



## **Annual Report**

of the

# **Independent Monitoring Board**

for

# **HM Young Offenders Institution Reading**

**01 April 2009 to 31 March 2010**

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# 1. Executive summary

This report covers the period from 01 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 and throughout the detailed sections there is mention of good work at Reading Prison, but the IMB has also reported on important and serious issues that need to be addressed at Ministerial and Prison Service level (see below).

It should be recognised that the Governor and staff during a period of financial constraint, staff shortages and problems with service providers outside their immediate control have continued to operate the establishment efficiently and humanely, whilst continually striving for improvement.

The Board is of the opinion that in 2009/10 the prisoners have been in the main provided with a safe, just and respectful environment whilst being treated equally and with dignity.

## a. Issues For the Minister

### i. Provision of education

The performance of the current provider, Manchester College is unacceptable.

In these times of stringent financial management and constraint, what contractual remedies will be made against Manchester College (MC) to ensure that they honour their contract and provide the required, necessary and contracted levels of education for the prisoners of Reading?

### ii. Contracts with third party service providers

It is unacceptable, that as at June 2010, ten months after Manchester College took over the provision of education at Reading, the Governor still did not have access to the contract (or at the very least those sections that relate to service levels).

How can the Prison Service (PS) be expected to ensure that prisoners in its care receive the correct entitlement to a key rehabilitation service when they are not allowed access to the contract that underpins the service?

### iii. Death in custody and the timing of the resulting inquest.

Whereas the Board understands the response from the previous Minister dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 2010, the Board still finds the current time delays unacceptable.

The Board does not believe that a provisional date of January 2011 for an inquest into a death in custody that occurred in December 2007 can solely be attributed to the time necessary to undertake a full investigation and ensure justice is done.

What measures will be taken to review the current investigative process to make it more efficient financially, and compassionate?

## b. Issues for the Governor and Prison Service

### i. Staff shortages

The significant decline in and failure to meet targets for out of cell hours due to staff shortages and MC's under performance is unacceptable.

What assurances in the current economic climate can be given that Reading will be allowed to recruit to and then maintain at established headcount levels

required to meet its Key Performance Targets (KPTs) irrespective of overall PS budgets?

ii. Population management

The Board accepts that Reading and its limited facilities is not the ideal location to house sentenced prisoners however the increasing population churn and reducing length of stay is having a detrimental effect on the ability of prisoners to access the various services and rehabilitation programmes available whilst also degrading the benefit of initiatives that engage the prisoners in beneficial activities such as The Listeners, and the Prisoner Consultative meeting etc.

Can the frequency, size and selection of cohorts to be transferred to other establishments be adjusted to increase the stability of Reading's prisoner population?

## **2. Areas that must be reported on**

### **a. Diversity**

- i. Diversity is a high priority for the Prison and the Board commends the excellent Race Equality Action Team (REAT) for their focus, diligence and actions.
- ii. Meetings are held monthly with the senior management in attendance to oversee and drive a comprehensive action plan (REAP) to address potential areas of concern and ensure compliance.
- iii. Feedback from a variety of sources including Prisoner surveys and Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are regularly reviewed and fed into the REAP. The Board recognises that over the period complaints of racist or discriminatory behaviour have continued to drop.
- iv. There are clear policies for the treatment of all prisoners from all backgrounds which are regularly updated to ensure that all staff are aware of the challenges that they may present. Diversity training continues to be delivered to all staff.
- v. Prisoners have access to a wide range of resources to cater for their various needs, and efforts are made to ensure that what may appear otherwise trivial demands are met with respect and efforts to accommodate, as recently evidenced by the need to provide a barber to work with Afro-Caribbean hair.
- vi. Events were held throughout the year to celebrate different festivals including film screenings to commemorate Holocaust day and Gay and Lesbians in the Prison Service (GALIPS) representation on Pride events.

### **b. Learning and skills**

- i. The provision of education by Manchester College (MC) has in the opinion of the Board been unacceptable.

MC was awarded by the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) the contract at Reading in August 2009 as part of winning the prime provider contract for the South East and North East areas in addition to their existing prisons. The Board understands that the decision was made on the basis of:

- a. Provision of consistent services, thereby allowing prisoners to undertake courses on a modular basis irrespective of transfers between establishments.
- b. Lowest cost provider, which given the economic climate was on the face of it understandable.

