



HMP Springhill

Annual Report

December 2009 - December 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.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Springhill is an open establishment (Category D) and accommodates up to 330 men. Prisoners are those who can be trusted in open conditions including those coming to the end of their sentences and those serving shorter sentences. All prisoners not serving a short sentence are encouraged to join a resettlement scheme which allows them to perform work for the local community and to seek full time work and work experience for the last months of their sentences.

On a daily basis the prison releases approximately 90 men into the community to perform charity work and other community-based projects. There are approximately 200 movements in and out of the prison daily.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of short term prisoners commented about in last year's annual review have now been reduced and replaced by ISP/IPP and Lifer prisoners which has caused a considerable strain upon staff especially with the reduction in staffing levels experienced this year.

The increase in ISP/Lifer population took place very rapidly during the course of the year and many prisoners arrived without up-to-date paperwork. This has required the staff managing these prisoners to catch up documentation very rapidly.

The Board feels it is necessary to highlight three areas of concern which have affected the prison dramatically in 2010 and which continue to be areas requiring close monitoring in 2011. These are:

- The management of the healthcare contract with Care UK and the provision of adequate healthcare services to the men
- The provision of Education services by Manchester College under their contract with the Skills and Funding Council
- The withdrawal of some drug testing and the management of drug risks within the prison

AREAS OF CONCERN REQUIRING A MINISTERIAL REPLY

The Works Department within the prison continues to be an area of concern as it provides poor service and maintenance but is not directly answerable to prison management. The Works Department has proved obstructive and generally is not sufficiently concerned with the welfare of the prisoners. This has resulted in the Board needing to make several complaints to the Governors. . The Board is pleased that a review of the relationship with the Works Department has begun in 2011.

The Board would like to highlight once again that, as was mentioned in last year's review, the fabric of the buildings at Springhill is very poor and needs serious attention.

Healthcare continues to be an area of concern. The appointment of Care UK has NOT led to "the improvement of recruitment, training and care..." that was anticipated (letter from Crispin Blunt in response to the IMB's 2009 Annual Review). In the view of the Board, there was not the "knitting together" of responsibilities between the prison management, PCT and the healthcare provider (Care UK) with the initiation of the contract. This resulted in the intervention by the Board in September prompted by the deterioration of the provision to the men demonstrated by a marked increase in applications. In our opinion, none of the three areas in charge, prison management, the PCT or Care UK, has attended to this problem sufficiently.

Major disruptions of the education provision which should have been provided by Manchester College under a contract negotiated by the Skills and Funding Agency has led to a significant loss of training and purposeful activity for the prisoners. As in the case of the healthcare provision, the Board feels that much of this difficulty has arisen due to local management being unable to have complete control.

It should be highlighted that the difficulty raised in all three areas above, Healthcare, Education and Training and the Works Department, stems from the fact that they are provided by outside agencies over which local management has limited control. This problem is also echoed in the sourcing of food highlighted in the section under Catering. The Board feels this issue of control and responsibility should be addressed by the Minister.

Healthcare

The responsibility for Healthcare in Springhill is split between several bodies, which at times lead to significant problems in communication, and also a problem in any one body assuming responsibility when things go wrong. Examples of the overlapping and sometimes confusing responsibilities are as follows:

- **HMPS** is responsible for some fixed assets: the buildings and dental chairs
- **NHS Buckinghamshire (PCT)** is responsible for the NHS computer system (SystemOne) - both the hardware and the software
- **Care UK** is responsible for primary care since April 2010 and employs all the medical and nursing staff. They also fund hospital escorts but the prison provides the staff for this, as well as the discipline officers in healthcare.
- **Bucks Priority Dental Service** is responsible for the dental care and employs the dental staff

- **Lloyds Pharmacy** is responsible for the dispensing of drugs but the cost of drugs falls to Care UK
- **Harmoni** provide the out of hours on call service and employ the staff members who are involved with the prison out of normal working hours and at the weekends.

