



HMP BEDFORD

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

**ANNUAL REPORT
2011-2012**

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Section 2

THE STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prison Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

1. satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
2. inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
3. **report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.**

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

HMP Bedford Independent Monitoring Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity that encompasses and promotes interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds, including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age. The Board recognises that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cut across such social and cultural categories, as for example, mental health and literacy.

The Board integrates this approach to diversity within its recruitment and development practices, to increase its repertoire of skills and to promote awareness among its members of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within the prison.

All members of the IMB at HMP Bedford endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is accessible to everyone within the establishment, regardless of their background or social situation. The Board monitors the experiences and interactions between staff, prisoners and visitors, to establish that these are appropriately fair and without prejudice.

REPORTING PERIOD

1st July 2011 to 30th June 2012

Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Bedford is a Category B Local Prison taking both sentenced and remanded prisoners, mainly from courts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The operational capacity is 506 (324 being the Certified Normal Location) and up to 46 prisoners may be Young Adults. The roll has rarely reached full capacity but the length of stay remains fairly short, averaging 39 days. The exceptions are those who have specific needs and are therefore harder to place in 'training' prisons, notably life sentenced, vulnerable and disabled prisoners.

Parts of the prison have been on this town-centre site for more than 200 years, although there have been additions and improvements over the years. Work to change the use of some of the wings has been ongoing, but an anticipated upgrading of the heating system and the windows has had to be deferred.

Wings A/E, B and C radiate from a central hub and were built in the 1850s:

- A wing holds* 140 prisoners and has 44 single cells for high risk prisoners;
- B wing holds 78 prisoners and has a 4-man cell. Above ground (B2 to B4) this wing accommodates 'enhanced' prisoners and kitchen workers; underground, B1 is the Support and Separation Unit with 6 furnished and 2 unfurnished cells;
- C Wing has 108 places. Above ground, C2 and C3 constitute the First Night Centre with two 4-man cells, one of which may be used for vulnerable prisoners when the VP unit is full. The Listeners have a dedicated cell on C2. C4 remains normal location. Underground, C1 has become the Resettlement Unit.
- E wing, increased in capacity from 38 to 43 places, has become the Drug Recovery and Support Unit for prisoners who are intent on reducing their drug intake.

The following facilities are accommodated in separate buildings on the one tight site, within a perimeter wall that is somewhat compromised by the proximity of buildings on the outside:

- F wing was built in the 1800s and houses a 30-place Vulnerable Prisoner Unit;
- D wing was built in 1992 and houses a 100-prisoner Drug Treatment wing;
- The Healthcare Centre, built in 1992, houses an Inpatient Unit on the first floor comprising nine cells, a 4-bedded dormitory, a gated cell, a safer cell and an anti-ligature cell. Consulting rooms, treatment rooms and a pharmacy are on the ground floor;
- The gatehouse, built in 1992, houses some offices, a Visits Hall and the Reception suite;
- The Gym (ground floor) shares a building with Education and Library (1st floor);
- Maintenance workshops;
- Kitchens;
- Administration, with limited teaching workshops on the ground floor.

* Note: These figures are for Operational Capacity, thus maximum.

Contractors and Agencies delivering services to the prison

Ark Handling	Employability skills
Asda Magic Workshop	Employability skills
Bedford Borough Council	Library
Bedford College	NVQ1 vocational training
Bedford Primary Care Trust	Health care
CARAT	Drug team
Citizens' Advice Bureau	Finance and debt advice
F1 Training	NOMS Serco welfare-to-work project
Job Centre Plus	Benefits, community care grants and job searches and the Work Programme
Learn Direct	Courses
Luton Rights	Debt advice
Milton Keynes College	Education contractor
Miracle Church of God	Listening service and financial support
NACRO	Pre-release support in education, training and employment
Ormiston Trust	Manages the visits centre, crèche in visits hall, parenting programme and Story Book Dads
Prison Fellowship	Bible classes, weekly workshop
Samaritans	Training and support for Listeners and Insiders
Shannon Trust	Toe by Toe literacy scheme
St Mungo	Housing needs
Tribal	
Royal British Legion	Support for ex servicemen and their families in custody and on release
Central and Cecil Gypsy Roma Travellers	Support for the travelling community in custody and on release

