



HMP Brixton

Independent Monitoring Board

Annual Report to the Secretary of State

1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014

Section 1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

1.1 The Prison Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and immigration removal centre 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:

- a. 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.
- b. inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, of any concern it has.
- c. 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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Section 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

- 3.1 For the year under review, HMP Brixton held Category C and D prisoners, with the aim of focusing on training and resettlement. The transfer of the Cat C vulnerable prisoners (VPs) to HMP Littlehey from the beginning of July and their replacement with main population Cat C prisoners brought changes in the distribution of the prison's accommodation. The transfers in and out were nearly completed by the end of August.
- 3.2 The prison's certified accommodation remained 525, but at the end of August the operational capacity rose from 798 to 810.
- 3.3 There are five residential areas (wings) and a Care and Separation Unit (CSU). From the beginning of September 2013 to the end of June 2014, A and B Wings held Cat C prisoners, and C Wing held Cat D prisoners, not all cleared for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). D Wing held the majority of Cat D prisoners going out to work on ROTL. G Wing held Cat C VPs, mostly offence-related (i.e. sex offenders). The capacity during that period was:
- Cat C: 365 prisoners in 227 cells on A (215 prisoners) and B (150 prisoners) Wings; A Wing had 17 ground floor cells and 62 places on two half landings gated off as a Drug Recovery Unit; B Wing had two safer custody cells.
 - Cat D: 183 prisoners in 95 cells on C (133 prisoners) and D (50 prisoners) Wings; C Wing had one ground floor cell; D Wing had three ground floor cells.
 - Cat C VPs: 250 prisoners in 148 cells on G Wing; one ground floor cell adapted for two prisoners.
 - The CSU had 6 cells, one holding room and one special cell.
- 3.4 At the end of August, after the transitional period, the configuration of the prison's accommodation was:
- Cat C: 630 prisoners in 475 cells on A (240 prisoners), B (150 prisoners) and G (240 prisoners) Wings.
 - Cat D: 133 prisoners on C Wing.
 - D Wing, with a capacity of 47, housed the remaining VPs.
 - The CSU remained the same.
- 3.5 From the end of this reporting year, the criteria for accepting prisoners in Reception are: Cat C and D prisoners from London, within the M25 only; no sex offenders, no prisoners from a CSU or Healthcare. Only prisoners sentenced to between 12 months and 4 years, or those with between 3 and 12 months left to serve of longer sentences, will be accepted.
- 3.6 During the reporting year, admission numbers varied, but were not subject to unusual variation. However, from 1st to 23rd July, an average of 50 VPs per week were transferred to HMP Littlehey. The 45 VPs who remained at the end of the reporting period - those completing sex offender treatment programmes (SOTP) and thinking skills programmes (TSP), some kitchen workers and those about to be released - will have left Brixton by the end of September. From 23rd July to the end of August, an average of 60 Cat C and Cat D prisoners per week were transferred into Brixton.
- 3.7 The prison must be commended on the smooth transfer into and out of Brixton. A sympathetic approach was taken to the transfer of elderly and/or frail VPs to HMP Littlehey. Great care was taken that all prisoners transferring into or out of Brixton had all their necessary documentation, health records and property.

- 3.8 During the period of transfer, and because of a smaller pool of eligible prisoners, prisoners inappropriate for ROTL and a more risk-averse attitude nationally to the granting of ROTL, the number of prisoners going out on ROTL dropped from the high 70s to an average of 30 each day.
- 3.9 Material changes to prison accommodation were largely a consequence of the transfers in and out. The privacy locks were taken from D Wing and moved to the fourth floor of C Wing, for the use of prisoners with full-time ROTL employment. Several holding cells in Reception have been converted to a storage area for the use of ROTL prisoners.
- 3.10 The new building, called the Building Block, housing the gym and spaces for Learning and Skills enterprises, has been a tremendous and necessary addition to the prison's focus on training. However, the lift was installed without a means of communication in case of emergency and so has been out of use since the building opened, limiting access to the upper floors to the able-bodied.
- 3.11 The sterile area at the end of G Wing was developed into a garden for VPs to gain horticultural qualifications. After the transfer of VPs out of Brixton, the opportunity to gain horticultural qualifications was opened to all prisoners. Those with cells on G Wing have enjoyed the garden's ambience during free flow, and everyone moving through the prison has taken pleasure in the boxes and pots filled with plants and flowers which have been placed in the prison's open areas by the gardening staff and prisoners.
- 3.12 The Visitors' area was decorated, and the Bad Boys Bakery opened a cafe for the use of visitors and prison staff. A new room in Reception where interviews could be conducted confidentially was being prepared.
- 3.13 CCTV along the perimeter and along free flow areas was upgraded.
- 3.14 There remained areas of dilapidation which need immediate attention. In the absence of a Building Management System the aged boilers are not up to the task of keeping all areas of the prison at a reasonable temperature. Although the showers on the wings have been improved to some extent, they remain below acceptable standard. Although for most of the reporting year the CSU suffered from severe dilapidation, the walls and floor of the shower, as well as the walls of cells, have recently been much improved, as were the toilets in Reception.
- 3.15 The prison was staffed by 104 officers, when the prison's quota was 110 and 35 operational support grades (OSG), when the prison's quota was 38. There were 16 senior officers (SOs), which met requirements. Those staffing figures mask the deplorable results of staffing levels which are far from optimal and result in delays in the work of, for example, the Offender Management Unit (OMU), the mandatory drug testing and equalities teams, and the ROTL spotters.
- 3.16 By the end of August, the ratio of staff to prisoners on Wings A, B and G was 1:30; on C Wing 1:44; and D Wing 1:23.
- 3.17 Although Brixton faced great challenges, which are highlighted throughout this Report, in general prisoners had more time out of cell and more access to purposeful activity during the reporting year.

