

2010 - 2011



HMP ACKLINGTON

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

01 JULY 2010 – 31 DECEMBER 2011

To: The Secretary of State for Justice

I have the honour of submitting to you this, the final Report of the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Acklington, which has now merged with its neighbour HMP Castington, to form HMP Northumberland. Although it comes from me, it is the co-operative work of all my colleagues and I am deeply grateful to them for all their work and commitment as Board members. If all my predecessors have submitted an Annual Report, this should be the 40th. I hope it is true to say that the Independent Monitoring Board and the Board of Visitors that went before it have, during this time, fulfilled their role and served those for whom they have existed well.

*On behalf of the Board,
Ben Hopkinson, Chair*

December 2011

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.

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3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

3.1 PREFACE

For the reasons shown here, it is not possible to confine this Report to the year July 2010 to June 2011. It would make no sense in view of the situation which was already well this side of the horizon in the summer and which will put *finis* to the story of HMP Acklington and its IMB at the beginning of 2012; our report, therefore, covers the period July 2010 to the end of 2011. Some statistics are available only up to November 2011.

The reader who has compared this section of our Annual Reports for several years past will have seen change in size and detail, but not in kind. This year is different and the differences come under two heads, Merging and Market Testing. The first means that HMP Acklington, as it was and has been, no longer exists, while the second holds in front of us a fog of uncertainty. Because of this, it is necessary to look at all that has been happening to the organisation of the prison over the past eighteen months before talking factual detail.

We do need to say that, as a Board, we feel that the process of merging has been very well managed. Staff morale held up well as the process took shape, and there has been a general commitment to make it work. The aim, which was understood, was fusion, not fission.

However, the announcement that the prison would be market tested, with all the unknowns that brought with it, has inevitably affected staff morale which has taken a serious dip. We trust that it will rebuild soon.

3.2 MERGING

3.2 (1) HMP Acklington and HMYOI Castington

In October 2010 the announcement was made that HMP Acklington would merge with HMP Castington to form one establishment. The two sites are cheek by jowl, sharing the vast space that was once a noted RAF aerodrome.¹ Castington, which had been a YOI, was re-designated as a Category C Training Prison; the Governor of Castington was appointed temporary Governor of both prisons, and later confirmed as the full holder of that post.

The merging of the two establishments, which has meant, perforce, a thorough restructuring of the administration in every department, has been no easy task. Over forty years very different traditions and ambiances had built up; the staff at Acklington were Category C trained, but those at Castington had the very different job of working with young offenders and juveniles. As well as this, there was a sharp contrast in size, with Castington holding less than half the number of prisoners held by Acklington. For a time, certainly from the IMB's point of view, but also from that of the staff in

¹ Interestingly, what became HMYOI Castington was the original site of HMP Acklington, which moved the short distance to its present position when some ex-RAF buildings were converted into residential wings A, B & C, by prison labour.

general, it seemed almost impossible to know who was who, doing what and where from one week to the next. We need to say that, throughout this time, the Merger Team performed very well, and did keep people informed. Things have now settled down, and seem to be working well.

3.2 (2) The Name

The merging of names became a subject of much discussion, with the psychological impact, the costings and the agreement of the local community all having to be taken into account. Finally consensus settled upon HMP Northumberland, and this will be the official name from the beginning of 2012; indeed, the name is already in use at the time of writing.

3.2 (3) The Independent Monitoring Boards

The two IMBs also have had to merge. This means that the present two Boards will cease to exist, and a new Board, IMB HMP Northumberland, has been appointed to hold office from January 1st 2012. This part of the process has involved a great deal of detailed hard work on the part of the present members, who have shown fine skills and great commitment.

3.2 (4) Completion

At the time of writing (December 2011) the merger is complete as far as the governance of the prison is concerned. What remains is adding some new fencing so that the two sites may become one; then it will be possible to join up those parts which still remain double: gates, health centres, kitchens, education and industries and SACUs. This is timed for early 2013.

3.3 Market Testing

On the 13th July, with the work on the merger still having a good way to go, it was announced that Acklington / Castington, together with seven other prisons in the North-East region, were to be market tested with bidding for management open to both the public and private sectors. The outcome of the process will not be known until the autumn of 2012, but it is another crucial aspect to be highlighted in describing the prison. We cannot say who will be running the establishment in 2013, and this has produced a level of uncertainty which is affecting all who work here, including members of the IMB. The morale of the staff has been badly dented.

The Board cannot have a view about the pros and cons of public or private prisons. However, as Chair, I have expressed the opinion, and had agreement from many members, that it would have been much easier and more appropriate, in every way, if the process had been postponed until the merger was tried and tested.

3.4 DETAILED OVERVIEW

HMP Northumberland remains a Category C Training Prison, though the possibility of regarding it as a Working Prison is no longer under consideration.

In the following sections it is not possible to be as tidy as one would wish here; some sections have to look at the new prison as a whole, but some,

because the two sites remain separately fenced, will refer only to the Acklington site.

3.4 (1) Population

These statistics now cover the merged prison, and refer to November 2011.

CNA		Population	VPs	Lifers	IPP
Acklington 890	Castington 400	1278	456	48	128

It will be seen that the population figures for the Acklington site are down on those of last year; this is partly because of the closure of some areas for necessary maintenance work.

It should be noted that plans are being discussed for increasing the number of VPs on the Acklington area.

