with humanity and lawfully; and by
- (2) seeking to reduce the risk of re-offending through effective prisoner management and interventions

The Board has serious concerns that although the projected changes brought about by budget cuts for 2010/11 are not expected to have a detrimental effect on the regime, further budgetary cuts may seriously affect the prison's ability to deliver programmes that are currently run which prepare prisoners for release and aim to reduce re-offending.

ISSUES REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT SERVICE

1. PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

The Board report for 2008/9 commented that there had not been an Instructor for a Painting and Decorating workshop for some months. At the date of this report an Instructor has still not been appointed, this has meant that the prison has not been able to deliver a course that would have given a number of prisoners the opportunity to learn skills that can lead to employment on release. The workshop has been lying idle for at least 16 months. This is unacceptable. See also 5.5

2. BUDGETARY CUTS

The Board would like assurances from the National Offender Management Service that further predicted budget cuts will not have a detrimental effect on the prison's ability to provide courses which are designed for prisoners to address their offending behaviour and reduce their risk of re-offending and at the same time providing a decent and safe environment.

3. PRISON SHOP

The Board expresses its concern about the pricing policy for the prison shop operated by DHL BOOKER. Complaints have been made by prisoners and Board members about prices, in particular of fresh food where the prices charged are far in excess of those of major organisations. Prisoners can see these prices in the media and make comparisons. Ministerial replies to complaints made by IMB and prisoners representatives are considered to be unsympathetic and unhelpful. See also 6.2.

S5 AREAS THAT MUST BE REPORTED ON

5.1 CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT (CSU)

The CSU is only a small facility with various types of cell to hold prisoners for disciplinary reasons or for use as a safe environment for those under threat of harm were they to remain in a residential house. IMB members are required to ensure that all residents are seen and spoken to on a regular basis to check their wellbeing and that they are held for legitimate reasons. With few exceptions, members have attended reviews of prisoners held in the unit for Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) and Own Protection (OP) to ensure that they are not there for unreasonable periods of time.

Prisoners who are found guilty of an offence against prison rules may be given, as a penalty, a period of Cellular Confinement (CC) and this is served in the CSU.

It has been noted that the average number of prisoners being held in the CSU each day has reduced considerably. This is attributed to a much more settled and less volatile population. The number of Adjudications held in 2008/9 was 761 for a population of 482 and 359 in the reporting year 2009/10 for a population of 600.

The Special Unfurnished Cell used for refractory prisoners has not been used during the reporting year.

5.2 DIVERSITY

The pattern of regular meetings of the Disability and Race Equality Action Team (DREAT) has continued this year but on a bi-monthly basis. In the intervening months the prisoner representatives have meetings with the Diversity Manager to examine in more detail the SMART monitoring statistics. The problem with these statistics is that they are difficult to take in when displayed on a screen at the full DREAT meetings, although a more user friendly presentation has been devised by the current Diversity Manager. The purpose of the SMART system is to monitor that there is fairness in the treatment of prisoners of different backgrounds. Where the figures go outside prescribed ranges the reasons are investigated. One of the problems with the process is that the ranges are determined centrally and do not have regard, in Maidstone's case, to the high number of BME prisoners.

The number of older prisoners has been steadily growing in Maidstone. The problems arising from this group of the prison's population with regard in particular to health and mobility are regularly discussed at the DREAT meetings and addressed. Examples are the provision of a special library session for this group and the organisation by Healthcare of meetings for those suffering with diabetes.

There has been a concerted effort on the part of the Chaplaincy Team to ensure that the festivals of the many religions reflected in the prison's population are properly celebrated.

The unannounced inspection of HM Inspector of Prisons found that most of its recommendations following the 2007 full announced inspection had been fully or partially achieved.