Section 4

SUMMARY

4.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Bedford reports, in this document, on the significant issues arising from its monitoring of the prison during the twelve months from the beginning of July 2011 to the end of June 2012. The Board reports primarily by exception; it does not aim to give a synoptic picture of the prison, its workings and context. The Report does not mention minor issues discussed and resolved with the Governor and his staff during the year.
2. A prison is intrinsically difficult and stressful to run – incidents can develop at a moment's notice and without apparent warning; and a predominantly nineteenth century facility can seem physically unattractive and unsuited to modern norms. Nonetheless the senior management team leads what is, in the main, still, a dedicated, professional, cheerful, polite and respectful team, in running a busy prison – no easy task at the best of times, and these are not easy times.
3. The Board wrote last year of its unease at the shriveling of budgets for work with prisoners that is oriented towards their rehabilitation and successful resettlement in the community. Its protest is louder this year, as its fears have been piecemeal realised.
4. The most significant development this year, which was anticipated in the last Report but did not make it to the Executive Summary, concerns a worsening of the environment for prisoners due to an increase in incidents of serious bullying by staff members. It should be emphasized that the number of staff members implicated is very small – the significant majority of the staff are good at their difficult roles, and some are exceptional, but the Board takes such matters very seriously indeed for two principal reasons:
 - imprisonment is at best distinctly unpleasant, and for vulnerable individuals it can be made much worse if those with authority over them abuse their trust and pick upon them;
 - one of the principal purposes of imprisonment is to detain individuals who have behaved seriously antisocially, in order to rehabilitate them, for example by education and by offering them a positive role model - positive influences they may never before have encountered - with the intention of returning them to the community in such shape as they may stand some chance of leading law-abiding lives, therefore reducing the number of victims, and the spiraling costs (direct as well as opportunity costs) of antisocial behavior, to our society.
5. The Board is pleased to report that the Senior Management Team are also concerned by these apparently emergent tendencies and are determined to reverse the trend. But they have no authority over the much broader trends that have occasioned staff disgruntlement and alienation, that have in turn, arguably, contributed to the incidents of bullying. The Board sympathises deeply with the prison staff members who are suffering in a distinctly adverse and apparently ungrateful environment.

4.2 POINTS OF COMMENDATION AND CONCERN

The Board would like to commend the management and staff of HMP Bedford for the following specific points:

- *the improvements the temporary Education Manager has introduced (5.2)*
- *the extent to which hard-pressed medical and mental healthcare staff members continue to bother and to care, delivering impressively professional services (5.3)*
- *the commendable effort that has been put into working with the local Employers' Forum (5.5)*
- *that there are many good, and some exemplary officers, governors and civilian staff at HMP Bedford, whose consistently high standards the Board cannot praise enough (5.6)*
- *the officers assigned to the SSU on the good interaction that they have with prisoners assigned to their care (5.7)*
- *that the kitchen has run harmoniously during the year and has elicited few complaints (5.8)*
- *that plans have now been fulfilled to move the First Night Centre above ground (5.8)*
- *that trained Information and Guidance (IAG) enhanced prisoners now systematically give input at Induction (5.8)*
- *that the use of SIRs continues to increase and that they are acted upon appropriately (6.1)*
- *that the prison has handled the difficult matter of adjudications competently and with sensitivity (6.2)*
- *the professionalism shown by the staff who help prisoners who have been recalled (6.4)*
- *the kindness and efficiency of the staff who perform the tasks involved in planning a newly sentenced lifer's sentence (6.4)*
- *the Foreign Nationals Manager who has dealt successfully with some difficult cases (6.4)*
- *the chaplaincy, which is a cheerful well-run unit that supports all aspects of prison life in spite of the constraints upon it (6.5)*

The Board has raised the following specific points of concern:

- *the effects of certain difficulties besetting the Education Department but outside their control (5.2)*
- *if vocational training courses are to be maintained, the Board would like to see prisoners put on transfer-hold until they have completed the course (5.2)*
- *deep worry about the state of Healthcare, which is experiencing severe difficulties, in the effective absence of a Manager; it repeats that there remain too many men with mental health issues in prison who should be detained in specialised mental health institutions (5.3)*
- *it is not possible to "speak to the Governor" about worries in Healthcare, as Healthcare is not accountable to the Governor (5.3)*
- *in every case that the depressing stereotypes (concerning released prisoners slipping back into previous behaviours) prove true, prison has failed. The Board expresses its deep frustration that the budget priority oriented to turning these men's lives around,*

while they are amenable to influence in prison, is so small, restricting management choices severely (5.5)

