



**HMP BEDFORD**

**INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2013 -2014**

**28<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

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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, do 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 2013 to 30th June 2014

## **Section 3**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

HMP Bedford is a Category B Prison with an Operational Capacity of 514 (324 being the Certified Normal Location, and up to 46 prisoners may be Young Adults, aged 18 to 21). The roll has rarely reached full capacity. A busy "local" prison HMP Bedford takes both sentenced and remanded prisoners, mainly from courts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The prison's Reception processed 3357 new admissions during the year and the length of stay was consequently fairly short, averaging 39 days. The exceptions to this short-stay pattern are those who have specific needs and are therefore harder to place in 'training' prisons, notably life sentenced, vulnerable and disabled prisoners.

There has been a prison on this town-centre site for more than 200 years, although there have been additions and improvements over the years. The use to which the wings have been put has changed time and time again over the years. Regrettably, a much needed upgrading of the heating system and the windows has been deferred.

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

- A wing holds\* 146 prisoners and has 39 single cells for high risk prisoners;
- B wing holds 80 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 107 places. Above ground, C2 and C3 constitute the First Night Centre consisting predominantly of 2-man cells, but including also two 4-man cells, one of which may be used for vulnerable prisoners when the VP unit is full. Listeners have a dedicated cell on C2. C4 remains normal location. Underground, C1 is the Resettlement Unit, accommodating what are effectively super-enhanced prisoners.
- E wing, with 41 places, is 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 congested site, within a perimeter wall that is somewhat compromised by the proximity of buildings on the outside:

- F wing was built in the 1850s 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 the Library (1<sup>st</sup> 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**

A4E	Education contractor
Ark Handling	Employability skills out in the community
Asda Magic Workshop	Employability skills
Bedford Borough Council	Library
Bedford College	NVQ1&2 Vocational training
Bedford Primary Care Trust	Health Care
Burner Systems Ltd	Contract for assembly in F Wing and elsewhere

Westminster Drug Project	Drug Team
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Support Group	Support for travelling communities in custody release
Citizens' Advice Bureau Bedford	Finance and debt advice
CRSP	Support for prisoners on leaving custody
F1 Training	NOMS Serco welfare-to-work project
Job Centre Plus	Benefits, community care grants, job searches and the Work Programme
Luton Rights	Debt advice
NACRO	Pre-release support in education, training and employment
Ormiston Trust	Managing the Visitor Centre, creche in Visits Hall, Parenting Programme and Story Book Dads
Prison Fellowship	Bible classes, weekly workshop
Bedford Samaritans	Selection training and support for Listeners
Shannon Trust	Toe by Toe literacy scheme
St. Mungo	Housing needs
National Careers Service	Assessment of educational skills and training
Royal British Legion	Support for ex-servicemen and their families in custody and after release
SSAFA	Support for ex-servicemen and families

## **Section 4**

### **SUMMARY**

#### **4.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The key themes of the year have been increasing levels of overcrowding for the entire reporting period and short-staffing:

- The impact of overcrowding is evidenced by many detailed dysfunctions, for example the diversion of new prisoners away from the First Night Centre; difficulty ensuring that prisoners on E wing are committed to abstaining from drugs; prisoners being accommodated on the Healthcare wing who are not sick; lack of purposeful activity for too many prisoners; vulnerable prisoners located on main wings. The prison has been required to house some much more disruptive prisoners during the reporting year than in recent times.
- Short-staffing means that prisoners are locked up for longer periods; prisoners miss Healthcare and Education appointments and fail to arrive at activities; AstroTurf is never used as there are insufficient gym staff; the Library no longer has a librarian; OSGs now run the mail and PIN phones; officers don't have time to manage minor issues on the wings. The regime has taken some blows and is still shrinking, which has a necessarily negative impact on prisoner calmness and on progress towards rehabilitation.

On the positive side, it would seem that these privations have not impacted as negatively as they could have done, on the prison or its management's projection of legitimacy. The governors and officers use of their power is still seen as legitimate, perhaps because the prisoners blame the government for the difficulties rather than local management.

The burden of maintaining a truly decent environment for prisoners – an essential pre-requisite for making any progress towards rehabilitation - lies, as much now as it has ever done in the past, on each and every prison officer, in whatever role they may be allocated day to day, responding to each and every provocation firmly but compassionately. As prisons become more 'lively' with the increasing overcrowding and associated pruning of the regime, it is more and more important to maintain these standards of decent behavior and intercourse.

A remarkable feature of HMP Bedford is that staff members at every level, led clearly in this direction by their senior management, seem to be prepared to work in this way, generating a generally humane environment with a relatively clear and moral purpose.

While the Board protest loudly at the lamentably stringent budgetary provision, which limits severely the attention that can be paid to elements of the regime that will have an influence on resettlement and reducing recidivism; and it harps on about details; it is content to argue that HMP Bedford deserves the reputation it seems to have in some quarters, as a 'good prison'. If this is true, then it is entirely due to the attitude and humanity of the staff, and their readiness to go the extra mile - again and again.

