



**HMP/YOI ASKHAM GRANGE**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**1 JULY 2010 – 30 JUNE 2011**

**The Right Honourable the Secretary of State  
For the Ministry of Justice**

**Sir**

**I have the honour to submit the:**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**FOR HMP/YOI ASKHAM GRANGE  
FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**Members of the Board**

**Mr S Beyer– Chairman**

**Mr M Barrie**

**Mrs H Gilbertson**

**Ms N Gooch**

**Ms J Guilfoyle**

**Mr R Hubbard**

**Mrs R King**

**Mr J Pearson**

**Mr C Saunders – resigned November 2010**

**Mrs D Smith**

**S C Beyer**

**Chairman 08-02-2012**

## **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

The prison Act of 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act of 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 other official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concerns 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 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 the prison records.

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## **1. Brief description of the Prison and its Functions**

- 1.1. HMP/YOI Askham Grange is a women's open prison in the rural village of Askham Richard just South of York
- 1.2. The baseline CNA of 151, an in-use CNA of 128 and an operational capacity of 126
- 1.3. The population, all convicted, ranges in age from Young Offenders to residents of mature years. They predominantly live in dormitory accommodation but those on Stage Two resettlement and lifer prisoners have priority for single rooms and are placed on a waiting list as appropriate to ensure fairness of allocation.
- 1.4. Askham Grange is an open prison in which the overriding ethos is for resettlement and preparation of the residents for their return to the community via its Interventions and Pathways regime which encompasses all aspects of the needs of the residents. It has provision for up to ten mothers with their babies, enabling them to maintain full time care of their child up to two years, whilst in prison, and it is complemented by a nursery which takes in some children from the prison staff and the local community. A family team works with them and all other mothers in Askham to prepare for life on release.
- 1.5.** The regime is focussed on reducing the re-offending rate by developing a wide range of skills to enhance their opportunities on release. All departments contribute to this in their separate ways.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. HMP/YOI Askham Grange continues to receive the High Performance Status award. As we commented before, this reflects the hard work of staff in all departments and their concern for the resettlement of residents after release. When set against the economies that have been made and the subsequent reduction in staff numbers, together with a concerted effort to keep the establishment at or near full capacity, this is a remarkable achievement and one that we as external monitors fully support.
- 2.2. As a board we were concerned that the reduction in staffing levels coupled with an increase in population could lead to problems, however in the year since these changes were implemented, support for the residents appears to have been maintained. The lower staffing level at night is a matter of concern but to date no serious incident has occurred to test the new staffing levels.
- 2.3. The problem of population suitability coupled with shorter length of sentences remains. Despite great efforts on the part of the Askham Grange Management, and an emphasis as part of national Policy, it continues. The success rate for not re-offending remains high, but the Board remains convinced that more work could be done for the good of women in prison by the right choice of residents being sent to Askham, with reasonable remaining lengths of sentence to serve transferring at the earliest appropriate moment to our open conditions.
- 2.4. During the year the prison has been visited at least twice a week for monitoring, often more frequently and matters of housekeeping have generally been resolved by staff at the appropriate level.
- 2.5. Askham Grange is an establishment in which residents generally feel safe and think that their wellbeing is looked after. This is due to the good work of the staff and we list the various departments who have contributed in the relevant part of the report.

## 2.6. Questions to the Minister

**2.6.1.** Despite recent cost savings the resettlement and re-offending rates at YOI/HMP Askham Grange remain excellent with the latest re-offending rates below 6% and this in one of the most cost effective prisons in England. The Board is concerned that a further reduction in budget will negatively impact on the services the prison provides and its excellent record as a re-settlement prison.

**As mentioned in last year's report will the Minister give consideration to the exceptional re-settlement record of the establishment and assist NOMS to ensure that future budgets allow this to continue?**

## 2.7. Question to the Prison Service

**2.7.1.** Over the last three years the Board has expressed concern about residents who have work placements walking back from Bilbrough on the A64 to Askham Grange late at night or on dark winter afternoons, a distance of 0.7miles on a lonely country road. All Governors have been sympathetic about the situation and last year personal alarms and fluorescent safety vests were issued but transport arrangements could not be made because of the late and differing hours that residents finished work.