Section 4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

- 4.1 Since Brixton's re-role to a Cat C and D prison focusing on training and resettlement, building work has been completed and new activity spaces have become available. Although it is regrettable that this transition has taken so long, the prison has begun to feel more suited to its new role.
- 4.2 The Board commends the prison's efforts to offer a regime more focused on resettlement over the reporting year. Opportunities for purposeful activity improved significantly in both quantity and quality. However, some obstacles remain before Brixton can genuinely be called a resettlement prison: there was still not an activity place for every prisoner, there was an unacceptably high number of prisoners without an assessment (OASys) and sentence plan, and residential accommodation remained of a poor standard. Staffing issues and the transfer out of the VP population (June and July) challenged the stability needed for the prison to settle into its new role.
- 4.3 Applications to the IMB were up by over 80% on last year (1098 compared to 602). The Board attributed this to late, inadequate or non-existent responses from the prison to complaints and requests, and general apps, as well as recurrent problems within the prison, particularly in relation to drug testing and matters within the remit of the OMU.

Operation of the regime

- 4.4 In his response to the Board's last report the then Minister stated, "[a]s the prison stabilises following its re-role, staff at HMP Brixton will be increasingly able to implement the establishment's admission criteria and ensure that prisoners are appropriate for HMP Brixton". Regrettably, this has not happened. The prison continued to receive prisoners who did not meet the criteria for a resettlement regime, particularly by having too long or too short a time left to serve. Additional upheaval was caused by the transfer of almost the entire VP population: the Board regrets that all the prison's work to create a resettlement regime for two distinct populations (e.g. the planning of two barber shops) and the ensuing expense were effectively wasted. However, it commends the determination of the governor responsible for resettlement at the time the transfer was announced, that the prison would continue to do its best for VPs as long as they remained.
- 4.5 The pace of improvements to the operation of the OMU was slowed by changes in management and the restructuring of staff teams into new "hubs", as well as staff absence. While the Board recognises and commends the work that governors have done both to deal with the piles of files representing a huge backlog and to attempt to quantify the extent of problems, of which the backlog of OASys forms is the most prominent, it remains concerned that the OMU is unable to function at the required level. At the end of the reporting period an estimated 491 prisoners were without a complete, up-to-date OASys form. Staff were often cross-deployed and morale remained low, with the result that hundreds of prisoners were unable to progress through their sentence towards, e.g. recategorisation, ROTL or home detention curfew (HDC). It was not uncommon to hear from staff in the OMU that through annual leave, cross-deployment, and dealing with other unanticipated urgent events, they were left with just a few spare hours each week to address the needs of their prisoner caseload. This is clearly unsustainable when each OASys form takes an average of approximately 8 hours to complete, or 4 to review. At times prisoners could have been provided with more information on the processes and timeframe of OMU work. It would help prisoners and staff if prisoners had a better understanding of who would do what and when, including what they themselves need to do, to progress their cases e.g. for ROTL and HDC.

- 4.6 The robust implementation of the new Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme led to complaints from prisoners who, without any corresponding deterioration in their behaviour, experienced a downgrading of their status. In the Board's view, this was an unnecessary, undesirable and demoralising example of a stress on an establishment managing too much change with too few resources. There was not enough preparation, either for operational staff or for others working with prisoners in education and training, to ensure that prisoners were brought up to speed with the new requirements for positive behaviour (rather than the absence of negative behaviour). Entries regarding prisoner behaviour were not routinely added to case notes (NOMIS).
- 4.7 The atmosphere in the prison was generally calm and relaxed, with the use of force commendably low.

Resettlement Regime

- 4.8 Progress has been made during the last year towards Brixton fully operating as a resettlement prison. As part of the new regime, several new activities have started in the prison. However, challenges remained. There were too few activities available for every prisoner to be able to participate in them. This was due to a number of factors: delays in new physical spaces being made available; difficulties in planning activities due to a lack of coordinated information-sharing among relevant agencies; Brixton receiving prisoners who did not match resettlement criteria or who had no sentence plan in place; and the slow pace of the necessary culture change to transform the prison from a Cat B local to a genuine resettlement prison. It would have been beneficial for prisoners to have received more regular updates on what activities were coming on stream when throughout 2014.
- 4.9 Despite improved enrolment in classes, courses were still not full to capacity, leaving too many men on the wing during the core day.

