



**HMP BEDFORD**

**INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2012 -2013**

v 3.0

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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**

1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013

## **Section 3**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

HMP Bedford is a Category B Prison with an Operational Capacity of 506 (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\* 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 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 38 places (41 from October 2013), 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 (from November)
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
Milton Keynes College	Education contractor (up to November)
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**

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 2012 to the end of June 2013. The Board reports primarily by exception; it does not aim to give a synoptic picture of the prison, its workings and context. The Report also does not necessarily mention all the minor issues discussed and resolved with the Governor and his staff during the year.
2. HMP Bedford has been challenged by the severe pressure on budgets that currently characterises all of public life. This has reduced the Governor's scope, and has eliminated virtually all the slack in the system – the prison could find itself in some difficulty if more than a handful of staff were ever off sick at the same time, for example. But Bedford has been run economically for the last decade and more, and the institution seems to find the demands of “benchmarking” less traumatic than have many other establishments.
3. 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 a dedicated, professional, cheerful, polite and respectful staff, in running a busy prison – no easy task at the best of times, and these are not easy times.
4. The most significant development this year has been the re-emergence of strong and engaged leadership within the prison from the top – a leadership that is prepared to emphasise its commitment to making the prison a place where, to the extent that this is possible, prisoners are given a positive role model and staff time is devoted, again to the extent that this is possible, to improving prisoners' life-chances. This firm lead has positively reaffirmed professional standards at all levels among the uniformed staff and their civilian colleagues. As it stressed in its last report, the concerns expressed then only related to a very small minority of officers.
5. The Board is doubly impressed that it can make this kind of endorsement of the general level of staff performance, given the political and economic circumstances. The pace of change has been hectic, and the nature of the changes often quite aggressive. And still the men and women who do this work come back for more and are proud to do it.
6. The Board wishes to remember the late Officer Frank Settle, who died in service after many years in the prison; a good man who was exemplary in his dedication to the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders, and who was also a good support to the Board.

## 4.2 POINTS OF COMMENDATION AND CONCERN

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

- the “Activity Task Force” introduced last year, whereby officers and prison staff visit the wings to promote education, which has achieved improved attendance figures in educational programmes. (5.2)
- the judgement of an OFSTED-trained inspector employed by A4e to conduct an internal evaluation, who described some of the teaching as: “good with elements of outstanding’. (5.2)
- the progress made this year in healthcare management, and improved liaison with the Board. (5.3)
- the increase in the number of prisoners “purposefully employed”. (5.4)
- The first ROTL work placement was secured during the year and has so far proved to be a success. The prisoner concerned, formerly a drug user and prolific offender, has won an award from The Bedfordshire and Luton Learning Partnership in recognition of his apparent determination to turn his life around. (5.5)
- the several new “through the gates” initiatives to support prisoners, believing that such activity can be disproportionately influential in reducing reoffending. (5.5)
- The Board’s report for 2011-2012 drew attention to a worrying increase in the incidence of staff-on-prisoner bullying, localized apparently with a very few individual officers. The Board is pleased to report that this year the Governor took action to make it clear to managers and to staff that he values very highly the quality of interaction between staff and prisoners and will not tolerate deficiencies in this area. He acknowledged there was a problem and 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. He was able to invest in the commissioning (from the regional Psychology Team) of a refresher-programme to train staff to model good staff /prisoner interaction. Staff Performance and Development Records are accordingly being more rigorously used to reinforce the kind of behaviour expected. (5.6)
- the prison is fortunate in having many committed and people-centred staff (uniformed and civilians). They have carried on with their jobs, despite considerable work pressure and personal development challenges in the last 12 months, with professionalism and an admirable sense of duty to those in their care. (5.6)
- the Board has been impressed that the SMT tends to take serious note of criticism and recommendation, rather than defaulting to defence. (5.6)
- the Board will be watching with interest proposed improvements in the facilities offered to segregated prisoners to assist them in their “turn-around”. (5.7)
- the prison’s ancient infrastructure is extremely challenging. Nevertheless, experienced prisoners. (5.8)
- the reduced input from UKBA over the last 6 months has not apparently adversely affected the delivery of service to foreign national prisoners. (6.5)

