



**HMP Brixton**

**Independent Monitoring Board**

**Annual Report to the Secretary of State**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012**

# **1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

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

1.2 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.

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

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### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

- 3.1 For most of the reporting year Brixton continued to serve the courts of South London as a category B male local prison, accommodating a rapidly changing population of remand and sentenced prisoners (handling 4400 new receptions in the year to March 2012 – the highest number compared with operational capacity of any prison in the UK). The certified normal accommodation is 525 and the prison has an operational capacity of 798. Until April 2012 it was operating at close to this capacity, with many single cells in double occupancy, resulting in cramped conditions relative to more modern establishments.
- 3.2 While the prison was a Category B local, prisoners were accommodated in one healthcare wing (D) dealing almost exclusively with serious mental health issues, four residential wings and a Care and Separation Unit (CSU).
- 3.3 Wings (apart from D Wing) have no communal eating areas and meals are eaten in cell, the majority of which have integral toilets shielded only by a flimsy and easily damaged curtain. Most of the prison buildings are Victorian, and expensive to modernise or repair. There are very few ground floor cells. There is a general lack of regime and very little workshop space.
- 3.4 These were the conditions in which Brixton was required to re-role as a Category C resettlement prison in July 2012 – with no additional education/work space in the short term, with a reduced staffing level and a distinctly Category B regime.
- 3.5 In the run-up to this re-categorisation the prison accommodated a number of other changes. In September 2011, when HMP Latchmere House closed, 16 Category D prisoners were transferred to Brixton. In the same month a pilot Drug Recovery Wing was introduced in order to encourage committed prisoners to reduce and relinquish their drug and alcohol dependency. In January 2012 the prison accommodated about 150 men from HMP Wandsworth's Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU) – mostly category C but with a range of educational and physical needs that presented new challenges.
- 3.6 In its new role as a Resettlement prison Brixton operates with five residential wings and a CSU and houses a mixture of category C and D sentenced prisoners:
- A wing – 215 category C prisoners in 139 cells (one with disabled facilities) incorporating a 62 bed Drug Recovery Wing;
  - B wing – 150 category C prisoners in 88 cells;
  - C wing – 133 category D and enhanced category C prisoners in 69 cells (one with disabled facilities);
  - D wing – 50 category D prisoners in 25 cells;
  - G wing – Vulnerable Prisoner Unit: 250 category C prisoners in 149 cells (one with disabled facilities);
  - CSU – 7 cells, of which one is gated and one is 'special' plus one holding room.
- 3.7 The prison no longer accommodates remand prisoners, sole detainees or prisoners with in-patient health requirements or complex mental health needs. From April 2012 the prison's population was reduced as these prisoners were transferred out. From that point the prison began to receive Category C and D prisoners from other establishments. The criteria for accepting new prisoners are that they should have less than 12 months to serve (other than VPs), be local to London, be able to handle stairs and share a cell, and have a reasonable recent behaviour record. The prison recognised that it had little to offer by way of regime, in-prison training or accommodation, but hoped that proximity to family would compensate. In the event it appeared that many early arrivals at Brixton had been oversold the facilities that Brixton could offer by their transferring prisons and were understandably deeply dissatisfied to find themselves in a prison that continued to offer a poor category B regime. The prison continues to cope with this mismatch between expectations and reality.

- 3.8 At the close of the reporting year the population is 634. A and B wings are full and almost all remaining spaces are on the VPU (G wing).
- 3.9 The prison's objective is to have about 100 Category D prisoners working full-time outside the prison. At the end of the reporting year this had been achieved for 20 of the 124 Cat D prisoners. These 20 are housed on D wing and subject to an open prison regime within their wing (i.e. open cells, communal social areas). The remaining Cat D prisoners on C wing are out of their cells for about 7.5 hours per day but have very little purposeful activity while they wait for Release on Temporary Licence security assessments to be completed. Category C prisoners are understandably given priority for purposeful activity. They have at most 7 hours out of cell per day (1 hour of 'domestics' first thing, 2.5 hours education or work, 2.5 hours association and 1 hour for showers, telephone calls or an organised group activity on some evenings).
- 3.10 Jobs within the prison include wing cleaning, painting, kitchen and servery work. Work is under way to make all jobs part-time in order to maximise the number of men with a job. Education, currently under a contract with Kensington and Chelsea College, is due to move to A4E in November 2012. The most popular courses currently continue to be the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) available to prisoners working, for example, in the kitchen or the gym. The prison runs an on-site radio station called Electric Radio, which is well subscribed and also provides training.
- 3.11 At the end of the reporting year there were 123 jobs (mostly part time) and 240 education places available in the prison. This means that there are currently insufficient places to keep all Cat C prisoners busy part time.
- 3.12 There are plans for a new building, scheduled to be ready in autumn 2013, which will provide an additional 300 much-needed education and workshop spaces. Meanwhile portacabins have recently been installed providing 96 education and training places, but because of refurbishment of the existing Education department there is essentially no new regime space until late 2012.
- 3.13 Until April 2014 Healthcare will continue to be delivered by a consortium led by Care UK, which includes the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM), with pharmacy and other services provided by Lambeth Community Health; dental services are provided by Weymouth Group. NHS Lambeth (formerly the Primary Care Trust) is the commissioner and holds the contract with Care UK.
- 3.14 The Chaplaincy team represents all the major world religions and is particularly active, with some outside faith groups involved in services. Other outside agencies that are involved in HMP Brixton include Probation, the UK Borders Agency, the Samaritans, CARATS (drug and alcohol misuse team), Adfam (family support for prisoners with drug and alcohol problems), St. Giles Trust (housing assistance for all prisoners and support for gay, transgender and bisexual prisoners), SSAFA (support for ex-servicemen), Jobcentre Plus, Working Links (resettlement), New Bridge (resettlement and mentoring), Belong London (mentoring), Spurgeons (Visitor Centre) and the Phoenix Trust (yoga and meditation). Additional links with local authorities and other local agencies are being developed in order to support the prison's new resettlement role.

## **4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **4.1 Overview**

- 4.1.1 Considering the constraints within which the prison is obliged to operate (including the age and condition of its buildings, its small footprint and limited regime) the Board felt that as a Category B local prison Brixton generally provided prisoners with a decent level of care. This view was borne out by a very positive result from the MQPL (Measuring the Quality of Prison Life) survey in December 2011 and the fact that the prison's performance status has remained at 3 (indicating that it is meeting the majority of its targets).
- 4.1.2 During the year the prison management has had to cope with significant changes while planning for Brixton's new role as a Category C Resettlement prison. The prison has embarked on its new role with inadequate education and employment space to provide a proper resettlement regime – a situation that is likely to last until at least September 2013 when a new building is scheduled to become available. The Board regard this as unacceptable. Prisoners arriving at Brixton are frustrated by the amount of time spent in cell or without purposeful activity and the tension of the prison is raised. This puts extra pressure on staff at a time when their numbers have decreased because of the re-categorisation. It is regrettable that at the same time there are other vacancies that cannot be filled as a result of a Prison Service wide freeze and in anticipation of the implementation of 'fair and sustainable' cuts next April.
- 4.1.3 It is the Board's belief that the prison management have done their utmost to accommodate the changes that they have been asked to make, and have worked creatively to make the best of the prison's limited physical resources – but that they have not had the time or financial resources to create a suitable environment for the prison's new role, and that there is some way to go in achieving the culture change that will be necessary in order to make a success of it. While there is little doubt that the prison's location should, in the long term, make it ideally placed to build links with London employers and services and to resettle London prisoners, we feel that the next year will be a difficult one for staff and prisoners because of the lack of a proper Category C/D regime.
- 4.1.4 The majority of this report focuses on the planning and early implementation of the prison's new role rather than reflecting on one that has passed, but the Board recognise that we can only provide a snapshot of what will continue to be a fast-changing environment.