Accommodation

- 4.10 While the new building, the Building Block, has provided welcome new activity space, residential accommodation remains essentially unchanged. There continued to be no significant investment in improving the Victorian fabric of the wings.
- 4.11 There was no satisfactory exit plan for prisoners who refused to leave the CSU. While some were referred to the independent adjudicator (in the hope that the prospect of a penalty of additional days would be a deterrent), this was not possible for others, such as Lifers or those on recall. The Board was concerned by inconsistencies in approach to this problem by different members of the senior management team.

Staffing

- 4.12 In general, staff continued to work hard to get the best outcomes for prisoners and to treat prisoners with patience and humanity. They coped well with the introduction in January of New Ways of Working, the welcome result of which has been more men out of their cells for longer.

- 4.13 However, low staff levels meant that there was little slack to cover unpredictable events such as staff sickness, which was uncomfortably high for much of the year, or prisoner escorts. The impact of this was felt in all areas of the prison. In particular, the OMU, which was already pushed to the limits dealing with the high number of prisoners both already in Brixton and newly arriving without up-to-date OASys documents, then had staff cross-deployed, which exacerbated delays even further. Lower staff numbers and cross-deployment have also affected the CSU. The Board has noted an increase in instances when there is only one officer in the CSU as others have been cross-deployed. This reduces the level of engagement with prisoners in the CSU as cell doors cannot be unlocked when only one officer is present, so the only communication possible with prisoners is through the closed door. This affects the interaction prisoners have with all those visiting the CSU, including IMB members.
- 4.14 Additionally, there were frequent changes in senior management responsibilities during the reporting period, adding to the feeling of instability.
- 4.15 As of the final day of the reporting period, the prison was obliged to send four staff members to assist at nearby establishments, meaning it had to operate a restricted regime, closing down wings on a rotational basis. This situation was due to continue over the following weeks. The IMB considers this indicative of the inadequate staffing levels across the estate and condemns in the strongest possible terms national initiatives that take staff away from Brixton with the inevitable negative consequences for rehabilitation.

Drugs and contraband

- 4.16 While drug use was not as obvious as it had been in the previous reporting year, the prevalence of drugs during the reporting year remained unacceptably high on A and B Wings, as demonstrated by the rate of positive drugs tests, as well as anecdotal evidence from prisoners. Clearly drug use in itself is detrimental to rehabilitation, resettlement and reducing reoffending; the associated bullying and debt remain concerns that need to be addressed. The Board hopes that the lower level of drug use over the last few months of the reporting year was the start of continuous progress.
- 4.17 Mobile phones and SIM cards were also regularly discovered.
- 4.18 More frequent searches of both prisoners and staff would require the availability of more staff.

Equality and Inclusion

- 4.19 The prison made some progress on equality and inclusion, mainly thanks to the efforts of one officer. The transfer out of the VP population should simplify this area to some extent. However, the Board would like to see equality and inclusion work embedded further in the prison, and more proactive work undertaken.

Issues requiring a response

For the Minister

- 4.20 Brixton has undergone several major changes (e.g. rerole, introduction of *New Ways of Working*, transfer out of VPs) in little more than two years. The Board requests acknowledgement that the Minister understands the difficulty prisons have in planning adequately to meet the needs of their populations when they change so rapidly. In addition, it is clear that such a rate of change is expensive, and prisoners receive reduced and inconsistent assistance.
- 4.21 The Board deplores prescribed levels of staffing which wholly ignore the requirements of running a prison effectively, safely and humanely.
- 4.22 The Board regrets cut backs to ROTL, which it regards as vital to resettlement.
- 4.23 The Board very much regrets the inability of Brixton and London's local prisons to fulfil their obligation to complete prisoners' OASys forms because of inadequate staffing in the OMU. The effect of the inevitable delays on prisoners' sentence plans, HDC and ROTL hampers the resettlement role of the prison and the expectations of prisoners.
- 4.24 The Board also regrets that the new IEP standards were so ambiguously drafted that their implementation across the prison estate was inconsistent. What was intended as incentive often became, in prisoners' view, an unfair and haphazard punishment. This had a damaging impact on prospects for resettlement. In addition, the IEP scheme's ban on parcels adversely affects rehabilitation: the difficulty in obtaining books inhibits education; the ban on clothes parcels makes it more difficult for prisoners to present themselves adequately dressed for work on ROTL.
- 4.25 The Skills Funding Agency should demonstrate its commitment to short, arts-based education in light of the demonstrable benefits of offering this type of activity, and the associated employment opportunities in the London area.
- 4.26 The Board recommends that a senior official in NOMS takes active responsibility for co-ordination of inter-prison issues such as transfers and the exchange of information to ensure greater efficiency within the system, and less prejudicial impact on prisoners.

For NOMS

- 4.27 The Board regrets the decision in August 2014 to despatch four Brixton staff to cover shortages at nearby prisons, resulting in curtailment of the Brixton regime and a detrimental effect on rehabilitation. It calls on NOMS to make alternative arrangements to ensure this does not happen again.
- 4.28 The burden on, often junior or agency, staff at Brixton of creating OASys plans for prisoners is a matter of the deepest concern to the Board. A timely OASys plan is essential for each prisoner's sentence plan, as well as the granting of HDC and ROTL. Delays grievously hamper both rehabilitation and resettlement.
- 4.29 The Board regrets that, given both the importance of ROTL in the rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners and the very small number of absconders from ROTL, the system has become more risk-averse.
- 4.30 The Board is concerned that, despite the criteria for the profile of prisoners transferring into Brixton, too often the prison is obliged to accept prisoners who do not meet those criteria, which damages and undermines the regime.