### **The Board has raised the following specific points of concern:**

- good wing diversity representatives have been transferred out too quickly; the Board hope that in future, once fully trained and if it is in their overall interest, they will be placed on hold, as are Listeners. (5.1)

- 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. (5.2)
- 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. (5.4)
- timely supply of suitable orderlies to work in the Library and elsewhere seems still to be problematic. (5.4)
- 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. (5.6)
- 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. (5.7)
- 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. (5.8)
- the Canteen service is disappointing, given its importance to prisoners. More effort should be invested in making its operation foolproof. (5.8)
- 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. (5.8)
- the Board is concerned that the old exercise yard, now a splendid Astro turf 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. (5.8)
- the Board is concerned that the prison makes a 'profit' from the operation of the Canteen – the prices are unacceptably high in comparison with prisoners' earning capacity. (5.8)
- 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. (5.8)
- 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. (5.8)
- the Board has the impression that the Incentives and (IEP) may not be administered consistently throughout the prison. (6.2)
- the Board is concerned that the delineation between GOOD reviews, and adjudications, has become increasingly blurred in the minds of prisoners. (6.2)
- more could perhaps be done to streamline telephone systems and to make telephones generally more available and affordable. (6.4)
- 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. (6.5)

### 4.3 OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. On the one hand, the Board protests in this Report, as it has repeatedly done in the past, at the shrivelling of nationally-set budgets for interventions with prisoners that are oriented towards their rehabilitation and successful resettlement in the community as law-abiding, working taxpayers, who parent future generations of children to grow up and play a full part in society. Prisoners are uselessly banged up in their cells for far too many hours in the week, and the situation is getting worse. The Board continues to deplore the churn in centrally-driven policy; and the obsession with the bottom line of budgets, to the apparent virtual exclusion (despite the rhetoric) of attention to the investment needed in offenders. Many of the prisoners in Bedford, as in all British jails, have missed earlier opportunities offered them for education and preparation for work; but most of them have been born into poor and deprived circumstances, which limit the life-chances for all but the exceptional. Many people see such citizens as undeserving of any further chances, other than punishment. The Board takes the evidence-based view that society's greater need is to reduce re-offending and thus reduce the number of victims of crime. Thus it is necessary to do everything possible to turn convicted prisoners' lives around. But the Board observes with concern that there is insufficient attention being paid, and investment available, to realise this aim. Tragically, policy is achieving an inflated prison population; a more and more impoverished regime in prison; and an increasingly de-skilled and alienated staff group.
8. On the other hand, the Board's overall judgment locally returns from orange to green. The Board has been impressed by the emergence of strong and consistent leadership from the SMT and the Residential Managers in matters of soft policy – decency, respect and attention to matters that might have an effect on rehabilitation and reoffending, for example – in complement to their natural concern for safety and security. It has been pleased to see the energy put into forming links with external agencies and companies to deliver services and experience to prisoners during and after their sentence in prison. It is also very pleased to report a return to a general view that the officers and other staff, who perform skilled, considerate and potentially highly influential roles with a vulnerable and needy group who have temporarily been deprived of their freedom, do so admirably. This is a small efficient local prison located just where it should be – in the centre of the community it serves. It would be wonderful if the good work done in this prison, and the skilled work done by its staff, were better appreciated and celebrated in that local community.

## **Section 5**

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

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

- 5 The Bedford Equality Action Team meets monthly, but attendance remains poor. Much work has gone into developing a training scheme for Diversity Representatives from the wings, but the training itself has been slow in delivery. Good wing representatives have been transferred out too quickly; the Board hope that in future, once fully trained, they may be placed on hold, as are Listeners.
- 6 Plans are in place to develop guidelines for all 'protected' categories of prisoner. Focus groups continue to be held but these have apparently been arranged at short notice and members of the Board have rarely been available to attend.