However it appears that no proper consideration was given by either OLASS or its parent the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as to the capability and management span of control of MC. Despite being awarded (outside of the tender process) further substantial additional funds to cover the under quoted resources gap, MC still failed (and as at June 10 continues to do so) to deliver an acceptable level of educational services as illustrated by the following student attendance statistics for education. This is especially the case in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter:

<b>Period</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Student Attendance</b>	<b>Delta</b>
Jul 09	Milton Keynes	1312	
Aug 09	Manchester	1498	+14%
Sep 09	Manchester	777	-40%
Oct 09	Manchester	1131	-13%
Nov 09	Manchester	922	-30%
Dec 09	Manchester	846	-36%
Jan 10	Manchester	571	-56%
Feb 10	Manchester	546	-58%
Mar 10	Manchester	641	-51%
<b>Average</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>-36%</b>

- ii. The Board is concerned that even by June 2010, the Governors were still not allowed after nearly a year to have access to the contract with Manchester College so that they could ensure that prisoners in their care received the education that they were entitled to.
- iii. In addition and as part of its normal rota duties, the Board has also closely monitored the Learning and Skills department and has observed the following within the department
  - a. Poor levels of support by MC to their own local management.
  - b. Insufficient focus on recruitment of the required contractually employed staff. Actual manning has been at approximately 50% of the previous providers.
  - c. Minimal focus on retention which has led to low morale and high sickness levels within the staff.
  - d. A curriculum which after the initial transition disruption has been in a state of flux irrespective of manning levels.
- iv. However the Vocational Skills courses (outside of the MC contract) have remained popular and well subscribed especially with the introduction at the beginning of the year of two new popular and successful courses (brick laying and motorcycle maintenance). Towards the end of the year throughput did slightly decline due to a combination of population churn, poor weather and the staff shortages.

**c. Healthcare and mental health**

i. The Board continues to recognise that the Healthcare team has been pro-active in the provision of medical care, together with general wellbeing and sex education. Generally appointments are being kept and there are minimal applications to the Board relating to healthcare issues.

ii. Fortunately, during the year the population has also continued to be relatively healthy and free from acute illnesses. When someone has been suspected of an infectious or contagious illness the action has always been prompt and appropriate; despite there not being 24 hour care available the Board are satisfied that the procedures in place are adequate. There were no outbreaks of Swine Flu in the prison.

iii. Together with the Safer Custody (SC) team, Healthcare run weekly multi disciplined high dependency meetings, where all prisoners judged to be at risk (including mental healthcare) are reviewed and the necessary protective strategies and treatments put in place.

iv. The level of prisoners being considered at this meeting as evidenced by the numbers registered on the Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork process (ACCT) on average has declined in the year, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the hard work put in by the staff.

v. Looking forward, the Board is pleased to report that there will be a full time 24 X 7 nurse presence from mid August 2010. This is seen as a positive investment in the development of healthcare and drug treatment at Reading.

vi. It should be noted that on occasion Healthcare did not attend on as required to the Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) prisoner reviews held in Segregation.

**d. Safer custody**

i. The Board commends the work of the Safer Custody (SC) team which has continued to be dedicated and effective.

ii. In addition the prison has an effective process including regular well attended meetings and reviews to ensure that prisoner self harm and violence reduction is constantly addressed.

iii. Recent SC focus has been on up-dating staff training on the ACCT process in line with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) review of the ACCT core-planning process for identifying and supporting at risk prisoners.

iv. The Board also notes that the same review concluded that the overall policy of suicide prevention and self-harm management needed to be made more user friendly and less complex. The Board hopes that this review enhances rather than undermines the increased standard of care that has been achieved at Reading since the current safer custody model was established.

**e. Segregated and separated prisoners**

i. The Board recognises the diligent and patient work undertaken by staff in the Segregation unit to ensure that difficult prisoners are still treated fairly and humanely whilst they have been removed from the landings and that they strive to ensure that:

a. Segregation is for the minimum length of time.