### **4.2 Issues requiring a response from the Secretary of State**

- 4.2.1 The Board wish to highlight the fact that the prison management team has repeatedly been expected to produce 'bricks without straw'. This applies equally to the introduction of the new Drug Recovery Wing (DRW) in September 2011 (see section 6.2), the reception of prisoners from HMP Wandsworth's Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU) in January 2012 (see section 6.9), and the resettlement role generally (see section 6.6). The neglect of capital works at Brixton, over many years, means that the prison buildings are not fit for purpose, and will not be, despite best efforts, for some time to come. Only the kitchen has been refurbished; the planned health centre was shelved two years ago; D wing was condemned, properly as regards the physical environment, by HMCIP in 2010; there are ongoing problems with heating, leaking pipes, poor water pressure and general dilapidation (e.g. see 5.1.2 and 6.9.6); and there is a serious lack of employment/education space for the prison's new role (see 5.4.1.2) which means that it will not be possible in the short to medium term to provide an adequate range of programmes to prepare prisoners for release.
- 4.2.2 The current regime does not meet the reasonable expectations of 'resettlement' prisoners. The use of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) has gone up markedly (see 5.1.7) and there has been a reported instance of first-time self-harm because of the poor regime (see 5.5.4 and 5.5.6), which is of great concern to the Board. Managers are working hard to make best use of resources (see e.g. 6.6.4 and 6.8.3) and to improve regime where possible, but the Board feel

that perhaps the prison's operational capacity should have been reduced or staffing held at Cat B levels until a significantly better regime becomes available and the prison is in a more stable state.

- 4.2.3 The prison management set criteria for the prison's new intake that made regime limitations clear. Nevertheless many prisoners are arriving who do not meet the criteria or realise the limitations. Some are not from London; some need ground floor accommodation and Brixton has hardly any (see 6.9.7); some cannot or will not share a cell (see 5.1.6); some have too long still to serve; almost all expect to find a full resettlement regime. Many immediately apply to transfer elsewhere, adding to the load on staff and undermining the resettlement objective. The criteria also state that an OASYS security report should be completed before transfer to Brixton but over 100 prisoners have arrived without one, which puts extra pressure on Brixton staff. The Board struggle to understand why the Prisoner Movement Unit continues to transfer unsuitable prisoners to Brixton, and is frustrated by the fact that, having arrived, these prisoners are so difficult to transfer out.
- 4.2.4 Because of a Prison Service-wide recruitment freeze, Brixton has been without a full-time Imam for much of the year (see 6.1.6) and has been unable to employ psychology assistants to run rehabilitation programmes or temps to cover for long-term sick leave. Meanwhile levels of long-term staff sickness are high. Re-profiling provided for 5 new administrative posts, but the Board understand that these staff cannot be appointed because of the freeze. At the same time the prison has been going through a 'fair and sustainable' exercise in preparation for possible market testing that will lead to further cuts in April 2013 and to frozen management posts in the meantime if staff leave. Staff shortages lead to delays e.g. in prisoners getting cleared for jobs and receiving pay once employed; in the production of OASYS security reports and in processing applications for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) (see 6.6.5). The Board feel strongly that these restrictions further reduce regime, increase dissatisfaction and lead to a diminished likelihood of successful rehabilitation.
- 4.2.5 In September 2011 the Deputy Governor was suspended following an allegation. At that time the Board welcomed the speedy implementation of appropriate procedures to investigate the allegation. Unfortunately the matter is still not resolved and the prison continues with an acting Deputy. The Board are concerned about the impact on morale of drift, particularly at a time of management cuts, and would welcome a robust closure.
- 4.2.6 The introduction of a number of centrally negotiated contracts has led to an increased cost for Brixton or to reduced facilities. These include the visitors' centre (see 6.8.12) and the interpreting service (see 5.2.5). The Board feel that the prison should not have to carry additional costs or to accept a diminished service as a result of centrally negotiated contracts that the prison is compelled to accept.

### **4.3 Other issues of concern or excellence**

- 4.3.1 The Board were very concerned by the development of backlogs and other problems in handling prisoners' mail and complaints during the first few months of 2012 (see section 6.4).
- 4.3.2 While we acknowledge the progress the prison has made in the resettlement area (see 6.6.1 to 6.6.4) the Board feel that greater priority could usefully be given to developing a more co-ordinated resettlement strategy with partners (see 6.6.6 and 6.6.7) and to cultivating links with local businesses in order to maximise work opportunities for prisoners (see 6.6.8). We are disappointed that a full-time post to take on the business link role is not due to be filled until April 2013.
- 4.3.3 The Board seek assurances that new arrivals receive prompt induction (see 6.3.7) that spells out the prison's current limitations in order to set prisoners' expectations (see 6.3.6) and, since there is no longer a 'first-nighter' wing, that new arrivals are well-monitored on their destination wing (see 6.3.8).

- 4.3.4 The Board commend the rapid and professional response of healthcare and custodial staff that prevented the death of at least one prisoner (see 5.3.5) and the compassionate way in which the prison handled a death in custody this year (see 5.5.9). Independent clinical reviews of recent deaths in custody have not identified failures of care, and have praised good clinical practice and the caring attitude of healthcare and prison staff (see 5.3.5).
- 4.3.5 The Board see a lot of evidence of the good will and desire of staff at all levels to provide a humane regime (see e.g. 5.3.5, 5.3.6, 5.5.1, 5.5.4, 6.9.7). It is also notable that prison officers who took part in the national strike on the morning of 10 June 2012 came back to the prison in their own time during the afternoon so that no prisoners lost association as a result of the strike, and that prisoners were paid for work/education that they could not attend.
- 4.3.6 The Board commend the fact that the new staff profile was agreed with the Prison Officers' Association without contention and achieved without redundancies, and acknowledge the hard work of the Governor in helping prison officers to move to other prisons of their choice.
- 4.3.7 The Board congratulate staff and prisoners on the success of the Gordon Ramsey training kitchen, especially the fact that prisoners were allowed to work a full day in the kitchen rather than returning to their cells over lunch time, the strong likelihood that the bakery product they developed will be taken on by Working Links, providing work in the community for Cat D Brixton prisoners (see 5.4.1.6), and the possibility that the kitchen might be used for a new Clink restaurant at Brixton, providing ongoing in-prison training in chef and serving skills (see 6.6.3).

