



HMP USK & PRESCOED

Report

1 May 2009 – 30 April 2010

Section 1

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.

Section 2

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Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

3. HMP Usk/Prescoed is situated on three sites. Usk, Prescoed and a farm at Cilwrgi. The Prisoners are supported by Personal Officers, Caseworkers, a Psychology Department, a Substance Misuse Team, the Chaplaincy and the Healthcare Department. The service offered aims to be equivalent to those accessible to People in the community. However, there are no Healthcare beds, only a day care facility.

3.1 HMP Usk is situated in the town of Usk. It opened in 1844. The establishment subsequently became a Male category C prison holding vulnerable prisoners. The certified normal accommodation (CNA) is 150, with an operational capacity of 250. Over the past year the number of prisoners has averaged 248.58. The Prison is overcrowded but the number of complaints regarding doubling up in cells has not risen and the Board is therefore confident that the overcrowding is not causing significant problems. Alterations have taken place such as a new Security Suite and new Visits area.

The objectives of the prison are to hold Prisoners securely and safely, to provide a well-ordered establishment where Prisoners are treated humanely and with decency and to provide a structured regime such that the risk of Prisoners re-offending is reduced so that on leaving they contribute positively to society.

3.2 HMP Prescoed is situated in open countryside approximately 3 miles from the town of Usk. It is a Category D Resettlement prison and was opened in 1939. It now accommodates adults but in 2008 due to the overcrowding in prisons generally, Prescoed did take a small number of Young Offenders for a short time, this did not seem to cause any operational problems.

The CNA is 160 with an operational capacity of 178. The average population is 152.83 and therefore it is operating virtually at capacity

The Physical Education department offers the Prisoners recreational activities, largely within a gymnasium, with occasional opportunities for competitive, outdoor sports. The football team at Prescoed belong to a Local football League

The regime at Prescoed is designed to rehabilitate and educate through a structured sentence plan and resettlement regime such that the risk of Prisoner re-offending is reduced so that on leaving they contribute positively to society. Opportunities exist for education and work placements with resources being applied to resettlement. Training is offered across a range of industries and activities which have not changed since the last report

The Board regrets to report that there were 4 absconds during the reporting period, all were apprehended and returned to closed conditions..

3.2 HMP Cilwrgri Farm consists of 460 acres, 160 acres of which are of woodlands, plus a variety of outbuildings. The Farm has a Milking herd and a number of pedigree Welsh Black Cattle. The prisoners are transported to the farm on a daily basis. The average number of Prisoners working at the Farm for the period was 16

The Farm is designated an area of special scientific interest, and have received visits from the Animal Welfare Agency, had a cross compliance check by the Welsh Assembly and an inspection regarding ear tagging and TB.

Section 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4(a) PARTICULAR ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

4(b) OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN OR GOOD PRACTICE NOT REQUIRING A RESPONSE

Good Practice

USK

The chaplaincy team, which now represent all major faiths, plays an important role in the life of the prison at Usk

A drop-in centre giving help and advice has been established for prisoners and is staffed by the prisoners

A "Young at Heart Group" for the older prisoners is organised by a very capable 90year old, they meet twice a week for activities and mutual support

The prisoners still have above average time out of their cells for a category C Prison.

PRESCOED

The Resettlement Team are very committed to the work and continue to develop the Resettlement Programme, however, the Board has concerns relating to the impact that cuts in budget have on the resettlement work in this prison

Issues of Concern

USK

4(b)1 Prisoners are still having to eat in their cells which is unsatisfactory. However, complaints to the Board have not increased since the last report. This still does not justify the situation. (4(b)1 2008-2009)

4(b)2 Healthcare facilities still wait improvement (4.2 2006-2007). Building work due in March 2009 has now commenced. The new facilities are now scheduled to be completed Summer 2010. However, the new facilities will still not provide any accommodation in healthcare

4(b)4 The Kitchen floor remains poor, even though it has been repaired/replaced many times.

The workshops are now closed on weekends which causes concern to the Board.