3.4 (2) Accommodation – Acklington Site

The site is divided into two sections, the Vulnerable Prisoners Unit (VPU) and the Main Prisoners Unit (MPU). All accommodation units have been renamed as House Blocks (HB).

3.4 (2.1) Vulnerable Prisoners Unit (VPU) Residential 2

At last, after many years of badgering, from the IMB and from all sections of the prison management, the disgraceful A, B and C wings have been replaced by a new unit, HB 9, built on a traditional three spur design, and this was opened in the first week of November. The accommodation is good, all single cells with internal sanitation. A section is set aside for older prisoners, and there are cells with disabled access. Prisoner induction now takes place in this unit. There is still some shaking down to do, with minor adjustments to the building. The regime is, perforce, somewhat different from that in the old wings, but all in all HB 9 is a vast improvement over what it replaced.

All the other VPU accommodation has been opened within the last decade. HB6 (formerly J) is an open unit with a relaxed regime; HB7 (H) is a large double spur unit, housing both newly transferred and long term prisoners; HB8 (L) is for enhanced prisoners and was opened three years ago. All the cells are now single with internal sanitation.

3.4 (2.2) Main Prisoners Unit (MPU) Residential 3

HB10 (K) is a four year old unit for enhanced prisoners, with good accommodation. HBs 11(D), 12(E), 13(F) and 14(G) are the original units of the site² and, although the cells are now single, these units badly need refurbishment. HB11 is the induction unit; HB12 largely houses enhanced prisoners; HB13 and HB14 are wings of mixed IEP status, and HB14 has,

² These buildings were built by prisoners from the Castington site. The person who was Chair of the IMB at the time tells the writer that considerable sabotage was practised during construction.

for several years, had a landing (G3) that was originally set aside for prisoners who were unable to cope with the normal prison routine. As we have reported over the last two years, this unit is no longer fulfilling its set purpose, and, we are glad to say, it is now to be closed.

3.4 (2.3) Segregation and Care Unit (SACU)

This has 12 cells. When the two sites are merged with the completion of new fencing, it is planned that the SACU for the whole prison will be on the Castington site, with, perhaps, some holding cells at Acklington. (See 5.4, p21)

3.4 (3) HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIES

These are now run by the same providers across the whole establishment, but the reports below refer only to the Acklington site.

3.4 (3.1) Health Care

This is now subcontracted by the NHS to Care UK Ltd. (See 5.3, p.18)

3.4 (3.2) Education

Manchester College continues to run the educational provision. (See Learning and Skills report, section 5.2, p.14)

3.4 (3.3) Industries and Work Places

Training workshops are: engineering, woodwork, laundry, contract services (usually doing electrical connections), brick work, textiles and tailoring, gardening and waste management. The kitchen provides training in catering. Other work includes cleaning the wings and orderly jobs in various departments. One of the great success stories of the last year was the workshop that had the contract to sort out the canteen orders for DHL, the provider, which, for the first time in this establishment, employed both VPs and MPs working together. It is very unfortunate for this prison that DHL have now moved their operation elsewhere. (See 5.2.3 p.17)

3.4 (3.4) Gardens

The gardens are very well kept and add greatly to the look of the prison. They provide work for both vulnerable and main prisoners, in separate locations. It is a pity, though unavoidable, that during the construction of HB9 the excellent market garden had to close. We very much hope that it will be opened again before long. (See below 4.2.7)

3.5 VOLUNTARY AND OTHER AGENCIES

The following Third Sector agencies work in the prison:

Provider/Service	Current Provision
Alcoholics Anonymous	Facilitate a group every other Saturday morning 10am (Gov's w/e) for prisoners to attend a one hr meeting in the multi-faith room.

	Acklington provision – mains every Tuesday night and VPs alternate Saturdays to Castington.
Escape Family Support – Family development	By referral - On site 2 days per week,
Job Centre Plus – advice on jobs and training, appropriate benefits, guidance upon release.	On site – split between both sites
SHELTER – Housing advice & referral service.	On site – split between both sites
EASE/Pertemps Advice & Guidance on finding work/training post release.	On site every Wednesday (Cast) & Thursday (Ack)
Marriott Mentors – Work placement upon release dependant on criteria.	Referral only
New Bridge –Family Matters Course	Agreement between Lesley & No1 Gov to run 10 Family matters courses for 2011/2012 financial year. 1, 3day course run to date. This provision is in Castington only at present.
BASS/Stonham accommodation providers subject to criteria for those either on bail of without suitable HDC accommodation.	Onsite weekly providing information to new inductions
Aquila Way - Resettlement	Onsite weekly on Gateway unit.
Reflex – faith based organisation for resettlement	Onsite as required
Sowing Seeds – Chaplaincy organised	Onsite as required
Caring for ex-offenders - Chaplaincy organised	Referral only
Faith Action	Funding/policy advisory service for 3 rd sector
Prison fellowship/Sycamore Tree	3 courses to be run this financial year in restorative justice (finer detail yet to be determined)
NEPACS – An independent community based charity to support prisoners and their families. KIDS VIP – agency concerned with children visiting prisons	Visitor Centre provider open 7 days a week with various facilities and referral information.
Phoenix Features – the UK leading drug charity providing specialist treatment services and residential programmes.	On both sites
A4E – Careers advisory service	On both sites
Manchester College – Education provider	On both sites

Veterans in Custody Liaison Officers – sign posting to agencies listed below as necessary	By referral
Royal British Legion – offers advice and practical support during and after custody	By referral via Veterans in Custody Liaison Officers
SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families - offers advice and practical support during and after custody	By referral via Veterans in Custody Liaison Officers
Samaritans – provides training for prisoners to become listeners.	Referral for training to become a ‘Listener’.
Addaction – Drug and alcohol agency with services throughout England	By referral via CARATS department.
Norcure – Supported housing for those who are socially and economically excluded, vulnerable or disadvantaged.	By referral to housing worker Chris Kemp

In addition to this list, the Shannon Trust supports the Toe by Toe literacy scheme.