## **5. CORE REPORTING AREAS**

### **5.1 Care and Separation Unit (CSU)**

- 5.1.1 The CSU at HMP Brixton has 6 operational cells (one of them gated), 1 holding cell and 1 special cell. For the most part it operates to a good standard, it generally has a relatively relaxed atmosphere and is used only as a last resort (the Incentives and Earned Privileges [IEP] system is always used as the first option). 121 prisoners were accommodated in the CSU during the reporting year. Until the re-categorisation there were generally only 2-3 prisoners in the Unit and it was not unusual to find it empty. This was commendable in a Cat B local prison.
- 5.1.2 A full regime is offered every day and is generally taken up by prisoners in the CSU. Despite the redecoration in July 2011 the general facilities, particularly the heating, still require improvement. However the Board understand that this is unlikely to happen as the issues stem from HMP Brixton being a Victorian prison with limited opportunities to renovate.
- 5.1.3 The Board have received comparatively few applications from prisoners in the CSU (18 out of a total of 716) and Board members are always able to see and speak freely to prisoners. Board members who have attended reviews have on the whole been satisfied that the prison authorities have acted appropriately. The Board were concerned to learn that on one occasion in June, a prisoner did not receive his 72 hour review within the correct timeframe due to staffing levels over the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend; as far as the Board are aware, this was an oversight which has not occurred either before or since.
- 5.1.4 Internal adjudications are held regularly (every day if necessary) and are fully recorded. There have been a total of 1040 adjudications in the reporting period, a slight increase from 964 in the previous year. In addition, a judge conducts external adjudications approximately once a month; these are often attended by Board members and are considered to be fair and correctly documented.
- 5.1.5 The Samaritans cannot be called from a number of cells in the CSU because of poor reception from the base unit (the CSU shares a Samaritans phone with an adjacent residential wing). The Board has raised this problem with the prison but so far there has been no resolution.
- 5.1.6 A number of the prisoners who transferred to Brixton from HMP Wandsworth in January 2012 objected to sharing a cell and this led to increased use of the CSU. In the run-up to the re-role, this was repeated as Cat C prisoners arrived at Brixton with expectations of single cell occupancy.
- 5.1.7 Since the re-role the CSU has become far busier and for the first three weeks of July, all cells were continuously occupied. The Governor has suggested that the CSU may have to continue to be used to house Category C prisoners frustrated with the limited regime currently on offer at Brixton. Whilst this is only expected to be a teething issue, it has been suggested that this may not change greatly until the late autumn when more regime space becomes available. The only current contingency plan in place for an overflowing CSU is to allow one or more prisoners to serve their Cellular Confinement on the wings (this will be determined on a least risk basis); the Board have been assured that this option would hardly ever be used.
- 5.1.8 Staffing in the CSU has decreased as a result of the re-role, although officers are still specially selected to work in the CSU. There are now 3 officers on duty in the morning, 2 in the afternoon and 1 overnight; the big change being that there is no longer an SO on duty at all times. While this reduced staffing is in line with Cat C norms it is regrettable that staffing has decreased at a time when the unit has become busier.

## 5.2 Equality

- 5.2.1 For much of the year the Equality Manager post has been frozen (ahead of the re-categorisation) and the Foreign National Co-ordinator has been filling this role in addition to her own. As a result of the re-categorisation staffing has been further reduced, the department now has only two staff members, and a planned Equality Day has been put on hold. Although the re-categorisation led to some simplification of the foreign national population with the removal of sole detainees, the transfer of the VPU from HMP Wandsworth introduced a higher proportion of older and disabled prisoners to Brixton, which complicated the work of the department.
- 5.2.2 At the same time, a number of third sector organisations with good track records at Brixton have encountered funding/staffing problems that have reduced their ability to engage with Brixton prisoners: the Detention Advice Service stopped their weekly immigration advice visits to Brixton in March 2012 (although they are still available by telephone); Diaspora, who were running group sessions for Jamaican prisoners, had to suspend their involvement at the end of 2011; and the St Giles Trust have lost funding for their 'In Here and Out' sexual orientation programme. This is regrettable, since there is no public sector replacement for these valuable supports. (It is hoped that Diaspora will be able to start again by the end of September.)
- 5.2.3 The foreign national population stood at about 30% of the total until the prison was re-categorised, but has dropped to 15% at the close of the reporting period. In line with this change, the number of immigration officers who visit Brixton has been reduced from 3 to 2 and their surgery, which continues to be well-attended, runs only once per week instead of twice. An ad-hoc surgery is provided on the VPU.
- 5.2.4 Until the re-role the Board continued to be concerned about the number of sole detainees at Brixton and the length of time they remained in prison after completing their sentence. It took one sole detainee who wished to withdraw his appeal to the European Court of Human Rights and return to his country of origin several months to acquire the necessary disclaimer form despite IMB intervention.
- 5.2.5 In March 2012 the interpreting service at Brixton was transferred from the Big Word to Applied Language Solutions as a result of a Ministry of Justice wide contract. Under the new contract Equalities staff can no longer see up-to-date usage per wing or per prisoner, as reporting is very late. This is of concern to the Board, as we commented in our last Annual Report about the uneven take-up of interpreting services on different wings.
- 5.2.6 The proportion of BME prisoners in the population remains high at about 60% but SMART data through the year has raised no lasting concerns.
- 5.2.7 The number of older prisoners at Brixton increased markedly as a result of the transfer of the VPU from Wandsworth in January 2012. Twice weekly gym sessions for older prisoners have since been introduced, and a weekly drop-in group for older prisoners on the VPU has just started (though it is currently limited to 8 prisoners by the size of the room available). The Board hope that other activities appropriate for this age group, along with the space to accommodate them, will become available soon.
- 5.2.8 Equality representatives have been hard to retain over the reporting year because of the amount of prisoner movement. It is hoped that the re-categorisation will bring more stability to the role. Those representatives that have attended the Equality meetings seem to be well supported and to take their role seriously.
- 5.2.9 The number of Diversity Incident Report Forms (DIRFs) – which cover the full remit of diversity issues and have replaced the Racial Incident Report Forms – is quite low at 66 (compared with 95 during the last reporting year). Few complaints are upheld as diversity related, mostly because the grievance was of a more general nature, but the investigations and responses checked by the IMB were generally of a high standard. One of the (few) DIRFs that

required more detailed investigation took a surprisingly long time to complete (more than 4 months) and was not finalised at the end of the reporting period. During the reporting year the IMB received 21 applications that were primarily about equality issues compared with 16 in 2010/11.

- 5.2.10 After our last Annual Report, when the Board were concerned about the support available to homosexual prisoners, the prison engaged a St Giles Trust group (In Here and Out) to work with gay, bi-sexual and transgender prisoners (although they are currently without funding for group work). Homosexuality remains a difficult area for prisoners to be open about but the prison is taking its responsibility in this area seriously. During the reporting year two pre-op transgender prisoners have been successfully accommodated on the VP Unit.
- 5.2.11 The Board would like to commend the active support from SSAFA for imprisoned ex-servicemen.