5.3 FOREIGN NATIONALS

The increase of the Foreign National population to 250 prisoners in Maidstone coincided with the opening of the refurbished Weald House that had been designated as an integrated induction wing for Foreign Nationals and Sex Offenders. In preparation for this staff were provided with additional training and the Board held a very successful training day together with colleagues from HMP Canterbury, with input from the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) officers and a National Trainer from HMP The Mount. The prison, being a spoke of the Canterbury hub, began to receive twice weekly visits from UKBA officers who had an input in the induction programme for incoming prisoners, provided information leaflets in a number of languages and held well attended surgeries. The Detention Advisory Service also attended the prison fortnightly although this was scaled down to monthly at the suggestion of wing representatives.

Each House elected a Foreign National prisoner representative and throughout the year bi-monthly meetings were held with members of staff and a UKBA officer where problems were discussed. These meetings proved very useful forums for views and complaints to be expressed and resolved. In addition monthly evening meetings were held for all Foreign National prisoners to socialise and meet a Governor. Several of these meetings were used to provide a forum for the International Organisation for Migration to show a DVD on the ERS (Early Release Scheme) and FRS (Facilitated Release Scheme) and to speak to groups of prisoners from particular countries. These meetings were also used as opportunities for a Governor to inform prisoners of changes of policy that would affect them.

The organisation of arrangements and support for House representatives improved as the result of a member of uniform staff, supported by a House Principal Officer, being appointed to take full time responsibility for Foreign National prisoners. In the early part of the year staff who were able to speak foreign languages were identified and in the summer a contract was set up with Big Word to provide interpretation services. Staff in the prison, in particular the Care and Separation Unit, went to some lengths to acquire standard forms, information and literature in a number of languages.

Since the summer, when the Board started to monitor the situation, there have been at any one time up to six prisoners beyond their sentence date on Form IS91 (a UKBA Warrant), one man for as long as four months.

Over the year provisions for, and communications with, Foreign National prisoners in Maidstone improved and staff have contacted and visited other establishments with a substantial population of Foreign National prisoners to learn from their experiences. However, there remains an issue with running the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme in as much that few Foreign National prisoners can benefit from increased visits, but because many of their family and friends are abroad they are unable to take advantage of the additional visits. The lead Governor is still looking at alternative incentives that could be

provided. The Catering Manager took steps to encourage Foreign National prisoners to make suggestions for and give opinions on menus.

5.4 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Board has a statutory duty to monitor the healthcare provision on a regular basis and report on any shortcomings, particularly if prisoners are receiving less favourable treatment than members of the public.

The budget for bed watches has proved hugely inadequate. A bed watch for one man can cost about £1000 per day and so it is very difficult to make a realistic budget when it cannot be known if there will be any chronically ill prisoners needing frequent hospital treatment.

IDTS (Integrated Drug Treatment System) is much underused mainly due to a much lower level of drug use in the prison, and we believe discussions are underway to make alterations to the way it is used and funded.

The x-ray service has been discontinued because it was not cost-effective. Services provided by the local hospital are deemed acceptable.

The cost of disability aids such as electric wheelchairs for prisoners are currently met by the prison whereas, in the community, they are met by the PCT.

The take-up for flu and swine flu vaccines was very good. During the 5 month period from July to December when the Board monitored closely the incidence of Swine Flu only 6 prisoners and 13 members of staff contracted the disease.

The staffing level is still below full complement and bank staff are often called upon to cover shifts.

The new prisoner electronic records 'System 1' has been introduced but, regrettably, it is not interactive with the new P-Nomis system which is also in use.

Clinical Governance meetings were better supported for a while by the PCT but this has since tailed off again.

The Board has been advised that HMPs East Sutton Park, Blantyre House and Maidstone prisons which are clustered for Healthcare provision by the PCT is to be put out to tender during 2010.

The Board receives few legitimate complaints from prisoners about healthcare provision.

5.5 LEARNING AND SKILLS INCORPORATING PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

Education

Education provision covers a wide range of subjects from very basic literacy and numeracy for those whose entry level is very low to Open University tuition. There are also non academic subjects offered such as painting/art where some of the work is of a very high standard. Excellent support is given to prisoners who are on the brickwork course to enable them to calculate material requirements for their own building projects. Prisoners are able to obtain City and Guilds qualifications and some go on to train as mentors.