The IMB has commented adversely in our reports for previous years about the provision of healthcare in HMP Springhill and these problems have continued through 2010. The number and skills of the staff were inadequate for the needs of the prisoners and the facilities are dated and inadequate, not meeting those expected in the contemporary NHS. During the first part of the year the delays in commissioning care contributed to a worsening of this situation as it put a blight on staff recruitment and undermined the morale of the dwindling number of healthcare staff who remained in post and who were left in an uncertain position about their own future employment with CareUK before this new provider had agreed its contract with the PCT and prison service.

As a result of this the problems that we commented on last year became more severe up to the change of provider to CareUK in April 2010. There was a transient improvement in staff morale at this time but because some of the staff left after they had not transferred their contracts to CareUK, the number of permanent healthcare staff declined yet further and this and other changes in the management led to a steep rise in the prisoners' healthcare complaints throughout the summer months.

The IMB was sufficiently concerned to write to the PCT in September 2010 complaining about the situation in healthcare in Springhill (and Grendon).

Particular concerns were

- Both the poor attendance and the quality of care given by medical staff, as there were periods when locum GP's who should have been attending did not arrive at the prison. This was a particular concern as there appeared to be no system for documenting the staffs' attendances for those duties they were employed to deliver
- The poor standards of record keeping, in part but only in part, because the implementation of the computer system was delayed, and patient care suffered as a consequence
- Poor communication between the prisoners, prison staff, healthcare staff, CareUK and the PCT. This was compounded by the changes in the handling of the prisoners' complaints about healthcare, which made it very difficult for the governors to be fully aware of the problems that were arising.

During the summer and autumn months of the number of complaints made by prisoners about healthcare matters rose steeply, in some weeks these exceeded all those for all other issues combined, and this reflected the general level of dissatisfaction with the care provided.

At the same time the IMB experienced a refusal (confusions about sharing data) by both CareUK and the PCT to share any monitoring data that they might have obtained on the quality of the care provided, which made it impossible for the IMB to form an objective view. However the flow of complaints from the prisoners and staff continued and the IMB formed the impression that in addition to poor communication the standard of care had deteriorated.

The fall in the number of regular staff and the failure to recruit replacements lead to several posts being filled in the short term with agency staff who were unfamiliar with this prison's regime, and this, together with the increase in the number of substantial complaints, lead to a

serious question as to whether the new contract for the provision of primary care was being honoured. This document was also not provided when requested by the IMB in the months after CareUK had taken up the provision of primary care.

In addition to these problems with CareUK and the employed medical staff, there was concern that the **pharmaceutical dispensing service** provided by a local community pharmacist was not providing an adequate service to the prisons, with several prisoners having to wait for urgent medication for an unacceptable time. It was also noted that these difficulties with the provision of prescribed medicines was not entirely due to the problems with the dispensing pharmacist.

Early in the year the **dental service** at the prisons improved with a new dentist employed and extra weekly sessions provided at the prison for a few months which reduced the number of prisoners waiting for an appointment to see the dentist. However the increase in the dental sessions was only temporary and the waiting time for urgent dental appointments increased again towards the end of the year with an increased number of prisoners waiting to see the dentist.

In November 2010 a new but experienced senior interim head of healthcare was appointed to lead the CareUK team and this did bring an improvement in several of the problems, such as in communication with staff and prisoners and consequently an improvement in their attendance at doctor's and other healthcare appointments. He also addressed some of the healthcare staffing problems and identified and addressed training needs for some of the more longstanding staff. However at the end of the year the permanent staff numbers are still reduced with no permanent head of healthcare appointed and it is anticipated that the interim head may move on at the end of January 2011.

In June when an epidemic of norovirus spread through Springhill prisoners the staff in healthcare did provide an adequate service and the epidemic was handled well with few secondarily infected.