### **5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health**

- 5.3.1 Healthcare had three big challenges over the reporting year: for most of the year, D wing (the Healthcare wing) had a number of very disturbed prisoners; the transfer of the Onslow VPU prisoners from HMP Wandsworth brought in elderly prisoners with different needs, some unaddressed on arrival; and forward planning was needed for the re-role to a Cat C prison, without a healthcare wing and with different prisoner needs. Despite these challenges, the healthcare contractors met all the key targets set by NHS Lambeth commissioners, and improved performance generally.
- 5.3.2 Despite a succession of very challenging patients – there was an increase in constant supervision and three man unlock, self harm, serious assaults on staff, cell wrecking, and ‘dirty protests’ – the standard of care by custodial and healthcare staff on D wing was maintained. The independent mental health advocacy worker endorsed the continuing high standards. As in previous years, there was sometimes a waiting list for D wing, so that mentally ill prisoners had to remain on a standard wing, although they were usually taken to D wing during unlock periods. On at least one occasion, when the three gated ‘constant supervision’ cells on D wing were in use, one prisoner was held in the gated cell in the CSU, with healthcare supervision. Some prisoners – e.g. a very disturbed new reception – were held temporarily in the CSU when there was no room in D wing, to reduce the risks to themselves and others.
- 5.3.3 A strategy for older prisoners was developed, and extra appointments and clinics have been arranged for them. NHS Lambeth provided additional funding to cope with the extra demand on services. VPU prisoners have praised the dental care. VPU prisoners are represented on the monthly meetings of prisoner representatives with Healthcare.
- 5.3.4 NHS Lambeth and the health providers (Care UK and SLaM), the London Specialist Commissioning Group and NOMS worked very hard to ensure that prisoners were transferred to appropriate provision when D wing closed in June 2012, and to provide some continuity for them. Some D wing staff transferred to the receiving prisons. NHS Lambeth PCT is also to be commended for developing a robust and precautionary assessment of healthcare needs in the prison for its future role.
- 5.3.5 Independent clinical reviews were carried out for the deaths in custody in 2011 and 2012. The most recent review praised the care the prisoner had received at Brixton and at HMP Pentonville. All reviews highlighted good clinical practice and the caring attitude of healthcare and prison staff, with no recommendations for improvement. Healthcare-related recommendations from previous reviews and from inquests – which are still running very late – are all in place, and were audited. In at least one case of self-harm, the prisoner’s life was saved by prompt action by healthcare and prison staff.
- 5.3.6 On-wing medical rooms have been refurbished. The Board continue to be pleased by the provision of clinics, regular health promotions, the monthly prisoner representative meetings

and the attendance of a prisoner at the quarterly healthcare partnership meetings. The Board also acknowledge the staff commitment across the prison, especially in the community mental health service and on D wing.

- 5.3.7 On a less positive note, funding for healthcare provision is to be cut, which may jeopardise some of the benefits achieved to date and the resettlement objective. From April 2014, healthcare in prisons will become the responsibility of the National Commissioning Board, and London healthcare commissioners have been working with the Department of Health on a new structure that recognises achievements made locally, and optimises opportunities available with a cross-London approach. It was agreed by the Brixton Healthcare Partnership that the NHS Lambeth contract with Care UK, due to expire in April 2013, be extended for a year to cover the transition period. Until there is more certainty about funding, however, there is no guarantee that the quality of care at Brixton will be maintained.
- 5.3.8 Training for staff and prisoners on learning disability is in progress, linked to a SLAM research project, but there is a lack of NOMS information about learning disability across the prison population.

## 5.4 Learning and Skills

### 5.4.1 The Education department

- 5.4.1.1 At the time of reporting Kensington and Chelsea College remains responsible for the provision of education and training within the prison. A new contract with education provider A4E will take effect from November 2012.
- 5.4.1.2 There are approximately 240 education/training places at each of the two daily education sessions. The education department is being refurbished to create more classrooms and scope for a wider range of activities suitable for the prison's new role. This will not be complete until late 2012. Portacabins have been installed to provide 96 education places – but there will be no net increase in provision until the refurbishment is complete. There are also plans to build a new education/workshop building, which will provide an additional 300 education places and is scheduled to be available from Autumn 2013. In the short term therefore, the prison remains woefully under-provided for in terms of education and training, and with the exception of 8 full-time training places in radio production, Cat C prisoners will at best be offered part-time education of 12.5 hours per week. This will reduce further to 10 hours per week in November 2012 when the new Offender Learning And Skills Service (OLASS) 4 contract begins.
- 5.4.1.3 Established courses include ESOL (English for prisoners whose first language is not English), English, maths, ICT, radio production, graphic design, business start-up, Health and Safety and industrial cleaning.
- 5.4.1.4 In our last Annual Report we were concerned about the high number of prisoners who failed to attend classes. Although there has been some improvement, attendance is still low. A **new workforce policy** introduced as part of the re-role aims at getting all prisoners out of cell and into work or education. As part of this policy healthcare appointments and recreational gym will take place during association time and it is hoped that this will increase education take-up. More strenuous efforts are also being made to prevent prisoners refusing education or signing up for more than one simultaneous activity (both of which have been ongoing problems).
- 5.4.1.5 The prison radio continues to thrive and to offer training to prisoners. In May 2012 it won a Gold Sony Radio Academy Award for “The Victim’s Voice” – a programme recording a Restorative Justice meeting between offenders and victims.

5.4.1.6 There have been a number of new education and training initiatives in the last year, including:

- The Prison Phoenix Trust provides **yoga** for prisoners on the Drug Recovery Wing.
- A **Writer in Residence** programme, which is part of The Writer in Prison Network, has been running since October 2011 although, because of the movement of prisoners as part of the re-role, some individuals who started with the programme have been unable to complete it, having moved on. The Introduction to Creative Writing course is 6 sessions and includes short stories, poetry, lyrics, story telling and play writing.
- Ten prisoners have been chosen to write an anthology of short stories to be published quarterly as part of a **Pathway Journalism** course, which is being re-branded and will also be accredited.
- A **Radio show** called WORD UP, which goes out monthly, is co-presented by prisoners and showcases writers in prisons.
- **Physical Education** are delivering a larger number of accredited training courses.
- A very successful production by the **Synergy Theatre Project** of Glengarry Glen Ross was performed and staged by Brixton prisoners to audiences of prisoners, their families and friends and members of the public.
- A **new kitchen** was provided by TV Channel 4 for the ‘Gordon Behind Bars’ TV programme, resulting in cooking training for a number of men, at least two of whom have already been released and obtained restaurant work. In a new departure for Brixton, prisoners were allowed to work a full day in the kitchen rather than returning to their cells over lunch time, making it a much more real working experience. It is hoped that **Working Links** will take over the ‘Bad Boys Bakery’ that was set up for ‘Gordon Behind Bars’ and provide continuing work for Cat D Brixton prisoners.