## 4.2 POINTS OF COMMENDATION AND CONCERN

### The Board commends the management and staff on the following points:

- a. The level of support, care, and attention to detail given to mentally ill prisoners. (14)
- b. Efforts directed at creation of new contacts within the local Community in pursuit of training and work for prisoners. (23)
- c. OMU staff members evidence care in the casework for individual prisoners, and a new awareness of the importance of visiting prisoners on the wings to keep them assured that their processes are being actively progressed. (26)
- d. The impressive work of the chaplaincy team in working on a community theme, and bringing in external stimuli. (28)
- e. The Safer Custody team functions with impressive professionalism under the influence of a governor who fosters an attentive ethos. (30)
- f. The re-launch of the personal officer scheme has been a welcome means of encouraging positive engagement between officers and prisoners. (41)
- g. The ambient culture in the prison encourages and celebrates a considerate and empathetic attitude to prisoners, even though some prisoners can exhibit challenging coping mechanisms. (43)
- h. The care and patience the staff members assigned to the SSU show in supervising some very recalcitrant prisoners. (51)
- i. Food quality and quantity appear to be adequate, despite the disgracefully low budget. (63)
- j. The senior staff members seem admirably ready to learn from suggestions and from their mistakes. This trait contributes to the general smooth running of the facility, despite the limitations placed upon them by reduced resources, the prison's role and cramped antiquity. (87)
- k. The senior Governors seem to be prepared consistently to promote decency. This feature alone is probably the main reason why the prison gives little cause for alarm (cf. concern, see the next section). (89)

### The Board raises the following points of concern:

- A. The number of time-expired Foreign National prisoners awaiting deportation. (2)
- B. The fluctuation of attendance numbers in Education. (4)
- C. The "Virtual Campus" IT system, which gives prisoners access to community education and employment opportunities, and still has not yet been fully implemented. (5)
- D. Provision of a library service has been increasingly problematic. (7)
- E. The management structure of Healthcare is again in flux. (9)
- F. It seems to take little in the way of unexpected circumstances to disrupt the regular flow of prisoners to their Healthcare appointments and back to their cells. (10)
- G. The use of the Healthcare wing to buffer peaks of overcrowding. (12)
- H. Prison, as currently staffed, is not the best environment for resolving the problems of prisoners with mental health issues. (14)
- I. The small and isolated E Wing, a precious and rare commodity in the prison, could be used for a purpose that the Board would judge to be more viable in the circumstances in which HMP Bedford operates, and more important in providing care – as a First Night Centre – rather than as a Drug Recovery wing. (17)

- J. The Board is continuously worried about the apparent ease with which groups of prisoners manage to achieve a supply of drugs in prison. (18)
- K. The prison has found it difficult to sustain contracts with outside companies that provide work for prisoners; work that has anyway been mundane and thus unlikely to stimulate much in the way of personal development and rehabilitation. It has also not been sufficient in volume to occupy more than a small proportion of the prisoner population. (20)
- L. The government's policy of 'full employment of prisoners', will be challenging to implement at HMP Bedford due to systemic limitations. (22)
- M. There is no available evaluation of the efficacy of resettlement services. (29)
- N. Healthcare representatives still seem to have difficulty attending Safer Custody meetings and GOOD Reviews. (31)
- O. Despite the attention being paid to prisoner safety, the data collected show more than a doubling in the incidence of both self-harm and violence. (32)
- P. The difficulty of maintaining the Personal Officer Scheme at current staffing levels in the high-churn environment that is inevitable at HMP Bedford. (41)
- Q. The risk of a surrender of power from officers to prisoners, as staffing levels are reduced; inexperienced officers are introduced; regimes are pared down; overcrowding is increased and prisons become more tense. (42)
- R. Seriously difficult prisoners cause upheaval throughout the system, negatively impacting both the individuals themselves and hapless other prisoners. (46)
- S. The lack of constructive ways for segregated prisoners to use time in the SSU. (47)
- T. The subterranean and claustrophobic location of the SSU. (49)
- U. The Astroturf that is still rarely used (either for prisoner exercise or for football) except by staff members in their lunch break. (58)
- V. Prisoners' complaint about having their hot meal at lunchtime and only a light cold meal, usually filled baguettes or baked potatoes for dinner. (60)
- W. The centralised contract for the supply of virtually all food, which eliminates the possibility of local sourcing. (63)
- X. The lack of a First Night Centre worthy of the name. (79)
- Y. Inconsistency in the approach taken by Governors towards GOOD reviews and adjudications. (81)
- Z. The entry-level IEP scheme, unloved by officers and prisoners alike. (82)
- AA. The variability on the quality of report writing by officers in the OMU and elsewhere. (84)
- BB. The variable quality of responses (in time and content) to prisoners' complaints. (84)

### 4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MINISTER

The Board recommends that the Minister:

- remove the entry-level IEP grade as it has had no positive impact on the behavior of prisoners and is counter-productive;
- influence the sentencing guidelines such that fewer convictions result in prison sentences;
- provide sufficient prison places such that HMP Bedford can operate at its 'certified normal accommodation' level. Overcrowding adversely impacts every aspect of prison life and should not be seen as standard practice;
- ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to allow a normal regime to operate with prisoners spending sufficient time out of their cells;
- procure that more specialist places be made available in appropriately equipped jails, so that difficult prisoners get the treatment they need in a timely fashion and the average prisoner is left in peace;
- halt the trend towards centralisation within NOMS that is progressively reducing the autonomy of the governing governor. The centralisation of decision-making can also deliver a centralisation of error-making. It also risks making a career in the prison service less appealing.