3.6 THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

The IMB has had much extra responsibility in preparing the merger of the Board with that of HMP Castington; this has been successfully concluded, and the new Board for HMP Northumberland will take office on January 1st 2012.

The merger has provided a very useful opportunity for the Board to look at every aspect of the way it has been working. An ‘away-day’ was held in March, which was very useful, and from which the merger process was worked out in detail.

As part of the preparation the Board instituted, in October, a new rota and monitoring system on a three month trial run, which will be assessed by the new Board in January. The Board also revised thoroughly the Serious Incident Contingency Plans. On the Acklington site there was one Serious Incident to which the Board was called, a roof climb, which happened within a fortnight of our having received training. Fortunately it was very quickly resolved.

It is noticeable that applications to the Board have increased during the period covered by this report, especially in the last few months.

It is encouraging that there have been some excellent new members who have joined the Board this year, and there is a very strong list of people who are interested in joining. This will, of course, be dealt with by the new Board. The training of new members has been very much improved.

It needs to be said that all members have taken their role very seriously and conscientiously, and, often, shown considerable initiative, too.

3.7 CHAPLAINCY

The Chaplaincy has functioned well over the period of the Report. It, too, is subject to the merger process, so the Chaplaincies of the two sites are being combined, with the loss of one full time Chaplain. It was also sad to say goodbye to Sister Moira, who has been the Roman Catholic Chaplain for the last twelve years, and given unique and outstanding service. She is to be replaced by a priest.

4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTER

NB all these items concern the Acklington site.

4.1 (1) HEALTH CARE

The Board believes that the present provision of healthcare needs to be watched very carefully by the Minister. This is not a criticism of those who work in the department, but the contracting of the service to a private company is a new venture and needs constant assessment. There seemed to be a rough period in the early stages of the new contract, when the Board received a considerable number of healthcare applications. This has now settled down, we are glad to say, and the provision is on a more even keel, but awareness needs to be maintained. Again, it needs to be emphasised that this is not a view on the wisdom or otherwise of using the private sector. The Board is well aware that that is not its role.

4.1 (2) LEARNING AND SKILLS

Art Room

The Board is very upset that the art rooms have been discontinued and the art staff made redundant. While it is true that, barring some very exceptional instances, the art rooms did not prepare prisoners for employment, there can be no doubt about the efficacy of art as a therapy. Art from what is now HMP Northumberland has often been exhibited at the annual Koestler Exhibition at the South Bank Centre, and, indeed, the work of an Acklington inmate graced the front of the exhibition programme in 2010. Taking away the opportunities that art provides seems counter productive and unnecessary.

4.1 (3) SEGREGATION AND CARE UNIT

The Board finds the SACU to be well managed by the staff. The matter of policy to which we would draw the Minister's attention concerns prisoners who are housed in the unit for very long periods of time for one reason or another. This situation is not good, either for the prisoner or the SACU staff. We know that this is also a matter of concern to the prison management, and other options need to be provided.

4.1 (4) IPP PRISONERS

Last year the Board expressed its concerns about the IPP sentence. We should like to hear more details about the proposed alterations to this that have been in the news.

4.1 (5) THREE MATTERS OF EXCELLENCE

The Board would like to draw the Minister's attention to two areas of outstandingly good service.

4.1 (5.1) Kitchen

During the exceptionally bad weather we experienced in December 2010 and January 2011, both the civilian staff and the prisoners who work in the kitchen reported for work every day and this speaks volumes about the quality of the kitchen management. Especial commendation should go to the prisoner who drove the electric tractor that delivers the food. He worked long hours, and showed great initiative.

4.1 (5.2) The Gym

It is worth drawing the Minister's attention to the very fine report about the Gym staff (see below 6.9, p.24). The member who wrote the report has been a PE Teacher and knows his onions.

4.1 (6) The Independent Monitoring Boards and the Prison Merger

I write this personally as Chair of Acklington IMB, at the risk of being accused of blowing my own trumpet; in fact, though, I am sounding the brass for the members of both the Acklington and Castington Boards. I believe that the way the two IMBs have tackled the challenge of merging, which has meant their own demise and the appointment of a new Board has been exemplary. Not only has there been a very fine spirit of co-operation, but the opportunity has been taken for refining and renewing the way the IMB undertakes its responsibilities, a process which has brought out much initiative from many members, and shown their great commitment. I should like the Minister to understand this because it shows an IMB ethos, which can easily be overlooked or taken for granted.

4.2 ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE FROM THE PRISON SERVICE

4.2 (1) Health Care

- The poorer industrial relations profile resulting from the changeover in Healthcare provider. The situation has not been resolved nine months after change of provider. The Board needs reassurance that the number and expertise of staff will not be reduced;
- The resources available to care for an increasing number of elderly prisoners resulting from a planned increase in the VP population of prisoners at Acklington.

Areas of good practice need to be noted:

- The appointment of an experienced Healthcare Manager who can implement the Care UK patient complaints system;
- The quality of the increased IDTS service.