Education for most of the year was provided by A4E but latterly Manchester College has been appointed as the provider. The contract appears to be taking time to bed in and the Board is monitoring the provision of the service.

The recent HMIP inspection report has identified a number of shortcomings in education provision and a Governor has recently commenced an in depth look at what education is delivered which will also take into account the need to move to a more academic curriculum which will result in a reduction in Arts and Crafts classes.

Purposeful Activity

There is a wide range of work available within the prison which includes residential house cleaning, food servery, gardens, kitchen, print shop, laundry, computers, brick shop, rag cutting and recycling of waste produced within the prison.

Many of these areas provide the opportunity to take qualifications which can be of benefit when seeking employment on release. The rag cutting shop provides very mundane work but is popular with prisoners as it provides earnings at a higher level than education or cleaning.

Waste recycling work offers the opportunity for prisoners to gain qualifications but also saves the prison money in contractors charges for waste removal.

The print shop provides the greatest number of work places and offers highly technical training opportunities using ultra modern equipment, together with many places for prisoners to work on hand assembly and finishing. The very modern facilities need to be provided with sufficient work to keep it fully operational.

As has been highlighted in the executive summary, the failure to employ an instructor in the Painting and Decorating shop for 16 months has led to the loss of a significant number of very useful training places during the year.

The Purposeful Activity KPT (Key Performance Target) only asks for very simplistic statistics which measure the number of hours a man is engaged in Purposeful Activity without giving in any way a clear picture of what is actually provided on a daily or weekly basis in the prison – and as is indicated by recommendations made within the recent HMIP Inspection report. The whole area of Purposeful Activity is a much more complex issue than that – making monitoring and interrogating the effectiveness of provision at Maidstone a far from easy task.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

A well-attended Safer Custody Meeting takes place monthly under the chairmanship of a Governor. Officers and prisoner representatives from each of the four houses are present, as well as the Supervisor/Tutor from the Samaritans.

The meeting deals with the statistics for the number of Assessment, Care in Custody and teamwork, (ACCTS) books that have been opened during the month, their location and the number of offenders involved. It also deals with the severity of any self harming and whether a visit to the local hospital Accident and Emergency Department was necessary. It highlights those areas that need to be improved, before moving on to learning from and implementing good practice from around the country.

The use of Samaritans is very important and a good training schedule has been put in place, especially to ensure that there are sufficient Listeners available in Kent House, which is entirely dedicated to the care and custody of Foreign National prisoners.

Anti Violence: The numbers of reports of bullying and the outcomes are discussed. Alleged bullies are identified and are confronted, and victims have documents opened so that closer supervision takes place and is officially recorded. Recently, a zero tolerance attitude to threatening and abusive language has been introduced. Staff need to recognise that threatening and abusive language is an offence, and must be dealt with by placing offenders on report, as well as by using the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme .

Anti violence representatives from the Houses are being used by prisoners and progress is being made to enable staff to be aware of their existence and so to use them.

Fortunately, during the year, there has only been one death in custody in Maidstone. The Ombudsman has yet to carry out the investigation, but early indications from the Coroner's Office point to the fact that it was likely the prisoner died from natural causes. Although the previous death in custody happened well over one year ago, an inquest has still not been heard.

During House visits. Board members examine ACCT books to monitor that reviews are up to date and entries are meaningful.

S6 OTHER AREAS

6.1 ADJUDICATIONS

Adjudications are heard by a Governor in cases where a prisoner is charged by staff with a breach of prison rules. Board members attend the adjudications on an ad hoc basis to monitor the processes and ensure that prisoners have appropriate interpreting facilities if needed. Board members have observed that Governors usually conduct Adjudications with good humour and sensitivity.

Certain adjudications are heard by an Independent Adjudicator (a Judge) who hears cases that when proven can merit additional periods in prison.

The Board receives very few complaints from offenders about the conduct or outcome of adjudications.