### 4.3 QUESTIONS AND REMARKS FOR NOMS

The Board asks NOMS to respond to each of the points of concern, and perhaps also to the points of commendation. Particularly, because it feels they ought to be tractable, the Board hopes that NOMS will mandate change in the following two areas:

- the IT provision is a disgrace, holds the whole system back in important ways and does surely not represent value for money. Wholesale modern thinking and equipment is merited and badly needed, to support:
  - effective and efficient management and administration, and
  - prisoners (in-cell IT could transform prisoners' access to educational resources, for example, and thus play a part in transforming the effectiveness of time spent increasingly behind bars).
- The Board believes that prisoners would be better served by the provision of locally sourced food. Could NOMS permit some or all of the food budget to be spent on local produce?

#### 4.4 CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN THE BOARD'S 2012-13 REPORT

##### Points of Concern taken from the Board's 2012-2013 Report

##### Commentary

the significant delay between a learner's achievement of the criteria in the new qualifications, and the receipt by the prison of award certificates, means that prisoners may already have moved on

this may have been resolved

a great deal more would need to be done, including significant budget shifts, to secure purposeful employment for the majority of prisoners in Bedford for the large part of the day – an ambition that would surely be worthwhile from the perspective of rehabilitation

this is still as much of a problem as it was

timely supply of suitable orderlies to work in the Library and elsewhere seems still to be problematic

this problem has assumed a new form

the Board remains watchful concerning whether leaner ways of working, driven by constant pressure on prison budgets, will or will not affect front-line services, believing that efforts at rehabilitation, including notably education, are already massively underfunded compared with the real need

more prisoners and reduced funding has made this worse

the location of the segregation unit in HMP Bedford is subterranean, providing a poor working and living environment for both staff and prisoners, as the Board has remarked in its reports for many years

this is as bad as ever

the Board would like to see clearer evidence that the prison is doing its utmost to install more phones, and to make their use by prisoners (especially perhaps by those at the bottom of the 'pecking order') non-stressful and routine

no new phones have been installed and the existing phones are frequently out of order

the Canteen service is disappointing, given its importance to prisoners. More effort should be invested in making its operation foolproof

Canteen arrived late on one occasion but there have been few complaints from prisoners

the Board notes the considerable age of much of the infrastructure, and the limitations that the cramped space imposes on the SMT's ability to provide adequate facilities for the many needs of this diverse population

converting single cells to double cells won't help this

the Board is concerned that the old exercise yard, now a splendid AstroTurf football pitch, is very rarely used, whereas it is centrally located and significantly larger than the awkward little yard, located away from the main wings, that is now used for general exercise

an escape attempt has meant that the AstroTurf was used as the main exercise yard for a number of weeks; staff shortages are a key factor in the lack of use of the football pitch

the Board is concerned that the prison makes a 'profit' from the operation of the Canteen – the prices are unacceptably high in

this is still an issue for prisoners

comparison with prisoners' earning capacity

the Board has remarked annually on its outrage that the national budgetary allocation for food for each prisoner per day is so low – few ordinary members of the public could subsist on it. The Board's concern is principally about healthy nutrition and the absence of local sourcing.

the kitchen has been found to be reusing leftovers on occasion; the food budget is set to increase by 10% next year.

the Board remains watchful that the effectiveness of the First Night Centre is not compromised by the location of unsuitable mainstream prisoners on the C4 landing

this is still a problem

the Board has the impression that the Incentives and (IEP) may not be administered consistently throughout the prison

this has not been as prominent an issue this year

the Board is concerned that the delineation between GOOD reviews, and adjudications, has become increasingly blurred in the minds of prisoners

many GOOD reviews still resemble adjudications

more could perhaps be done to streamline telephone systems and to make telephones generally more available and affordable

phones often out of order; repeats an earlier point

the prison lacks specialist facilities for coping with prisoners who exhibit severe behavioural problems. Such prisoners tend to be placed in Healthcare, which puts an additional strain on the unit and on the other prisoner patients located there

Prisoners still placed in Healthcare but this has been linked to medical needs, for example refusing food whilst in segregation

## **Section 5**

### **PRINCIPAL FOCI OF MONITORING IN THE PRISON**

#### **5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION.**

1. The Bedford Equality Action Team has now come under the chairmanship of the governor responsible for Safer Custody, who is planning improvements to the system. Plans are in place to make more use of the Foreign National representatives in Induction.
2. The Board is concerned about the number of time-expired Foreign Nationals waiting to be deported and the continuing difficulty in procuring appropriate and timely language provision for them. An increasing number of prisoners (especially from Eastern Europe) have such a limited command of English that they require the assistance of translators and extra time to complete basic tasks.

#### **5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS, WORKSHOPS AND LIBRARY**

3. Education is currently provided by A4e Justice, which offers a range of courses under the City and Guilds and OCR awarding bodies. Learning and Skills courses represent a small but important element of the prison's resettlement agenda and a source of 'purposeful activity' for prisoners.
4. Attendance numbers fluctuate worryingly, and an Activities Officer has been introduced to investigate reasons for absence and to issue IEPs to prisoners for non-attendance without good reason. Staffing has been an issue, with five teachers leaving during the reporting year, but few sessions needed to be cancelled and the shortfall has been resolved.
5. The "Virtual Campus" IT system, which gives prisoners access to community education and employment opportunities, has not yet been fully implemented.
6. The valuable Toe-by-Toe mentoring scheme has been restarted but has been hampered by operational constraints that make it difficult to allow mentors and learners to spend 20 minutes per day together.
7. Provision of the Library service has been increasingly problematic, not helped by changes in guidance from the Government. Prisoners have had difficulty obtaining specialist books because the library cannot order them; they can now only get them posted in if they obtain special permission from the Head of Residential Services, although he is usually happy to oblige. A list from NOMS now limits the publications that prisoners may order routinely for themselves. Prisoners have accordingly had trouble obtaining specialist magazines and DVDs in foreign languages, both of which need special justification.
8. At the time of reporting, the library was undergoing major changes, which have caused disruptions of service to prisoners. Bedford Borough Council withdrew its service from mid-August 2014, the prison having decided that it could no longer justify supplying an officer to be in attendance during library sessions (in keeping with education classes). The prison is

currently tendering for a new provider. The library is important to prisoners and so the Board will maintain a watchful brief.