- *attrition rates (in the panel of Listeners) remain a concern and the coverage of trained Listeners often falls short of guidelines (5.6)*
- *in its last Report, the Board recorded early indications of a concern about worsening staff/prisoner relations; this year has seen that concern harden - the Board has seen an increase in both the number and seriousness of formal and informal allegations, made by prisoners, of treatment by staff that falls below the standard expected (5.6)*
- *good prison officers are worth gold, and they deserve good working conditions, remuneration, recognition and continuous in-depth professional development; these are not the messages that are being communicated to them by recent developments (5.6)*
- *the diminutive budget (£2.10) allocated per prisoner per day to the purchase of food (5.8)*
- *investment in automated prisoner-access through "ATM" machines might deliver worthwhile benefits in management of the 'canteen' (5.8)*
- *the effectiveness of those agencies that participate in Induction sessions is hampered by prisoner non-attendance at scheduled interviews (5.8)*
- *the threefold increase in the number of applications concerning grievances against staff; the fourfold increase in applications concerning grievances against other prisoners; and the significant increase (from 3 to 16) in the number of applications relating to Diversity (7.3)*

4.3 PARTICULAR ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

From the Minister

6. As the senior officer in Her Majesty's Government, responsible for prisons and the contribution or impact of prisons spending and policy on society and the economy, immediately and over time, the Board asks: is the policy of squeezing this sector so rigorously (see particularly Sections 5.5 and 5.6) a responsible one, when seen from the long view, even given the ambient state of economic stringency?

From NOMS

7. Healthcare - does NOMS acknowledge that the frequent changes in contractual responsibility for and management of Healthcare Services within HMP Bedford is having a detrimental impact on the quality of care provided?
8. Morale - does NOMS recognise the significant undermining of general staff morale and diversion of attention caused by the collective pressures of "Fair & Sustainable" (widely interpreted as neither), pension changes, apparently endless budget challenges and 'market testing'; and does NOMS appreciate the extent of the detrimental effect this is having on the staff/prisoner relations, and thus, in turn, on the mission to rehabilitate?

4.4 OVERALL JUDGEMENT

9. The Board's overall judgment is much less comfortable than last year, largely because the economic and political climate within which this, and all other English prisons operate, has become so hostile to staff development and professional respect, on the one hand; and towards the rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders, on the other. The Board feels that these are short-sighted economies and policies, that will come, in time, to cost society dearly. The prison however, appears to be in good hands.

Section 5

PRINCIPAL FOCI OF MONITORING IN THE PRISON

5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

10. An Equalities Policy was produced in March. The Bedford Equality Action Team met every month, though the meeting was not always well attended. A well-equipped disabled cell on the main wings that can take two disabled prisoners, completed last year, has been under-used this year.
11. Focus groups were held regularly for the following categories of prisoner with 'protected characteristics': older prisoners, disabled prisoners, gypsy and traveller prisoners. There are support groups for gay prisoners and Islamic prisoners held in partnership with the Chaplaincy team. PEEPs and Care Plans have been developed for specific groups of prisoners - those with hearing, sight or mobility issues, for example. A Diversity Orderly is always present at Induction, and Diversity Reps attend the BEAT meeting when they are available, though the high churn rate characteristic of a local prison makes it difficult to maintain a team of trained prisoner representatives. The Board will monitor the change from the Discrimination Incident Reporting Form, to dealing with equality issues through the complaints system, to ensure that prisoners who have equality issues feel confident that they will be dealt with fairly under the new system.

5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS, THE LIBRARY AND WORKSHOPS