6.2 APPLICATIONS TO THE BOARD

The Board monitors on a monthly basis applications received by reference to the source, reason and ethnic background of applicants. Statistics which record this monitoring are contained in appendix 1 and 2.

The number of applications received by the Board has increased from 2008/9 but the increase is in line with the increased population. A wide range of subjects are raised in the applications made but a recurring theme is prisoners' property that goes missing.

The prison management has carried out a thorough review of the systems in place which track where prisoners' property is and has identified a number of areas where property entering and leaving the prison require improvement which are expected to be implemented in April 2010. Hopefully this will reduce claims for compensation and the number of applications to the Board.

One area where the prison is unable to effect changes is around the inter prison transfer where the transport contractor will only take two bags of property at the time the prisoner moves. Most prisoners have several bags of possessions so alternative arrangements have to be made for any balance to be transported to the receiving prison with the consequent risks of loss and mis-delivery

A significant number of complaints were received from prisoners about the searching procedures following visits. These were investigated and as a result a clearer and more transparent policy was implemented .

6.3 PRISON SHOP

The change of contract for prisoners' canteen has settled down after some initial problems, although a lack of flexibility for local managers can sometimes cause local hitches. Nevertheless, prisoners appear to be reasonably happy with the service provided, with two important exceptions. Refunds, when an item is out of stock or otherwise unavailable, take significantly longer than under the previous arrangements. This causes significant concern to prisoners who have little or no cash in their accounts and a delayed refund can prevent them ordering items from the shop during the following week. Prices are also of major concern as prisoners are well aware from the press and other sources that many items are significantly more expensive in the prison shop than in local supermarkets. Approaches re prisoners' complaints about prices to those who manage the contract in Prison Headquarters have resulted in unsatisfactory and unsympathetic replies. There is an urgent need to address the price issue for many items so that prisoners are not disadvantaged by their captive market status.

6.4 CATERING AND KITCHENS

Prisoners are able to choose their meals a week in advance from a varied menu produced by the Catering Manager. Consideration is given to prisoners who, for a variety of reasons, require a special diet. Given the minimal sum allowed with which to feed each prisoner per day, the Catering Manager is to be congratulated on the variety and quality of the meals provided to prisoners. This is reflected in the low numbers of complaints received by the Board about prison menus and food and the many largely positive prisoners' comments observed in the Wing Food Complaints Book seen at the servery by Board members during their Rota Visits. We hope that the current need for efficiency savings will not affect the catering budget as any further reduction in that budget would seriously affect the quality and choice of food available to prisoners with consequent impact on their well-being and health.

Board members visit the kitchen and serveries on a regular basis to satisfy themselves that food is prepared and served in clean and hygienic facilities. Food is sampled on a random basis at the servery, alongside prisoners, to check quality and temperature.

Very few complaints are made to IMB about the quality or variety of food.

The Board in its 2008/9 report highlighted that approval had been given for a new kitchen to replace a poor and deteriorating facility. The Board was subsequently given to understand that the project had been shelved and wrote to the Prisons Minister with their concerns. The response received indicated that a further review was taking place by National Offender Management Service (NOMS). It is pleasing to report that approval was finally given for the replacement kitchen and work has commenced on a temporary facility with the new kitchen due for completion in 2011.

6.5 CHURCH / MULTI FAITH CENTRE

The Church of the Good Shepherd plays an important part in the life of the prison. It is now used for all faiths to worship. Family visit days are held there and various courses which address offending behaviour are run in the chapel. As the largest meeting place in the prison, it is also used for full staff meetings.

The change in prison population to exclusively Foreign National and Sex Offenders has resulted in an increase in attendance at the religious gatherings of Christian, Muslim and other faiths.

The Free Church Chaplain has worked hard to introduce a music session on Monday afternoons. This is well attended by prisoners.

There has been some progress in the training of staff but there is still more to be done. The department is in need of more IT support, which we believe is still being considered.

The state of the chapel continues to cause great concern. Masonry has fallen both inside and outside of the building and some areas are cordoned off.