## 5.4.2 The Library

5.4.2.1 The prison Library continues to be run by Lambeth council, who provide one full-time member of staff. It is open from Monday to Friday for 24.75 hours per week. Prisoners are allowed 30 minutes per visit.

5.4.2.2 It is well stocked with novels and a range of general and legal reference books including those specified in the Prison Library Mandatory Publication List. Periodicals and daily newspapers are available for use in the library. The library runs a regular reading group as well as ‘Toe by Toe’ sessions (which enable prisoners who can read to support those who struggle with literacy).

5.4.2.3 Special provision is made within the library stock for ethnic minorities and the visually impaired, educationally disadvantaged and foreign national prisoners. Each wing also has a mini library, including one on the CSU.

5.4.2.4 Prisoners can attend a session with **Job centre plus** a few weeks prior to release to get assistance with applying for work and claiming benefits before they are discharged. **Virtual Campus** (a one-stop resettlement shop that enables prisoners to create CVs, apply for training and jobs online, find out about support resources and contact tutors inside and outside the prison) is now up and running after teething problems last year.

5.4.2.5 Library attendance levels have improved since last year but continue to be relatively low. One reason for this may be its location (away from the free-flow route and up several flights of stairs), so that prisoners have to be escorted in order to attend. Prisoners have told Board members that they would like to go to the Library but that staff are not available to take them. There are plans to move the Library this autumn to a new location at ground level on the free-flow route, which will increase accessibility and should increase utilisation.

## 5.5 Safer Custody

- 5.5.1 The regular monthly safer custody meeting is generally well attended by staff from across the prison (including primary care mental health, chaplaincy, equalities), Samaritans and Listener representatives. It is chaired by the Governing Governor, and observed by the IMB. There is good communication between departments at the meetings and the atmosphere is one of genuine care for the wellbeing of those in the prison's custody. It provides a useful forum for going over the month's events, evaluating the standard of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) paperwork and making sure that any issues arising are swiftly dealt with where possible or at least not allowed to slip from the agenda.
- 5.5.2 However, there have been instances where issues could not be dealt with due to the absence of the appropriate member of prison staff and lack of a substitute or email contribution. Occasionally this has led to delays of some months in issues being resolved. In addition, representatives from Security do not regularly attend the safer custody meetings, and the IMB is concerned that the department's records on use of force (where available, see 6.7.5) are not brought on to the safer custody agenda.
- 5.5.3 The monthly meeting is the forum in which the prison checks it is complying with coroners' recommendations arising out of inquests. Minutes of the meeting are readily available. The safer custody team compile comprehensive qualitative and quantitative monthly reports on incidents of harm and self-harm, which are shared with relevant staff at and between meetings. There has also been an audit of the relevant consolidated recommendations by the healthcare partnership.
- 5.5.4 Staff/prisoner relationships generally appear good. At least one prisoner told the IMB during the reporting period that he had requested transfer to Brixton on the basis of his previous experience of the officers here. Staff often go out of their way to improve things for prisoners. However, the transition period leading up to the July re-role to Cat C put strain on staff and prisoners alike. Some prisoners expressed dissatisfaction and frustration at the lack of Cat C facilities in the prison, which set back progress achieved elsewhere. Listeners reported being called to hear such complaints and there was at least one case of first time self-harm where the prisoner informed the IMB that this was due to lack of suitable regime. This does not conform with the prison's own vision, published in its Violence Reduction Strategy, of a climate "where prisoners are held in a safe, secure establishment and encouraged to use their time in custody constructively through the regime and use of relevant programmes designed to reduce the risk of re-offending."
- 5.5.5 Listeners, overseen by the Samaritans, have continued to provide valuable support to prisoners, although numbers have fluctuated over the reporting period, and occasionally some landings have been left without any Listeners available. This was due to their transfer to other establishments and the fact that the prison was not allowed to put a hold on them. Occasionally Listeners have complained of not being unlocked and so unable to fulfil their duties. A Listener reported during the October 2011 meeting that Listeners were unable to get on to D Wing. At that time one prisoner on D wing set fire to himself. The Listener thought that this incident might have been avoided had Listeners been available, although the prison received no formal complaint to this effect. As the IMB reported last year, not all Listeners' spaces are fully confidential as at least one still has a window in its door.
- 5.5.6 Discussions as to how the prison would function with respect to safer custody after the re-role seemed to take place very late in the day, and a new constant supervision policy for after the re-role was only put in place in July/August 2012. In the lead up to the re-role and since its implementation, prison staff have repeatedly stated that the new types of prisoner have different needs and are less likely to self-harm than before. The Board acknowledge that the numbers of open ACCTs and incidences of self-harm have reduced substantially since the re-role but urge the prison to guard against complacency, especially given the high levels of frustration at the inadequate regime.

- 5.5.7 There are sufficient ACCT assessors and family liaison officers, including at senior level. Ensuring the quality and consistency of paperwork has been a challenge. The quality of ACCT entries was found to be variable throughout the reporting period (some were excellent and detailed whilst common shortcomings were repetitive, cursory entries filled in every hour on the hour, especially during night time periods.) Some ACCTs seen by the IMB lacked basic information e.g. who had opened the ACCT and whether the prisoner's consent to share information had been sought and/or obtained. Some lacked sufficient staff/prisoner interaction. The shortcomings in completion and timeliness, as well as circulation amongst staff, of assessment forms were also flagged by coroners' rulings on earlier deaths in custody – although it is likely that these comments are out of step with current (generally improved) practice because of inquest delays.
- 5.5.8 For a period following the new prisoner transport contract with SERCO the prison was receiving prisoners very late in the evening. This could have increased the risks to vulnerable prisoners. SERCO attendance at the monthly meeting was poor. The prison also recorded instances where prisoners were returned to the prison by SERCO without their ACCT paperwork.
- 5.5.9 There were two deaths in custody during the year (one of them in hospital after a protracted illness). The Board felt the deaths were handled well and compassionately. The chaplaincy are actively involved, including in family liaison and in supporting staff and other prisoners directly involved. The IMB are promptly informed when a serious incident occurs.
- 5.5.10 There were also several instances of serious self-harm that did not prove fatal. In at least one case this appeared to be thanks to swift and concerted staff intervention.
- 5.5.11 One prisoner refused food in August 2011 and was admitted to hospital and discharged several times. In the Board's view staff treated him with respect for his dignity throughout a difficult period of physical deterioration.

## **6. ADDITIONAL REPORTING AREAS**

This section highlights areas of good practice and those of concern to the IMB across the remainder of the prison.

