

HMP SHEPTON MALLET

ANNUAL REPORT

PERIOD

1st APRIL 2009 – 31st MARCH 2010

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.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Shepton Mallet IMB 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, disability and age. We also recognize that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cut across social and cultural categories such as mental health, literacy, drug addiction or offence.

All members of the Shepton Mallet IMB will undertake their duties in a manner that is accessible to everyone within the establishment regardless of their background or social situation. The Board monitors to establish that the experiences and interaction between staff, prisoners and visitors is fair and without prejudice. Where this is not the case the Board will alert the appropriate authorities and individuals including the governor, senior management, area manager and the prisons minister.

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1 Description of the prison

1.1. HMP Cornhill, Shepton Mallet, is a Category C prison previously dedicated to the holding of life sentenced prisoners at the second stage of release. However, the prison now holds a small number of Indeterminate Public Protection prisoners who transfer in to undertake courses offered by the Offending Behaviour Unit.

1.2. Shepton Mallet is the oldest working prison in the country, celebrating the 400th anniversary of its inception in 2010. It was closed from 1930 to 1939 before becoming a military prison (English/American) from 1939 until 1966. It re-rolled to become the first Category C lifer centre in the Prison Service in 2001.

1.3. The Certified Normal Accommodation is 165, with the operational capacity being 189. Having now completed the refurbishment of the floors on all Wings, which was reported as being in progress last year, the operational capacity is usually maximised.

1.4. The prisoners are organised into four residential wings in 141 single cells and 24 shared cells.

1.5. Approximately 60% of the prisoners have been convicted of murder whilst around 20% have been convicted of a sexual offence. The remaining 20% have been convicted of offences such as violence and robbery.

1.6. Almost 40% of prisoners are aged over 50 and only around 5% aged under 30 years. The average age is approximately 47 years.

1.7. There are currently 44 prisoners who are registered disabled.

1.8. The main contractor for the provision of Education, Learning and Skills is A4e. Dorset Primary Care Trust now commissions and provides healthcare.

1.9. A range of organisations visits the prison to provide assistance to prisoners including Mendip District Council, Somerset Racial Equality Council, Age Concern, Mothers' Union, Samaritans, Changing Tunes, Alcoholics Anonymous.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Particular issues requiring a response.

2.1.1. The budgets for the running of the prison had been cut in the past three financial years and again this year with the prison expected to maintain its provision against a cut of £350,000. The prison has had to suffer a reduction in the “National Core Day”, eliminating Friday afternoon activities and cutting educational and work opportunities for prisoners. This year staff cuts have resulted in gym facilities remaining unused for part of the week and the loss of the drug dogs. The Head of Regimes now manages Learning and Skills, Library, Workshops, Healthcare, Chaplaincy and PE whilst the Head of Offender Management now manages the Offending Behaviour Programmes Unit

2.1.2. It is a tribute to the management and staff that many of the budget cuts have been absorbed without even greater impact on the daily running of the establishment. However we are very concerned that further cuts in budgets will result in a reduction in the quality of service that the prison can provide. We would welcome assurance that there will be no further cuts to prison budgets.

2.1.3. Last year in this section we raised the issue of delays to Parole Board hearings because of delays in receiving probation officers reports to complete dossiers. We wrote;

Many prisoners at Shepton Mallet have served long sentences and frequently the probation officer tasked with completing this (Parole board) report has little personal knowledge of the prisoner. Indeed they may never have met. We appreciate that this report may be indispensable for prisoners who will be re-entering the community after a successful parole board hearing, but most prisoners at Shepton Mallet will be transferring only to open conditions. With resettlement in their local area still way in the future, the report from the Offender supervisor at Shepton Mallet is more relevant.

We ask why the Minister felt that in these circumstances the report was required since it incurred additional costs to the service and frequently led to delays in hearings. **We were disappointed to receive no response from the Minister.**

2.1.4. We also wish to raise the issue of the budget set for the Board to do its work. Shepton Mallet is set in a relatively rural location, so members incur travel costs which are greater than those of boards in urban areas. We would urge that a rurality factor is included when board budgets are calculated.

2.1.5. We would welcome reassurance that magistrates will continue to be permitted to serve as IMB members.

2.2 Other issues of concern or excellence not requiring a response.

2.2.1. Shepton Mallet continues to be a prison well served by dedicated staff, both uniformed and civilian, who noticeably go out of their way to assist prisoners and colleagues alike.

2.2.2. The Board is very concerned that the proposal to increase the prison population from 189 by a further 70 during the forthcoming year will have a deleterious impact on a very successful prison. Facilities within the prison are restricted by the constraints of the building and we fear that the increased population will tax these facilities. We are concerned that this will lead to a breakdown in the existing harmonious relations which provide an excellent environment for prisoners to progress in their sentences.