- 4.31 The Board asks NOMS to consider measures to improve local day to day control of centrally-let contracts (e.g. the contract with Spurgeons to run the Visitors' Centre).
- 4.32 The Board is concerned that there is inadequate recognition of the importance of oversight in co-ordinating the work of the myriad agencies offering training, work and other purposeful activity within the prison. This has consequences on the effective sequencing of Learning and Skills programmes for prisoners, both within the prison and when transferring between prisons.
- 4.33 The Board is concerned that prisoners who have completed a qualification at their previous prison but not received their certificates often found it hard to obtain them after transfer to Brixton. This problem, which was not unique to Brixton or within the prison's control, was clearly demotivating for the individuals and potentially damaging to their job prospects on release.
- 4.34 The Board is concerned that the result of drugs tests is assumed to be accurate in all cases. The Board would welcome a more transparent method of validation of drugs tests and in particular audit trails for compact-based drug tests.
- 4.35 The Board recommends that interpretation services are reviewed; it is unacceptable that prison staff do not use interpreters for formal procedures because they find the current system to be too slow and cumbersome.
- 4.36 The Board very much regrets that there is no national mechanism for linking the legislated social responsibilities and obligations of local authorities with the healthcare responsibilities within the prison, toward both serving and released prisoners. As a result of this state of affairs, the needs of prisoners with disabilities often remain unaddressed.
- 4.37 The deplorable lack of a clear and humane policy for the treatment and removal of foreign nationals subject to deportation, with its consequent uncertainty for the detainees and the prison, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 4.38 With regard to the equalities dimensions of the use of force and the IEP scheme, the Board welcomes the new NOMS monitoring system for identifying "out of range" indicators against a wide number of categories, including age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. However, its production took resources out of prisons, because historic data already in the system had to be resupplied. There is not yet enough guidance to prisons on when action is required. The red/amber/green traffic light markers show up red for perhaps the majority of data cells, whether there are too few or too many of the target population affected. There is not enough staff resource available, certainly in Brixton, and perhaps in other prisons, to interrogate the data effectively, and this undermines the system's effectiveness for reducing inequalities.
- 4.39 The serious problems with the recent Prison Service IT upgrade have had a significant impact on the ability of already over-stretched staff to do their jobs. The Board is concerned about the impact this has had on the successful rehabilitation of prisoners.

For the Governor

- 4.40 The Board welcomes the plan to introduce a dedicated first night centre and looks forward to a consistent and effective level of first night induction.
- 4.41 The Board recommends that the prison introduces formal logging and a fixed deadline for responses to appeals about re-categorisation, HDC and ROTL.

- 4.42 Similarly, the prison should ensure full responses to prisoners' requests and complaints within the prescribed time. Staff responsible for processing these must be fully trained for the role.
- 4.43 The Board recommends that the prison provides more information to prisoners on priority issues and current challenges such as new activity opportunities; OMU processes; IEP. For example on the latter, the Board is concerned that prisoners are not aware of exactly how the new IEP criteria function. Prisoners need to have clear and accurate information about the IEP scheme.
- 4.44 The Board recommends that the planned curriculum review is undertaken as soon as possible to make sure that education and training programmes are relevant to job vacancies in the London area.
- 4.45 The Board regrets the fact that education classes remain undersubscribed and would like to see more stringent efforts by wing staff and the education provider to get men off the wings and into classes during the core day.
- 4.46 External employers of prisoners should be kept informed if prisoners will be absent from work for security reasons.
- 4.47 The Board would welcome the formulation of an effective and consistent plan to remove from the CSU prisoners who refuse to leave.
- 4.48 The Board strongly recommends that a Samaritans telephone is made available in the CSU and that the Samaritans telephones on all the wings are always in working order.
- 4.49 Daily log sheets for prisoners in the CSU should be thoroughly completed, including the names of governors or independent adjudicators presiding over adjudications.
- 4.50 In order to stem the importation of drugs, mobile phones, SIM cards and other contraband, the Board recommends a clear strategy involving more searches, including the use of dog(s), and better liaison with local police. More frequent and thorough searches of staff, contractors and others coming into the Visitors' Centre should be implemented.
- 4.51 Fixed times for Rule 45 reviews would be welcomed by the Board. It would facilitate the presence of Board members and representatives of Healthcare, who are required to attend such reviews.
- 4.52 Professional interpretation should be used for reviews and adjudications where it is suspected that a prisoner is unable to understand the discussion.
- 4.53 More efforts should be made to enhance the effectiveness of Personal Officers, ensuring that prisoners know who their Personal Officers are and that such officers have opportunities to assist those prisoners.
- 4.54 The problem of the inefficient and unreliable boilers which service the wings and the CSU needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 4.55 The floors, walls and screens of showers on all the wings need to be improved.
- 4.56 The Board would welcome the provision of tables and seating on all the wings, enabling prisoners to eat meals out of their cells.
- 4.57 The Board is concerned by the lack of arts programmes and creative writing classes in the prison.