**Can the Prison Service use its best endeavours to provide resources that can cater for individual residents on work placements?**

**2.7.2.** In previous Annual Reports the Board has raised the issue of short term transfers from closed conditions to Askham Grange and the extra burden the processes required for new receptions followed shortly afterwards by discharge, place upon the staff and residents. The situation has improved during the year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 but still leaves room for considerable improvement.

**Can the Prison Service use its best endeavours to ensure that prisoners arriving at Askham Grange have sufficient time left to serve, so as to benefit from the excellent services the establishment has to offer?**

### 3. The Care and Treatment of Offenders

#### 3.1. Healthcare

- 3.1.1.** A further extension to the Health Centre has been built, housing the pharmacy and adding to the civilian atmosphere. The Centre transferred to the Management of the Harrogate NHS Foundation Trust in April 2011.
- 3.1.2.** IDTS now covers Alcohol abuse and is run in conjunction with Leeds Hospital Foundation Trust.
- 3.1.3.** The provision of a part time psychologist at Askham has been somewhat patchy but during the course of the reporting period it has considerably improved.
- 3.1.4.** Exit surveys continue to show high levels of satisfaction with the service provided for residents. The last quarterly survey for the reporting period shows increased satisfaction on the part of residents

<b>Level of access</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Below Av.</b>
Doctors & Nurses	25	7	2	
Dentist	9	13	2	1
Optician	5	2	2	
<b>Level of care received</b>				
Health Care	28	2	2	
Dentist	8	9	2	1
Optician	3	1	2	1
<b>Attitude/Professionalism</b>				
Healthcare	28	2	2	
Dentist	8	9	2	1
Optician	3	1	2	1

#### 3.2. Security and Safer Custody

##### 3.2.1. Security

- 3.2.2.** The Intelligence system at Askham Grange comprises Operational Intelligence and Strategic Intelligence and both form a vital part of the overall process.
- 3.2.3.** Operational Intelligence indicates a specific threat to security or control such as contraband, absconds etc. Strategic Intelligence provides an up-to-date picture of an individual resident and her world; this is mainly achieved through the use of SIRs. Much of this work concentrates on drug misuse, bullying and alcohol abuse. Security meetings are held monthly to review the overall picture as well as individual concerns.
- 3.2.4.** The Security staff keep well on top of the situation whilst allowing a relaxed overall atmosphere to be maintained.

### 3.2.5. Safer Custody

- 3.2.6. Residents in general feel very safe within the prison and this has been confirmed in recent HMCIP inspections and surveys of the residents. An anonymous exit survey is done with those being released, particularly concerning bullying and results for the last year show a very positive result. This allows any problems to be diagnosed early and action taken if needed.
- 3.2.7. A Safer Custody Team, which monitors this area, has recently been reconfigured for more efficient working. This should mean that the reviewing process is more manageable. A robust anti-bullying policy is in place and investigations are thorough and outcomes followed through.
- 3.2.8. Few ACCTs are opened and are generally closed quite quickly. Those residents on ACCTs are monitored carefully and support is given.

### 3.3. Diversity – Equal Opportunities, Disability and Foreign Nationals.

- 3.3.1. We commented in last year's Annual Report on the frequency of meetings being changed from monthly to bi-monthly, the venue alternating between Askham Grange and New Hall, our clustered establishment. Particularly referred to was the inability of resident representatives and staff to attend Diversity meetings. This was subsequently changed in the reporting year to quarterly meetings held at Askham Grange.
- 3.3.2. The Race Equality Officer's stated intention to resume Diversity events has not materialised, consequently the previously successful Diversity Events Planning Group has been disbanded.
- 3.3.3. The introduction of PSI 32/2011 "Ensuring Equality" has changed the dynamics of monitoring the management of equalities in the establishment and we note the abandonment of "Diversity" as a title.
- 3.3.4. A comprehensive Equality Action Plan 2011/2012 has been produced covering all equalities issues. The IMB dedicated Equalities member will continue to attend all relevant meetings and report to the Board on monitoring of the Action Plan.  
As a consequence of PSI 32/2011, RIRF reports are no longer in use at Askham Grange; the establishment being part of a Regional Pilot scheme where Racial Incident matters are included in Comp. I and IA Forms. Historically there have been very few RIRF reports but the Board will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme.
- 3.3.5. Senior Management constantly seek ways of improving the quality of life for residents with disabilities in a building that presents many logistical difficulties and are to be congratulated.
- 3.3.6. **Amid all the changes that have occurred in the reporting year, the Board remains entirely satisfied that residents belonging to minority groups are not disadvantaged during their time at Askham Grange.**
- 3.3.7. The long awaited multi-faith room, known as the Sanctuary, was opened on February 8th 2011 and a dedicated team of Faith Chaplains continue to minister to the needs of residents in much improved surroundings.