All the windows on the South side of the chapel have been encased in Perspex. This is because they had become unsafe. Extra money was allocated for this and we appreciate the benefit from having daylight coming in to the Chapel. Boarded up windows would have been very depressing and oppressive.

We were advised that the building had been put on English Heritage's 'Buildings at risk' register. However, this does not appear to have happened yet.

The repairs required to this listed building are becoming ever more urgent.

6.6 COMMUNICATIONS

A Communications Strategy introduced in 2008 has continued to be implemented with a weekly bulletin and three monthly meeting for staff.

For prisoners there are House Consultative meetings where issues can be raised and resolved by prisoner representatives and staff. In addition there is a Prisoner Council which meets bi-monthly and enables prison wide issues to be raised with management. An information channel on prisoners' televisions is used to inform of changes to regime and other matters of interest.

Where possible Board members attend meetings but House meetings are held at erratic intervals and often without sufficient notice for members to attend as observers.

The Prisoner Council meetings have become a complaint forum which gives prisoner representatives the opportunity to raise individual or personal grievances.

The Governor is currently investigating how the two forums can be improved.

6.7 CONSTANT SUPERVISION CELLS.

Shortly before the end of the reporting year two cells in the CSU have been converted to give constant observation, while still allowing a prisoner to have access to his normal regime, for a prisoner who is deemed to be at high risk of serious self harm. This arrangement replaces the system of transferring the prisoner to a prison with 24 hour medical facilities for constant observation, which used to mean that a prisoner in an already disturbed condition needing to be moved to a strange environment without access to a normal regime.

The Board, whilst welcoming the development, has concerns about the location of the two cells. The CSU is referred to by prisoners and staff at all levels as the 'SEG or BLOCK' with all the connotations of a punishment unit. A prisoner who is disturbed enough to require constant supervision will believe that he is being punished.

This is a very new facility for the prison and the Board intends to monitor the use of the cells and the effects on prisoners located there.

6.8 CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness was an issue for many years for members carrying out their Statutory Visits but it is pleasing to note that the marked improvements that were highlighted in the Board's 2008/9 report have been maintained. Self cook areas in each House provided facilities for prisoners to cook their own food purchased through the prison shop. These areas which were regularly criticised by board members for poor cleanliness have been removed.

6.9 DECENCY STRATEGY

The 3 year Decency Strategy was implemented in 2007 and members observe the relationships between staff and prisoners and between members of staff. Generally the observations are positive but occasional complaints are made in applications by prisoners who feel that they are not being treated with respect by staff. It has to be said that some of the complaints are made by prisoners who are difficult to manage.

There are still a number of staff who have not fully embraced the Decency Strategy when referring to prisoners.

6.10 DRUGS AND MOBILE PHONES

Drug usage in the prison has reduced substantially and this is evidenced by the Mandatory Drug Testing figures which have fallen from 30% to below 7%. Few packages of drugs are now detected coming over the wall.

Mobile phones continue to be found in searching operations. Many of the phones discovered are found in the possession of Foreign National prisoners. Their reason for using a phone is because they do not have visits from family and friends and this is their way of maintaining contact with their families. The prison phone system is very expensive to use for calls abroad.

6.11 INDUCTIONS

Each week a member of the Board attends the prison to take part in the Induction Programme for prisoners new to Maidstone. The member informs them of the role of IMB and how to make contact should a prisoner wish to talk to a member of the Board.

Trained Peer Workers now run much of the Induction process. In February 2009 a new integrated induction programme was introduced which has been reduced from three weeks to one week and now caters for all prisoners regardless of their offence.

Board members endeavour to speak to all new members of staff with the similar aim of informing them of the IMB's role in the prison.

6.12 INTEGRATED REGIME

In most prisons where the population is made up of prisoners with convictions for sexual and non sex related offences, it is not possible to have an integrated regime where prisoners mix together for work, education etc.

The re-opening of Weald House as an Induction wing for all prisoners regardless of their offence and the change in population at Maidstone also brought about an integrated regime where workshops, education, gymnasium and the kitchen all have complements made up of prisoners regardless of offence.