In recent years the prison service has provided facilities for methadone to cover drug withdrawal but this form of treatment has not been available at Springhill. From April 2010 the contract to provide this service was given to CareUK but as of the end of the year it was still not available as no staff member was qualified to provide this treatment. There were also planned changes to the buildings to provide secure storage for the drugs required but these alterations by the prisons were not yet completed before the end of the year. The IMB is concerned if the funds, in the order of £300,000, paid to CareUK for this service were reimbursed, but the IMB were refused access to the relevant documents by both the PCT and the commissioned provider.

AREAS OF EXCELLENCE

The Board would like to commend the continuing dedication and excellent work of Springhill staff and management who, under ongoing budgetary pressures, have continued to ensure that the prison is safe and offers significant resettlement opportunities to long term prisoners.

A change in management of the OMU which will allow for layered case loads among the staff is a welcome development and should improve workloads and efficiency in dealing with paper work and backlogs.

The proposed re-wiring for the OMU in the main house will be done by prisoners – providing employment and resulting in significant cost savings. The Board feels this is a very successful direction for the prison to be taking and encourages further instances of such employment.

Farms and Gardens/Walled Garden

The Board is delighted, especially following our concerns stated in previous annual reviews, to anticipate the opening of the walled garden project. This will be a land-based training and education initiative in order to produce a range of fresh local produce. The project will develop an education centre and revitalise the extensive resources of the walled garden, fields and orchard. The project will centre around a non-profit making company and is supported by a £275,000 grant from the Lottery Fund. The company will provide fresh produce for the local market and for use in the prison as well.

OBLIGATORY REPORTS

Diversity

Considerable extra thought went into the celebration of Ramadan this year which resulted in very favourable response. Especially appreciated was the fact that the faith room was made available for all night prayer at appropriate times.

The Board has no current concerns about diversity issues in Springhill. A Race Equality Action Team and race equality issues are managed effectively. Members of the PREM are present at the meetings and their minutes are discussed.

The chaplaincy represents a diverse number of faiths, and the kitchens provide suitable food for the various faiths represented. Foods from different cultures are provided on a regular basis, as a means of celebration, education and inclusion, and events such as Black History month are fully supported.

Learning and Skills

As at Grendon, education has been severely hampered due to the inability of Manchester College to provide the service that they contracted in accordance with a contract prepared by the Skills and Funding Agency. The contract and its negotiation were not robust enough to prevent this deterioration in services. It is sad that the prison did not have more input into the letting and implementation of this contract.

Problems with Manchester College which surfaced early in the year have continued throughout. This has caused enormous disruption to staff who felt uncertain about the security of their jobs and to the prisoners whose purposeful activities were interrupted.

PICTA and Computer skills

Manchester College has now taken over PICTA which has caused considerable anxiety among the staff and created issues of continuity of coursework among prisoners.

During the course of the year, Manchester College assumed responsibility for the Officers Mess. This should have offered the opportunity for NVQ's for the men in catering. Sadly, it was found that the kitchen was subsequently forced to close due to violations of food safety and hygiene standards. The kitchen required a "deep clean" by an outside contractor. This has left men without work opportunities and deprived staff of hot food.

Safer Custody

The results from Safer Custody were very good with only one ACCT document opened in the year. This was opened because a Prisoner refused to take his prescribed medicine. There were only 29 IMB applications for the year from 19 Prisoners. Not all applications reflect safer custody implications. The reasons for the low number of IMB applications are the very active and effective Listener service operating in the Prison, the fact that many prisoners are near to completing their sentence and do not wish to draw attention to themselves, and many applications are dealt with verbally which can be settled quickly with the help of staff.

There have been only eight absconds and eleven failures to return this year. These figures are calculated from March and therefore do not represent a full twelve months but never the less are very good.

Other Essential Reports

Springhill Resettlement

Resettlement continues to perform well, a cohesive and inclusive approach involving community links and job club; onsite training opportunities and education enable a high proportion of prisoners to be released into employment.