### 5.3 HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUGS

9. The structures for the management of healthcare within the prison are again in flux. The Manager has been redeployed and an Acting Manager is in place; other vacancies are being covered by agency staff. However the Healthcare team appears to offer a good service, dispensing a level and range of care and physical rehabilitation that few prisoners passing through the prison are likely to see routinely outside.
10. It would seem to take little in the way of unexpected circumstances (prison lockdown in response to an emergency or staff-training; a doctor's indisposition; or a temporary dearth of escorts) to disrupt the regular flow of prisoners to their appointments and back to their cells. Medical staff members are fortunately practiced at making *ad hoc* scheduling adjustments to ensure continuity of healthcare provision, but missed appointments represent a waste of precious resources and, presumably, impact on the general standard of patient care.
11. Prisoners have complained that they can have to wait some days for an appointment (Board Members are not always entirely convinced by such complaints). This has been difficult to research due to imperfect communication between wing officers escorting prisoners to clinics and the healthcare personnel. However, a new system of appointment management has been put in place that the Board has been assured will prove more robust.
12. The Board is concerned about officer staffing levels on the wing at peak times and the way the wing is used to buffer periods of overcrowding. In-patients have had difficulty obtaining exercise as this requires there to be officers in both locations – the wing and the exercise yard. Prisoners on the healthcare wing seem relatively frequently to be confined to their cells when officer numbers are short.

#### **Mental Health**

13. The mental health 'in-reach team' operates under high, and arguably increasing, pressure, as the incidence of mental ill-health among prisoners seems to be relentlessly on the increase, often strongly associated with substance, drug or alcohol abuse.
14. While the Board is impressed with the level of support, care, and attention to detail given to mentally ill prisoners by the mental health professionals as well as by the officers and governors, it is in little doubt that prison is not the best environment for resolving many of these prisoners' problems. As in so many areas of prison policy, the Board believes that money carefully spent in the community to address these problems could prove a good investment in the longer term. It is not morally acceptable to allow the problems to rage out of control, leaving individuals so damaged that they spend a large part of their lives causing social disruption, creating victims, and losing their liberty at the state's expense.

#### **The 'Drug Rehabilitation Wing'**

15. The prison runs a drug-recovery function in E Wing that the Board has difficulty in believing is a feasible project in a busy local prison. When questioned, the staff members who run it have never seemed to be convinced that it delivers value, or indeed that it is viable. The design of the scheme was apparently based upon effective programmes in other prisons (Leicester has been mentioned) where:
  - IDTS is not adopted (thus prisoners can be weaned off drugs entirely and not 'maintained' on addictive substances, to return to the community with un-addressed and enduring dependency);

- prisoners stay much longer;
  - it has proved possible to achieve a firm covenant with each participating prisoner, and put in place strong motivations to succeed.
16. E Wing is relatively easy to populate, but not evidently with appropriately equipped and motivated prisoners. Rather, in the Board's estimation, based on many conversations with prisoners and staff members with experience of E Wing, it is seen as an 'easy number', away from the hustle of the main wings. Paradoxically, however, prisoners do not seem to be content there either (see Paragraph 45).
17. The Board would prefer to see all drug-related initiatives based in D Wing. The small and isolated E Wing, a desperately precious and rare commodity in the prison, could then be used for a purpose that the Board would judge to be more viable in the circumstances in which HMP Bedford operates, and more important in providing care – as a First Night Centre.

#### **Drugs more generally**

18. The Board is aware that it is not alone in being continuously worried about the apparent facility with which groups of prisoners manage to achieve a supply of drugs in prison, the latest fashion being for "spice" or synthetic cannabis, for which adequate detection methodologies have been slow in development.
19. The collateral cost of drugs in the prison is very high indeed, as their trade leads to countless acts of violence and intimidation, particularly of weaker prisoners, some of whom request the stigma of segregation to the VP wing to shelter them from the attentions of the bullies and drug dealers on the main wings, to whom they readily become indebted.

## **5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY**

20. The Board is concerned that the prison has found it difficult to sustain the contracts with outside companies that provide work for prisoners. The work provided so far has anyway been distinctly mundane (thus unlikely to stimulate much in the way of personal development and thus rehabilitation) and has also not been sufficient in volume to occupy more than a small proportion of the prisoner population.
21. The BICS workshop is now functioning again after a long delay, for industrial cleaning training. The laundry is also working towards accreditation for its workers. The bricklaying course has ended after problems obtaining a tutor, though this course was arguably too long for many prisoners to complete their qualification. The Laundry is flourishing under a new manager and is introducing a new accredited certificate of competence.
22. The prison has implemented a potentially valuable "Employment Passport" scheme, which evidences prisoner's employability skills, as a component of its agenda to equip prisoners for employment on their release. While plans are in place to increase vocational training places across the prison, the Board does not expect to see any major improvement in the near future. There are important disjunctions between the government's policy of 'full employment of prisoners', and well publicized limitations:
- very tight budgets that restrict the staff time that can be devoted to this work and to its administrative support;
  - the high churn-rate associated with the prison's role;
  - limited physical space, antiquated infrastructure; and

- prison management's caution on account of ministers' fear of adverse publicity along the lines that prisoners, believed to be undeserving and subsidized by public funds, are 'taking work away' from free citizens on the outside.