4.2 (2) SACU

The Board is concerned that it has often not been possible for a member to attend 14 Day Reviews because either they have been held at irregular times, or the timing has been altered at the last moment, often without informing the IMB. We have been assured by the recently appointed SACU Governor that henceforth there will be better regulation and communication.

4.2 (3) Transfers

The Board is concerned that we receive a large number of applications about transfers. We accept that the transfer situation is very difficult, but wonder whether there is any better way of communicating this to prisoners.

4.2 (4) Courses

We also receive applications from a considerable number of prisoners who are sent here for courses which they find are not held on this site; we find that it can seriously impact upon a prisoner's release date, and cause considerable frustration and anguish.

4.2 (5) Staff Sickness

We know that the SMT is very concerned about the worryingly high level of staff reporting sick, and hope that it may be possible to reduce this to a more acceptable level in the coming year.

4.2 (6) Lifer Days

The Board is concerned that Lifer Days have not been held this year. This may well be owing to the pressure of work caused by merging and Market Testing, but we do hope that they will be restored soon. Members have reported on how valuable they are.

4.2 (7) Market Garden

The Market Garden was a superb project. We very much hope that, now that the building work on HB9 is over, it will be possible to start vegetable growing again.

4.3 OVERALL JUDGMENT

The period covered by this report has been a very difficult one for Acklington/Castington, but the staff have worked very hard indeed to make a success of the change that they face. The possibilities for imaginative and constructive regimes to help to reduce reoffending are legion. The IMB meets with much goodwill among the staff, with officers who work very hard at their jobs. It is to be hoped that as the future becomes clearer there will be more staff stability and the promise of the establishment may be realised.

5 AREAS THAT MUST BE REPORTED ON

5.1 DIVERSITY

There has been a problem over the correct recording of some ethnicity data, particularly in relation to travellers. This has now improved.

5.1 (1) The Race Equality and Diversity Management Team (READ) continues to meet on a regular basis to discuss upgrades to policy regarding Race, Disability, Diversity, Sexual Orientation and Equal Opportunities, and to report on issues. At each meeting there is a lot of statistical evidence available but very little time to unpack any trends or issues.

The group comprises uniformed staff from wings, both Main and Vulnerable Prisoners Unit, and other specialised staff within the prison, REO, DLO, HR, EQ OPS, Prisoner Representatives, IMB, and outside agencies including the Chaplaincy, Victim Support, Police Liaison. The committee is encouraged to provide summary data as a matter of course for prisoner consultative committees.

At the meeting representatives from the BME group within the prison attend to give feedback from the prisoners. The prison held a 'Black history month' in October which was well supported. Recently there has been a new group set up for Older Prisoners. This year the group has had a visit and presentation by members of the Police Anti-terrorist Squad.

An application to the IMB from a Gypsy/ Roma prisoner in May about access to a magazine for Travellers revealed his ethnicity had not been correctly recorded. The READ Officer has ensured the magazine is now in the library and steps are being taken to improve liaison with traveller support groups. However the prisoner has still not had his ethnicity code changed because of the current way in which computer data is recorded.

5.1 (2) RIRFS

Information gathered to date has shown the RIRF's have dropped.

RIRFS	Proven	Not Proven	On-going
23	7	13	3

Prisoners with Disabilities

Registered Disabled	36
Hearing Impaired	27
Mobility Impaired	33
Visually Impaired	23

Figures for Foreign Nationals

Average No Foreign Nationals for year	BME prisoners for year
7 = 0.6%	38 = 4%

All the figures shown in the tables above show averages and percentages based upon a prison population of 964. With the increase in estate size these figures will no doubt change for next year's report.

5.2 LEARNING AND SKILLS

During the year the IMB received monthly reports about activities from the Allocation Board but staff changes from the merger restructuring mean these have not been provided in the last few months. However, the IMB member with the Learning and Skills specialism has met with Head of Learning and Skills, Head of Education and Head of Industries regularly throughout the year. The merger has led to a major staffing change whereby the post of the Head of Learning and Skills, which was a non-operational role, has been replaced by a Governor, Head of Regimes, who reports to the Resettlement Governor. The removal of the role of Head of Industries will take place in the course of the next year.

5.2 (1) Education

In the 2009-2010 Annual Report the following issues were identified for particular attention during the year 2010-2011:

- Monitor the impact of the Manchester College 'resettlement' on the quality of learning in the Education Department. In particular, address any possible impact on standards due to staff morale and increased sessional working;
- Monitor the impact of changes to the curriculum, including the cross curricular delivery of PSD, and take-up of programmes;
- Potential OFSTED inspection during which the number of 'unemployed' prisoners will be a key issue for the College.

Manchester College became the Education provider at HMP Acklington in 2009. In the first half of 2010 the College began a major restructuring or 'resettlement' of staff. The College also began to implement the National Certification Framework whereby all programmes provided by Manchester College are now nationally accredited and transferable. Inevitably there has been a period of readjustment to both a new curriculum and a changed staff structure. The new staff structure adopted by Manchester College included the employment of many more sessional workers than previously. It also involved the redundancy of some experienced permanent staff in the summer and autumn of 2010, including highly successful art teachers. The College

experienced great difficulty in immediately replacing permanent staff with new part-time staff, and in covering for absentees, and consequently found itself for much of the last year in a difficult situation as classes were cancelled or start dates for programmes were delayed. To tackle staff shortages, several recruitment fairs have been held at the prison while the regional recruitment service (Blue Octopus) provided by Manchester College has also been used.