2.2.3. The transfer of the canteen contract to DHL in February 2009 resulted in the closure of the Aramark Distribution centre at Shepton Mallet. This was a severe blow to the prison as it resulted in the loss of 20 activity places. The facilities available within the prison building limit the range of potential employment possibilities and a planned sewing shop, due to commence operation during summer of 2009, has remained uncommissioned. A new painting and decorating workshop became operational in October offering much needed and popular additional vocational courses.

3 Topics on which the IMB must report

This section looks at the five areas, Diversity, Learning and Skills, Healthcare and Mental Health, Safer Custody, Segregation and Separation Units

3.1 DIVERSITY

3.1.1. The issues of Diversity continue to be taken seriously by Senior Managers of all departments of Shepton Mallet prison and attending the quarterly Diversity Meetings is considered to be a priority. An IMB member attends these meetings.

3.1.2. The discussions at these meetings cover all aspects of “difference”, i.e. race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, equal opportunities etc. the object of which is to check for indicators of discrimination and to plan for appropriate action to be taken.

3.1.3. Unfortunately, last year’s plan for Diversity training to be held within the prison for prison staff every three years had to be suspended to accommodate the mandatory requirement of P-Nomis training for all staff. It is hoped that Diversity training will begin again in April 2010.

3.1.1 Race Equality.

3.1.1.1. The Prison Service Race Relations Policy Statement is displayed throughout the prison and prisoners are given clear information on race equality on arrival at Shepton Mallet.

3.1.1.2. Also on arrival, prisoners are met by a nominated Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) (volunteer) prisoner who offers support in what initially may seem to be a strange and/or hostile environment.

3.1.1.3. Shepton Mallet prison works and consults with a representative from the Somerset Race Equality Council who is invited to the quarterly Diversity meetings, as is a prisoner representative.

3.1.1.4. Both are also invited to the quarterly Race Equality sub-committee which is chaired by the Race Equality Officer (REO). An IMB member also attends this meeting.

3.1.1.5. 11.7% of prisoners in Shepton Mallet come from BME groups with over 88% being White. The prison is holding nine foreign Nationals.

3.1.1.6. Following a recent retirement, there are currently no BME members of staff.

3.1.1.7. The Race Equality Communication Strategy has been reviewed

3.1.1.8. Information continues to be displayed in the Staff training room, Healthcare and Prisoners’ information room

3.1.1.9. A Race Equality folder has been created and placed in the Visitors’ waiting area.

3.1.1.10. As it is a requirement for the prison to engage with the prison community, a survey has recently been undertaken. The majority of prisoners appears to be happy with Race Equality, but requested more cultural food and events.

3.1.2 Racist Incidents.

3.1.2.1. Thirteen incidents were recorded over the past 12 months, eight of which concerned one individual prisoner. All were investigated and dealt with appropriately.

3.1.2.2. One prisoner of Islamic faith complained that, although he had agreed his cell mate could smoke, he found it unbearable and submitted a complaint arguing that passive smoking is against his faith.

3.1.2.3. After research, his complaint was upheld and he was moved into another double cell with a non-smoker - an example of good practice in Shepton Mallet prison.

3.1.2.4. Whilst race equality still remains an important area for discussion, it is acknowledged that many lessons have been learned and acted upon. It is now an issue which throws up little conflict in Shepton Mallet for prisoners or staff.

3.1.2.5. However, it is clear that when or where prejudice has arisen, the root cause seems to stem from ignorance of the culture of others.

3.1.3 Multi-cultural Awareness.

3.1.3.1. A proposal to arrange multi-cultural awareness events in the prison was enthusiastically taken up by the Race Equality Officer (REO) who undertook to research the history of many different faiths and festivals linked to the prison population.

3.1.3.2. The resulting events included Nigerian Day, German reunification day, Black history month, Jamaica independence, Armistice and Remembrance Day, St. Andrews day, St. David's day, Christmas, Burns' night, Paganism. etc and covered specific sports, music, arts and literature.

3.1.3.3. The Catering Manager co-operated in the multi-cultural awareness programme by organising different, and sometimes unusual, national and international foods which the prisoners could choose for their meals. These particular events caused some grumbles, but much positive discussion ensued when it was explained that the object of cultural awareness events is about education not just food.

3.1.3.4. The REO also suggested to the Race Relations Sub-Committee that a two minute silence might take place and candles lit on January 27 in order to remember those who suffered in the Holocaust. A DVD called "Legacy of Hope" was also available for prisoners to view. Prisoners were approached by their representatives of the RE Sub-Committee for their views and it was agreed that this should go ahead. The event was sensitively arranged and proved successful.