### 3.4. Learning and Skills

- 3.4.1. The Learning and Skills provision continues to be outstanding. This is particularly impressive against the backdrop of increased prisoner population, education staff having to teach for more hours for the same remuneration, and major changes to the curriculum, and the inevitable course re-writing. The Education Manager, despite carrying a 10% extra teaching load, being fully involved with Prisoner Boards, sentence planning and initiatives to improve prisoner prospects on rehabilitation, continues to drive Education at Askham with devotion and passion.
- 3.4.2. The education ethos of Askham Grange is to provide residents with a Learning Package of qualifications specifically appropriate to their increased career aspirations as well as teaching inter-active skills in order to maximise their future employment prospects and worthwhile contribution to their community. Matching prisoner education achievements and employment aspirations with Community and/or paid work has proved more difficult this year with the national economic situation, unemployment rates.
- 3.4.3. Underpinning a varied curriculum is the literacy, numeracy and basic information technology provision. Some prisoners are reluctant to embark upon these qualifications, but then achieving the relevant level, entry 1 or 2, makes them feel proud, boosts their confidence and encourages them to continue to study.
- 3.4.4. Generally, there have been changes in the Curriculum being offered in some areas to ensure that Askham Grange awards are up to date, match the offer in the community and are nationally recognised. Changes have occurred in Computing and Business Studies. Creative writing is now being offered as 3 set courses a year. The very popular nails technology course, linked to the NVQ Hairdressing curriculum has been changed to teaching in fixed cohorts, to improve the success rate. Industrial Cleaning qualifications are well supported and have progressed significantly this year to include Level 2 Quality Control Framework. The number of Assertiveness courses has increased, to improve the confidence and self-esteem of our women. The numbers of prisoners attending programmes of study has increased in line with the higher population, but although classes are full, there are no waiting lists.
- 3.4.5. Residents are engaged in distance learning and home study courses leading to Diploma qualifications in a wide range of subjects. At any given time there is about 25% of the population engaged in, or applying for such courses, the funding of which is the responsibility of the individual resident but obtaining this is proving more difficult in the current climate.
- 3.4.6. The IPP resident referred to in the 2010 Annual Report, reading for a B.Sc in Social Science is due for release shortly, has obtained accommodation and will complete her course at the University of York. This long serving prisoner came to Askham Grange with a minimal educational background, but has embraced the opportunity that the establishment has provided. Her first year course work was in the top 30% of the University Social Sciences results. Likewise, a lifer resident has commenced a distance course at Northumberland University, leading to a M.Sc degree in Library and Information Studies. A number of residents continue their OU courses leading to degrees and qualifications in Business Studies, Engineering and Accountancy. However, funding is not as secure as previously and it is likely there will be fewer residents able to go to college in the future.

### 3.5. Pathways and Resettlement

**3.5.1.** Askham Grange is a resettlement prison and as such the focus of the regime is to maintain the present very low re-offending rate of some six percent. This can be limited when, and if, too many residents are transferred with too little time at Askham to follow the full programme to paid work. It is perfectly clear that the main factors which effect re-offending with women are family, health, education, work and substance misuse. To this end an overview comprising many departments co-ordinates the work and meets on a regular basis. The departments involved include Health Care, Education and Training, Substance Misuse, Pathways and all its functions, the Family Team amongst others. Regular meetings try to ensure that the various departments work together for the good of the residents. As well as a strategic overview they also maintain a tactical brief on the progress of individual residents.

**3.5.2. As a Board we remain convinced that although women are transferred for a variety of good reasons, an effort must continue to be made to identify those who can benefit most from the resources available at Askham Grange.**

**3.5.3.** Pathways as a department has remained in a state of flux, a matter alluded to in our report last year. Despite this the members of staff have continued to deliver an outstanding service and it is very much valued by the residents. They cover matters such as housing, community work, paid work, debt, social services etc. They are aided in this by the work done in the Offender Management Unit, particularly by Probation.