These staffing shortages were exacerbated by the length of time taken by the Security Department to clear the new, mostly sessional, staff. With the appointment of the new Head of Regimes moves have taken place to improve some of these security blockages which has made it easier for the College to cover staff absences and, while the recruitment of new staff is ongoing, it is reported that less cancellations of classes are taking place.

The College has set up an Induction Programme for new staff but recognise that many new staff find the work in the prison very challenging and require a high level of support. It was reported that some of these sessional staff were taking on the course leader role in an unpaid capacity.

The new Head of Regimes is also making a positive impact in areas such as improving prisoner attendance at classes through co-ordination of areas such as Gymnasium, Health Care, pay arrangements for prisoners, wing procedures with education and training. He is absolutely clear that there should be greater consistency in tackling cross regime issues. However, prisoner attendance rates in education remain low. These figures hit a low in December-January with 59% efficiency, although by May had risen to 73%. The Head of Regimes appointed a Senior Officer to work closely with wing staff promoting a consistent approach to prisoner attendance at classes.

The Quality Improvement Group, comprised of Education and Training with A4E, Job Centre Plus and EASE, is now led by the Head of Regimes. Both HMP Acklington and HMP Castington now work together to share good practice from both sites. There is a sense that things are happening and that some long standing issues will be addressed under this revised management structure.

The OLASS manager recognised early in the year the need to develop a greater team spirit among staff, many of whom were new to HMP Acklington, while some long standing staff were still feeling some of the inevitable effects of the 'resettlement' process earlier in the year. To this end some managers have attended leadership training and regular team bonding sessions have been held throughout the year for all staff. For example, in October, a staff meeting was held on the Way Forward for the College; in addition some unqualified staff are being equipped with teaching qualifications.

The OLASS Manager's other ambition for the year was to embark on a period of curriculum development. The College's Accredited PEARL course has been developed, as were New Business Venture qualifications, Diplomas in Bricks and Paints and in Functional Skills. NVQ Levels One and 2 in Barbering will be delivered in the new Barbering Suite, which has been constructed in the former Art Rooms. The Bistro in Mains Education will also be mirrored for

Vulnerable Prisoners to enable them to achieve Levels One and 2 NVQ's in Hospitality.

There is continuing concern over the low take-up of some courses, for example, Skills for Life, for which the post of Student Support Worker was created to address. Unfortunately the original post-holder, appointed early in the autumn, left after a month in post, so improvement in this area has been less than expected. A new post-holder, who took up role in April (although appointed in November!) has begun to make some impact. Take-up has improved from a low 68% at the start of the year to 84% in May.

Participation rates are another concern; the average is 48.2% this year. Meetings have been held with the Number One Governor and the Resettlement Governor. More effective use of the Allocation Board is one strategy to tackle this issue. Closer working with A4E is also taking place through a number of meetings with a focus on improving induction and ILP's.

Engagement with employers is being developed at a regional level by Manchester College although the prison staff do speak to local employers. The OLASS Manager is keen to provide courses which combine education and work, and discussions have been held with the Head of Regimes to expedite this. They have looked at altering pay arrangements for prisoners to enable them to take both options, and if this happens it will be an important step towards achieving this worthwhile goal.

Open University courses are offered by the prison with some facilitation carried out by The Manchester College; there are currently 12 undergraduates. During the year a small number of prisoners had transferred to other prisons or had decided the OU was not for them. Students who meet the literacy and numeracy requirements are funded by a charity or by the OU itself.

5.2 (1.1) Toe by Toe

We give this special mention as a hugely promising programme. This is a hugely promising programme, but it is unfortunate that it is drifting somewhat, owing to lack of the direction that was once given by a volunteer officer who is now no longer able to be involved. The majority of mentors are on the VP wings, and, as of December 2011, there are only 5 prisoners undertaking Toe by Toe, so several mentors have no mentees at present. The majority of mentees are also VPs, and it would be very good if some way could be found to widen the scope of Toe by Toe, and, especially, to encourage MPs to take part. The 'culture' on the Mains wings does not embrace such programmes readily.

Toe by Toe does not cost the prison a penny and is entirely supported by the Shannon Trust and the Board very much hopes that it will be possible to expand it. It is a wonderfully worth while project, if only its potential could be realised.

5.2 (1.2) Positive features of the year include-

- The inclusion of an OFSTED database of good practice for the Bistro for developing employability and personal skills for prisoners.

- Establishment of the Virtual Campus - a resettlement tool which will be operational for late summer;
- Development of new programmes;
- It is also very noticeable that, after the initial difficulties and worries caused by the new contract, things have now shaken down and are much more positive. The enthusiasm of the OLASS Manager is palpable and infectious.

5.2 (1.3) Issues for 2011-12

- Continue to monitor impact of sessional workers on quality of provision;
- Monitor the take-up of courses;
- Monitor the moves to provide programmes which combine education and work;
- Awareness that an OFSTED inspection is imminent;
- A management reorganisation is taking place as we go to press, which needs monitoring.

5.2 (1.4) Some Education statistics -

Average August 2010-July 2011:

Enrolled v. capacity: 77.6%

Attended v. enrolled: 69.9%

Average August - November 2011

Enrolled v. capacity: 82.46%

Attended v. enrolled: 72.65%

5.2 (1.5) Training and Industries

The Governor and SMT are very concerned to raise the competitive standard and output efficiency of industries.