## 5.5 RESETTLEMENT

23. The Resettlement Policy Committee meets quarterly to monitor progress and to identify gaps in provision. It is chaired by the Community Engagement Manager who has broken new ground making good contacts within the local Community while seeking training and work for prisoners. The prison was also able to celebrate a small, but motivating, success with the first ROTL prisoner, when he went on to gain an award.
24. The meetings serve to bring together the various outreach and third sector agencies involved (NACRO, CRSP, Citizens Advice etc.) so that service delivery can be monitored. However staff changes, including reductions in the number of senior staff, budget cuts, and the re-clustering of prisons, are all taking a toll on such initiatives. Management focus is more now on working with the Education department to organise short courses for prisoners who are on very short sentences. This balance is likely to change again next year when the re-roling takes effect.
25. Diagnostic resettlement efforts begin at Reception and Induction and in both areas the prisoners are well served by IAG workers as well as by uniformed staff. There seems to be good co-working between prison officers and the external agency workers, who do much of the prisoner face-to-face work.
26. OMU staff members involved in this process keep fairly well up to date with sentence planning for prisoners sentenced to more than 12 months, evidencing care in the casework needed to plot personalized trajectories (sequences of moves to prisons where suitable courses are on offer) for individual prisoners. There is less they can do for prisoners sentenced to a shorter term. The Board has been greatly impressed by the emergence of a new awareness of the importance of visiting prisoners on the wings to keep them assured that matters are being progressed on their behalves.
27. The agencies work hard to assist with the basic requisites of housing, benefits and work/education by setting up interviews and helping the prisoners to complete forms. The new policy of issuing IEPs for non-attendance has apparently enabled them to make better use of their time and to reach more prisoners.
28. The Board is impressed by the work of the Chaplaincy team in attempting to bring the community into the prison by means of a Communities Week and other special events. The Cambridge Community Choir visited 3 times and organized workshops giving a few prisoners confidence in singing and drumming. These are followed up by a concert for any prisoners who wish to attend. It is hoped to make this a regular commitment and The Board will be interested to see how this might develop. It is inspirational to see the young people interacting with the prisoners, who have been very appreciative of their talents. The Chaplain was also instrumental in bringing a group of ministers into the prison to run practical painting sessions in the Visits Hall and inspire murals and banners around the wings.
29. The Board's concerns include the paucity of statistics collected relating to resettlement generally and to the work of the Discharge Board in particular; the absence of any evaluation of the efficacy of the services provided, and its observation that many prisoners do not seem to avail themselves of those services. It will endeavor to determine in the coming year what the reasons might be for this.

## 5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

30. The Safer Custody team functions with impressive professionalism under the influence of a governor who fosters an attentive ethos. His innovation of a weekly multidisciplinary 'Complex Needs' meeting has sharpened the focus on this vulnerable category of prisoner – individuals who, if not closely and expertly managed, can create disproportionate harm and disruption, both to themselves and to others.
31. The difficulty Healthcare representatives seem to have attending these meetings continues to be a concern.

### **Prisoner Safety, Self-harm and Acts of Violence**

32. Despite the attention being paid to prisoner safety, the data collected show more than a doubling in both the incidence of self-harm and of violence, predominantly by white males aged 21-25. Few incidents resulted in serious injury.
33. Board Members are particularly alert, when interacting informally with prisoners, to how safe those prisoners feel. Data from prisoner response surveys conducted in 2014 and the MQPL survey in November 2013 indicated that HMP Bedford is regarded by prisoners as a relatively 'safe' prison.
34. According to HMCIP in its 2014 report: "the prison is fundamentally safe and respectful. Staff /prisoner relationships are good and are the glue holding the prison together .... most prisoners told the Inspectorate they felt safe and vulnerable prisoners were particularly positive about their care. Safeguarding arrangements were much better than we normally see." HMCIP rated both the care given to ACCT prisoners and the quality of most ACCT documentation as 'good'; a judgment that the Board would support.
35. Procedures and systems relating to prisoner safety appear to the Board to be well embedded. Nonetheless, there are typically at least 20 ACCT documents open at any one time. The constant watch cell (in the healthcare wing) is not well configured – a defect that is unlikely to be improved soon, in part due to the existing density of development of this cramped site.
36. Efforts have been made to ensure that prisoners do not endure lengthy stays in segregation. Two prisoners were segregated for many months at the start of the reporting year due to very challenging behaviour but good teamwork from Governors, SSU officers, the mental health team and Healthcare staff eventually secured appropriate treatment for their psychological problems and allowed them to return to the main wings.
37. Under the careful watch of the Samaritans, the Listener's scheme is thriving with increased numbers being trained, although high turnover of trained prisoners remains a chronic problem and every effort is made to put these prisoners on hold. Work is underway to recruit Foreign Nationals and younger prisoners as Listeners, groups that currently have no specific representation. A dedicated Samaritans line is available on all wings for the case where Listeners are fully engaged at night. The Safer Custody team is supportive of the Listeners scheme.