**3.5.4.** It has been particularly good to note the work done with employers both local but also with national exposure so that residents can move more easily on release. The present economic climate has not made this job easy.

**3.5.5. We should like to see a period of calm and stability confirmed in Pathways to allow them to consolidate the excellent work which they do, and sufficient funds found to ensure this happens.**

### 3.6. The Family Team

**3.6.1.** Askham Grange has many residents who have families and a high proportion of these comprise young children; this is apart from those on the Mother and Baby Unit. It is well known that the maintenance and development of family ties and skills are crucial for the women when they are released, let alone for the families left outside.

**3.6.2.** There is a robust structure in place in the prison to ensure that the maximum work is done so that families are kept in as close contact as possible, and whatever work can be done is done to develop the skills necessary for the well-being of the children. This is a multi-agency team comprising the Family Worker, Nursery, Social Worker, Healthcare, Health Visitor and Mother and Baby team. Education, Probation and Pathways can also be involved.

- 3.6.3. The Mother and Baby Unit has been nearly full during the year and is a remarkable resource which also gives the residents a standard to which to aspire. There has been a change in the staffing arrangements which the Board has monitored and as yet there does not seem to have been a problem. The work which is done by the Mother and Baby team led by a Senior Officer is quite excellent. The Nursery is always a joy to visit. It not only looks after the children but ensures that mothers have to spend quality, monitored time with their children. The presence of community children and the older age of some is a great advantage both to the children of residents and the residents themselves.
- 3.6.4. The continued use of Acorn House, which provides overnight accommodation for residents and their children in a quiet environment at the edge of the grounds, has continued to be an increasing success. It is difficult to quantify its value but the anecdotal evidence is that it makes a huge contribution to holding families together.
- 3.6.5. It is essential that this facility continues as an integral part of the family programme.
- 3.6.6. Within this overall structure the role of the Family Worker is pivotal. There is concern how this might change in the coming year. The job brings together all the family orientated departments working with mothers and their families. It is a key role.
- 3.6.7. As a Board we are very conscious of the excellent work which Askham does so well with mothers and families and we shall monitor the role of the Family Worker in order that the rest of the team can perform their part in the overall work done.**

### **3.7. Catering and Kitchens**

- 3.7.1. Although constantly under pressure because of staff shortages, catering continues to provide an excellent range of food for the residents, providing good quality food for all ethnic backgrounds, dietary needs and food intolerances. The manager and his team make a special effort to celebrate ethnic food festivals and the vast majority of notes from residents in the canteen comments book are positive.
- 3.7.2. The Askham Grange catering unit is one of only two prisons in England to score 13/13 in the independently audited Annual Hygiene Inspection.
- 3.7.3. All this is a considerable achievement when judged against the slender budget the kitchens work on.

#### 4. Statistics

##### 4.1. Board Statistics

Recommended Complement of Board Members	10
Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period	9
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during the reporting period	11
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	77%
Total number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	190
Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	249

##### 4.2. Applications, Receptions, Adjudications and ACCTs

	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
Total number of written applications received	27	29	20
Total number of verbal applications received	9	26	9
Total number of receptions	261	220	212
Total number of Adjudications	90	69	70
Total number of ACCT's opened	6	7	21
Total number of request complaints	85	102	87

4.3. The significant increase in the number of ACCTs opened is due to a deliberate policy decision by the Management to, where possible, keep women on ACCTs at the prison, giving them extra support and help to work through their problems and go on to be released, rather than face the setback of being returned to closed conditions. The Board supports this humane approach to ACCTs.

4.4. With a working number generally of around 125 any small numerical variation can appear as a much larger percentage. As a board, we view numbers and compare month by month and year by year to see if there are any trends or variations that should give us cause for concern. They are reported at all our monthly meetings

#### 5. Conclusion

Askham Grange by the nature of what it does is an institution of high complexity, catering for a population more accustomed to an imposed ordered discipline. Living in an open prison brings its own complications with self-discipline on the part of the residents an absolute necessity. The regime at Askham still proves to be supportive and caring for the women in its custody, we find that all departments at Askham Grange do excellent work with a clear focus on the decent and humane treatment of residents whilst they are at Askham and also in the preparation for their release. As a board we have received help and co-operation from all departments in the prosecution of our role.