12. The Education function in the prison has undergone a period of challenge, accentuated by the resignation of the manager in July 2011. The temporary appointment of the deputy education manager from HMP Wellingborough represented a turning point. The Board welcomes the improvements she has introduced, and the renewed spirit of commitment and enthusiasm throughout the department.
13. Of the many new initiatives, the Board is particularly impressed with the introduction of a "Welcome to Education" course, which has resulted in improved assessments of individual educational needs, courses better targeted to maximise effectiveness, and a speeding up of the induction process. The Board welcomes the department's response to student feedback by modifying the delivery of literacy and numeracy classes. Several courses have been replaced by revised or updated modules and now benefit from recognised qualifications. "Action Task Force" has been introduced, whereby officers and prison staff visit the wings to promote education and motivate prisoners to attend classes.
14. The cancellation of courses due to staff sickness, continued to affect the delivery of training. However, the shortfall was made up by increased provision of other courses, covering, for example: literacy and numeracy, personal and social development, employability, and courses specific to prisoners on the drug dependency wing. Significant effort has been put into provision for vulnerable prisoners. A vital part in communicating a positive culture has been the engagement of committed wing staff. Courses in mental health awareness, hidden disabilities recognition and ACCT awareness have been made possible by the provision of staff training and development.
15. The department has achieved its target of 11,000 hours of training delivered. 66 percent of prisoners achieved pass marks (cf. 68% last year), which exceeds the Skills Funding Agency's requirement. The Board considers achievement of a Percentage Success Rate in the high 60s to be commendable in the circumstances of an extremely tight budget, and clients who are generally unfamiliar with formal educational discipline.
16. The library continues to provide a professional service, in spite of budget cuts. 50 – 60% of eligible prisoners used the Library. The responsiveness of the Foreign National section to prisoner

numbers is impressive, with funds spent on Vietnamese and Russian publications. Missing books continue to represent a drain on the budget, despite great efforts to track them down.

17. There have been difficulties with the transfer of prisoners from their location on the wings to education and the library: problems of prison officer shortages; of sequencing the various activities prisoners need to engage in; and breakdowns in communication on the wings. Sessions can be cancelled due to a lack of staff; prisoners can be taken to a class that has been cancelled; and prisoners are often asked to make decisions about whether they wish to attend education / library, use the gym, or have a shower. More often than not, educational activity becomes the casualty! The Board notes the effects of these difficulties with concern, but has been led to understand that the Senior Management Team has recognised them and is taking steps to develop more sophisticated scheduling as well as wing staff encouraging inmates to take up the available places.
18. Relocation of the bricklaying and painting & decorating workshops has caused unavoidable disruption to the provision of training, but the resulting accommodation is much improved. Courses offered in the workshops are often not completed and thus qualifications not obtained. This must be a great frustration to prisoners as there is no guarantee that their destination prison will be able to finish the course. The provision of meaningful training in an environment characterised by a fast churn of prisoners is far from straightforward, but these expensive courses are either worth taking seriously, or they are not. If they are to be maintained, the Board would like to see prisoners, who have been accepted for a workshop course, put on transfer-hold until they have completed the course.
19. The contract for the provision of education has been retendered and the successful supplier, A4e, is expected to take up the role on 31 October 2012.

5.3 HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUGS

20. The Board is deeply worried about the state of Healthcare, which is experiencing severe difficulties arising from the introduction of so many changes. It is concerned that the detail of the changes is ill-considered, when seen from the users' point of view; and that they are being introduced faster than new behaviours can successfully embed and consolidate, especially in the effective absence of a Manager. Evidence that leads the Board to these depressing conclusions, includes:
 - a. **Changes in accountability** The Healthcare contract has again been re-tendered with the result that the South Essex Partnership Trust will, from September 2013, assume control, and thus responsibility for the existing staff. The staff members are understandably anxious and morale seems to be low; many are seeking new opportunities within the NHS.
 - b. **Changes in management** The unit has had a competent manager for a year or so, but he has now been so completely redirected to address problems elsewhere, that he has only rarely been in the prison.
 - c. **New procedures** New procedures have been so rapidly introduced that looking after the needs of patients seems to be increasingly subjugated to a culture of form-filling.
21. The above concerns have principally to do with the contractual context in which the unit is managed; the Board remains impressed by the extent to which hard-pressed staff members continue to bother and to care, delivering impressively professional services despite the environment. The Board has nothing but praise for the Mental Health Team, whose input is ever more in demand, and which has performed flawlessly. However the Board repeats its message that there remain many men in prison who would benefit from care in a dedicated unit.
22. The Board is concerned that it is not possible to "speak to the Governor" about worries in Healthcare, as Healthcare is not accountable to the Governor.