3.1.3.5. The REO encouraged many of Shepton Mallet's prisoners to help in the cultural awareness project who in turn supplied additional good ideas and materials.

3.1.3.6. The Graphic Design NVQ class in the prison Education Block was approached for help and the student-prisoners agreed to produce graphic designs depicting the various cultural subjects. These were then displayed on the Centre Diversity Board and in the Chapel. These designs were then submitted as part of the individual student-prisoners NVQ portfolio.

3.1.3.7. "Difference" in sexuality was also researched and bravely displayed.

3.1.3.8. Under the heading of Cultural Awareness, it has been agreed that Shepton Mallet prison will purchase 100 "Faces of Britain" (a cultural guide) booklets.

3.1.3.9. The REO, assisted by the Public Protection Officer undertook this mammoth piece of work, whilst continuing with their normal duties. They, along with the prisoners and staff who took part in this innovative programme and the many "outside" supporters who offered invaluable advice, are to be congratulated on their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work which made the events possible and so successful.

3.1.4 Equal Opportunities.

3.1.4.1. The Equal Opportunities Action Plan included Diversity training “Challenge it, Change it” but, as previously stated, this had to be cancelled due to commitment to P-Nomis training. However, at the time of writing this report this training has restarted.

3.1.4.2. No complaints have been received under this heading.

3.1.5 Disability

3.1.5.1. There are at present 44 men on the Disabled Prisoners Register and 74 on the Older Prisoners Register (46 aged 50-59, 24 aged 60-69 and 4 aged 70+). As the age of the prison population increases it is to be expected that disability will also increase.

3.1.5.2. The main area of concern within the prison for both disabled and older prisoners is adequate access to the prison facilities. The age of Shepton Mallet prison (400 years this year) makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to have adaptations to the building.

3.1.5.3. This could lead to unavoidable discrimination against elderly and/or disabled prisoners e.g. access to the Education Dept. means negotiating several flights of stairs. However, where possible, some education can be undertaken in cell

3.1.5.4. The expectation that Shepton Mallet will provide an additional 70 prisoner places in the coming year means that at least 30 cells will have to accommodate bunk beds. The expectation that elderly and/or disabled prisoners should climb into upper bunks may lead to Health and Safety issues and could instigate areas of dissatisfaction and/or unrest.

3.1.5.5. A “Single Impact Assessment” staff meeting was held, where prison staff were invited to put forward areas/categories of prisoners where there appeared to be potential risk of discrimination. It became clear that the categories of Disability and Older Prisoners met this description.

3.1.5.6. Consequently, the Governor has advised that Single Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on both of these categories in the coming year to ascertain indicators of potential discrimination within the present policies.

3.1.5.7. The Governor has agreed to the purchase of “Disability” pamphlets as a learning guide for staff.

3.2 LEARNING AND SKILLS

3.2.1. Since our last report the provision of Learning and Skills has been taken over by A4e who were the successful bidders for the contract.

3.2.2. The Head of Learning and Skills, who is also the Head of Regimes, attends Sentence Planning Boards. The department works effectively to meet the identified learning needs in respect of numeracy and literacy and in providing further courses for those wishing to proceed to a higher level of education. All prisoners are assessed on their arrival at Shepton Mallet for their literacy and numeracy needs. Unfortunately, some new arrivals resist the recommendations to update or improve their numeracy and literary skills although the department continues to work hard to encourage prisoners to rethink their abilities in these aspects.

3.2.3. In a prison with fairly limited capacity, increasing the number and variety of vocational training opportunities remains a challenge. However, qualifications are possible in the Learning and Skills Department, the Woodwork Shop and the Gymnasium. The loss of the Aramark contract last year (Shepton Mallet was a canteen packing and distribution centre), where prisoners could gain an NVQ in Warehousing and Distribution was a blow. Some 25 prisoners lost their jobs and finding other employment was not easy.

3.2.4. On the positive side, there remains a waiting list to join the Woodwork class where class members work towards a City and Guilds qualification in Woodworking, Carpentry and Joinery and Furniture Making.

3.2.5. After an initial hiccup with the appointed instructor leaving after just a few weeks, the Painting and Decorating Courses finally got under way and have proved popular amongst the prisoners. IT courses continue to be very popular, although the Open University course in Computer Programming has been stopped for security reasons.

3.2.6. The Gymnasium remains ever popular, providing a range of courses and recreational activities. Staff assess suitability of courses for individual prisoners, since some are precluded from taking courses which provide qualifications for work as personal trainers or instructors.