Whilst not within this reporting period there were real concerns about the suggested re role of the Prison, we are pleased to hear that Usk will now retain its vulnerable prisoner population

PRESCOED

4(b)5 Work on the kitchen although completed, is still not to a satisfactory level.

CILWRGI

4(b)6 The Farm has suffered from not knowing about their future and assessments are ongoing to ascertain the future of the farm. However, numbers at the farm have improved

during this reporting period. The new area for cooking has not been implemented due to health and safety reasons. The Wood Kiln is still a bit of a white elephant. The use of the oven has only resulted in ruined wood at present. The wood that can be treated is only one size. The ongoing costs which have to be funded by the Prison do not cover the expense of the running costs

4(c) OVERALL JUDGEMENT

There are still ongoing changes in the regime at the prisons. On the whole the staff are responding well but there is real concern about the suggested re role of the Prison

Carol Shergold (Chair)

On behalf of the Independent Monitoring Board of Usk/Prescoed Establishment

Section 5

AREAS THAT MUST BE REPORTED ON

5.1 DIVERSITY/RACE RELATIONS

The work done in this area by the Race relations Officer is commendable in resolving issues raised by both Prisoners and Officers. Diversity and Race relations are taken very seriously, and the applications of these policies are robust and transparent, any reported incident is dealt with in a timely manner, The prison has a low ethnic mix of Prisoners on both sites. The Race Equality Action team/Decency team meet on a bi monthly basis in order to discuss all aspects, initiatives, concerns and other issues arising in regard to Race Equality and Diversity issues within both establishments. The Board sees no sign of increased racism either institutional or individual.

There are Prisoner representatives who are employed at both Usk and Prescoed who help promote Diversity and has an Expressions Group.

Concerns:

There are still concerns over the number of Foreign Nations at the prison past their release date (5.1 2008-2009)

5.2 LEARNING AND SKILLS

SOTP is the main programme at Usk with Enhanced Thinking Skills and Anger Management

The Board has found that Prisoners at Prescoed whilst generally preferring to take paid work on Stage 2, this has reduced due to the economic climate. There is mutual respect of the Prisoners and the Vocational staff, and good work is produced as a result.

Learning & Skills at Usk has a well equipped Training Kitchen, Computer room, Key Skills Workshop and a Hairdressing Salon. The extensive curriculum covers Basic Skills to Higher Education, Open Learning courses and Multi-skills courses, also a range of evening classes available. There is a purpose-built Vocational Training centre offering City and Guilds and Open College Network in Woodcraft, Bricklaying and Plastering. Laundry, Vision Aid, Cleaners, Stores, Gardens, Recycling, Painting and Kitchen party meet the needs of the establishment.

Learning & Skills at Prescoed consists of Classrooms, Computer Room, Discussion/ Video Room and offers part-time general education. Library, Training Kitchen, Open Learning Room, Design and Information Technology workshop and a BICSc Training Workshop are all facilities at Prescoed. Learning & Skills can cover IT, theory driving test practise and a broad range of education is covered. The Farm has a 420 acre dairy farm a short distance from the establishment with milking cows plus young stock, along with a small herd of Pedigree Welsh Black cattle and chickens. There is also a sawmill from which wood products are being developed by prisoners from the 160 acre woodland. The farm is an accredited lift truck training centre through RTITB.

Learning and Skills held an Art Exhibition at Usk prison, which showed the excellent work done by Prisoner.

Concerns:

The Board still remains concerned that the Educational opportunities at the Farm have dwindled.

5.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

All Prisoners have access to a Doctor & Dentist within a reasonable time. The Board receives a minimum of applications about Healthcare.

Prisoners from Prescoed attend a dentist in Usk Town, they are taken by staff to the Usk dentist every 2nd Friday, unless an emergency treatment is required.

A Health Awareness day was held for Prisoners, which was very informative and well attended.

The New Health Centre at Usk is built but not operational at the time of writing this report

Concerns:

However, even with the new very much improved Healthcare facility, there will still be no health care beds at either establishment. This causes operational problems when officers are required for Bed Watch duties at the local hospitals.