4.58 The Board feels that the IEP policy introduced locally in March 2014, which excludes all men on Basic from work or education, is incompatible with the prison's resettlement objective and should be revised so that as many men as possible are in purposeful activity off-wing.

Section 5 CORE REPORTING AREAS

Education, learning and skills

- 5.1 During the reporting year there was a significant increase in the range and quality of education and training for prisoners as the new activity building and refurbished education rooms became available. A new and very active gym (see 6.29 below), accredited training in tailoring, horticulture, painting and decorating, food service and food preparation all came on stream during the first few months of 2014.
- 5.2 The full range of planned work/training opportunities was not in place by the end of the reporting period, though courses in barbering and bricklaying/ paving were due to be available within the following fortnight, and dry-lining later in the year. This should bring the prison up to its potential 759 activity spaces, sufficient to occupy all Cat C prisoners if Cat Ds are employed outside the prison.
- 5.3 A number of activities were specifically developed for the VP population, including horticulture and tailoring. Following the transfer of the VPs to Littlehey, these activities have been available to the general Cat C population.
- 5.4 At the close of the reporting year the prison was planning a curriculum review which took into account the types of job vacancies in the London area. This should streamline learning and skills provision and increase the range of places available to Cat C men. Unfortunately this review has been delayed by the contractor (see 5.15 below).
- 5.5 There was a significant improvement in education and training course enrolment since the Board's last report, but courses were still not at capacity and attendance continued to fall short (generally at or below 75%), leaving too many men on the wings during the core day. Attempts were made to improve take-up of basic English and Maths instruction by embedding some of this teaching in practical courses.
- 5.6 There was work in train to sequence prisoners' transition between education and training courses (a complex business given the number of agencies involved) and this should, if successful, improve enrolment figures. Most unfortunately, during July and August 2014 progress on this important spreadsheet was inhibited by the disastrous roll-out of a Prison Service computer system update, which essentially prevented prison staff from using IT effectively. At the end of the reporting period it was still impossible for staff to progress this work fully. Prison staff depend on good access to IT to perform their duties effectively, and the Board is concerned by the impact of this IT failure on both staff and prisoners.
- 5.7 A plan to produce a weekly Prisoner Information Notice (PIN) on vacancies was slow to materialise; work was clearly going on behind the scenes to address the vacancies, but the Board felt that a weekly PIN would 'normalise' the application process by putting the onus on prisoners, and would assist the increasingly active Learning and Skills reps on each wing. Such a PIN has been sent out weekly since early July 2014. The Board welcomes this.
- 5.8 Most off-wing education and training offered a qualification, and a new, simplified pay system usefully encouraged prisoners' engagement in these activities. Training that led to a mentored work placement after release, such as that offered by Bounce Back (painting and decorating) and The Clink (restaurant) were particularly valuable to Brixton's new resettlement role.

- 5.9 Prisoners who had completed a qualification at their previous prison but not received their certificates often found it hard to obtain them after transfer to Brixton. This problem, which was not unique to Brixton or within the prison's control, was clearly demotivating for the individual and potentially damaging to their job prospects on release.
- 5.10 The Board welcomed the successful and entertaining Synergy theatre production in July 2014 (starring A Wing prisoners), which was attended by 450 staff, prisoners and families during its six performances. This led to a job offer for at least one prisoner. However, the Board continued to feel that, despite assurances from the Minister after its last Annual Report, there was too little commitment to ongoing creative writing and arts programmes. There was no longer a writer in residence. The Skills Funding Agency dropped from its database of courses that attract funding a variety of short arts-based courses.
- 5.11 There was an improvement in the level of support for prisoners doing Open University and other distance learning since last year. By the time they were transferred out of Brixton, men on the VP unit had access to computers on wing (though they only saw an A4E tutor or had access to a printer once per week). Other Cat C men had good access to the IT suite for coursework preparation, and Cat D men on ROTL had the opportunity to use outside libraries to access the OU electronically and even to attend tutorial sessions (though cases had to be argued individually and take-up was low). The IT suite was likely to be in higher demand once the general Cat C population increased, and the Board would like to see some separate out of cell provision for quiet study. Access to OU tutors continued to be difficult other than by post, and more could be done to facilitate telephoned tutorials.
- 5.12 The new IEP scheme introduced in November 2013 (see 6.33 – 6.34 below) withdrew from prisoners the right to receive parcels. The Board congratulates Brixton staff for their endeavours to ensure that there was continued access to textbooks for distance study, but inevitably special cases were more likely to encounter obstacles and some men had to wait a long time for books. The Board felt that this Prison Service policy change inhibits rehabilitation through learning.
- 5.13 Virtual Campus was available to an increasing range of classes, though its usefulness appeared to be limited by the fact that a lot of the content was out of date – something that seemed inevitable given the closed nature of its implementation – and its apparent inability to support a large user base.
- 5.14 The library is small and inconveniently placed for use by classes, but use by prisoners increased through the last year, and the library offered a bright, orderly and welcoming environment, with a good variety of books as well as daily papers and magazines in a range of languages. A larger and better-placed library area would be better able to support private study and education courses and would bring more people in. There was still no access to Lambeth's TALIS library catalogue, and the librarian had to order books through the Lambeth Council book reservation website, but reserved books were available quite quickly (sometimes delivered, sometimes collected in person by the librarian). Two prisoner reps developed a local catalogue and booking system which appeared to work extremely well and significantly reduced the number of 'losses' from the library. The librarian and the prisoner reps are to be congratulated for this piece of entrepreneurship. The librarian continued to train and support prisoner mentors in the Shannon Trust's Toe by Toe literacy programme, and adjustments were made to the core day to support the required contact levels between mentors and learners. The library also hosted Story Book Dads and ran the Six Book Challenge, Books on Prescription, reading groups and a workshop to produce cards and letters from fathers to their families.