It is a great pity that DHL have decided not to renew their contract for running their retail workshop, which processed the canteen orders, here. This was a very busy and thriving workshop, and was all the more notable because it employed a mix of VPs and MPs, which, after an initial settling down time, worked extremely well.

Another disappointment was that the prison was not awarded the contract for running a printing workshop.

The impact of a number of factors this past year means that achievement of KPTs in Industries will not be as strong as anticipated. The Market Gardens have been shut all year due to the building of the new wing, while both PICTA and BICS sections were shut for long periods due to the absence of the single members of staff who ran the areas. In addition,

Contract Services was closed prior to the opening of the new recycling area. The Head of Industries had applied to have KPTs reduced but this was declined. The current Performance is 85.05 against a target score of 100. VP prisoners are employed to a greater extent than Mains prisoners.

On a positive note some new industries have been developed which broaden the range of work available to prisoners. Genesis-Aps - which involves one group of VP prisoners packing sample cases of wall and floor trims and a second group cutting the wall and floor trim to specified lengths for these sample boxes. A recycling workshop has been introduced using a Social Enterprise company called Think 3E based in Wellingborough. This workshop breaks down plastic windows and employs 30 prisoners. The company also support ex-prisoners in the community including setting up micro enterprises with ex offenders.

An employability course running across Education and Industries has also been introduced targeting prisoners in the last 14 weeks of a sentence. Prisoners are seen by Job Centre Plus and some employers and generally the programme is more flexible than usual.

In terms of the merger both prisons are sharing good practice and co-ordinating application and allocation processes which include using the PNOMIS system based at Castington.

The Head of Industries is concerned about several factors which impact negatively on the working day for prisoners. These include interruptions caused by IDTS, Gymnasium programmes, prisoner sickness, and staff absence. Early in 2011, 4 Industries staff were sick at one time for lengthy periods and workshops were closed. With an overall target of 80% efficiency there is a hope that some of these issues will be sorted by Operational Governor who is attempting greater co-ordination across the different areas in the prison, as noted above for Education.

5.2 (1.6) Labour Profiles

	Population	Work Spaces	Employed	OAP employed	Vacancies	Unemployed
Main Prisoners	427	396	326	2	70	106
Vulnerable Prisoners	453	421	383	17	38	66

5.2 (1.7) Issues for the year ahead

- Monitor impact of staff absences on prisoners' working hours;
- Monitor impact of the changes to the leadership roles within Industries;
- Monitor take-up of programmes by Mains prisoners;
- Monitor quality and range of work programmes available for prisoners.

5.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

5.3.1 Healthcare Care at Acklington

In preparing the Annual Report on Healthcare at HMP Acklington, it has been necessary to divide the report into 2 sections, namely the period before April 1st 2011, when the Healthcare was under the control of the NHS, and the later period when Healthcare was contracted out to Care UK.

As stated in the last Annual Report the Board believe that an effective Healthcare and Mental Health care service is a key performance requirement of any good performing prison. The service must meet the twin requirements of 'looking after all prisoners with humanity' and encouraging a good level of performance related morale amongst staff and prisoners.

The role of the Board is to monitor the effectiveness of the Healthcare system in delivering the agreed level of services to prisoners. The Board continues to emphasise that they are not involved in clinical decision making merely to ensure that agreed services are delivered to the specified standards.

During the first 9 months of the period under review it was noticeable that staff morale dipped as the staff faced up to the uncertainty of who would be their future employer and how would any new/contracted employer operate the Healthcare system within the prison.

The transition of Healthcare services to Care UK has not been without its difficulties due to a lack of sensitivity by Care UK about the continuing employment of the staff. The use of a 'standard' letter, which hinted at redundancies, did not aid the transition to Care UK and hence staff morale suffered a further unnecessary reduction at a time when the two organisations needed to build bridges. In recent weeks the morale has improved. The Board would be most concerned if overall staffing levels were reduced and look forward to staff who leave being quickly replaced by newcomers of equivalent experience.

The Board did pick up 5 applications concerning a very serious matter, which was that medication was being withdrawn from prisoners on their arrival at Reception. If this happened at the weekend, it could take up to five days for it to be prescribed again. As the Board looked into this issue, there did seem to be real substance in the complaints, and this was backed up by prison staff, and by our colleagues on the Castington site. We are very glad to have been assured that the problem has now been resolved, and hope that we have played a positive role in this outcome.

The Mental Health team continue in their role and remain part of the NHS, although their role is at as a second level sub-contractor. The Board has expressed its concern that the provision of bereavement counselling was, for a time, not provided. A service is now being provided, and we are grateful for this, but need to know more about how it operates. This service is clearly of great benefit to prisoners who suffer the loss of loved ones whilst they are in prison.

The Board would like to see an increase in stress counselling courses as these courses can improve the quality of life for prisoners.

The Board is pleased to note that an experienced Health Care Manager with wide NHS and Prison Service expertise, has been appointed as Healthcare Manager.

5.3 (2) Learning Disabilities

The Board continues to express its concern that no additional funding has been made to improve the quality of service given to prisoners with major healthcare and mental health issues as they try to adapt to life within prison.

The full Board acknowledge the often unseen outstanding support given to prisoners with personal hygiene and mental health problems by both prison staff and healthcare professionals. However, prisoners with mental health problems do pose serious management issues for prison staff.