The Board had some misgivings about this change because of the traditional animosities between prisoners with the two types of offence, but are pleased to report that with a few exceptions integration is working well and is a model for other prisons to follow.

6.13 PERFORMANCE RECOGNITION

Performance recognition has become an important part of the quarterly staff meetings where outstanding performance by staff in a task or difficult situation is recognised, alongside gaining qualifications in prisoner management and long service. Staff have also gained recognition nationally for excellent and innovative work.

6.14 RESETTLEMENT

Board members attend on an ad hoc basis Discharge Boards for prisoners which are held 3 months prior to release. The aim of the Discharge Board is to discuss with the prisoner a range of issues that he will be facing and to arrange for prisoners being discharged into the community to have settled accommodation to go to, to address family adjustments and to make links with outside agencies.

Assistance with gaining employment is given but unless a prisoner already has a job to go to it will be very difficult for him to find employment in the current economic situation.

For Foreign National prisoners any skills training they can gain whilst in prison will assist them in finding employment when they are returned to their country of origin.

6.15 SECURITY

During the year the long running problem of the number of packages over the walls showed an improvement with the installation of additional fencing round Kent House, window grilles and the change of population of the prison at the beginning of the year. It was noted that the areas of the walls where packages entered the prison had changed and the monitoring and searching of these new areas was stepped up. Positive drug testing results declined but indicated that drugs were still coming into the prison and cell searches produce a number of mobile phones. It is suggested that many prisoners have their own SIM cards but share or rent out phones to cut down problems of concealment.

The prison took steps to address these problems by increasing the searching of prisoners, the use of a Body Orifice Scanning chair to detect illicit items, staff and visitors by drugs dogs and the monitoring of prisoners' movements more closely.

The gang culture that occurred from time to time in Kent House, the Foreign National prisoners' House, was effectively managed by staff and efforts made to improve the culture of the House. A member of Special Branch spoke to staff about extremism and a system was set up to provide and monitor a suitable balance of nationalities, ethnic groups and faiths. Prisoners showing signs of extremism were monitored and extremism remained low in Maidstone. Board members also attended extremism training.

Links with the local community and the police were continued. The identification of the contents of packages over the wall was still slow to come from the police, which did not help staff to pinpoint the prisoners for whom they were intended.

The use of force figures remained low and reflects a more settled population.

The Security audit carried out during the year came back with a raised score of 88%.

6.16 RECEPTION

The Board received a number of Applications from prisoners who claimed that their property had gone missing either during the transfer process between prisons or when brought or sent into the prison. The prison has recognised that it is expensive to recompense prisoners for the loss of property.

A recent review of the Reception systems has revealed loopholes in the recording systems of receipt and distribution of property and measures are to be put in place to attempt to reduce the number of claims.

This situation is common to most prisons and also involves the Contractors who transport prisoners between prisons.

6.17 VISITS

For very many years the Board has raised issues with the Prison Service of the indignity of prisoners families having to queue outside the prison in all weathers which did not give a good impression of what the service stands for, 'treating prisoners and all others with dignity and respect'.

After several years a facility was kindly provided by the United Reform Church, run in conjunction with members of Maidstone's Mothers Union and the Prison, where visitors could have a warm drink and use the churches facilities to keep warm and comfortable before their visit. The ladies there provided a welcoming atmosphere to support the visitors. This was not ideal, as it was situated approximately 500m from the prison.

The prison has made many improvements to its visitor facilities. There is now the Dinsmore Centre within the walls which can be accessed an hour before visits begin. The centre is warm and has toilet and baby changing facilities where visitors can wait before going through the security checks. There is a drinks machine with packet snacks. The most recent addition is the ability for visitors to book their forthcoming visits during the time they are there.

The spirit of those waiting is upbeat, helped by the staff working in the centre, which are on first name terms with the majority of those passing through. The staff are caring of these people and try to look out for first time visitors to help put them at their ease.

Family Days have continued during the year. They are very popular and help maintain family links.