- b. Behavioural problems, such as being a bully or a disruptive prisoner are addressed and where possible corrective remedies initiated.
- c. Wherever possible that participation in the various programmes is continued.
- ii. Board policy is to try and attend all post 72 hour and 7/14 day GOOD reviews and are also regular observers at the Governor adjudications.
- iii. It is noted that staff in E Wing (previously named Separated Prisoner Unit (SPU)) are dedicated in ensuring the safety and well being of these vulnerable prisoners whilst encouraging self confidence in them that in turn leads to greater participation in prison life and programmes such as education.
- iv. A member of the Board will speak to every prisoner in Segregation and the SPU at least twice a week to ensure that they are alright and being treated fairly.

### **3. Other areas**

#### **a. Alcohol and Drugs**

- i. At any point in time, approximately one third of Reading's population have drug and/or alcohol related problems which should require some sort of immediate intervention and access to specialised assistance and programmes. Dealing with these problems quickly would also facilitate / assist with the prisoner's integration in the regime and assist in their ultimate resettlement.
- ii. However the Board is concerned that the screening and selection process for these programmes can often be too lengthy especially in comparison with other activities (i.e. education) and therefore become the "second rather than first choice" for those in most need.
- iii. This is then compounded by the high churn of the prison population reducing participant numbers and in one case leading to the cancellation of a course as they fell below the required loading.
- iv. Even though the Integrated Drug Treatment Service (IDTS) was introduced within the Prison Service last year has still not gone fully live at Reading. It was originally scheduled for April 2010 but this has been postponed to August 2010. This will bring the Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Through care Scheme (CARATS) together with Healthcare to improve prisoner treatment and inter agency working.

#### **b. Food and kitchen**

- i. The kitchen manager and staff are to be commended for providing a varied, healthy and wholesome menu and reasonable portion size each day from a per capita cost of only £2.
- ii. They also provide 10 places on a four month course N.V.Q level 1 course on cookery. Unfortunately due to population churn not all of them complete the course.

#### **c. Foreign nationals (FN)**

- i. The average number of FN prisoners held at Reading per month was 23. With a total of 123 entering the prison since January 2009. The most common nationalities are Vietnamese and Romanian. The number held on an IS91 has been generally very low during the period.

ii. The Board commends the bi monthly meeting between the FN's and the relevant outside services and agencies which has begun to address the information vacuum and frustration that FN's have discussed with the Board.

**d. Reception**

i. Whereas the Board understands the physical constraints of a small Victorian prison and the current financial situation, it as in past years believes that the state of this area is unacceptable especially as this is often the first image/contact that potential vulnerable "first night" prisoners will have of a prison. Concerns include:

- a. Un inviting decor.
- b. Lack of privacy when being searched.
- c. Sub standard toilet facilities.
- d. Initial interviews taking place in a public office that may restrict prisoners speaking freely about their concerns and problems.

ii. Mandatory drug testing is not done at Reception but Healthcare is on hand to talk with prisoners and if thought to be necessary testing will be carried out.

**e. Regime**

i. The Board is disappointed that due primarily to severe staff shortages (caused by the national recruitment freeze) the regime has been negatively impacted and the prison was unable to meet their "out of cell hours per day" key performance target (KPT) of 8.4.

ii. In Quarter 4 this declined to only 6.6. Even though it is understandable that the adverse weather conditions exacerbated the situation, the Board believes that this poor performance is still unacceptable.

iii. The Board also has serious concerns that the overall establishment average KPT masks unacceptable levels of performance for certain sections of the population. For example, it is not unusual for A Wing to experience out of cell hours per day of only 4.5 (weekdays) and 2.75 (weekends). This then leads to increased levels of tension and poor behaviour.

iv. During the year, the Board has also received applications relating to the reoccurring in-equitable allocation of staff during undermanned shifts, where locations that require a higher level of manning per prisoner to oversee out of cell hours are locked down more than others. Even though management always reacted to the Boards concerns positively, the problem seemed to drift back over time.