Following on from last year the number of short term prisoners sent to Springhill continued to challenge resources during the first half of the year; much effort was put into managing and directing this group of prisoners into appropriate activities. Towards the end of the year the numbers of short termers dropped off and were replaced by an increased number of Lifers. Springhill now has 90; many arriving without OAYSES reports adding a huge burden to an already overstretched administration. This unpredictability does nothing to enhance the regime and together with other difficulties referred to below has made for a tough year.

As a standard Cat D establishment specialising in resettlement without resettlement status Springhill cannot influence who comes through the door. Despite this the staff group are buoyant, innovative and upbeat.

KPT's were amended downward slightly during the year and an overall average of 54.2% was achieved for employment against a revised KPT's of 55% and 64%. For Education and

Employment the figure was an average of 58.5%. The lowest month being January at 35.5% and the highest July at 74%

Given the financial climate which has affected all community and full time placements, this is a very creditable achievement. Agencies that provide full time jobs are quieter, finding other work has become more difficult as there is less activity in the job market. The rural location of the prison adds a further dimension to the challenges.

Cuts in establishment figures have made supervising ongoing work placements more difficult and this is a cause of concern to the Board.

There are more men on camp and great efforts have been made to provide alternative activity to compensate, however the financial constraints and staff availability continue to stretch everyone.

A difficulty with education provision has also been a factor with access to basic/ vocational courses limited and patchy at various points during the year. The provider, Manchester College has had difficulty in meeting their obligations from time to time. Much effort has been expended by prison staff in trying to resolve these problems and they must be commended for their efforts. The Board would like to see more consistency in the organisation and delivery of the educational programmes contracted out to Manchester College.

Housing

The St Giles Trust is a very successful project finding accommodation for prisoners on release and also providing an opportunity for 2 prisoners to work as Peer Advisors and gain NVQ III in 'Advice and Guidance'. The Peer Advisors, together with a part time manager, work with prisoners well in advance of their release date to secure appropriate accommodation.

The unit moved to a better central location within the prison during the year. The new site has provided improved accommodation, with a waiting area and interview rooms. Staff report this new facility is working better

Numbers using the service vary from month to month, in February 2010 there were 113 men on the books and currently they have 140. With monthly release figures ranging from 22 to 42 during the year, this is quite a challenge; a 97% success rate was achieved with those prisoners seeking assistance from the Trust.

Population Management

Springhill has always managed its long-term prisoners effectively, and a year ago was still continuing to adjust to the needs and inherent problems associated with the increasing number of short-term prisoners it was receiving. At that time, Springhill's Lifer Unit was doing an effective job managing up to 20 Lifers (life-sentenced prisoners) and ISPs (indefinite-sentenced prisoners). However, from April 2010, Springhill began receiving rapidly increasing numbers of ISPs, of which around half were Indeterminate for Public Protection sentenced prisoners (IPPs). It must be stated that most IPPs are inevitably over tariff, and their attitudes and behaviour in the vast majority of cases are very different from the rest of the ISP population and are therefore more time-consuming to manage than non-IPPs. By January 2011 the number of ISPs had reached 94, almost a third of the population (334) of Springhill.

The impact of this dramatic rise in ISP numbers on the multi-disciplinary ISP team at Springhill has been enormous. Many ISPs arrive at Springhill either with no prior or outdated assessments from other establishments, and as these assessments must be completed before prisoners can progress to town visits, community work and then full-time work, this is a real concern. Staffing resources have not increased, thus placing Officers, Probation staff, the ISP Clerk, the OMU Senior Officer, the Resettlement Governor, the Head of OMU, Employment Links, and the CARATS team under immense pressure. The resultant backlog of work has impacted on all areas of ISP management. The Director of Offender Management and the Deputy Director of Custody for the south-east, aware of the escalating situation, are supportive. Springhill requested a 2-month cap from mid-January to mid-March (2011), which was granted, and this has enabled the ISP team time to catch up. But this is obviously just a temporary measure. We hope to see a sensible solution to this problem in the near future and will be monitoring the situation very closely.