### **Deaths in Custody**

38. There have sadly been two deaths in custody, on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014.
39. The jury at the inquest on the first case concluded that the conduct of an officer on F wing contributed to the prisoner's discomfort, and thus to his decision to take his own life. The Board remains agnostic, as there are other possible interpretations of the allegations made against this officer by prisoners on the wing after the death. Attempts to introduce a tougher regime on the wing may have contributed to his unpopularity, and thus to a campaign to discredit him. There are multiple issues involved here and the Board will be monitoring carefully. The inquest on the second case is still awaited.
40. IMB members attended in the aftermath of these events and were impressed by the compassionate and professional way these shocking events have been handled.

**Staff-prisoner relations**

41. The re-launch of the personal officer scheme has been a welcome means of encouraging positive engagement between officers and prisoners, though the Board is not optimistic that this will prove easy to maintain in the prison's high-churn environment.
42. Some officers find their necessarily somewhat ambivalent role – maintaining the necessary power relationship while treating the prisoners in their care with evident humanity – unsurprisingly a more difficult one to play than others. The Board has learned, however, that a very few officers have been observed to be reluctant to intervene when groups of prisoners display inappropriate behavior, which runs the risk of a potentially disastrous surrender of an important element of power. The temptation to accede to conditioning by the cleverer prisoners may become more compelling yet, if the trends of endemic and growing staff shortage and the growth in prisoner population should continue.
43. The Board is appreciative, however, of the general emphasis in this prison. The ambient culture encourages and celebrates a considerate and empathetic attitude to prisoners, respecting that the depersonalisation and disempowerment involved in imprisonment cause real and severe pain. Different prisoners respond to these difficulties with their own brand of coping-mechanism, often learned way back in their acutely challenging childhood.

**Measuring the quality of prison life (MQPL)**

44. The 2013 MQPL report showed an overall improvement in prisoners' perceptions of the prison compared to 2011, this time ranking in the middle of 18 other local prisons. It was noted that prisoners spent too much time locked up in their cells and that a number of prisoners felt they were doing time rather than using time(!)
45. Prisoners felt positive about the gym. They criticized the size of the food portions and tended to be negative about staff professionalism, healthcare and wing facilities. E wing prisoners were notably more negative about their time in Bedford than other wings (see Paragraphs 16, 17).

**5.7 SEGREGATION, SEPARATION AND CARE, CLOSE SUPERVISION**

46. The SSU has been a busy and difficult place in the reporting period mainly due to the housing of some very difficult and recalcitrant prisoners with complex issues. These prisoners have been held in SSU for long periods as there appears to be no other establishment prepared to take them, apart from an occasional short period in other prisons to give SSU staff a 'rest'. The SSU staff, as expressed in earlier reports, impress Board Members with their commitment, skill and professionalism in dealing with these awkward prisoners. The Board is concerned with the prolonged and difficult work necessary to find a suitable place, such as a hospital, for these prisoners. Their erratic and often threatening personal demeanour can make the prison significantly more unpleasant for weaker prisoners. It believes that more specialist places should be made available, so that difficult prisoners get the treatment they need in a timely fashion and the average prisoner is left in peace.
47. The lack of any constructive way of passing the time in SSU, such as in-cell education or work, continues to be a concern. However following a recent unannounced inspection which noted this defect, an action plan has been developed to provide longer-stay prisoners with some occupation in the shape of education or work. The Board will be watching the progress of the plan with interest. New radios have been purchased and an item of gym equipment will soon be installed. Radios and possibly TVs may be issued on improved behaviour. The grim exercise yard is to improved, though nothing has happened as yet. The cells will be regularly painted and one of the 'special accommodation' cells will be developed into a holding cell.

48. The inspectors also reported that too many prisoners on ACCT documents had been held in SSU, since when anyone in SSU with an open ACCT document has been closely monitored. The monthly SMARG a meeting has been better attended and became more rigorous in its investigation of SMARG data in the last quarter.
49. The SSU being on a subterranean level will never be a good site for segregation or for the staff who work there. However, at present there is no better site that could be made available without loss of other facilities. A water cooler has recently been installed and better lighting has made a slight improvement.
50. The average length of stay in SSU during the period was 6 days (this figure is likely to be coloured by the long stay of difficult prisoners). 52 prisoners were located in SSU, and the unfurnished cell was used only once in the reporting period. Good Review boards were all held within time limits and Board members attended the majority of them. There have been an average of 85 adjudications per month compared to around 78 adjudications per month in the previous reporting period, making the SSU a busy place with lots of paperwork. Some of the increase in the numbers of adjudications has been put down to prisoners transferring to Bedford with high numbers of adjudications outstanding.
51. The Board would like to stress again that it is impressed with the care and patience the staff members assigned to this function, show in supervising some very recalcitrant prisoners.
52. The Board was glad to hear the following policy announcement at the IMB conference: 'Further measures are considered to help manage longer-term spells in segregation including regular assessment and monitoring by senior staff of any prisoner held for three months or more. Any prisoners held for long periods in segregation will be assessed for referral to Offender Personality Disorder Services, which may lead to allocation to a Close Supervision Centre, a Vulnerable Persons Unit or a secure hospital as an alternative to continued segregation'. The Board will be watching these developments with interest.

#### **Use of Force**

53. Control and Restraint was used 142 times during the reporting period and prisoners were located under restraint 51 times. This compares to 170 occasions that C&R was used in the prior reporting period and just 2 occasions when prisoners were located under restraint previously.

## **5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

#### **Letters**

54. Prisoners regularly complain that their letters have gone missing. The Board has seen no clear evidence that the problem lies within the prison mailroom.

#### **Telephones**

55. Telephones on the main wings are frequently out of order and seem to take an unacceptable time to be repaired. Prisoners always want more time on the phone. Overcrowding means that this valuable resource is in ever-greater demand.