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

- 7 The education function has undergone major changes. During the year the service provider was changed to A4e (though many staff members have been 'TUPEd over' from the previous contractor, Milton Keynes College). The contract was changed to include 'payment by results' rather than by hours of delivery, to encourage prisoners and providers to work together to secure the best environment for resettlement. The Board will observe closely the practical working out of this idea. The new arrangements do seem to have resulted in a tightening of the timeframe within which learners are achieving certification of the prescribed 'learning outcomes'.
- 8 The department has been strengthened by the confirmation in role of the Manager, and the introduction of a Deputy Education Manager who started in May. The Board has been pleased to note that the "Activity Task Force" introduced last year, whereby officers and prison staff visit the wings to promote education, has improved attendance in Education.
- 9 A change from discrete English and Maths qualifications to integrated 'Functional Skills' has placed more emphasis on everyday skills. However, these potentially useful exam-based qualifications are only available once a month and so are not ideal for a high-churning local prison. The Board is pleased to note that the department is responding by planning 'bite sized' qualifications in Maths and English, available to entry-level learners, and designed to provide a countervailing enhancement of the 'success rate'. While it would be preferable to address an individual's education holistically, these initiatives should enable prisoners to achieve a small qualification before being moved on or released, and may motivate them to go further.
- 10 The 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. Efforts are being made to improve the process.
- 11 The Board also looks forward to reporting on other initiatives next year, for example:
  - Introduction of a "Working Towards Goals" unit in Healthcare which enables learners to work towards a qualification tailored to their personal learning and health needs;
  - Incorporation of a "Supporting Others" module into the Information and Guidance course, targeted at those prisoners who offer supporting roles (Toe-by-Toe mentors, Listeners, etc.).
- 12 The Department has been strongly motivated by the judgement of an OFSTED-trained inspector employed by A4e to conduct an internal evaluation, who described some of

the teaching as: “good with elements of outstanding.” The Board hopes that other areas of teaching will find it possible to rise to the same impressive level.

### **The Library**

- 13 The Library continues to experience difficulties associated with the busy nature of the prison: stock goes missing when prisoners are transferred, and reliable and competent orderlies prove hard to retain, once trained. Nonetheless, a committed staff ensures that a consistent 50% of prisoners use the library.
- 14 The Board is impressed with the efforts made to canvas suggestions from prisoners for improvements to the service. The detailed assignment of officers to duties does not yet seem to have cracked the need to provide staff in timely fashion to assemble and escort prisoners to and from the library.

### **Workshops**

- 15 The vulnerable prisoner wing (F Wing) continues to enjoy an active workshop culture, currently assembling gas burners and caps for lighter fuel. Contracted into the prison from local companies (listed on page 5), the work is planned to expand to involve main wing prisoners. The gas burner assembly has moved to a new location to be staffed by prisoners from the main wings. E wing has also opened a small workshop to do some of this assembly work. The completion of the laundry has provided extra work and cut costs. These developments respond to a serious deficit in employment skills experienced by many prisoners. They also contribute valuable revenue to those individuals allowed to work, and to the prison.
- 16 Vocational training has yielded 19 qualifications for prisoners who have been allowed to remain in Bedford for an extended period. This number required considerable effort to achieve, but it seems small compared with the prison population, and their overwhelming needs. Prisoners' unavailability to finish courses due to the quick turnover remains problematic, though each prisoner's potential to complete their courses is reviewed individually, and every effort made to retain those prisoners deemed to have a good chance of success.
- 17 Plans for prisoners to undertake a number of industry-standard courses are in place and the Board looks forward to reporting on these initiatives in the next reporting year.

## **5.3 HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUGS**

- 18 All prison healthcare now comes under the New Commission Board of NHS England which sets out a clear vision for a modernised NHS. As a consequence, new structures are currently being discussed that will inform national and regional governance. The health provision within HMP Bedford is still awaiting final decisions on the pattern of local partnerships, which is delaying the introduction of an effective regional overview. However, to the credit of the senior medical staff concerned and the responsible governor in the prison, arrangements for local governance are thorough, effectively focussed on prison issues, and thus serve the needs of the prison well.
- 19 Healthcare in the prison is shared between the South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) and Northamptonshire Foundation Health Trust (NHFT) with the latter managing the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS). These two bodies work closely together and are monitored by the prison governor responsible for Residential Services, who has taken an active role in the overall governance of health care, to ensure that integrated services run smoothly within the prison, and that they continue to be effective. The prison draws on the services of outside agencies (listed on page 5) to support and improve the overall healthcare of the prisoners.
- 20 The Board has been impressed by the progress made this year in enhancing the service for prisoners. This has built on the good practice recognised by the Howard League for