5.3 (3) Structure of Healthcare – Living with an ageing VP population

The proposal that the number of VPs located at HMP Acklington is increased consolidates the Board's concerns regarding the provision of healthcare for an ageing VP prison population. It is noted that there are 131 prisoners who are 55 years of age and above and that the oldest prisoner is 84 years old. Healthcare for an ageing population, both at national and local level, is a major healthcare challenge and must be tackled in the near future. The problems of prisoners with age related illness, such as dementia, will only increase as the average age of Acklington's VP prisoners increases. The Board note that there are redundant 'hospital' facilities at Castington and urge the Bid Team to investigate whether they can be used to benefit HMP Northumberland VPs. and possibly gain a competitive advantage.

5.3 (4) ACCT

The Board recently attended a training session on the ACCT process and have observed that the system is being implemented satisfactorily. It is noted however that no work has been initiated to develop more innovative support packages for self-harmers.

5.3 (5) Hospital Escorts and Telemedicine

The Board notes that the Telemedicine initiative has commenced and that up to 5 referrals occur each month. We understand that a hospital in Skipton supplies the necessary medical consultancy services. The Board continue to express it's concern regarding the high number of hospital escorts that take place every month. It is to be hoped that Telemedicine can reduce the 70 escorts which occur every month. The Board are encouraged by the proposal that Consultants, in appropriate disciplines, will visit the prison on a regular basis.

5.3 (6) Drug Treatment Services

The maximum number of IDTS scheme participants has risen to 100 from 60. A small number of reserved places are held for prisoners transferring in from other prisons who are existing members of the scheme. The aim of diverting prisoners from drug use both inside and outside of prison is clearly challenging and is clearly a well supported, high priority project within the prison.

The Board hope that staffing levels will be maintained and that the prison can continue its current high quality level of support to prisoners on the scheme.

5.3 (7) Drugs

The Prison staff continue to engage in an endless battle to stop drugs getting into the prison. Whilst it is pleasing to note that many successes are reported, the prison acknowledge that continual vigilance is required if the drug problem is to be reduced.

5.3 (8) Dental Health

The Board note, with regret, that the resignation of the previous high performing Prison Dentist when Care UK took over the Healthcare service. The departure coincided with the number of sessions was reduced from 7 to 4 per week. It is hoped that an increase in sessions can be negotiated, although it is noted that the 4 sessions per week is the number specified in the contract.

5.3 (9) Complaints

The Board is concerned that the previous Complaints System developed by the previous Complaints System Owner, was suspended when the contract moved to Care UK. The system does now seem to be working more effectively and the Board are delighted to learn that a new member of staff from PALS joined Healthcare in July, on a one day per week basis, to handle complaints. This initiative is most welcome.

The Board will work co-operatively with the newly appointed Healthcare Manager and new PALS 'staff member' to understand the Care UK complaints system and to ensure that monthly reports are made available to the Board. The Board view this complaints data as a vital tool in monitoring the quality of service provided to the prison by Care UK. The 'total' Healthcare complaints system needs a detailed review and the development of a simple Complaints Guideline. The Board needs to fully understand how the Care UK complaints system links into the NHS complaints system; this urgent requirement will be worked with the Healthcare Manager. As of November 2011 no data has been supplied to the Board.

5.3 (10) Future Challenges

The Board awaits with great interest the formal merger of the 2 prisons with the new name, HMP Northumberland. The merger of the 2 Healthcare Teams and facilities will be a challenging task; the Board

wishes them great success. We encourage the prison to be more self sufficient and therefore deliver an improved service at lower costs.

5.4 SEGREGATION AND CARE UNIT

The Segregation Unit is well managed by staff who relate appropriately and fairly with prisoners in their care; they show diligence in dealing with the variety of situations that confront them in their everyday work and will enter into discussion and dialogue with IMB members that visit.

Board members have very few applications from this unit and overall prisoners have a positive attitude towards staff and react well to the manner in which they are treated.

The IMB visits the unit every week and every prisoner is seen by the member on the SACU rota for that week. That member is also informed of any new admissions to the unit and all relevant paperwork is checked and countersigned.

Adjudications are regularly attended by IMB members who report that the proceedings are carried out fairly and appropriately in accordance with the prescribed rules and directives. Members with special responsibilities for this and related areas attend quarterly SMARG, Use of Force, and Adjudication Review meetings where our presence is well received and our comments noted and recorded.

Our main concerns continue to relate to the issues regarding 1) prisoners who are detained in the unit for an excessive amount of time and 2) the less than regular attendance at 14 day review meetings by IMB members. In this latter regard the lack of timely liaison has been a problem but this is being actively reviewed and addressed as part of the current Acklington/Castington merger discussions. This will result in clearer expectations on the prison regarding this particular aspect of the duties of the IMB. The situation has improved in the last few weeks.

6 OTHER AREAS

6.1 General Monitoring Comments

1. Monitoring is assigned to Governor Level so prison sees it as important.
2. All required machinery appears to be in place. However attendance at monitoring meetings does not always seem a high priority for staff.
3. Key issues arising from survey of monitoring were:
 - i. High level of potential claims against prison for loss of property/ injury etc. This could amount to half a million pounds plus if all were settled in the applicants favour. Clearly this will not be the case but with over 50 claims from prisoners and staff, a ratio about 9 to one, the volume of work generated is very considerable.

- ii. Levels of staff sickness persistently high
- iii. The Board is considering monitoring cases where prisoners' privileges are removed under IEP system without going through the adjudication process. It is not suggested that this is excessive but it seems an important area for the Board to monitor.

6.2 Adjudications And Reviews

These are attended to the limits of the Board's capacity. We find that they are conducted to a consistently high standard.