- 5.15 In the final month of the reporting period Manchester College was announced as the preferred bidder for Education in London prisons from November 2015, and A4E published its intention to withdraw early from its contract because it was losing money. At the end of the reporting period it was not clear what the outcome would be, but the Board hopes that prisoners' ongoing training (and consequent resettlement) will not suffer.

Equality and inclusion

- 5.16 More was done this year to improve performance, after the unannounced HMIP inspection in July 2013 found that equality work lacked focus and direction. Much of the improvement was due to one officer, not full time and without consistent management oversight most of the year. Equalities meetings were resumed in January 2014, after a year's hiatus. Additional focus groups were set up, and prisoner representatives appointed on some wings. Occasionally focus groups were postponed, because the single officer had to be detailed elsewhere. Some equalities policies were produced in July.
- 5.17 More work was done with foreign national (FN) prisoners, of whom there were around 100 at any one time. But this depended on one officer, and there was very limited support when she was on leave. UK Visas and Immigration resumed regular surgeries in February. Immigration detainees held beyond their sentence got help with bail, successfully in a number of cases, from the charity Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID).
- 5.18 In the previous year, the number of complaints about discrimination (DIRFs) dropped significantly: the process was not well publicised, and responses were very slow. During the second half of this reporting year, responses were audited by the Zahid Mubarek Trust. It considered that the increase in DIRFs, to about double the previous level, was an indication that prisoners and staff felt more confident about the system and about challenging perceived discrimination. The number of DIRFs was still low: applications to the IMB about discrimination were also low. Action was taken to increase the visibility and improve the speed of response on DIRFs.
- 5.19 Not all the initiatives proposed for the VPs on G Wing, including the elderly, were achieved before the majority of VPs were moved out by the end of July. However, the gardening work got off to a good start and advice from RECOUP, a charity which helps with resettlement, was available by phone. The 'retirement payment' was increased from £6 to £8.
- 5.20 More was also done to ensure that prisoners with disabilities were identified at Reception, and that personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) were in place for those who needed them. There was no building modification to make life simpler for men with mobility problems.
- 5.21 There was little examination of global equality statistics for much of the reporting year - no data were collected from August to October 2013, although specific areas like use of force and segregation were examined separately. The new NOMS traffic light system appeared in June. It may take some time for any patterns to emerge at Brixton, because the age distribution of the population, and perhaps other characteristics, will have changed with the departure of the VPs. Like other prisons, Brixton lacked data on some characteristics, notably sexual orientation. The system is complex, and initially flagged up a significant proportion of red areas on the 'traffic light' markings, for Brixton and other prisons. For instance, red for too many young men in the CSU, and red for too few older men in the CSU. Without clear guidance, under-resourced prisons were not able to make good use of the data. Brixton did not have enough prisoners in some categories for the system to produce its analysis, because each category is broken down by age and ethnicity.

These missing data included use of force and IEP basic. Use of force by ethnicity, and complaints (COMP 1 forms) by ethnicity continued to be monitored in-house.

- 5.22 It was difficult to identify all prisoners with special educational needs. It was unclear exactly what disabilities that broad term encompassed, and which department of the prison should try to ameliorate them, Healthcare or Education. Although prisoners were offered diagnostic tests during their week's Reception induction, many refused to take them. If the tests were taken and an educational need identified, Education devised a pathway of appropriate programmes. However, even then, many prisoners were reluctant to disclose weaknesses, e.g. of reading or writing, in a classroom. Prisoners often had several difficulties which should be the shared concern of not only both Healthcare and Education but also of the local authority in its statutory social responsibility. Prisoners with special educational needs were generally ill-served.