Visits

Visits continue to offer an innovative and responsive service. This year visits sponsored a marriage course which was judged to be popular and beneficial.

This year during the cold weather, the dining room where Visits take place was unacceptably cold because the heating in the dining room was broken. The Board complained vigorously about this to Works and to the Governor.

Catering

The Board is concerned about the centralised buying of food, especially meat, which is of very poor quality. There has been significant difficulty with meeting sell by dates on supplies received. Ultimately, the costs have proved much higher than if the prison were able to source food locally and independently.

There is significant disruption caused by the inefficiencies of maintenance of kitchen/catering equipment. The Board is concerned that equipment suppliers are not fulfilling their service agreements.

The Board would like to commend staff for achieving a good healthy diet despite the significant cost constraints. It should also be noted that food supply and equipment maintenance which cause most difficulties are the responsibility of outside agencies.

Drug Strategy

The Drug strategy team has invested large amounts of time and training devoted to the start up of the IDTS (methadone support) program in Springhill. Much of this work has been rendered ineffective due to the combined failure of the healthcare provider to secure a substance misuse nurse to oversee the program and to the Works department in failing to carry out promptly the structural changes required to operate the program. The original planned start up date of the

program slipped from April 2010 to February 2011. While Springhill does have a more controlled drug problem than many similar Category D prisons, the presence of a new drug in the facility (methadone) does require great care. The Board is concerned with the failure of both Healthcare and the Works Department to support this program properly.

In addition, the work of the Drug Strategy team was also undermined during the year by the removal of the drug dogs and by curtailment of the drug testing programs. The Board feels this is highly risky especially in light of the expected start up of the IDTS program and the need to control carefully those prisoners who are in this program and the presence of drugs generally within the prison. While both testing and the drugs dogs have been re-instated in early 2011, this is clearly an area of concern for monitoring going forward.

CARATS work in Springhill has been hampered by the loss of the full time CARATS worker whose work is now being done by one worker covering both Springhill and Grendon. While the hiring of a CARATS worker for Grendon is planned this has not yet been accomplished. This is an area that must continue to be monitored to ensure Springhill prisoners continue to receive good quality support programs.

T Hut, which accommodates prisoners at risk from drug dependency has seen some disruption this year but was swiftly restored to good order by the combined hard work of the drug strategy team and security.

Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy team continues to offer a diverse and responsive service and is well supported.

THE WORK OF THE BOARD

Members of the Board attended meetings throughout the year across the following subjects:

- Springhill Ops
- Security
- Catering
- Drug Strategy
- Diversity
- Induction New staff
- Social events
- Visits
- POA
- Training
- Safer Custody
- Resettlement

Prisons visited/hosted

Over the last 12 months members of the Board have visited Dovegate and Wormwood Scrubbs prisons. The Board hosted a visit from Bullingdon Prison.

External training

Members of the Board have attended the following external training courses:

- Experienced Members course
- New Members Course
- New Chair Course

The IMB Conference was attended by 2 members

Internal training

Members of the Board have had two full training mornings where we have had talks from various departments.

During the year a new Vice Chair was appointed

Vice Chair – Ian North

BOARD STATISTICS - SPRINGHILL	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	2
Total number of board meetings during reporting period	12
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	9.3
Total number of applications received	29

APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT	
Accommodation	0
Adjudications	0
Diversity related	0
Education/employment/training	5
Bullying	3
Food kitchen related	0
Health related	0
Property/Money	2
ROTL	2
Staff/prisoner/detainee related	8
Transfers	0
Miscellaneous	9
Total	29

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Springhill Board and our IMB clerk for their hard work and support over the last 12 months.

Louise Hammond
IMB Chair, Springhill