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

23. The Board will place emphasis on this area in the forthcoming year.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT

24. Commendable effort has again been put into working with the local Employers' Forum to provide training and employment. Thus ASDA (retail), Groupama (insurance) and Ark Handling (logistics and packing) have all continued to support prisoners, running short courses in the prison to assist them to prepare for employment. The Virtual Campus has now been implemented; but Job Club with Job Centre Plus has faltered for lack of staff and finance. There has been no funding available for continuing the successful intervention by the Princes Trust to offer a Level 1 Coaching Certificate in football for 12 prisoners, notwithstanding the fact that HMP Bedford is well suited to such short interventions.
25. All the resettlement agencies in the prison, together with Health Care representatives, attend Discharge Board meetings with prisoners. Resettlement figures show that targets were generally met: 90% of released prisoners had accommodation to go to, 34% had jobs and 13% had been helped to start educational courses.
26. Such targets however mask the reality of the situation. While the Board acknowledges that the primary function of HMP Bedford is to serve the local courts and move convicted prisoners to prisons equipped for retraining, it is concerned that many prisoners come to the end of sentence and are released back into the community from HMP Bedford without adequate pre-release training and preparation or post-release support. The Board expresses its deep frustration that the budget restricts the priority management can devote to turning these men's lives around, while they are available to influence in prison.

Organisation, Categorisation and Allocation (OCA)

27. Following NOMS policy, HMP Bedford does not offer proper sentence-planning for prisoners sentenced to less than 12 months. Instead, immediate needs are assessed on arrival and reviewed before discharge. The allocation and sequencing of prisoners' moves within the estate are driven, in principle, by availability of suitable courses and proximity to home.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

28. There were 251 self-harm incidents, a 5% increase on the previous year. The Senior Management Team continued to focus on keeping prisoners safe, and staff continued to adhere closely to ACCT processes, with a strong degree of oversight from the Safer Custody Manager and the Safer Custody Group. Monthly Safer Custody meetings have been well attended.
29. There was one death in custody. The Board was informed promptly and the prison's response was appropriately sensitive and supportive to all concerned. The Ombudsman's report identified certain shortcomings relating to the care of this prisoner in the short period between his arrival and his death, in response to which a clear action plan was set and implemented. The Coroner's Inquest has not yet been held, though there has been a welcome improvement in the speed with which such inquests have generally been conducted.
30. There were 722 violent incidents reported during the year, a 22% year-on-year increase. This may in part be due to the broader redefinition of a 'violent incident', and to the changing population within the prison. There has been a focus on Violence Reduction refresher training and the Board's perception is that staff members are becoming more comfortable with the VR reporting process and are using it more readily – an impression that is backed up by a recent increase in the use of the Incentives and Earned Privileges system to degrade a higher number of troublesome prisoners to "Basic".
31. The panel of Listeners continues to be actively used in HMP Bedford. Attrition rates remain a concern and the coverage of trained Listeners often falls short of guidelines, despite a further ramping up of initial training sessions offered by Samaritans volunteers. All attempts to improve this key weakness have proved fruitless so far; a new approach is needed. The Board is aware of the appreciation shown by other prisons when fully trained Listeners are transferred.

Staff/prisoner relations

32. In its last Report, the Board recorded early indications of a concern about worsening staff/prisoner relations under two headings: 'Contact between prisoners and their support networks', and 'Engagement between prisoners and staff'. This year has seen that concern harden. The Board has seen an increase in both the number and seriousness of formal and informal allegations, made by prisoners, of treatment by staff that falls below the standard expected.
33. The Board has discussed its concerns on a number of occasions with the Governor. He has acknowledged that there is indeed an issue, and has set clear goals in the establishment's Delivery Plan for 2012/13 to focus on positive staff engagement with prisoners, through staff development and training, and the Staff Performance and Development Record process. The Board has been most appreciative of the Governor's candour in discussing such sensitive issues, including his acknowledgement that these vital staff development functions have fallen into some degree of disuse. The Board shares his alarm and sense of urgency, feeling that satisfactory progress in this important area depends absolutely on the quality of leadership at every management level, on the integrity with which the decency agenda is promoted by those leaders, and on the quality and consistency of the management systems supporting the policies. The Governor is reporting progress on the Delivery Plan at monthly IMB Board meetings.
34. The Board can only surmise what may be causing this cultural deterioration: this threat to 'decency'. Arguably the collective pressures of "Fair & Sustainable" (widely interpreted as neither), pension changes, apparently endless budget challenges, 'market testing', and senior management turnover have all contributed. The Board inclines to the view that cumulative erosion of staff morale has resulted in the negative impact it has observed on staff/prisoner relations. Officers who have become angry and disaffected may not be so keen to put in the extra effort to engage positively with what is a challenging group of clients. Understandable as this may be, it cannot be tolerated – the situation has to be managed. The consequences of a diminished positive role model from the staff may turn out to be dire in future years, as the impacts on reoffending rates start to be felt.
35. The Board cannot say clearly or forcefully enough that the role of a prison officer, often challenging and dangerous, is one that can achieve immense social benefits if it is conducted with humanity and deeply-felt empathy and understanding of the situation and prospects of their charges. If the job is done crudely and roughly, the result will certainly be further damage to prisoners, increased re-offending, more victims and a greater cost to society. Good prison officers are worth gold, and they deserve good working conditions, remuneration, recognition and continuous in-depth professional development. These are not the messages that are being communicated to them by recent developments.
36. This said, there are many good, and some exemplary officers, governors and civilian staff at HMP Bedford, whose consistently high standards the Board cannot praise enough.