Penal Reform in their report 'Do better, do less' (2009) which recognised HMP Bedford as demonstrating exemplary standards of practice and care, reporting that the prison offers an effective model for other prisons. However, some prisoners still report that they experience difficulties in securing timely medical services and there is often a long pause between being prescribed medication and actually receiving it. They feel that the prison healthcare service does not always take appropriate account of the medical information that they bring with them from their GP or other medical facilities. The Board will explore further the extent to which this apparent divergence between policy and practice has to do on the one hand with prisoners' exaggerated expectations, and on the other, with a further need for service reform and development.

#### 5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

- 21 A snapshot of employment taken in June 2013 revealed that 64 prisoners were in full-time work and 72 in part-time work. Given the constraints (high churn, limited physical space and facilities, high number of remand prisoners who can choose whether to work or not), this may be an impressive figure. However, 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.
- 22 Figures for purposeful activity have been boosted by a cell refurbishment programme that has given prisoners much-desired work redecorating cells. Full-time work as orderlies for the gym, healthcare, laundry and kitchen remains available. Developments in workshops in F wing and elsewhere have been reported above. New full-time work is expected from contracts packing chocolates and recycling waste; both will be housed in the old industrial cleaning training suite, industrial cleaning training having become 'on-the-job'.
- 23 Demand for work seems to have been well handled alongside the growth in available jobs, but a delay of at least two weeks before new prisoners can be cleared to work by Security is still problematic. Both the library and kitchen have reported difficulties in obtaining sufficient suitably skilled orderlies. On occasion, unavailability of officers has interfered with work scheduling, with prisoners left hanging around awaiting instruction, for example.

#### 5.5 RESETTLEMENT

- 24 Notable changes have taken place in the prison's approach to resettlement, symbolized by the appointment of a new Head of Resettlement and a completely new Business in the Community Engagement Manager. The re-launch of the Resettlement Policy Committee (RPC) has helped re-shape the approach to resettlement at the prison from induction through to release.
- 25 The first ROTL work placement was secured during the year and has so far proved to be a success. The prisoner concerned, formerly a drug user and prolific offender, has won an award from The Bedfordshire and Luton Learning Partnership in recognition of his apparent determination to turn his life around. More such opportunities will depend upon suitable prisoners and placements being identified.
- 26 Prisoner attendance at activities and appointments has been variable, but uniformed staff members have been encouraged to issue an IEP warning when prisoners fail to turn up. The Board will monitor carefully whether this is a good idea.
- 27 According to the prison's reported figures, key Performance Targets of 90% prisoners into settled accommodation; 35% of prisoners into employment; and 15% of prisoners into education or training are being met, though no research seems to have been done to discover whether these relatively successful immediate outcomes proved to be enduring.

- 28 The Board is happy to acknowledge the positive and motivational impact of the Governor's own strong support for initiatives in the related fields of "Purposeful Activity" and "Resettlement", and the significantly energetic and imaginative efforts of the senior staff members assigned to the work. Perhaps partly because there had previously been so little work "through the gates", the growth of such interventions and their quality has been significant. The Board believes that such activity can be disproportionately influential in reducing reoffending, and thus applauds it.

## **5.6 SAFER CUSTODY**

- 29 Safer custody appears to have been given high priority, despite repeated budget cuts. The Governor has assured the Board that leaner ways of working, driven by constant pressure on prison budgets, will not affect front-line services in this area. The Board will be particularly watchful for evidence that cutbacks in service-levels impact negatively on the care and safety of prisoners. There is low-level evidence for both of these possible deficits: for example, officers sometimes remark that they have less time for interacting with prisoners; and a number of senior officers have taken early retirement, disgruntled, and their experience has been sorely missed.
- 30 Reception officers identify on arrival prisoners who may be at risk of self-harm or suicide, from Prisoner Escort Records (PER) documents, pre-sentence reports, and PNomis. Clinical staff members do the same from their records. Cell-sharing risk-assessment seems to be carried out rigorously. There has been some disquiet about the quality of PER documentation received on arrival, and this has been raised with the SERCO representative attending the Safer Custody meetings.
- 31 There has been a genuine effort to engage prisoners in "forum" meetings so that their views and needs are better understood and communicated.
- 32 The SMT have emphasized the need for officers to report violent incidents promptly and accurately. Control and Restraint Training has also emphasised that de-escalation techniques should wherever possible be practiced in preference to the use of force. The level of force accordingly declined towards the end of 2012 and although bullying is still reported by prisoners, there have been no recent proven cases.
- 33 Data on self-harm incidents, violence reduction measures (and as necessary deaths in custody) are reviewed regularly at well-attended monthly multidisciplinary Safer Custody meetings. Irregular attendance by healthcare representatives at many meetings still needs to be effectively addressed by their management.