### **6.1 Chaplaincy**

#### **Good practice**

- 6.1.1 The Chaplaincy team represents the major world religions and is particularly active, with some outside faith groups involved in services.
- 6.1.2 The department continues to run a wide range of well-attended chaplaincy activities throughout the week, including regular services for C of E, Free Church, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu prisoners. Chaplains of other faiths visit the prison as required.
- 6.1.3 Muslim prisoners observing Ramadan this year have been provided with flasks containing their evening meal. The IMB have received no complaints about this provision, which suggests that it has been more successful than last year's freeze-dried food packs.
- 6.1.4 The resettlement agenda is supported through the Debt Programme and partnerships with mentoring agencies, enabling men to leave the prison with community support.
- 6.1.5 In preparation for the change in Brixton's role the Chaplaincy team has developed a full-time 6 week 'Faith in the Future' faith-based resettlement programme. It will commence in early September 2012, can accommodate 20 prisoners and is fully booked. There are plans to run 5 such courses per year. The chaplaincy is also introducing a programme of evening activities.

#### **Concerns**

- 6.1.6 The full-time Imam transferred to another prison in late 2011, and a new permanent Imam could not be appointed because of a Prison Service recruitment freeze. The sessional Imam increased his hours, and, as well as the weekly service, has been running study groups, with a separate one for the VPU prisoners. However, it seemed to the Board that a significant population (almost 25% of the prison) was not having their needs met in an adequate fashion. The Board raised this concern with the Secretary of State and we have just heard that a new appointment has been sanctioned – but the fact remains that Muslim prisoners have had reduced support for a significant period.

### **6.2 Drug Recovery Wing (DRW)**

#### **Good practice**

- 6.2.1 In September 2011, as part of a Ministry of Justice pilot programme, Brixton set up a 60 bed DRW on A Wing to provide a focused environment to support prisoners who are ready to overcome their drug or alcohol dependency.
- 6.2.2 A key feature of the pilot is the working links that have been forged with the local community, so that prisoners have developed relationships with external support groups before release. The Unit has linked with drug and alcohol teams in a number of local London Boroughs as well as a range of mutual aid groups such as Narcotics Anonymous. Prisoners are also provided with more holistic rehabilitation support including yoga, acupuncture and advice about healthy relationships.

#### **Concerns**

- 6.2.3 While the pilot has been a useful trial run in forging community links ahead of the prison's re-role, it has been a difficult period in which to develop a stable population on the DRW, and many prisoners who moved on to the wing were transferred with little warning. This has made it difficult to get a good measure of outcomes. It is hoped that this will improve as the prison's

population stabilises. Meanwhile a significant number of prisoners on the DRW have not committed to the aims of the Unit, and this makes it more difficult to manage.

- 6.2.4 For this reason, and because the DRW is part of a larger wing, it has been hard to minimise traffic coming on and off the unit and interactions with other prisoners. The Board have been told that the other DRWs in the pilot all have self-contained accommodation; this would have been very beneficial at Brixton.
- 6.2.5 The Board understand that there was no additional funding for the DRW, resulting in further stretching of already stretched resources.

## **6.3 Induction**

### **Good practice**

- 6.3.1 Brixton has developed a much-improved Induction presentation to replace the outdated Cat B version.
- 6.3.2 Three tailored induction programmes have been introduced for Cat C prisoners, Vulnerable Prisoners and Cat D prisoners on ROTL, each with a useful accompanying booklet.
- 6.3.3 The Chaplaincy makes a huge effort to attend induction meetings and is extremely encouraging and proactive in getting prisoners engaged in some of the services/programmes prisoners can attend in the Chapel.

### **Concerns**

- 6.3.4 The new presentation was not produced in time for the start of the re-role and a number of prisoners expressed frustration and confusion when shown slides that contained out of date information.
- 6.3.5 The presentation is currently being shown on an inadequately small screen in a room where it is difficult for more than a few at the front to view it clearly.
- 6.3.6 As new arrivals at Brixton have already spent time in other prisons, they have an awareness of many if not all Prison Service rules and regimes and are much more interested in local information about Home Detention Curfew (HDC), pin phone transfers and the details and timing of ROTL applications. The Board recommend that the presentation place a stronger focus on these topics. The Board also recommend that the presentation include more information on the limitations of the current regime in order to better manage prisoners' expectations.
- 6.3.7 Prisoners are not given the induction booklets mentioned above until after they have attended the induction presentation. Since some prisoners appear not to get to this presentation until they have been at Brixton for a number of days, it would be more useful for the booklet to be given to them on arrival.
- 6.3.8 Since new arrivals at the prison are now immediately housed on their final destination wing rather than on a 'first-nighter' wing, the Board seek assurance that they are well monitored during their first few days at the prison, when it is recognised that risk of self-harm is highest.
- 6.3.9 The updated Induction material has not yet been translated. Although the diversity of nationalities and language speakers has reduced we would still recommend that the literature is made available in a variety of languages as soon as its content is settled.

## **6.4 Prisoners' mail and complaints**

### **Concerns**

- 6.4.1 During early months of 2012 the IMB received numerous complaints about lost or delayed incoming and outgoing mail, including delayed legal letters that led to missed court dates and appeal deadlines.

- 6.4.2 A significant backlog of mail, some of it delayed by as much as three months and including Valentine cards, Mothers' Day cards, money, legal letters, Visiting Orders and a funeral oration written by a prisoner, was discovered and cleared by the prison in early April.
- 6.4.3 At about the same time the number of IMB applications concerning late or missing replies to Prison complaints (Comp 1s) also increased and again a backlog of such complaints was discovered and dealt with.
- 6.4.4 A Prisoner Information Note was issued apologising to prisoners for the problems, and matters improved to some extent.
- 6.4.5 While the Board were pleased that the problems were acknowledged and addressed by the prison, we were alarmed that things could go so wrong in an area that has such a significant impact on prisoners' ability to maintain good relationships with their families, as well as on their legal rights and the decency with which they feel they are being treated. Such problems are not solved overnight, and we are continuing to monitor these areas closely.

## 6.5 Reception

### Good practice

- 6.5.1 Approximately 20 ROTL prisoners currently go out each day between 8am and 9am returning between 7pm and 9pm. The process for these prisoners is straightforward and working well, and it is hoped that the numbers will increase soon.

### Concerns

- 6.5.2 Because there are now fewer receptions there has been a reduction in staffing from five officers to three. Two staff members are needed to check the prisoners in and three must be present to search them. Previously prisoners could be checked in and sent straight on to be searched, but with the reduced staffing level prisoners have to wait until everyone has been checked in before searching can begin. As a result staff struggle to get prisoners on to the Wings before 5pm. This is especially true currently for transfers, who frequently arrive late afternoon as there is no 'cut off' time to receive them, and who can number approximately 11-12 per day.
- 6.5.3 No decision has yet been reached about the amount of property that transferring prisoners can bring to Brixton or leave with. Brixton has a small property store and volumetric control has often been a problem, notably when HMP Wandsworth's VPU was transferred early in 2012. An additional problem is that Serco may not have space on the van to accept all the prisoners' bags.
- 6.5.4 The new Cat C facilities list is of a broader scope than the old Cat B one but is not completely compatible with other Cat C prisons. Items brought into the prison that are not on the list are initially taken away from the prisoner, who then has to apply to have the item back in his possession. The list has been updated at least once since the re-role, but inconsistencies have led to a degree of dissatisfaction among transferring prisoners.
- 6.5.5 The holding cells in Reception are still in use but to a lesser degree than previously. The Board are sorry that the most recent HMCIP inspection recommendation that prisoners can access key information about the prison during their wait for processing has still not been implemented.
- 6.5.6 It is not yet clear how well staff will be able to cope in future when 100 prisoners are coming in and out of the prison on ROTL on a daily basis.