**f. Resettlement**

i. The main ethos and innovative initiatives surrounding the "7 Pathways" for resettlement continue to be broadly addressed within the establishment. The operational instructions are clear and provide the basis of a good release process. It is enhanced by the weekly Discharge Board that for each prisoner due to be released reviews progress and identifies any remaining actions that need to be resolved prior release.

ii. The Board are concerned though that however diligently and comprehensively the Prison prepare the prisoners for their release the external agencies and services that are critical to prevent re offending are often not "joined-up" and fail to adequately provide the necessary support.

iii. Even though the prisoner mentoring scheme piloted by the Prisoner's Trust has had to be scaled back the Families and Children pathway continues to be developed with a variety of initiatives including:

- a. Provision of family visit days.
- b. Safeguarding children training.
- c. Appointment of a Family Liaison officer.
- d. The Kennet resettlement unit continues to work well and even though selection of suitable candidates is difficult, occupancy rates during the period have increased. Recently job placements have proved more difficult (probably due to current economic climate) but there have been many successes with employment being secured with local companies including the new Jamie's Italian Restaurant.

**g. Violence reduction**

- i. Given that the definition of violence is far wider than physical harm and takes into account the impact that fear from bullying etc can have on a prisoners well-being, the Board believes that more use could be made of the incentives and earned privileges scheme (IEP) to not only punish but also to promote good behaviour.
- ii. The Board has observed a marked increase in gang related behaviour between prisoners especially when out of area prisoners (notably London) are sent to Reading.

**h. Visits**

- i. The Board has observed some notable improvements in this area during the year including:
  - a. New comfortable furniture which has gone a long way to making the visits area smarter and more welcoming.
  - b. Expansion of family days from 4 to 6 where 10 to 12 prisoners and their families can spend time functioning as a family together playing, socialising and enjoying a good lunch with their children.
  - c. Introduction of a prisoner consultative group and survey.
  - d. Prompted by the HMCIP inspection report and then developed and agreed by the consultative group the wearing of bibs has been replaced by arm bands which has assisted in making the atmosphere of visits more relaxed and normal.
  - e. Weekend Samaritan support in the waiting area prior to a visit for the families who are also potential victims themselves.
- ii. Blue Band and Kennet prisoners continue to have the opportunity to have an extended visit using the Jubilee area, (a room off the corridor that leads to visits), allowing them to sit next to their relatives rather than across a table. There is also a larger floor space where children can play and interact more freely with the prisoner.
- iii. The Board would like to recognise the valuable contribution that local community organisations notably the WRVS and Samaritans provide during visits. However:
  - a. The children's play area has not been used over the last year due mainly to the problem of finding volunteers. Hopefully this will be rectified in the coming year with young local students being allowed to

work in this area as part of their community studies and work experience.

b. The refreshments available for purchase are of a basic/limited nature and do not always provide suitable fare for visitors who have travelled a long way especially with young children.

c. Given that a large proportion of the prisoners are also young parents who are struggling to responsibly bring up their children the Board believes that some sort of parenting advice and skills training (from an external agency or internal resources) could be very beneficial to both the Prisoner and partners. The Board now understands and welcomes that a new relationship course called Family Man is to be started for prisoners in 2010/11.

## **4. Annexes.**

### **a. Statutory role of the Board**

i. The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and Immigration Removal Centre to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated. The Board is specifically charged to:

- a. 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.
- b. Inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- c. 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.

ii. To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner, all areas of the prison and prison's records (excluding medical details).

### **b. Description of the Prison**

i. Reading Young Offenders Institution & Remand Centre is a local prison in a Victorian building built in 1844 on the site of a former jail.

ii. In 1992 it became a YOI for males between 18 and 21 and is a Category B prison with a Certified Normal Accommodation of 190. The prison has an operational capacity of 293 and has an average population during the period of approximately 260.

iii. A small prison in a large town, the corner site location is restricted by a canal, a dual carriageway and an adjacent church, thereby not affording any room for expansion. Expansion of non-cellular accommodation has been in the form of porta-cabins.

iv. Accommodation comprises three main wings of mixed single and double accommodation cells plus a small Segregation Unit and E Wing, which is used as a 16 bed Separated Prisoners Unit. There is also a 20 bed resettlement unit, known as The Kennet, mainly occupied by prisoners who are local to the prison's catchments area, but it forms part of the wider prison estate's resettlement policy.

v. Reading has good access by rail and road for visitors and its excellent position in the town allows pre-release prisoners to benefit from outside work experience.