### **Deaths in Custody**

- 34 One prisoner died in custody during the reporting year, in Papworth Hospital on 30th December, having suffered a heart attack in the prison.
- 35 The Coroner's Inquest on the death in custody of Mr. Mahoney on Christmas Eve 2011 was held in June 2012. In his narrative verdict of death by hanging, the Coroner made specific criticisms of procedure in the prison. The Governor and SMT acknowledged that certain first-night procedures have been shown, as a result of this regrettable incident, to need a revamp. The IMB have been impressed, in this case as so often, that the SMT takes serious note of criticism and recommendation, rather than defaulting to defence.

### **Violent incidents**

- 36 There were 431 violent incidents reported, compared with 724 last year. The prevailing zero-tolerance policy, with prisoners involved in fighting put on Basic automatically for 14 days, reviewed after 7 days, has apparently helped drive down both the incidence of prisoner-on-prisoner violence and the number of prisoners involved in any one affray.

### **Self-harm**

- 37 There were 138 separate self-harm incidents, compared with 250 in the last reporting year, while the number of individuals reported as self-harming fell from 152 to 116. The highest incidence of self-harm involved cutting, by white prisoners, aged between 21 and 25. A recent but short-lived increase in self-harm incidents among prisoners in the SSU and in the VP unit (F Wing) is being reviewed.
- 38 Extra training has been given to new officers where needed on the importance of ACCT procedures and the quality of ACCT documentation is generally high.

### **Listeners**

- 39 At times during the year there have been as few as four Listeners working, compared with a full complement of ten. The Board acknowledges that it is difficult to train and maintain enough Listeners given the high turnover of prisoners. Sentence planning requires offenders to be moved to other more appropriate prisons as promptly as possible. While it may pose challenges locally, the departure of some Listeners at the end of their sentence is often in those individuals' overall interest.
- 40 A new Listener post has been established in Reception to extend awareness of the service to newcomers and to assist any prisoners in distress.
- 41 The Safer Custody Team works with OMU and Security to review the issues of recruitment and retention. Samaritans and a Listener representative regularly attend and contribute to the monthly Safer Custody meetings.

### **Staff-prisoner relations**

- 42 The Board's report for 2011-2012 drew attention to a worrying increase in the incidence of staff-on-prisoner bullying, localized apparently with a very few individual officers. The Board is pleased to report that this year the Governor took action to make it clear to managers and to staff that he values very highly the quality of interaction between staff and prisoners and will not tolerate deficiencies in this area. He acknowledged there was a problem and 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. He was able to invest in the commissioning (from the Regional Psychology Team) of a refresher-programme to train staff to model good staff /prisoner interaction. Staff Performance and Development Records are accordingly being more rigorously used to reinforce the kind of behaviour expected.
- 43 The prison is fortunate in having many committed and people-centred staff (uniformed and civilians). They have carried on with their jobs, despite considerable work pressure and personal development challenges in the last 12 months, with professionalism and an admirable sense of duty to those in their care.

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

- 44 As the Board recorded in its last Report, an MQPL survey was carried out in June 2011 at NOMS' behest. The SMT set up a working group to develop a comprehensive action plan in response to the findings, which were highly critical in places. Progress with this plan is regularly discussed at senior management meetings. This work will be reviewed later in 2013.