Measuring the Quality of Prison Life

37. The MQPL survey conducted in June 2011 produced disappointing results when viewed both against historic MQPL results for HMP Bedford, but also against concurrent results for a relevant peer group of establishments: Bedford seemed to score less well both relatively and absolutely. There were certain mitigating factors acting at the time, which might partially explain the slippage, but to their credit the Senior Management team have not relied on these for explanation. On the contrary they have taken the implied criticisms head-on and have determined to respond appropriately. A working group has developed a comprehensive action plan; progress with this plan is regularly discussed at senior management meetings. The Board will also be monitoring the implementation of this action plan, closely related, as it is, to the issues of staff/prisoner engagement discussed above.

5.7 SEGREGATION, SEPARATION AND CARE, CLOSE SUPERVISION

38. The Board compliments the officers assigned to the SSU on the good interaction that they have with prisoners assigned to their care, encouraging better behaviour and engagement with the facilities on offer.
39. Members of the Board endeavour to attend all GOOD reviews as well as a sample of adjudications and speak to inmates in the unit whenever they are there.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

The physical environment

40. Members of the Board had hoped, following last year's successful experiment with 'dining out'; that there would be more of it this year. While this has not happened, baguette meals may now be taken at the dining tables. This leaves unresolved the issue that some prisoners are still dining in their cells close to uncovered lavatories.
41. Poor ventilation features as a constant concern in the Visits Hall. This large room frequently overheats causing both children and adults to become stressed. The Board would like to see air conditioning installed in the Visits Hall.

Catering

42. The kitchen has run harmoniously during the year and has elicited few complaints. Nonetheless, the Board deplores the diminutive budget (£2.10) allocated per prisoner per day. Kitchen staff made great efforts for large festival meals at Eid, Easter and Christmas, that were greatly appreciated.

Canteen

43. The weekly Canteen is a complex operation, given the churn, but it has generated few complaints this year. The Board believes that investment in automation with prisoner-access through "ATM" machines, as used in some private prisons, might deliver worthwhile benefits (saving in staff time allowing greater attention to prisoners' needs; and greater prisoner satisfaction).

First Night Centre

44. Until May 2012 the First Night Centre was located underground (C1) with only 7 double cells and 1 single. The Board has long considered this to be an unsuitable location for this vulnerable group of prisoners but is pleased that plans have now been fulfilled to move the FNC above ground.

Induction

45. The induction programme has been redesigned in an attempt more effectively to meet the changing needs of the transient population. Reception and Induction staff work well together and are specially trained for this role.
46. The Board is pleased that, in response to critical comments made in the last HMI Inspection Report, there is now more input from trained Information and Guidance (IAG) enhanced prisoners covering prison life and expectations.
47. These agencies meet monthly to review and coordinate their work with Prison Staff involved in education, training and resettlement in the Quality and Improvement Group (QUIG) chaired by the Head of Learning and Skills and attended by the Board.
48. The Board is concerned that the effectiveness of these agencies is hampered by prisoner non-attendance at scheduled interviews.

Section 6

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PRISON THAT THE IMB WISHES TO REMARK UPON

6.1 SECURITY

49. Security remains the single highest priority within the prison. The Board is pleased that SIR numbers continue to increase and that they are acted upon appropriately. Close links with the police intelligence officer shows results and it is hoped to increase the staffing level in this function in the near future. Security meetings now follow the National Intelligence Model, ensuring that security needs are being anticipated and resources are used appropriately. Staff members involved are conscientious and diligent, meeting the demands of the information obtained.