3.2.7. Ten prisoners are currently undertaking Fine Cell Work in which over 200 hours per month are engaged on tapestry.

3.2.8. We are pleased to report that in excess of 400 separate qualifications were achieved by prisoners during the last academic year, including six final awards from the Open University.

3.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

3.3.1. Day to day healthcare is provided by Somerset PCT, the department being staffed by a small but dedicated team, including psychiatric nurses. A GP attends for surgery sessions three times a week and also provides out of hours cover. The dentist attends for one weekly session. Other specialist professionals, for example chiropodist, also make regular visits to the prison.

3.3.2. A psychiatrist attended every three weeks and provides emergency on call cover. This service is currently under review.

3.3.3. The Department has been able to satisfy the audit cycle for the year. All healthcare staff have received appropriate training, this being coupled with supervision and appraisal.

3.3.4. There have been no problems accessing in-patient or out-patient care when required and all waiting times have been within NHS targets. However staff have had to engage regularly in rearranging clashing out-patient appointments because of the increase in number of appointments and operational issues restricting the scheduling of hospital attendances.

3.3.5. There have been several staff changes in the department during the year; with a new GP and a locum psychiatrist attending whilst a new appointment is made.

3.3.6. During the year, prisoner prescriptions have been reviewed to address the problem of long term reliance on pain relief medication. The department has been successful in reducing the number of patients taking these medications and it is hoped that work in the coming year will further reduce this dependency on prescription medications.

3.3.7. A Health Promotion Day in November was well received.

3.3.8. Prisoner representatives attend the quarterly Reference Group meetings. The annual survey is under review to bring provision into line with other services provided for by the Primary Care Trust.

3.3.9. Information on complaints procedures is displayed within the Healthcare Centre and there have been some complaints during the year. These were responded to within the prescribed time limits by either the Prison or the Primary Care Trust.

3.3.10. During this financial year, the prison was allocated over £81,000 from the Department of Health for the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS). The Healthcare department has developed the programme to be implemented in the forthcoming year.

3.4 SAFER CUSTODY

3.4.1 Deaths in Custody

3.4.1.1. Thankfully there have been no deaths of prisoners in this reporting year.

3.4.1.2. Coroner's Courts were held in respect of three prisoners who died during the previous year and these returned verdicts of death by natural causes.

3.4.2 Safer Custody procedures

3.4.2.1. The prison remains fortunate in having a low level of ACCT activity and, in the main, those which have been opened remain so for only a short period. There have been very few cases of self-harm or bullying behaviour. Any known instances of bullying have been quickly dealt with by the staff although it should be stressed that bullying is not a problem at Shepton Mallet.

3.4.2.2. The prison currently has fewer ACCT assessors than there would be in an ideal situation, but matters are in hand for more people to be trained. Reviews of closed ACCT's are carried out at the Safer Custody meeting after Listeners have left the meeting.

3.4.2.3. The prison currently has five Listeners although this number may be reduced if some members are, as has been recommended following a Parole Board hearing, transferred out of the prison to other establishments. However, matters are in hand for replacements to be trained by the Samaritans. It is understood that the Care Suite, which was relocated to B wing last year, is to be relocated again to another room within the same wing in the very near future.

3.4.2.4. The Safer Custody team meets quarterly with a mainly good attendance including Samaritans, Listeners, Healthcare and IMB representatives. The Violence Reduction Team meets on a monthly basis. Both meetings produce accurate minutes with effective follow up on any action points.

3.4.2.5. A Violence Reduction survey was carried out in October/November 2009 concerning prisoners' views on their safety within the establishment. Although the survey was handed to all prisoners, only 42 responses out of a possible 189 were received. One question was: "*What are the underlying issues that lead to threats/violence towards you or others?*". Eleven offenders, out of the forty-two who answered, felt that cell sharing was the main underlying issue. This is of particular concern as the Governor is being asked to find more accommodation places in the establishment. This will inevitably mean greater numbers sharing cells!

3.5 SEGREGATION/SEPARATION AND CARE UNITS

3.5.1. There are relatively few adjudications. A total of 70 adjudications have taken place during this reporting year, with 50 being proven and 20 being dismissed.

3.5.2. The segregation unit continues to be little used. Of the 50 proven adjudication cases, 23 resulted in the small segregation unit being used for cellular confinement, albeit only for a few days at a time.

3.5.3. It was reported last year that plans were in hand to convert one segregation cell for use under constant watch conditions. This has now been completed, but thankfully it has not yet been put to use at the time of writing this report.

3.5.4. The IMB are usually promptly informed when the segregation unit is in use and regular visits take place to assess prisoners' welfare.