Healthcare and mental health

- 5.23 Care UK has retained the contract for Healthcare for a further five years. From May 2014, primary and secondary mental health services were provided by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust. Other subcontractors are Time for Teeth (dentistry), Premier Therapy (physiotherapy and podiatry), Liberty Glasses (optician), Certitude (peer mentoring) and GSTT (sexual health services for 12 months; Care UK to take over provision thereafter).
- 5.24 The general shortage of prison staff continued to be exacerbated by the need for escorts to and bedwatch in hospital. Staff remaining in the prison, for example officers working in the OMU, too often needed to be deployed elsewhere. The need to escort prisoners to hospital appointments began to be mitigated by the introduction of Telehealth, allowing for consultations between consultants and prisoners via videolink. The implementation of a new Emergency Medical Code aimed to ensure emergencies requiring an ambulance were highlighted and responded to appropriately. In February, a doctor's request for an ambulance was not acted upon immediately, resulting in a 20 minute delay.
- 5.25 In-prison medical provision, both in the range of specialisms and in the numbers of sessions, was adequate, as were waiting times. There was a noticeably higher demand for GP, hospital escort and bedwatch services among Cat C (non-VP) prisoners than among Cat C VPs and Cat D prisoners. In addition, there was a spike in the numbers of prisoners requiring short-term mental health and secondary mental health intervention among the Cat C prisoners coming to Brixton from other prisons in July and August. Newly sentenced transfers-in, who had been on remand, arrived without Healthcare packages, and demand for services, e.g. dentistry, went up. Prisoners not attending in-prison appointments were followed up if medication was involved or Healthcare had specific medical concerns.
- 5.26 In November 2013, Healthcare began to pilot a self-assessment mechanism called the Recovery Wheel by which prisoners newly arrived at Reception could complete a form which would indicate their healthcare needs. There were initial problems: staff not confident; prisoner refusals; time constraints; room availability. The pilot was completed, and the Recovery Wheel continued to be used. However, changes in the induction process and the extraordinary demands on Reception between June and August made implementation of the programme a challenge.
- 5.27 The prescribing and distribution of medication generally ran smoothly, although in October 2013, a patient was given medication prescribed to someone else, and there was an instance of an administrative error in medication in March 2014. A national directive to prison GPs to assess prisoners' use of quasi-addictive painkillers, particularly Tramadol, led to the gradual diminution of

such prescriptions for some prisoners. That generated some applications to the Board. The distribution of medication for Muslims during Ramadan went smoothly.

- 5.28 The number of complaints to Healthcare was relatively low, averaging 7.5 per month. The complaints were dealt with conscientiously by the prison and agencies involved. The majority of Healthcare/drugs applications to the Board were concerned with drugs tests, hospital and other appointments and the prescription of medication. One application to the Board questioned Care UK's charge of £50 to a prisoner for providing him with his medical records.
- 5.29 There were monthly prisoner Healthcare representative meetings.
- 5.30 At night, non-emergency telephone advice was given to Oscar 1 by the Harmoni agency. Emergency healthcare at night remained problematic, if there were a need for more than one escort.
- 5.31 There were obstacles to Healthcare's endeavours to create links between released prisoners and local GPs, addiction and social care services. Many prisoners were released to temporary addresses and even when a released prisoner went to a longer-term address, local GPs were often reluctant to accept them on their lists.
- 5.32 The inconsistent presence of appropriate Healthcare representatives at all reviews was a matter of concern for the Board. The Healthcare Manager told the IMB he did not view attendance by members of his team at Rule 45 reviews as a priority, as they would already have spent time with segregated prisoners prior to their review as part of their daily rounds. He wanted to see a system where senior officers and healthcare staff could discuss individual cases as they arose, as healthcare staff could not always be made available to attend reviews, which were often delayed. When reminded that it is a requirement for healthcare to attend reviews, he stated that he did not agree with the relevant Prison Service Order on the grounds it had been written when healthcare was still managed by the prison (rather than commissioned) and was advocating for it to be changed. The IMB understood that the prison was considering making fixed dates and times for reviews in order to facilitate healthcare attendance.

Purposeful activity (includes work)

- 5.33 The prison's aim at the beginning of the reporting period was to have 100 prisoners out on ROTL daily. In fact the number peaked at the high 70s and then dropped to an average of 30 going out each day. This was attributable to:
- Prisoners being sent to Brixton with no OASys assessment and sentence plan;
 - Prisoners being sent to Brixton with insufficient time left on their sentence to be able to be considered for an external job, as well as the prison having fewer Cat D prisoners;
 - Imposition of new processes led by a more risk-averse agenda from ministers. Brixton amended its ROTL policy accordingly.
- 5.34 This resulted in confusion and frustration for prisoners, who did not receive clear information from the prison regarding their eligibility for ROTL. Another consequence was too many Cat D men on the wing during the core day with no activity and too many Cat D men taking up in-prison work, reducing the amount available for Cat C men.
- 5.35 The Board hopes that ROTL will not be cut back, since it can provide such a useful preparation for release. The risks of a very few prisoners absconding while on ROTL need to be compared with the risks of releasing men without giving them any experience of life outside, and there is no indication

that this has been considered on the basis of evidence. It is also important that the Population Management Unit (PMU) will focus on sending Cat D men to Brixton only if they have sufficient time left to serve to make ROTL a viable possibility.