6.2 DISCIPLINE

50. Board members have regularly monitored Adjudication Hearings. The papers relating to Adjudications in the period 1st July 2011 to 30th June 2012 have been reviewed:
51. There were some 1043 adjudications in this period, the prime offences being:
- | | |
|--|-----|
| a. Possession of an unauthorised object: | 257 |
| b. Refusing an order: | 173 |
| c. Administering a controlled drug: | 135 |
| d. Threatening / abusive behavior: | 124 |
| e. Destroying / damaging part or property of prison: | 100 |
| f. Fighting: | 86 |
| g. Committing any assault: | 71 |
52. There were no adjudications relating to 'racially aggravated destroying / damaging', and 5 cases of 'racially threatening / abusive behavior'. There were 6 dirty protests. A total of 44 cases were referred to a District Judge and 28 to the Police.
53. The adjudications were heard by eight different governors and there was substantial consistency between them as to penalty; the penalties (including those imposed by the Independent Adjudicator) appeared proportionate to the charges and circumstances.
54. The Board considers that the prison has handled these difficult matters competently and with sensitivity. It will be paying an increased attention to the growing use of the IEP system for the encouragement and maintenance of good discipline.

6.3 RECEPTION

55. Reception staff interviewed 7670 arriving prisoners and handled 15940 movements in and out over the course of the year – a busy workload. Court transfers typically numbered around 20 on a weekday. Reception officers dealt sensitively with newcomers; took time to explain procedures and answer questions. More intensive use of video link facilities is being considered now that both video suites are open. This should reduce the number of court appearances and transport costs. Building works, designed to upgrade the limited Reception area, are still ongoing. Minor changes have helped to ease congestion at busy times and afforded more privacy to incoming prisoners.

6.4 CATEGORIES OF PRISONER PRESENTING SPECIFIC ISSUES

Remand prisoners

56. Ideally remand prisoners should not share a cell with a sentenced prisoner and wherever possible they do not. However in the small number of cases where it is necessary the remand prisoner is always asked if they object and changes are made. The Board will be monitoring specifically to determine whether the appropriate demarcations are being respected.

Recalled prisoners and Parole

57. The recall system seems to generate a considerable amount of bad feeling, anger and despair. Just as many prisoners report feeling that they are being set up to fail (Section 5.5) when released at the end of their sentence with inadequate resources and skills, so too many recalled prisoners report feeling, when asked about their experience of release on license, that their recall was as a result of a random display of power by the probation officer, which may result in their serving many more years behind bars. Reading their license conditions it is often hard to imagine how they could enjoy their freedom without contravening the conditions and being recalled, often for what was little more than a technical (not a substantial) infringement. The Board receives few complaints about release and recall, but the bitterness about the perceived unfairness of the system comes out clearly when talking in some depth to such men. They also tend to feel profoundly disempowered and un-informed about the processes that will determine their future and their options for influencing those processes. It makes a huge difference to them when an officer from the OMU goes onto the wings to discuss such matters with them.
58. The Board is impressed with the professionalism, attention to detail, rate of work and empathy shown by the staff who help prisoners establish their case for discretionary release and who help those who have been recalled, with a new sentence plan and a long-term prison to go to. But even so, the quality of dialogue between the staff and the prisoners could be improved, perhaps in practice only by increasing the staffing assigned to this work. Again the return for effective investment in such roles would be expected to be reduced reoffending rates.

Lifers and prisoners serving indeterminate sentences

59. The prison has a major administrative task in relation to sentenced lifers and ISPs, which involves staging the MALRAP meeting during which all the relevant agencies gather to run through and record in a consistent way everything that is known about the prisoner so that there is a complete file available in several years time to support his application for release. The prisoner's sentence plan is completed and agreed with him, and a place is found for him in a dispersal prison. Thus sentenced lifers might spend several months at Bedford, until the prescribed processes have been completed and he is ready to be moved. The Board compliments the staff who perform these tasks as kindly and efficiently as their stacked desks will allow.

Foreign National Prisoners

60. The Foreign Nationals Manager has dealt successfully with some difficult cases, and her work was justifiably praised in a recent HMIP Inspection Report. The number of foreign national prisoners who have been detained past their sentence expiry date has been reduced. In the forthcoming year, with the introduction of the "pod system" throughout the prison's prisoner administration, foreign national prisoners will be managed by a team. The Board will monitor closely the way the new 'pod' system copes with the many difficulties experienced by the various categories of vulnerable prisoners.