5.4 SAFER CUSTODY

Since the last report the Safer Custody Team, has continued to meet quarterly. Departments across the prison are represented and the Samaritans and Prisoner Listeners attend. Listeners are encouraged to actively contribute at Safer Custody meetings. A zero tolerance approach to violence or any other form of anti-social behaviour. Demand for the Listener service varies, but every effort is made to publicise the kinds of help available. Issues that arise are addressed quickly and effectively. The Board is pleased to report that the number of incidents continues to remain low.

5.5 SEGREGATION /SEPARATION & Care units

There is no segregation unit at Usk.

Matters are dealt with swiftly, and if necessary resulting in the removal of the Prisoner to another establishment

Section 6

OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON REGIME

6.1 ADJUDICATIONS

There are no fixed times allotted for Adjudications. They have usually taken place on a very ad hoc basis, with busy Governors carrying them out when convenient. However, this does mean that Members have to make their own enquiries on a visiting day to find when and where they are taking place. Members who have attended Adjudications have felt these have been run well.

6.2 CATERING AND KITCHENS

The Kitchen supplies a wide and nutritious variety of food which takes into account the ethnic mix of Prisoners and their dietary needs/preferences. There was a concern regarding the preparation of Halal meat for Muslim prisoners. This has been addressed and the meat is now prepared by an Asian prisoner.

Concerns: The daily funding allocated for food remains low although it falls within National guidelines.

6.3 INDUCTION

The Board recognises that officers have a difficult brief with a constantly changing population at Prescoed and the vulnerability of Prisoners at the beginning of their sentence. The Board finds that induction generally works well.

6.4 ACCOMODATION

The prison is still overdue for refurbishment. The premises are worn and aged in many respects. In the Board's view, the Governor & his management team have managed the budget wisely given the constraints put on them from outside.

6.5 CHILD PROTECTION

Usk plays an important part in Child Protection. The procedure of raising concerns and reports about the nature of any incidents is used, are well managed.

Prescoed offers Fathers days to help Prisoners with parenting skills

Concerns: The local residents have in the passed voiced concerned about the moving of sex offenders to open conditions at Prescoed. The consultation group with the local councils and the Governor helps to address these concerns.

6.6 EXTERNAL REPORTS

6.7 FOREIGN NATIONALS

The Board will continue to monitor Foreign Nationals. However, Foreign Nationals have not had a significant impact on Usk or Prescoed. A Foreign Nationals Officer has now been appointed and Staff at all levels are generally aware of, and sympathetic to, the special needs of Foreign Nationals.

6.8 HMCIP HEALTHY PRISONS

Through its ongoing monitoring, the Board gain an overview of life in the prison and an insight into the culture, ethos and atmosphere of the prison.

Concerns: The Board will continue to monitor whether balancing the budget and meeting performance-related targets does not take precedence over caring for the Prisoners and providing them with the skills, knowledge and hope for a better future.

6.9 OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR PROGRAMMES

The IMB monitored Offending Behaviour programmes. The quality of courses is good.

6.10 PERSONAL OFFICER SCHEME

The Board has found that Personal Officers scheme works well and there is no difficulty in maintaining regular face to face contact with the Prisoners. On induction the prisoner is told how to find out the name of their Personal Officer and understand his/her purpose.

6.11 PREPARATION FOR RELEASE AND RESETTLEMENT

This is a key area if the prison is to fulfil its role as a resettlement prison. To enable progress to be maintained and do the job effectively, including the necessary business risk assessments, staff are allocated the time required to develop and implement a constructive programme to enable the Prisoners to return to their communities with the life skills they will need outside prison life. Those on stage 2 resettlement work with local employers and are paid a salary. The Board regards this as an important progression of the resettlement programme. Those on Stage 1 help with Community Projects in Usk, Llangibby & Trevethin and help out at the local agricultural shows in the area.

Concerns:

Due to the economic climate the numbers of prisoners on Stage 2 paid work have decreased in this reporting period.

6.12 PROFILING AND STAFF FACILITIES

Concerns: Board members are hearing concerns regarding the proposed re role of Usk Prison. At the time of writing this report nothing has been finally decided.