#### **The physical environment**

56. Outdoor exercise equipment has been installed outside E wing, and impressive murals have also been painted inside E wing. The showers on F wing have been upgraded. There is new security fencing around D wing and the entry to the prison. Windows on wing landings are

frequently to be seen propped open with cutlery. Gang-related graffiti has been evident inside cells.

57. The screening of in-cell WCs is poor, but when prisoners have hung up sheets for privacy they have been reprimanded – such screening has been claimed to limit officers' capability to maintain an effective watch on prisoner behaviour in-cell.
58. The Astro-Turf is still rarely used, despite many entreaties by the Board for it to be used for general exercise, at least while there are insufficient instructional staff members in the gym to allow it to be used for organized sport. This, despite the following statement in NOMS's response to the self-same remark made by the Board in its 2012 – 2013 Report: "Under the New Ways of Working, the additional resource afforded to the Gym Team will allow daily use of the Astroturf." 'Additional resources' have been either unavailable or re-allocated, and the Astroturf has remained unused day after day and week after week. Being several times larger than the diminutive yard currently used for the exercise of the men from the main wings, would it not be better re-allocated for general exercise, at least while the gym staff are under-complement?
59. Detailed observations include the following: cockroaches have been observed around areas where bins are located; some prisoners complain about the thin mattresses and claim they have trouble sleeping at night as a result; the prison lacks sufficiently comprehensive air conditioning and so there are corners that are very hot in Summer.

### **Catering**

60. Prisoners regularly complain about having their hot meal at lunchtime and only a light cold meal, usually filled baguettes or baked potatoes for dinner. HMP Bedford appears to be unusual in this arrangement. The second hot meal offered on Saturdays has now been lost.
61. Prisoners complain to the prison, though rarely to the IMB about the quantity and quality of food they receive. Of those prisoners who express an opinion roughly half say the food is terrible and the other half say it is good.
62. On occasion the kitchen has been found to have re-used left-over food as the filling for baguettes. When researched by the Board the kitchen manager has defended the practice, offering clear assurances that the practice scrupulously respects regulations. Concerns have also been raised about the origin of some Halal meat, though as yet none of these concerns have been found to be fully evidenced.
63. The Board would be much more comfortable about nutrition if the centralised contract were rescinded and prisons allowed to procure food stocks locally. Members regularly taste the food, and are regularly reassured, as quality and quantity appear to be reasonable, even though the budget is disgracefully low.
64. Many of the problems reported by prisoners relate more to the distribution of food than to its preparation, and the Board has yet fully to understand under whose responsibility this falls.

### **Visits and links with the outside**

65. Visits are essential to the sense of wellbeing and to the rehabilitation of prisoners. Appropriately the prison works hard to offer a positive visit experience. Improvements have been made in time keeping (thus ensuring that prisoners get their full allocation of time with their visitors) by bringing prisoners early to the Centre, and handling the changeover, between the first and the second session, with care.
66. The lift to the visits area has repeatedly been out of order, causing inconvenience to certain visitors.
67. Ormiston's parenting course is well received and efforts are made to ensure that prisoners stay in Bedford to complete the six-week course. Ormiston also reports that requests to participate in 'stories with Dad' are increasing; a positive sign.

68. Responding to a consistent sequence of complaints, the prison has introduced a new way of booking visits. For similar reasons, it is exploring the idea that prisoners could receive money via PayPal instead of postal orders.

### **Court Appearances**

69. Some prisoners report dissatisfaction with the increased use of the video-link for court hearings. Those who are dissatisfied feel that they have a reduced chance of a favourable hearing when appearing over video. Others, however, are delighted not to be shipped around in the awful prison vans, and run the risk that they be delivered back to a different prison, leaving their belongings at risk.

### **Reception**

70. There have been frequent late receptions but this has not apparently unduly impacted on the welfare of the prisoners. There have also (though comparatively rarely) been issues with prisoner's property not being clearly recorded on the property card or confusion when property is received in the Visits Hall.

### **Induction**

71. The prison ensures that all prisoners attend an induction session, including those who have previously been in HMP Bedford. The Board received only one complaint from a prisoner who had apparently been overlooked.

### **First Night**

72. Cell sharing assessment at Reception (particularly important for new prisoners) has been improved by the introduction of new procedures and by staff training.
73. The introduction of the new Entry Level within the IEP scheme, whereby prisoners have to wear prison-issue tracksuits for the first two weeks after any admission, marks them out as new, and therefore potentially vulnerable (a target for exploitation), to the rest of the population. Better segregation of all new prisoners would help safeguard them in those crucial first days.
74. Diversity analyses for 2014 shows that black and Muslim prisoners reported feeling less safe in their first night in custody than white British and non-Muslim groups.
75. The two DICs occurred on or just after the relevant prisoner's first night.
76. At present C2 and C3 landings have been identified as the First Night Centre. However, the pressure on space is such that experienced prisoners are frequently accommodated on the middle C landings if there are empty cells, with the consequence that first-night prisoners arriving later in the day cannot be accommodated in the so-called 'First Night Centre'. They are thus deprived of the intensive and compassionate quality of supervision that is intended for them in a First Night Centre.
77. The latest increase in the certified capacity of the prison and the associated pressure on places - and the consequential lack of flexibility - has made matters worse for new prisoners.
78. This is as much a matter of life and death, as one 'just' of kindness and decency, as new prisoners, typically in deep shock at being remanded to prison without the possibility of bail, are prone to some dark imaginings on the first night in jail. This category of desperate, often very young, prisoner features disproportionately in the national Death in Custody statistics.
79. The lack of a First Night Centre worthy of the name is a major concern. Despite the fact that the Board has offered this same criticism over the years, little-to-nothing has been done to create and run a viable facility. (See also Paragraphs 16, 17 where the Board makes explicit its oft-expressed criticism of the struggling 'drug recovery' function, currently occupying E Wing, which arguably can never work well in a busy local, and its consequential suggestion that E Wing be repurposed as a permanent First Night Centre.)