6.5 CHAPLAINCY

61. The full time coordinating chaplain has now been in post for a little more than a year. A total of 43 people work in the multi-faith Chaplaincy team: 2 full time, 13 sessional chaplains, and the rest volunteers (e.g. prison visitors and bereavement counsellors). There is concern that the current allocation of ten hours of administrative assistance is under threat. Members of the team are frequently to be found on the wings with prisoners, offering pastoral as well as religious care. They are highly regarded by those they help.

62. The Board is pleased to report that the chaplaincy is a cheerful well-run unit that supports all aspects of prison life in spite of the constraints upon it.

6.6 CONTACT BETWEEN PRISONERS AND THEIR SUPPORT NETWORKS

63. The e-mail system of booking visits has settled into a smooth operation. Wednesday morning visits are particularly popular with children of school age. Weekend sessions had in the past enabled some prisoners to receive two visits; this has been reduced to one visit per prisoner in line with Prison Service Orders. The Comments/Complaints system introduced this year for visitors enables their concerns to be addressed by the Advisory Committee which meets quarterly in the Visitors' Centre with the IMB represented.

6.7 THE GYMNASIUM

64. A number of staffing problems and the requirement that the PE Manager acquire additional areas of responsibility, have inevitably occasioned a reduction in effectiveness in the PE department. There are currently only two members of staff on duty at any one time. Course delivery, qualifications achieved, and team games that make use of the outdoor facility have all suffered. However, the department has continued to design and deliver a number of new initiatives. The Board is impressed, for example, with "Tough Talk", co-hosted with the Chaplaincy, where prisoners are introduced to a group of body-building enthusiasts, with difficult and often criminal backgrounds, who have found religion to be an aid in turning their lives around.

Section 7

SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE BY THE IMB

65. It has been a busy year for the Board but three members deservedly completed their probationary year and complemented the Board with their enthusiasm and fresh eyes. Sadly we have had several periods of sick leave and I am grateful for the extra time that some members have given to the work of the Board. The Board held a very useful peer-group review, and two members attended the National Conference. All three new members attended the Foundation Course and other members have attended study days relevant to the role of the Board. As my term of office as Chair of the Board draws to a close, I would like to thank both members of the Board, and all staff within the prison, who have helped to make my job easier over the last three years.
66. Members of the Board express sympathy to the family of the inmate who died in custody in December 2011.

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period	9
Number of new members joining during the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving during the reporting period	2
Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	442
Total number of applications received	337
Total number of segregation reviews attended	61

Applications within the prison's own system

67. There were 1581 applications under the Prison Complaint and Request Procedure. As with applications to the Board, the greatest number (233) related to Healthcare. Most applications were resolved at stage one of the procedure.

Applications to the Board

68. There were 337 applications to the Board. Of most concern is the increase in the number of applications concerning grievances against staff, and the increase in applications concerning grievances against other prisoners. Also of concern is the significant increase (from 3 to 16) in the number of applications relating to Diversity. As in previous years too many applications related to prisoners' healthcare: 55, a small decrease compared with 65 last year.
69. Applications in respect of prisoners' property have also remained high: 55 (excluding those relating to canteen which is counted within the group "Property"). Unlike previous years, when most of these concerned problems in the forwarding of property on transfer from another prison, the majority of applications concern property disputes at HMP Bedford.
70. There has been a drop in the number of applications concerning cell quality, although the number regarding wing/cell allocation has increased. Applications in connection with the IEP system have increased markedly. Applications relating to prisoners' Mail/PIN Phones (24 of the complaints grouped under "Family & Visits") have now significantly reduced following two consecutive years of increase. There have been few applications relating to catering (5), a reduction of 37%.

Section 8

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork – replacement for F2052SH
BEAT	Bedford Equality Action Team
CARATS	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Through-care Scheme – drug & alcohol team
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
IAG*	Information and Guidance
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges – Prisoners can be on Basic, Standard or Enhanced
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IRC	Immigrant Removal Centre
ISP	Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners
MALRAP	Multi Agency Lifer Risk Assessment Panel
MQPL	Measuring the Quality of Prison Life
NOMS	National Offender Manager Service – amalgamation of the Prison & Probation Services
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PEEP	Prisoner Emergency Evacuation Plan
SIR	Security Information Report
SSU	Separation and Support Unit
VPU	Vulnerable Prisoner Unit
VR	Violence Reduction