3.5.5. An IMB member attends the quarterly meeting, chaired by the Governor, to look over the previous quarters adjudications, to ensure that the punishments meted out are compliant with the local tariff guidelines.

4 Additional topics

4.1 Accommodation

4.1.1. A total solution to the problem of providing suitable heating to the upper landings of the wings is still awaited. It is a situation which, due to the fabric of the buildings, may never be properly resolved. However it is reassuring that during this colder than average winter, the temperature in the monitored cells remained above the minimum 15 degrees.

4.1.2. Shared cells remain an issue for some prisoners arriving at the prison. Many have been accustomed to not sharing and the movement up the waiting list for single accommodation is very slow. The prison continues to make every effort to inform prisoners in advance that they will have to share accommodation if they transfer to the prison and most new receptions are fully aware of the situation when they arrive at the prison.

4.1.3. The situation with shared cells is set to deteriorate over the coming year if the prison adapts to house an additional 70 prisoners. As only a minimal number can be accommodated by converting other spaces in the prison, such as the existing care suite and an association room, 20 cells will require additional beds and 45 the installation of bunk beds.

4.1.4. The introduction of easy chairs and coffee tables in the open wing areas has improved the ambience and sociability of association periods.

4.2 Catering & Kitchens

4.2.1. The quality of the food provided at Shepton Mallet remains at a generally high standard and there have been very few reported complaints, either to the IMB or written in the comments book provided on the Wings. The kitchen received a score of 83% when audited this year.

4.2.2. Catering staff continue to endeavour to cater for all national occasions by producing a menu suitable for the day. This is appreciated by the prisoners.

4.2.3. The long awaited major refurbishment of the kitchen including replacement of the floor and encapsulation of asbestos, is now scheduled to begin in April 2010. Temporary kitchens will provide a limited menu during the three months that the work is expected to take.

4.3 Chaplaincy

4.3.1. The Chaplaincy provision is wide and varied with access to a range of Christian Ministers as well as representatives of most other faiths. The Reverend Bird retired in August and his replacement, Reverend Peter Browne was installed early in 2010. A new Imam was welcomed to the prison early in 2010 following a lengthy interregnum.

4.3.2. The chaplaincy arranges and hosts a number of discussion group and evening musical events and concerts. It supports Changing Tunes which regularly attends sessions. A 'Songs of Praise' service is held each month.

4.3.3. The chaplaincy supervises and trains prison visitors who make weekly or fortnightly visits.

4.3.4. It also offers a supported visits service, to permit family to see prisoners more privately than in the visitors' centre, for example after a family bereavement or when links are being established after a lengthy period of estrangement.

4.3.5. The mosque has been moved from B - wing and is now accommodated in the Chapel area.

4.4 Drugs

4.4.1. Drug abuse in Shepton Mallet, compared with the wider prison estate, remains a relatively minor problem. The establishment's efficient mandatory and voluntary drug testing programmes identify and monitor any development of drug use very quickly.

4.4.2. All MDTs (Mandatory Drug Testing) figures have been achieved and VDTs (Voluntary Drug Testing) were carried out in excess of the requisite monthly numbers. The few positive tests that resulted were mainly attributed to prescription medication.

4.4.3. As stated in Section 3, Healthcare has been working to reduce the number of prisoners taking prescription medication. Whilst some prisoners may be reliant on unnecessary medication there have been incidents of "trading" between inmates of prescription medication. The healthcare department has introduced witness consumption when this is suspected.

4.4.4. The prison has the benefit of a part time CARAT worker who attends for three days each week and reports regularly to the Drug Strategy Committee. A large part of the work undertaken in these sessions provides useful preparation for a move to open prison conditions, where prisoners encounter greater opportunities for drug and alcohol use than in a Category C prison.

4.4.5. The prison has been allocated over £81,000 by the Department of Health to provide Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS) services. The scheme will be implemented in the forthcoming year and should provide a more interdisciplinary service with close links between Healthcare and CARAT.

4.5 Gym and Physical Education

4.5.1. There have been some problems through the year with maintaining staffing levels. The SO PEI left in October and financial constraints meant that no replacement was appointed. The department is now managed by the Head of Regimes. However, the two remaining staff continue to provide a range of classes and sessions to appeal to the wide age range of the prison.

4.5.2. The department continues to pursue a proactive role to persuade older prisoners and those with disability to engage in exercise activities and programmes. Prison staff are able to use the gym facility during the lunch period, with team games and individual support including weights training.

4.5.3. Gym staff organised a well supported power lifting completion during the year and a visit and demonstration by a body builder.