## **Section 6**

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

#### **6.2 DISCIPLINE**

80. GOOD reviews have been conducted without the presence of staff from Healthcare. This deficiency has placed IMB members in an increasingly difficult position as such reviews are not properly constituted (see also Paragraph 31).
81. The Board has observed some inconsistencies in the approach taken by Governors towards GOOD reviews and, to a lesser extent, adjudications. Some Governors employ a relaxed approach, considering the views of the prisoner and providing a clear pathway out of segregation that rewards improvements in behavior, while others employ a more confrontational approach, more applicable, perhaps, to an adjudication. Variation has also been observed in the degree of severity with which Governors regard certain breaches of prison rules - prisoner may receive a suspended sentence from one Governor at the start of the week then be harshly reprimanded by another a few days later for the same type of offence.
82. The entry level IEP scheme is unloved by officers and prisoners alike. The two-week delay in issuing prisoners their own clothes has created unnecessary work for wing officers. The limit on the amount of money that entry-level prisoners are allowed makes it more likely that they will incur debts to other prisoners, particularly if they are smokers, which leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Prisoners feel they are being punished without justification and officers have no discretion over who is placed on entry level so they cannot use it to manage behaviour. The Board has seen no evidence that the behaviour of new prisoners has improved following the introduction of the new Entry Level – it suspects that no such evidence will ever be forthcoming.

#### **6.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

83. The Senior Management Team has seen many changes of personnel, but functions cohesively under competent leadership. The senior staff seem admirably ready to learn from suggestions and from their mistakes, when events have run against them. There is a commendable mix of pride in their professionalism and in the care and attention to both the detail and the bigger picture that they bring to their work; and humility, that contributes to the general smooth running of the facility, despite the limitations placed upon them by the prison's role and cramped antiquity.
84. One area of concern is the extreme variability on the quality of report-writing by officers in the OMU and elsewhere. So very much depends, for individual prisoners, on the quality of the reports and the quality of the considerations and recommendations made about them, that this is a professional skill that merits considerable attention. There is also concern about the quality, legibility and timeliness of responses to Comp1 and 1A complaint/application forms. These in turn have ongoing implications for the IMB. While the provocation might be extreme,

it seems to the Board to be important that officers entrusted with this task (so vital to prisoners) should remain studiously patient.

85. Important to the Board, the senior Governors seem to be prepared to enunciate consistently to their staff members, the elements of decency. This feature alone is probably the main reason why the prison gives so little cause for real alarm.

## **6.1 SECURITY**

86. A prisoner staged a spectacularly public escape attempt that seems to have revealed a degree of complacency in the rubbing down procedure, since effectively dealt with, and has prompted an upgrade of the physical security within the prison walls. Another suspected escape plot before Christmas resulted in three searches of the prison, during which prisoners were locked up all day.
87. There has been an increase in the prevalence of gangs on the main wings, mobile phones are reportedly widespread and there is increasing evidence of dealing in the legal high known as 'spice'.

## **Section 7**

### **SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE BY THE IMB**

#### **7.1 APPLICATIONS FROM PRISONERS**

Code	Subject	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	Change
A	Accommodation	6	13	13	19	-7
B	Adjudications	11	9	8	5	2
C	Equality & Diversity (incl. religion)	10	3	17	3	7
D	Education/employment/training incl. IEP	52	28	30	23	24
E 1	Family/visits incl. mail & phone	82	41	40	50	41
E 2	Finance/pay					
F	Food/kitchen related	16	4	5	8	12
G	Health related	77	56	67	65	21
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	37	28	16	29	9
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	27	23	39	17	4
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	9	4	8	10	5
I	Sentence related (incl. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat, etc.)	44	34	34	22	10
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns incl. bullying	28	30	48	15	-2
K	Transfers	12	23	14	10	-11
L	Miscellaneous	26	26	90	39	0
	Total number of IMB applications	437	322	429	315	115

#### **Trends**

88. There have been increases in the numbers of applications relating to IEP, mail, PIN phones, property and visits. Prisoners often feel that they are being victimised by officers who enforce IEP decisions. There has been an increased focus on the use of IEP after a new scheme was introduced in November. OSGs have been assigned to the administration of the mail and PIN phones this reporting year. Problems with the training of OSGs may account for some of the rise in applications in these two categories.
89. There is an increasing trend for applications related to sentences. Applications about basic sentence, HDC and categorisation all showed marked increases on the reporting period. It may be that officers no longer feel they have time to follow up sentencing inquiries as staffing has become increasingly stretched.

90. The increasing trend for applications related to transfers, and to accommodation, were reported last year to be increasing. This trend has now ceased. Applications related to accommodation now show a decreasing trend.

## 7.2 BOARD STATISTICS

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within reporting period	4
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the Establishment	469
Total number of segregation reviews held	192
Total number of segregation reviews attended	81
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	24 April

## **Section 8**

### **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED**

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