6.13 PROPERTY

Concerns: There are now fewer cases where Prisoners transferring to Usk & Prescoed do not receive their property. However, when this happens, it can result in administrative difficulties for the staff who must then endeavour to locate and retrieve items when they become 'lost' in the system.

6.18 TRANSFERS

Concerns: Applications for transfers out can be agreed, only for the Prisoner to have to wait months to transfer, due to either overcrowding at other establishments, or transport delays as due to the cost, transport will not be provided just to move one Prisoner. These issues are out of the control of the establishment and this is no criticism of the work done at Usk & Prescoed, The Board continues to be concerned it can be difficult for Prisoners to maintain family ties due to the nature of the offenders at Usk.

6.20 PRISONERS/STAFF RELATIONS

The Senior Management Team demonstrates a sound and responsive relationship in sharing information about the running of the prison with staff. The present Governor (as did the previous Governor,) does his best to make himself known to the Prisoners and to be informed of life on the wings. The majority of staff continue to impress with their dedication and professionalism under often extremely difficult conditions

Section 7

THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

- 7.1 Support:** The Board do not have an agreed SLA, however the Governor is in the process of letting us have our own office. Progress!! and he has always given adequate support to the Board
- 7.2 Training:** Two members attended an Experience Members Course. One member attended C & R training at Prescoed
- 7.3 Developmental Activities:** In September 2009, two Members of the Board attended the IMB National Conference.
- 7.4 Team Development:** The Board monitors its attendance at the prison and the areas Members visit and at the Annual Team Performance review all members of the Board are encouraged to participate.
- 7.5 Board Meetings:** There were twelve, mostly well attended, monthly Board meetings. The Governor, Deputy Governor or Duty Governor attended 3, 8 and 1 of these respectively. Individual Members present a report each month, as does the Governor. A rolling duty rota ensured an IMB member was on duty each week for rota visits at both Usk and Prescoed and twice a month at the farm. Applications, are dealt with by individual members during a Rota Visit.
- 7.6 Special Interests:** The areas of special interest/responsibility need updating since we have lost members over the year. The Board raises any concerns in these areas, as appropriate.
- 7.7 Meetings attended:** Members attend various meetings but continued to experience difficulties due to late cancellations or last minute scheduling changes, This has not improved. Members regularly attended Security Meetings Safer Custody meetings and REAT meetings. The Chairman & Vice Chairman attended the Area IMB Chairs in Wales meetings. Adjudications are largely unscheduled and it is therefore only very occasionally observed.
- 7.8 Duty Visits:** Board Members made duty visits to all three prison sites, 156 times during the reporting period, within which visits they took 56 applications, another increase on last years numbers, which is a concern to the Board (or could this could reflect that as a Board we are more effective at resolving issues and the Prisoners feel there is more point in approaching us)

7.9 BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5
Number of members leaving within reporting period	0
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	13
Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	255
Total number of applications received	56
Total number of adjudications held	at Prescoed & at Usk
Total number of adjudications attended	0
Total number of segregation reviews held	N/A
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

Section 7 (cont.)

There should always be a full set of statistics on Applications in the form of the template below. These together with the Board's comments will be of assistance to the Ombudsman and management generally.

Code	Subject				
A	Bullying				0
B	Earned Privilege/Levels				1
C	Education/employment/training				0
D	Family/visits				6
E	Food/kitchen related				5
F	Health related				11
G	Lack of Association				0
	Managerial Decisions				0
H	Prison Conditions & Facilities				3
I	Property				1
J	Punishments				7
K	Race Relations				
L	Sentence related				1
M	Staff/prisoner/detainee related				2
N	Transfers				3
O	Miscellaneous				16
	Total number of applications				56

There will be other prison/centre statistics which the Board may want to include – adjudications, self harm and assaults etc. However, the Ministers and prison/centre authorities already have these figures (unlike applications) so only when they help to identify an issue of concern or good practice should they be included in the appropriate section of the report and then only to the extent necessary to demonstrate the point and its importance.