S7 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

The Board meets once a month to discuss the previous month's report from the Governor, individual reports of Statutory Visits, notes of meetings attended, statistics, and to plan areas for special attention during future visits. Prior to the Board meeting commencing a half hour slot is allocated to a member of staff or visitor to give details of the work of their department or function which enhances the knowledge base of members.

The Board Chair and Vice Chair meet with the Governor once a month to raise issues that require responses at the following Board meeting.

DUTY MEMBER

The Duty Member is required to be on 24 hour call for 7 days attending the Care and Separation Unit as necessary and to be present at prisoner reviews in order to ensure that prisoners are being held for valid reasons and are receiving appropriate care and attention. A report of all prisoners held in the Unit and when they are seen and spoken to is circulated to Board members. The Duty Member will attend incidents and make a record of their observations.

STATUTORY VISIT

A member will make an unannounced visit to the prison and inspect: Residential Houses, Healthcare and the Kitchen together with other areas identified for particular attention. The member makes a written report of the inspection which is circulated to all other members and the Governor, highlighting any issue that requires a management response.

INDUCTIONS/APPLICATIONS

Each week a member gives a talk to prisoners new to the prison on the work of the Board and how to make contact should they wish to speak to a member. The member also speaks to new members of staff about the role IMB has in the prison. The same member collects offender applications to the Board from residential houses, records details of the application, carries out an investigation and responds to the offender, recording the response given.

BOARD STATISTICS

Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	3
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	2
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board Meetings	304
Total number of visits to the prison	478
Total number of applications received	232
Total number of segregation reviews held	68*
Total number of segregation reviews attended	68

* not recorded but very few were not attended

BOARD ACTIVITIES

Apart from the main duties of the Board, members have areas of special interest where they attend meetings as observers and report back to the Board.

A visit was made to HMP Lewes order to increase members' knowledge of the Prison Service and exchange areas of best practice with their colleagues. Four members attended the Kidlington Centre to observe the advanced C&R training.

Five members went to the Criminal Casework Division of the UKBA to better understand the links between the unit and prisons and the difficulties that can be experienced in deporting prisoners at the end of their sentence and the need for detention on UKBA warrants (IS91).

Several members attended Conditioning Training and Extremism sessions organised by the National Council area representative.

Members attended New Members and Experienced Members and New Chair courses as appropriate, organised by the IMB Secretariat.

Two members attended the National Conference at Keele University.

During the year Board Development was promoted by a variety of prison staff being invited to speak at Board meetings and several Board members sat in on staff training sessions.

In addition an evening meeting was held following a Performance Review for Board members to look in depth at issues of particular importance.

APPENDIX 1

OFFENDER APPLICATIONS

		2009/10 No.	2008/9 No.	2007/8 No.
A	ACCOMODATION	8	0	5
B	ADJUDICATIONS	4	4	3
C	DIVERSITY RELATED	9	7	6
D	EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT/ TRAINING inc INCENTIVES AND EARNED PRIVILIGES	23	25	41
E	FAMILY/VISITS	34	24	34
F	FOOD/KITCHEN RELATED	13	8	7
G	HEALTH RELATED	19	16	12
H	PROPERTY	44	38	56
I	SENTENCE RELATED	20	20	33
J	STAFF/PRISONER RELATIONSHOPS	10	8	8
K	INTER PRISON TRANSFERS	5	4	13
L	MISCELLANEOUS	43	41	55
	TOTAL	232	195	273

APPENDIX 2

OFFENDER APPLICATIONS 2009/10

ETHNIC ANALYSIS

ETHNIC GROUP	APPLICATIONS	% OF TOTAL	% OF PRISON POPULATION
Asian British (A1,A2,A3,A9)	17	7.4	5.4
Black or Black British (B1,B2, B9)	52	22.4	21.5
Mixed (M1,M2,M3,M9)	4	1.7	1.0
Chinese or other Ethnic Group (O1,O9)	4	1.7	1.7
White (W1,W2,W9)	152	65.5	70.1
Not Stated	3	1.3	0.3