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

- 45 The Segregation Monitoring and Review Group meet monthly to monitor and review trends in segregation.
- 46 Segregated prisoners are seen daily by the Duty Governor, Chaplaincy, Healthcare, and within 72 hours of their move to segregated accommodation, by a member of the Board.

Reviews of prisoners consigned to the SSU under Good Order and Discipline regulations are held twice a week, with IMB members usually in attendance.

- 47 The Board is pleased to note that prisoners are generally returned to normal location as swiftly as possible, with the consequence that the average dwell-time in SSU is around 3.5 days. The unfurnished cell is rarely used and then only for short periods to allow prisoners to calm down. Capacity is adequate most of the time, but there are peaks when the unit is full to overflowing. The location of the SSU is however subterranean, providing a poor working and living environment for both staff and prisoners, as the Board has remarked in its reports for many years. In spite of this, the officers who work there are enthusiastic, professional and caring.
- 48 'Use of force' statistics show a fairly regular incidence of around 10 per month with a spike (20) in November when some problematic prisoners were segregated. Prisoners on ACCT documents are carefully monitored while in SSU, and those who appear to be at particularly severe risk of self-harm can be moved to the gated safe cell in Healthcare (but see also 5.6 'Prisoners with serious mental health issues').
- 49 At present segregated prisoners are offered a much-reduced regime, compared with those on the mail wings. Radios are not given automatically but are used as incentives to improve behaviour. There are plans to provide segregated prisoners with self-improvement packs, and to furnish some of the cells with better safe furniture. The Board will be watching these proposed developments with interest.

## **5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

### **Letters**

- 50 Staff members in the post room are helpful and patient. There are many prisoners, for example, who hold the prison responsible for the lack of communication from people they feel should be writing to them. Nonetheless, the Board does not perceive any true problems with the postal system.

### **Prisoners' Monies**

- 51 The staff members who deal with prisoners' monies are competent and always ready to provide an up-to-date statement of a prisoner's account. Again, the Board does not perceive any true problems with the postal system.

### **Telephone and credit**

- 52 The telephone system, on the other hand, represents a constant problem. Security clearance of the numbers that prisoners can call takes time and is often disputed. Prisoners also often complain that telephone credit takes too long to come through or that insufficient credit has appeared on their account. While the Board is confident that procedures are being followed, it wonders whether a review and streamline of those procedures could deliver improved functionality and timeliness for prisoners, particularly in their first days in prison (see also 6.4).
- 53 The Board cannot emphasise too much the importance of the telephone in maintaining prisoners' links to their support networks outside – links without which rehabilitation becomes a far-off vision. The Board notes that experiments in prisons where telephones have been installed in cells seem to lead to significantly lower levels of prisoner anxiety. It 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.

### **Prison shop - canteen**

- 54 The importance of this service to prisoners is such that more effort should be invested in making its operation foolproof. The Board has been concerned to learn that the prison makes 'a profit' on the operation of the canteen. It finds this regrettable, given the high cost of these small luxuries to the mostly severely cash-strapped prisoners. The Board would like to see this levy discontinued.

### **The physical environment**

- 55 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. Examples include the difficulty of providing safely isolated accommodation for first-nighters, vulnerable prisoners, and for drug recovery; space for "dining out" (of cells); optimal routes for prisoner movement; exercise areas, etc.). The Board is enthusiastic whenever the Governor finds money to enhance and modernize the prison, but it is conscious that with only austerity budgets on the horizon, the deficit in upgrading and maintenance can only grow. The Board particularly regrets the cancellation of the project to upgrade the heating system, believing that the institution merits this one-off investment.
- 56 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. The Board takes the view that any damage the artificial turf would suffer, if the yard were used for general exercise, would be a small price to pay given the limited contribution the turf actually makes to the prison's daily life.
- 57 On the bright side, one reason why Bedford seems to be economical to run and to deliver an acceptable (if constrained) environment is perhaps that the buildings are more robust than any modern replacement, and that they lend themselves to continuous adaptation. Modification is arguably much more problematic with the flimsy modern buildings that result from highly competitive tender procedures and detailed objective-specific design.
- 58 In spite of the constraints, many experienced prisoners have said to members that they are happier at Bedford than at many more modern prisons.