### **c. Work of the Board**

i. Membership and diversity

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 the Board consisted of 10 members but 2 have subsequently resigned.

The Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses and promotes greater interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status and age. The Board values this approach to

diversity within its own recruitment and board development practices. All members will undertake their duties in a manner which ensures that it is accessible and without prejudice to everyone within the establishment regardless of their background or social situation.

ii. Training

The Board undertook a variety of training throughout the year with Prison staff giving presentations. In addition Members have attended numerous training courses organised by the prison and also the IMB Secretariat.

iii. Duties

The Board held 11 meetings during the reporting year with 1 cancelled due to the snow. Members continued to receive applications from prisoners and fulfilled all other rota and statutory duties. These included attending Segregation Review Boards and meetings reflecting their areas of interest as observers.

iv. Board activity statistics:

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>
Recommended Complement of Board Members	10	10
Number of Board members at the start of the year	9	8
New members joining in year	0	3
Members leaving in year	-1	-1
Number of Board members at the end of the year	8	10
Total number of visits to the prison (inc meetings)	263	303
Total number of applications received	47	78
Total number of segregation reviews held	58	52
Total number of segregation reviews attended	58	39

v. Applications to the IMB analysed by nature of concern.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>
Accommodation	5	1	9	4	4
Adjudications & Segregations	7	13	5	3	7
Diversity	2	4	1	2	4
Education/Training/Employment	18	1	14	5	14
Family/visits	11	13	6	4	15
Food/kitchen related	6	3	2	4	3
Health related	7	11	5	5	3
Property	31	24	26	5	9
Sentence Related	21	17	3	5	2
Staff/Prisoner/Detainee related	8	13	8	7	8
Transfers	8	3	8	0	3
Miscellaneous	6	3	5	3	6
<b>Total applications</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>78</b>

The Board continues to receive a relative low number of applications. There does not appear to be anything sinister or untoward about this and the Board believes that the generally good relationships between prisoners and their Personal and/or Landing Officers have played a major part in the reduction.

The small year on year increase is due to a combination of small number of prisoners making multiple applications about fundamentally the same concern and a reaction to certain anti bullying tactics that the Prison sanctioned during part of the year.

However, even though the work of the IMB is covered at Induction sessions, the actual experience of the members going around the prison and talking with prisoners is that the actual awareness of the IMB and role could be improved.

vi. Development

During the year, the Board has invested considerable effort in developing its procedures and documentation.

vii. HMCIP Survey of efficiency savings

The Board invested significant effort into responding to this survey and look forward to receiving feedback from it in due course.

viii. Acknowledgements

The Board would like to acknowledge and thank the Governor and staff for the good working relationship that they have with them.

**d. Glossary of abbreviations and terms**

The following terms have been used in the report of abbreviations and prison related terms:

ACCT	Assessment, care in custody & teamwork process
BLUE BAND	A trusted prisoner employed in positions of responsibility housed in a separate area with an enhanced regime.
BOARD	Independent monitoring board
CARATS	Counselling, assessment, referral, advice & through care scheme – drug & alcohol team
EIA	Equality impact assessment
E Wing	See SPU
FN	Foreign nationals
GALIPs	Gays and lesbians in the Prison Service
GOOD	Good order or discipline – segregation under Rule 45/49
HMCIP	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
IDTS	Integrated drug treatment service
IEP	Incentives and earned privileges – Prisoners can be on basic, standard or enhanced
IMB	Independent monitoring board
KENNET	Resettlement unit at Reading
KPT	Key performance target
LSC	Learning & skills council (now the Skills funding agency)
MC	Manchester College – Education provider at Reading
NOMS	National offender management services
OLASS	Offender learning and skills service (part of LSC)
PCT	Primary care trust
PS	Prison Service

REAT	Race equality action plan
REAP	Race equality action plan
ROTL	Release on temporary licence - e.g. to work in mess; town visits; home leave
RRLO	Race relations liaison officer
SCG	Safer custody group
SDP	Short duration programme
SMART	Smart, measurable, attributable, relevant and time bound objectives
SPU	Separated prisoner unit for vulnerable prisoners (now E Wing)
VDT	Voluntary drugs testing
VTC	Vocational training centre
YOI	Young offenders institution