4.5.4. Developing links with community sports groups continues to be a challenge, because of the limited sports facilities available within the prison. However, a local volley ball team visited this year to play a prison team and it is hoped to continue that link.

4.5.6. The Gym also provides a service to the local community, with a group of vulnerable adults attending the department for a regular weekly session of supervised exercise. These sessions give prisoners who work with the group a valuable voluntary experience and an insight into the problems of others.

4.5.7. The gym is now able to offer Active IQ courses which are recognized in the community and which will permit prisoners to achieve higher qualifications than were offered by the previous OCN courses.

4.6 Lifers and the Offender Management Unit

4.6.1. Around three years ago, the Offender Management Unit was restructured, with four offender managers each assisted by a case administrator. The unit now provides comprehensive and efficient support to prisoners and is able to keep ahead of the demand for Parole Board dossiers.

4.6.2. Last year we reported that Parole Board decisions remained exceedingly cautious. We are pleased that the situation has improved and that more prisoners are receiving positive outcomes to their applications.

4.6.3. However Parole Board hearings are continuing to be delayed, resulting in additional work for unit staff needing to review and update dossiers for rescheduled hearings.

4.6.4. Adverse Parole Board decisions can be very upsetting for prisoners and the unit has developed procedures to support prisoners. Parole Board outcomes are reviewed first in the unit, after which the offender supervisor personally takes the Parole Board letter to the prisoner, going through the points raised and ensuring full understanding of any requirements or reasons for refusal. Staff always assess if an ACCT needs to be opened should a prisoner's response cause concerns.

4.7 Offending Behaviour Programmes

4.7.1. The Offending Behaviour Unit at Shepton Mallet offers a range of courses, including Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) Extended programme, the Better Lives Booster and the Cognitive Skills Booster (CSB).

4.7.2. The Cognitive Skills Booster programme continues to be very popular with a waiting list of prisoners wishing to take the course. The number of completions was 37, as against the KPT of 36.

4.7.3. The SOTP team delivered one Extended and three Better Lives Booster programmes during the year.

4.7.4. In the audit, the SOPT team was rated as 'higher achieved' and the CSB team rated as exceeding 'higher achieved' score.

4.7.5. The unit continued to support the Alternatives to Violence course, which has been conducted by the Quakers since 2007. This course proved popular in 2009, but is likely to be discontinued in the coming year.

4.7.6. This small Department has again been beset with staffing difficulties when arrangements needed to be made for maternity leave and for staff needing to reduce their hours. The timescales of the recruitment and vetting processes do not work to permit timely replacement of staff. As the year ends, the Head of the Offending Behaviour Unit has retired.

4.8 Preparation for Release and Resettlement

4.8.1. Quarterly meetings of the Reducing Re-Offending (Resettlement) Committee are held at Shepton Mallet and chaired by the Governor. The seven pathways are gone through and thoroughly discussed. The committee serves to bring representatives of a wide range of roles in the establishment together, enabling

constructive discussion and progression of ideas regarding preparation of inmates for Category D prison or release into the community.

4.8.2. The problem of prisoners being returned from Category D prisons continues, often because of drug offences. The committee has directed the CARAT worker at HMP Shepton Mallet to liaise further with the CARAT worker at HMP Leyhill (the local Category D prison) to try to find ways of reducing these figures.

4.8.3. The Learning & Skills department works closely with prisoners to improve literacy and numeracy skills to a level which enables them to achieve further educational qualifications. Currently 38% of inmates have reached level 2 literacy (equivalent to GCSE standard) and 45% have numeracy certificates.

4.8.4. A proposal to form a post-therapeutic community support group is being discussed for prisoners joining Shepton Mallet from such an establishment. As the ethos of a therapeutic community is very different from that of a normal prison, transitional difficulties can arise. The support group would provide informal support for members during their adjustment.

4.8.5. The establishment now has an information Pod available to prisoners. This is a stand-alone computer with a touch screen which will be particularly useful to new arrivals, enabling them to find out about the various services available in the prison.

4.9 Regimes and Activities

4.9.1. The transfer of the canteen contract to DHL in February 2009 resulted in the closure of the Aramark Distribution centre at Shepton with the loss of 20 activity places. Finding suitable replacement work, compatible with limited facilities at Shepton Mallet has proved a difficult task.

4.10 Security

4.10.1. We are pleased to report that there have been no escapes, nor confirmed attempted escapes, during this year.

4.10.2. A Governor chairs the regular monthly meetings of the Security Committee, which is always attended by a representative of the Board. This committee deals with all matters affecting security within the prison, including contingency plans and exercises.

4.10.3. Several exercises have taken place throughout the year including a hostage situation. All are up to date and a score of 90% in the Standards Audit was very acceptable. Personal Safety Training is also a priority within the prison and this is ongoing.