### **Catering**

- 59 Amazingly, the prison kitchens seem to satisfy most of the prisoners, most of the time - they have run harmoniously during the year and have elicited few serious complaints, though there are issues about the parity of portion-size offered in the various different serveries, and about the adequacy of the 'evening' meal. There have been sporadic complaints but for every one complaining about food quality, another will be happy on that score but unhappy about portion size, for example, and vice versa.
- 60 The Board has remarked annually on its outrage that the national budgetary allocation for food for each prisoner per day is so low – so low indeed that few ordinary members of the public could subsist on it. The Board's concern, even in the absence of many complaints from prisoners, is principally about healthy nutrition and the total absence of local-sourcing flowing from the nationally centralised supply contract.

### **First Night Centre**

- 61 The First Night Centre cells on C2 have been refurbished and new prisoners are not now housed below ground. With the exception of high-risk prisoners and those on illegal drugs, new prisoners stay anything from two days to three weeks on this wing, depending on their needs. The Board remains watchful in this area, as the

effectiveness of the first-night experience depends, in the current arrangement, very much on the suitable selection of mainstream prisoners who must share this wing, on the 4s landing.

### **Induction**

- 62 Since the Board's last report there have been improvements in the induction of new prisoners, who report satisfaction with the treatment they receive on entering the prison.

### **Reception**

- 63 Reception has been reorganised. The medical section has been refurbished and offers prisoners improved privacy. This has liberated more space for searching prisoners, which makes the experience arguably a little less stressful.
- 64 The officers assigned to Reception generally demonstrate admirable respect and professionalism when dealing with the many prisoners who enter and leave the prison each day. The total number of admissions during the year was 6547, an average of 17 for every day of the year. This was approximately double the number of 'new' admissions mentioned in the Summary, on account of the many movements of remand prisoners in and out of court. This massive 'processing' activity can be seen (as with every other busy 'local') as one of the prison's main functions.

### **Visitors' Centre**

- 65 There have been various changes and experiments in organising the Visits Hall. The Ormiston Trust provides support for the children of visitors and fosters relationships between children and their prisoner fathers. The Board has been impressed with the way prison staff members and Ormiston volunteers collaborate with the aim of raising service standards.

## **Section 6**

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

#### **6.1 SECURITY**

- 66 The Board is comfortable that security matters are competently and proportionately handled.

#### **6.2 DISCIPLINE**

- 67 The Board is minded to support the Governor's encouragement to use the Earned Privileges Scheme (IEP) to reinforce compliant behavior, in preference to leaving situations to develop to the point where a prisoner needs to be segregated, but its full support will depend upon how this policy plays out in practice. It has the impression, however, that the Incentives and (IEP) may not be administered consistently throughout the prison. As no clear guidelines exist as to what should be considered in an IEP 'strike', for example, decisions are left in the hands of officers. There are other problems with the system, for example. Prisoners understandably view a downgrade in IEP status as a punitive measure, and generally view the benefits of Enhanced IEP status as limited to the increased access to employment. The Board considers it important that these rules be clear and fairly administered. It will accordingly be monitoring this area closely in future.

68 The Board is concerned that the delineation between GOOD (strictly GOAD – Good Order and Discipline) reviews, and adjudications, has become increasingly blurred in the minds of prisoners: prisoners do not always understand the purpose and distinctiveness of the GOOD review process. The Board has not encountered any issues with the adjudication process this year. Members have judged as having been conducted fairly and reasonably those adjudications they have attended.

### **6.3 CHAPLAINCY**

69 The chaplaincy team has worked well, supported by volunteers, offering spiritual and pastoral care to both prisoners and staff. The Board commends the range of faith services offered and the general accessibility of members of the team, especially to prisoners in the Segregation Unit, in Healthcare and on ACCT.

### **6.4 CONTACT BETWEEN PRISONERS AND THEIR PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORKS**

70 The Board is comfortable that the prison gives a suitable priority to this function, given its towering importance in assisting offenders to desist from crime. More could perhaps be done, as reported above (see 5.8 Telephones), to streamline telephone systems and to make telephones generally more available and affordable.