## 6.6 Resettlement

### Good practice

- 6.6.1 As was the case last year, Brixton prison **consistently exceeds the NOMS resettlement target of 80%** of prisoners having accommodation to go to on release. From August 2011 to May 2012 the rate achieved each month ranged from 83% to 91%, the average over this 10-month period being 86%.
- 6.6.2 The Drug Recovery Wing (see section 6.2) has been a useful ‘trial run’ in forging community links ahead of the prison’s re-role.
- 6.6.3 The prison works with a **range of partners** to support prisoners with resettlement e.g. St Giles Trust, Jobcentre Plus, chaplaincy, New Bridge, Working Links. This provides a good basis from which to support a range of prisoner resettlement needs. Examples of good resettlement support include:
- **Mentoring** – the prison has increased the mentoring opportunities open to prisoners. Belong London started work in the prison in April 2012 providing one-to-one mentoring support for prisoners. New Bridge, St Giles Trust and the chaplaincy all also provide mentoring / meet-at-the-gate services. Following the re-role the prison now has a Mentoring Coordinator to maximise the benefit of this activity to the prison. Mentors are currently focusing on higher risk prisoners but the vision is for all prisoners to have a mentor. This emphasis on mentoring is very positive, as it has been shown to be effective in aiding successful resettlement.
  - **Integrated Offender Management (IOM)** – the Lambeth and Southwark IOM teams work with Brixton prisoners, aiming to reduce re-offending on release. They focus on prisoners serving sentences of less than 12 months who have a clear connection to the boroughs of Lambeth or Southwark. These prisoners are assigned an Enhanced Case Manager (ECM) to work with them – normally about 6-8 weeks before release. During this period, applications to support individuals for housing, employment, education, identification, drug treatment etc will be explored and the relevant referrals will be made. Upon release the ECM will continue to work with the client and support him to continue to access support services as well as focus on key working to identify triggers to offending; this may include ‘buddying up’ clients with IOM volunteers and/or peer support workers.
  - The prison worked with Gordon Ramsay on an innovative project in the first half of 2012 that resulted in a small number of prisoners being trained in chef skills. This has led to a much larger scale, long-term beneficial legacy in that a new Clink restaurant and kitchen may be established that will result in prisoners being trained in chef and serving **skills** to run the high quality restaurant.
- 6.6.4 Becoming a Category C prison has increased the prison’s focus on and need to provide resettlement services. This is no small challenge in a prison with a limited budget for resettlement activity, and a small footprint for its population size with limited options for using space flexibly for new resettlement activity. However the prison has already made important progress in adapting to its new role:
- The Governor and members of the prison’s senior management team have worked with colleagues in NOMS to design and agree a **new three storey building for resettlement activity**, including classrooms, a wet work area (for learning skills like bricklaying and plumbing) and a gym. Building work will begin in September 2012.
  - Since taking Category D prisoners (initially from HMP Latchmere) the prison had to organise its reception to start processing **ROTL prisoners who go out to work**. This system has been established with 20 prisoners now going out to work on a daily basis. Over the coming months the prison is set to increase this number to 100 prisoners working out of the prison each day – and is establishing D Wing and part of C Wing to house ROTL prisoners together.

- The length of time for prisoners' **visits** with their families has been increased from one to two hours, and visits are available every day of the week.
- The prison and NHS Lambeth PCT commissioners jointly ran a one-day **resettlement conference** to which many local agencies were invited. Despite some organisational problems the day generated good will and potential support for future placements.

### Concerns

- 6.6.5 A significant challenge for the prison in its new role is increasing the number of hours each day that prisoners are engaged in meaningful activity rather than spent in their cells. This requires sufficient time and prioritisation to be given to developing and implementing a **resettlement strategy**. It also requires sufficient staff to prevent backlogs in clearing prisoners for these activities – something that has been a problem in recent months.
- 6.6.6 As noted above the prison already has a positive range of organisations providing resettlement services and is looking to increase this. The challenge is ensuring that the current and future resettlement providers are effectively co-ordinated and complementary – to meet needs and avoid duplication of provision.
- 6.6.7 The prison could develop a more robust and explicit resettlement strategy with partners, so that all partners are clear on their and others' roles and how best to work together, and the prison is clear on how existing provision could be boosted to meet gaps in service demand. The Head of Resettlement and the Governor need to work collaboratively on this.
- 6.6.8 An example of where insufficient priority seems to be being given to maximising resettlement opportunities is in **cultivating links with local businesses** to generate work placement opportunities for Brixton prisoners. The prison has several business leads to follow up from contacts received from Latchmere House when it closed, and from other senior management contacts; but a full-time post to take on this business link role is not due to be filled until April 2013. Existing staff struggle to find the time alongside other responsibilities to develop these links – resulting in wasted opportunity.
- 6.6.9 Another key to a robust resettlement strategy is the need for a change in focus for **accommodation services** in the prison from saving existing accommodation (which was the case when the prison had a high proportion of new prisoners on remand) to finding accommodation for prisoners to go to on release – which is the case with the new population which largely has less than a year to serve on their sentences. Locating housing for offenders is a difficult task so the prison needs to co-ordinate its efforts across a range of providers (e.g. St Giles, Lambeth Council) as effectively as possible.
- 6.6.10 There is a question over whether the prison could do more to **advertise the range of resettlement services** that are available to prisoners – from induction through to regular information on the wings throughout a prisoner's stay. Often we hear that prisoners find out about support and services via word of mouth, rather than co-ordinated communication from prison staff.

## 6.7 Security

### Good practice

- 6.7.1 The biometric system that checks and identifies visitors from their fingerprints and photographs seems to be working well in the visitors' hall. It is also used for prisoners, who are checked against the system when they are released.
- 6.7.2 Over much of the reporting year the number of positive Mandatory Drug Tests (MDTs) has declined.

### Concerns

- 6.7.3 However, the Board are aware that positive MDTs and mobile phone activity have both risen since the re-role. The Security Department recognise that more needs to be done to monitor

new arrivals and ROTL prisoners returning to the prison, and we are assured that more robust measures are now in place.

- 6.7.4 During the reporting year there were two attempted escapes (one outside the prison that was foiled by the swift action of escorting prison officers). With respect to the attempted escape from within the prison, the Board were concerned about the level of staff training to access CCTV footage and trust that this has now improved.
- 6.7.5 Quarterly use of force meetings appear not to have been held regularly, possibly as a result of staff shortages. Those that were held were detailed and useful.