6.3 Bullying

The anti bullying policy is taken very seriously by the responsible staff. The Board does receive some applications concerning bullying, both by staff and other prisoners; these are acted upon immediately. However, it would be true to say that the level of bullying is not high. Following a recent workshop on this subject held in December 2011, there are plans to produce a revised Anti-Bullying Policy in the New Year.

6.4 Catering and Kitchens

As has been pointed out above (4.4.1) the work of the kitchens (the main kitchen for the Acklington site, together with the Acklington Staff mess) is to be highly commended. The Board receives very few complaints about the food. The kitchen is visited regularly, and the serveries are monitored, and food is tasted (at the last tasting made by the Chair, a score of 7/10 was given to a chicken fricassee).

The main kitchen is staffed with Mains prisoners, and the Staff mess with VPs. Strangely enough, both kitchens have something of a problem in recruiting enough prisoners to fill their staffing needs.

6.5 Complaints Procedures

The Board has had concerns about the Healthcare complaints process (see above 5.3 (1)). Otherwise the system works reasonably well, and the Complaints Clerk is unfailingly helpful when Board members have queries. The Board does find that it has a role in assisting prisoners to understand the proper use of the complaints system.

6.6 Consultative Committee (Staff/Prisoner) Meetings

The IMB monitors committees for both the MPU and VPU. Prisoners often feel that the two groups are treated differently, but the IMB can attest that this is not the case.

6.6 (1) Key areas for the year have been:

- introduction and monitoring of DHL/Booker performance;
- attendance at the committees of Area Manager in charge of the Prison Service section dealing with Canteen issues;
- introduction of READ as a standard agenda item;
- updates from the Governor/s on new build/possible moves of VPs into F/G wings;

- Changes in the TV reception regime with Freeview digital being planned; for 2011 installation- should remedy longstanding reception problems.
- ongoing problems with phones in wings both Mains and VP;
- introduction of new visit regime;
- major change in 2011 of Healthcare transition from NHS to private provider – intention to have Healthcare representative attending as standard at the committees;
- regular questions from IMB about the work activity for DHL where Mains and VPs mix – the recruitment for this work activity was extremely well handled by the Committee Chairs who made a key factor for appointment was acceptance of all workers as any discriminatory comments or actions would result in immediate loss of the job.

6.7 Drugs and Mobile Phones

These continue to be smuggled into the prison, but there have been significant finds during the year and it seems that, at last, the amount of such contraband coming into the prison is reducing.

6.8 Escorts

The main concern of the Board here is the amount of staff time that is taken up in escorting prisoners to Wansbeck hospital. Although the cost is born by the NHS, it is still a matter which affects the organisation of staffing in the prison, and the number of Officers needed.

6.9 Physical Education

The Physical Education Department has had an outstanding year and continues to make a very significant contribution to life within the prison. They were awarded the ‘Team of the Year’ Performance Recognition Award for 2010/2011 and the following are just a few examples of the excellent work that is ongoing in this area.

- Very close liaison with Medical Services (IDTS, CARATS, Drug Intervention and Mental Health) in raising standards and improving quality of care for prisoners;
- Engaging a large number of prisoners in sport and exercise. External verification of the NVQ they offer was given an A rating and they received some very positive feedback from OFSTED;
- Important partnerships were forged with Universities North East England (SUNEE). This is part of a Second Chance project that develops links with prisoners and provides funding. It seeks to create opportunities for prisoners on release to develop and utilise the coaching skills and qualifications they have acquired in prison;
- TSP and SOTP. The department provides teambuilding exercises for prisoners prior to them starting on these courses. The course is designed to identify leadership potential and strengths and weaknesses. There has been excellent feedback from staff and prisoners;

- Occupational health support for staff. This is a scheme where the department offers help to staff who may have health related issues. They are proactively encouraged to use the facilities and given feedback and assistance on their personal fitness and well being.
- All PE staff have undergone First Aid and DEFIB training. In October 2011 a prisoner suffered a heart attack and stopped breathing. Intervention from 3 PE Staff who administered DEFIB and CPR resulted in a full recovery.

The IMB recognises the very important work of the Physical Education department and congratulates them on their success.

7. APPENDICES

7.1 Board Statistics - July 2010 to December 2011

Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13*
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5 +2**
Number of members leaving within reporting period	5
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	19 + 4***
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	10.05
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	N/a
Total number of visits to the prison/IRC (including all meetings)	N/a
Total number of applications received	457
Total number of Segregation reviews held	N/a *****
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/a*****

*Includes 2 with dual membership with Castington

**Includes 2 from Castington with dual membership

***4 meetings jointly with Castington in preparation for the merger

***** See Segregation report above (5.4)

7.2 Applications by Subject

CODE	SUBJECT	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11 NB: 17 months	2010-2011 month average
A	Accommodation	9	12	16	12	0.7
B	Adjudications	6	8	9	1	0.05
C	Diversity Related	20	18	4	19	1.1
D	Education/Employment Training	20	20	25	34	2
E	Family/Visits	7	2	4	31	1.8
F	Food/Kitchen related	2	3	2	6	0.35
G	Health Related	43	46	40	76	4.5
H	Property	21	15	25	67	3.9
I	Sentence Related	45	48	35	23	1.35
J	Staff/Prisoner/related	16	12	11	43	2.5
K	Transfers	33	45	40	87	5.1
L	Miscellaneous	49	43	30	58	3.4
	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	271	287	241	457	
	Monthly average	22.5	24	20	27	