### **6.5 SPECIFIC GROUPS OF PRISONERS**

#### **Foreign National Prisoners**

71 About 20% of prisoners at any one time are foreign nationals, but the number of those unfortunate detainees who have completed their sentence and remain incarcerated awaiting deportation, remains fairly low. Their plight is nonetheless real. The Board initially had concerns that foreign national prisoners might experience a reduced service on account of changes in working practices within the prison, and reduced input from UKBA. Applications, however, have not increased and the Board will maintain its watch.

72 The Focus Group for Foreign Nationals has met infrequently during the year.

#### **Young Offenders**

73 Young Offenders at times resist transfer to HMYOI Glen Parva, creating a continuing source of conflict within the prison.

#### **Prisoners with serious mental health issues**

74 HMP Bedford 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.

## **Section 7**

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

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

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Change</b>
A	Accommodation	13	13	19	0%
B	Adjudications	9	8	5	13%
C	Equality & Diversity (incl. religion)	3	17	3	-82%
D	Education/employment/training incl. IEP	28	30	23	-7%
E 1	Family/visits incl. mail & phone	41	40	50	3%
E 2	Finance/pay				
F	Food/kitchen related	4	5	8	-20%
G	Health related	56	67	65	-16%
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	28	16	29	75%
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	23	39	17	-41%
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	4	8	10	-50%
I	Sentence related (incl. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc.)	34	34	22	0%
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns incl. bullying	30	48	15	-38%
K	Transfers	23	14	10	64%
L	Miscellaneous	26	90	39	-71%
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>-25%</b>

#### **Trends**

- 75 The total number of Applications has fallen 25% year-on-year, following a 36% increase in the previous year. Eight of the 15 application categories decreased. The largest falls have been in Equality and Diversity; down 82% following a more than 5-fold rise previously and Miscellaneous applications are also down 71% following a rise of 131% last year. Applications about Food/Kitchen and Canteen have declined. There has been a fall in the number of Staff/prisoner related applications of 37% from last year's number of 48: nonetheless at 30 applications this is still double the number from 2 years ago.
- 76 There has been a 75% rise in applications about Property, following a 44% fall last year, and a rise of 64% for applications about Transfers between establishments. Applications about Adjudications show a gently upward trend, although, as noted above, the Board has general confidence in the consistency and justice of this process. Healthcare applications, the largest category overall, are down 16%.

#### **Issues behind the trends**

- 77 Healthcare (56 applications) remains the category that receives the most applications. The Board is not, however, particularly concerned about this salience. Many of the applications are from drug users in dispute with the medical staff about their prescriptions, about which little can be done.
- 78 There are always many applications about mail and telephone usage (41). Some relevant points have been picked up above. There have been a number of applications complaining about difficulty in reaching the visits booking clerk in the prison, reporting

this to be frequently engaged. The Board is not convinced that there are any systematic problems in this area, but it will monitor this feature in future.

- 79 It is regrettable that prisoners have such difficulty understanding the processes they have to undergo during their remand period and sentence (34). Criminal law and procedure has become so complex as on occasion to baffle and confound even legal practitioners. The complexity and the difficulty of getting to speak directly with the staff members responsible for processing their file frequently leaves prisoners themselves little chance of comprehending their predicament, which in turn greatly increases the pains of imprisonment.
- 80 At 30 the number of complaints from prisoners against their treatment by officers (30) is still too high.
- 81 The perceived unfairness of the new policy of enforcement and zero-tolerance in the IEP scheme (28) is behind the large number of Category D applications.
- 82 Property (28 and 23) is and always has been a bone of contention. Some complaints are clearly well founded, and in such cases mistakes have frequently been made. In the main the Reception staff do a careful job processing some very complex prisoner movements.
- 83 Certain prisoners try to influence their movement from prison to prison (23), and in this intent may try to enlist the help of the IMB. This is not a decision that the Board tends to try to influence.
- 84 On the other end of the scale, it is perhaps notable that prisoners complain so little about food, adjudications, and accommodation. This is perhaps a reflection of the observation that they try to influence those features of prison life over which they think might retain a fragment of control.

## 7.2 BOARD STATISTICS

Recommended Complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5
Number of members leaving within reporting period	4
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	504
Total number of segregation reviews held	95
Total number of segregation reviews attended	88
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	24/03/2013

## **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