4.10.4. A total of 632 Security Information Reports have been received by the Security department over the year. Although these have made a lot more work for the department, they have provided invaluable information in safeguarding the safety and security of the prison.

4.10.5 The prison no longer has the services of the two dogs due to cost-cutting. The dogs have definitely been a deterrent to both visitors and prisoners alike and will be much missed. The older dog has been rehomed and the younger dog has gone to be retrained to work in a passive drug detection role.

4.11 Staffing

4.11.1. The Governor has now been in position for nearly five years and this has resulted in a very stable management of the prison. However this year the Governor was required to reduce the number of managers in the prison by seven, resulting in the loss of several senior staff.

4.11.2. Providing staff for bed watches continues to be a regular feature at Shepton Mallet, because of its aging prison population and geographical situation. Prisoners may be hospitalized in three different locations, Bath, Taunton and Yeovil. There was some further disruption when the POA were operating a work to rule. Generally the prison has been able to manage bed watches without too many instances of evening association being curtailed due to staff detailed elsewhere.

4.11.3. Working in a prison requires very specific training if the security of the prison is to be maintained. Along with regular staff, the prison has a substantial number of volunteers and regular contributors from outside agencies. Ensuring that these visitors to the prison all receive sufficient training to maintain their personal security and that of the establishment needs to be a high priority.

4.12 Visitors & Visitor Centres

4.12.1. Many prisoners at Shepton Mallet do not receive regular visits for several reasons. Some have served many years in prison and lost touch with family or have very elderly family members. Prisoners come from all quarters of the country and Shepton Mallet is not easily accessible for visitors travelling by public transport. For drivers, there is a lack of signage locally and the prison is hidden away.

4.12.2. HMCIP raised issues about poor visits facilities, including the lack of parking for disabled visitors. After protracted negotiation with the County Council in 2008-9 it was agreed that two dedicated disabled parking spaces would be provided immediately outside the prison. The Board is extremely pleased that these bays are now in place (April 2010). The prison awaits the agreed local signposting.

4.12.3. The extended day visit programme continues to provide a popular facility for family visits and the KidsVIP visits are usually fully booked. Four Extended Visit Days have taken place during the year including two Kids VIP days.

4.12.4. Domestic Visits are held on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but usually only around eight prisoners have visitors on these days. The distance and cost for visitors to travel to the prison and the lack of family ties are the main limiting factors. If the prison population increases as planned, then the visits area may come under pressure through lack of space to accommodate more visitors.

4.13 Wing Representaives

4.13.1. The establishment holds a Wing Representatives meeting every month, the meeting is chaired by a Principal Officer and is attend by an elected representative from each wing, also a representative of the prison kitchen staff.

4.13.2. Each representative is able to bring forward any concerns from their own wing; some of the concerns raised in the past year have included showers, meal times, visits, also hairdressing.

4.13.3. The canteen system, which is now settling down is appreciated; however the general increase in the retail price index and the increases in duty on tobacco products, has been of concern, in view of the lack of increase in prisoners wages; this has combined in reducing prisoners' buying power.

4.13.4. Other topics discussed at meetings have included national days, holocaust observance, hearing loops for those with impaired hearing, disability options and suicide prevention.

4.13.5. The IMB considers that these meetings are a valuable method, with which to address the needs and concerns of the prisoners held in the establishment, who are all life sentenced.

4.14 Works

4.14.1. Shepton Mallet has some vulnerable buildings, which being listed, carry considerable responsibilities with regard to their care and maintenance. Nevertheless, the Works Department remains on schedule with its planned and controlled series of maintenance tasks and repairs. It remains one of the best maintained prisons in the region.

4.14.2. The programme of works continues to keep the prison in sufficient good order for present use. Over the past year, chimneys have been replaced and roof tiles sprayed to prevent them being blown into the yards in high winds. The aging oil tanks have been replaced and pipework and controls replaced in the boiler house.

4.14.3. The prison enjoys only a very small garden area through which most prisoners pass on their way to work or education. However, this area is well maintained by a prisoner who continues to devote considerable time and attention to the flower and shrubbery beds and containers.

4.14.4. Despite proposals to re-vamp the activity yard, this has not progressed because of budget restrictions in this financial year.

4.14.5. The prison is fortunate that it has very little damage as a result of vandalism. In the last year, it spent only about £500, a considerably smaller sum than most prisons.