## **6.8 Visits**

### **Good Practice**

- 6.8.1 Visits sessions have been increased and now operate 7 days a week.
- 6.8.2 Prisoners housed on the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit have three exclusive visiting sessions on Tuesday morning, Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning.
- 6.8.3 Enhanced prisoners can enjoy four visits in every 4-week period, including one on a Sunday; standard prisoners are permitted three visits and basic prisoners two. These allowances are higher than the statutory requirements. The Board welcome this acknowledgement of the importance of good family relations to successful resettlement and recognise the effort being made by prison management in this area to make up for the lack of a good resettlement regime.
- 6.8.4 Since the re-role 2 hour visits have been introduced which have been welcomed by the prisoners and have alleviated the staffing problems of escorting prisoners as visiting times now coincide with free-flow times.
- 6.8.5 Spurgeons, who now operate the Visitor Centre, have a good relationship with the prison.
- 6.8.6 The prison has organised some popular family days and have plans for more. Snakes Alive (a touring programme that offers a hands-on educational experience for young people using a wide variety of live reptiles) has visited twice recently and been very popular. A science day is planned for later in the summer.
- 6.8.7 Spurgeons have plans for creating a staffed coffee bar within Visits, allowing a wider variety of refreshments than are currently available through the vending machines, as well as offering a more 'user-friendly' interface to prisoners' families and friends.
- 6.8.8 The visits booking system has been streamlined and the number of bookings that are made on line has increased.

### **Concerns**

- 6.8.9 The size of the hall is comparatively small for the size of the prison and the average number of visitors visiting at full sessions. The maximum number of prisoners that can be accommodated is 23.
- 6.8.10 The Board would welcome the introduction of evening visits once Brixton has settled into a fully operational Cat C prison. Sessions when children can come in to complete their homework with their fathers would also be welcome.
- 6.8.11 Vulnerable prisoners' visitors currently only have one opportunity per week to bring in clothes as the prison currently only accepts property handovers on weekday mornings.
- 6.8.12 The contract with Spurgeons has been negotiated by the Prison Service for all London prisons. While the Board have no issues with the service Spurgeons provide we understand that it is more expensive than the previous locally negotiated one with PACT. The IMB do not think it right that Brixton should have to carry this increased cost.

- 6.8.13 The building used by Spurgeons is not fit for purpose despite recent redecoration, as it is often over-crowded and chaotic before and after visiting times.
- 6.8.14 There is often no-one available to supervise the children of visitors, leading to additional pressure on prisoners, their visitors and staff.
- 6.8.15 Some prisoners and their families had great difficulties attending visits when the post room was overwhelmed in the spring as Visiting Orders failed to arrive on time (see section 6.4).

## **6.9 Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU)**

### **Good Practice**

- 6.9.1 With the transfer of the VPU from HMP Wandsworth in January 2012 it became possible to house this prisoner group completely separately from other prisoners. This has removed the concerns we expressed in our last Annual Report about the housing of some VPs on the same landing as other prisoners.
- 6.9.2 Brixton Healthcare Department's planning for this increase in the number of older prisoners in Brixton was very good. Extra appointments and clinics have been arranged for them. VPU prisoners have praised the dental care.

### **Concerns**

- 6.9.3 The transfer of VPs from Wandsworth led to a number of problems accommodating prisoners with restricted mobility as there are very few ground floor cells at Brixton. On B wing, where they were initially located, a few prisoners with restricted mobility could not access showers or exercise outside until the prison implemented an IMB suggestion that these men could use the CSU showers and exercise yard.
- 6.9.4 A number of transferred prisoners who were accustomed to single cell occupation objected to sharing and this led to an increased use of the CSU. Many prisoners complained about property having been lost or unexpectedly removed to the Branston storage centre, and it appeared that transferring prisoners had not been adequately advised about Brixton's property storage limits. There were also problems with legal and security-related mail. The Board felt that these problems made the transition period more unsettling for staff and prisoners and that the problems could have been better anticipated and planned for.
- 6.9.5 There was significant discontent among transferred prisoners about a worsening of regime compared with Wandsworth, particularly with respect to their limited time out of cell (2.5 hours per day) and lack of purposeful activity. With the re-role, time out of cell has improved – all prisoners are now out of their cells for 2.5 hours morning and afternoon for association, education or work and for an hour on some evenings for showers, phone calls or an organised activity; VPs are being used as kitchen workers; and efforts are being made to increase the range of activities available – but the Board feel that these improvements have taken too long to occur.
- 6.9.6 The physical condition of G wing (to which the VPU was transferred after a few months on B-wing) was very poor – with leaking pipes, malfunctioning heating, and dilapidated flooring and paintwork. Some repairs have now taken place and the wing is looking brighter and cleaner, but the buildings are old and in generally poor condition and the prison continues to struggle to find the necessary resources to repair and repaint.
- 6.9.7 One newly arrived VP with mobility problems had to be housed in the CSU because there was no ground floor accommodation on the VPU. The prison transferred him on as soon as possible. Meanwhile the man was relocated by wheelchair to the VPU for association each day and was appreciative of the treatment he received, but the Board felt that there was inadequate recognition by the central Prisoner Movement Unit of the type of prisoner who could be accommodated by Brixton.

## 7. THE WORK OF THE IMB

- 7.1 Seven new Board members have been recruited this year (including four who will be joining in September 2012); four members have left the Board and three are on a year's sabbatical.
- 7.2 Monthly Board meetings are held, and are attended by the prison's Governor or his nominated deputy. Each Board member is expected to carry out one rota visit between Board meetings. This allows for three members to carry out a rota visit in any one week. During a rota visit the Board member is expected to complete outstanding applications and to attend segregation reviews and adjudication hearings in addition to monitoring the day-to-day operation of the prison. Each member also has an area of special interest that they focus on for the reporting year. This involves observing prison meetings on the area, arranging information-gathering meetings with the relevant prison staff, and additional monitoring e.g. of completion standards of ACCTs. Our work culminates in this written report but involves us working with the prison on a weekly basis and, where necessary, challenging the prison to make improvements.
- 7.3 The Board are grateful to members of staff who have facilitated the work of the IMB, whether by attending Board meetings to keep us up-to-date, by making time to explain their role to individual Board members or by more general assistance to us in doing our duties.
- 7.4 The total number of applications to the IMB during this reporting period was 716, a significant rise from previous years.



<b>Board Statistics</b>	
Recommended complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	16
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period (including 3 who are on sabbatical)	19
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	8
Number of members leaving within reporting period	4
Total number of board meetings during reporting period	12
Average number of members at Board meetings during reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	Not recorded
Total number of segregation reviews held	Not recorded
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not recorded

## Applications to the IMB

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>2008/9</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>
A	Accommodation	34	41	36	44
B	Adjudications	7	11	9	11
C	Diversity Related	19	18	16	21
D	Education/employment/training	21	24	28	49
E	Family/visits	79	61	72	76
F	Food/kitchen related	37	27	36	30
G	Health related	65	55	62	68
H	Property	98	92	112	123
I	Sentence related	18	15	22	59
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee related	41	38	36	45
K	Transfers	28	29	34	40
L	Miscellaneous	62	64	69	150
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>716</b>