5 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

5.1 Board Activities and Profile

The Shepton Mallet Independent Monitoring Board remains small, starting this reporting period with seven members; Mr D. Franklin (Chairman), Mrs D.E. Culley JP (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J.B. Smith (Board Development Officer), R.C. Brown Esq. JP (National Council Member for South West), Mrs Mary Elmsley, Mrs J.Jenkin and Dr. P. Storey. Mrs J Jenkin retired from the board in March 2010 and the board was very grateful for her work and support during almost five years of service. During 2009 the board was pleased to welcome two new members, Charles Francis and Gervase O'Donohoe. Richard Brown took over as Chairman in January 2010, when David Franklin completed his three years in that role, with Pamela Storey as Vice-Chair.

Board members were in the prison on a total of over 300 individual occasions and attended 54 meetings besides the monthly Board meetings. Board members have carried out 52 weekly rota visits around the prison, and these reports are seen by all Board members and the Governor. A board member visits each week to meet and talk to newly arrived prisoners.

Members also deal with formal and informal applications from prisoners during the year and attend the monthly committee meetings covering many areas of prison management and activity including Wing Representatives Meetings, the Race Equality Action Team, the Diversity Committee, the Resettlement Committee, the Health and Safety Committee, Safer Custody and Violence Reduction Committees and the Quality Improvement Group (QIG).

The service level agreement with the prison continues to work satisfactorily. Our IMB Clerk has continued her dedicated support throughout the year, for which the Board is very grateful.

Table 5.1 Board Statistics

Recommended Complement of Board Members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within reporting period	1
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	54
Total number of visits to the prison/IRC (including all meetings)	304
Total number of applications received	27
Total number of segregation reviews held	3
Total number of segregation reviews attended	2

5.2 Applications

The IMB's own statistics relate to matters (known as 'applications') brought to us by prisoners after they have exhausted the regular Prison Service R&C process. The level of applications is much lower than in other prisons, because many prisoners discuss issues face to face with staff and because the prison environment at Shepton Mallet enables prisoners to deal with issues independently.

During the year a new Applications Box was fitted in the central area and a form designed for prisoners to complete when wishing to make an application to the board. However board members continue to take applications 'on the hoof'. There has been a slight increase in the number of applications made to the Board this year, 27 as compared to 24 in the previous reporting period (Table 5.2). Almost half are sentence related or staff/prisoner related complaints. For the most part, the matters were resolved very quickly upon investigation and in many cases had already been dealt with by staff, or were in the process of so being.

Table 5.2 Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
A	Accommodation			1	2	2
B	Adjudications			1	1	
C	Diversity related	2				
D	Education/Employment/ Training	1	8	3	2	4
E	Family visits	1	4		3	3
F	Food/Kitchen related		2	1		
G	Health related	4	7	7	1	4
H	Property	6	10	7	3	5
I	Sentence related	14	12	9	6	3
J	Staff/Prisoner related	9	10	1	5	
K	Transfers	6	2	1		
L	Miscellaneous	7	7	7	1	6
	Total Number of Applications	50	62	38	24	27

5.3 Board Training and Development

The Board had regular in-house training sessions during the year and the Board is indebted to management and staff in the prison who help the Board broaden its understanding of the prison, its processes and systems. Sessions this year have included talks from the heads of Healthcare, Offender Management, Finance and the Offending Behaviour Unit. In addition, officers attended board meetings to explain OASys and reception procedures. The Board was also indebted to a prisoner who explained his work as a Listener.

Members also attended staff training sessions including Change it or Challenge it and Mental Health Awareness. The Board very much appreciates the support given by the prison to IMB training.

One member attended the IMB Experienced Members course and the Board Development Officer attended the course for BDOs.

During the year, members visited the National Tactical Response Group at Kidlington, Oxfordshire to see staff training in C&R techniques.

The Board is dedicated to offering a professional service to prisoners and staff in Shepton Mallet prison and to this effect we undertake an annual Team Performance Review. The purpose of this is to examine whether the Board has met previous perceived goals and, if necessary, to set new targets for the coming year.

6 GLOSSARY OF PRISON-RELATED ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACCT Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork – replacement for F2052SH

BME Black & Minority Ethnic

C & R Control & Restraint

CARATS Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Throughcare Scheme – drug & alcohol team

CC Cellular Confinement – a punishment

ETS Enhanced Thinking Skills – an OBP

HMCIP Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons

IPP (Indeterminate sentence for Public Protection)

IMB Independent Monitoring Board

KPI/KPT Key Performance Indicator/Target

MDT Mandatory Drugs Testing

OBP Offending Behaviour Programme

PCT Primary Care Trust – National Health component responsible for healthcare

PEI/O Physical Education Instructor/Officer

RRLO Race Relations Liaison Officer

SCG Safer Custody Group

VDT Voluntary Drugs Testing