- 5.36 The prison's initial difficulties in securing appropriate and risk-assessed external jobs were transformed into a situation where the prison had more jobs on offer than they could fill. It was very successful in attracting companies such as The National Grid, Land Securities, Balfour Beatty, Costain, Barclays, as well as charities such as Sue Ryder Trust, Oxfam, the Big Issue and the Prison Reform Trust. A high proportion of prisoners retained their jobs upon release.
- 5.37 The prison did not consistently inform workplaces if prisoners were to be absent for security reasons, potentially jeopardising prisoners' working relationships through no fault of their own.
- 5.38 Over 14,000 temporary licences were issued during the reporting period. Three men absconded whilst on ROTL and were returned to custody. This was a commendable success rate. The prison had 'spotters' to check up on ROTL prisoners to confirm they were in the right place when on ROTL.
- 5.39 Of the Cat C population, the regime improved most for men on A and B Wing, with VPs on G Wing more restricted in terms of activities available because of the need to protect them from other prisoners. The notable exceptions in this improvement were men on the Basic IEP regime which, since a new local policy was implemented in March 2014, excluded these men from work or education and kept them locked in-cell for about 23 hours per day, with no electricity during the core day. This change (more stringent than the Basic regime when the prison was Cat B) felt incompatible with the prison's training and resettlement objective. The Board would prefer to see all men offered the opportunity for purposeful activity off-wing, with only refusers or trouble-makers confined to their cells.
- 5.40 The Clink restaurant was a valuable addition to the work opportunities available. It started taking bookings in February 2014, employing around 27 men in catering and front of house, and mentoring them after release.
- 5.41 The Keep Out programme employed prisoners to share their experiences with school children to discourage offending behaviour.
- 5.42 The Virtual Campus facility for prisoners to look for work on release was essentially useless, not only because the vacancy list was out of date but because applications had to be mediated by a member of staff and there was no-one assigned to do this either within the prison or from the many job-related agencies working in Brixton.
- 5.43 The Board welcomed the expanded opportunities available to prisoners to open bank accounts.
- 5.44 The prison worked hard to support delivery of a restorative justice programme, with 62 prisoners at one point approved to participate. Regrettably, however, this did not materialise. This was due in the first instance to the provider going into liquidation. Once a replacement provider, Beyond London, was involved, population changes in the prison meant that too few participating prisoners were available to make the project viable, and it had to be cancelled. The IMB considers this a missed opportunity and sadly illustrative of the effect externally-imposed changes have on the prison's attempts to support rehabilitation and resettlement.

Resettlement

- 5.45 The range of new activities available for prisoners was a welcome and significant step towards making Brixton a fully operational resettlement prison.
- 5.46 A key challenge was that although the number of meaningful resettlement activity places increased during the year, there were not enough for every prisoner. The new activity building that opened in January, education block and other activity spaces were not put to full use. For example the Bounce Back painting and decorating floor in the new activity building only opened in May after a delay of several weeks due to a lack of clarity about the NVQ training requirements for the space before it could operate. As of the end of August the ground floor of the building had not been used, as the company due to operate a recycling factory withdrew. However new plans were put in place and as of the end of the reporting period this floor was due to be used to deliver a brick laying and paving qualification from 15 September 2014, and later in the year also a dry lining qualification and furniture recycling. This is very positive as these activities will provide qualifications and experience of practical use when prisoners are resettled.
- 5.47 There was a challenge to planning and monitoring meaningful activity across the prison due to there being no source of data on the maximum number of total activity places available in the prison. It was not possible to tell if there will be a shortfall of places once all planned activity is operational. The Governor was aware of this and was working with staff to produce this information, but limited staff resource made it difficult.
- 5.48 Another continued challenge was that in the first half of the year in particular many prisoners transferred in did not meet the target criteria of having fewer than two years but more than 3 months left to serve. When prisoners arrive with fewer than 3 months to serve it is impossible to provide meaningful resettlement opportunities given the time taken to assess new arrivals and prepare them for resettlement e.g. clearing them for ROTL, completing a qualification, making housing arrangements. This situation notably improved in the latter half of the year and the IMB is keen to see this continue. On 1 May, the target criteria for the prison changed to prisoners sentenced to one to four years. Since then over 90% of incoming prisoners met the criteria – up to 95% in August 2014. This is very important in enabling Brixton to operate as a resettlement prison.
- 5.49 The problem of prisoners arriving without an OASys assessment and sentence plan continued to have a significant impact (see 6.44 below). At times this has been the case for 50% or more of arrivals.
- 5.50 As last year, the VP population had less access to resettlement activities than the rest of the prison population, but there were more opportunities than in the previous year.
- 5.51 Alongside these practical challenges, the prison continued to work through the challenge of culture change required by both prisoners and staff to maximise the use of available activity and overall success of the Cat C resettlement status of the prison. The new regime introduced in January was a positive step forward in this change. Prisoners were expected to be out of their cells in activity for most of the day rather than in cell. The prison is to be commended on the preparation done ahead of this change, resulting in a smooth introduction. Staff were given the opportunity to contribute to designing and planning the ongoing change and be kept up-to-date via ‘world café’ style meetings. The prison needs to continue to provide sufficient information for prisoners and staff on developments as on occasion this has been lacking.

- 5.52 As in the previous three years, Brixton consistently exceeded the NOMS' target of 82% for prisoners having accommodation on release – achieving between 89% and 96% each month of this year. The prison continued to provide a range of support across the seven resettlement pathways, through relations with a range of partners including Jobcentre Plus, housing, debt and substance misuse charities. Lambeth Council dedicated a full-time worker to finding jobs for Lambeth-based prisoners released from Brixton and HMP Wandsworth. The other main agencies involved in the resettlement pathways were:
- Accommodation: St. Giles Trust, Jigsaw and the Healthcare psychiatry team
 - Finance, Debt and Benefit: Lambeth Advice Centre, Chaplaincy Faith in the Future course
 - Substance Misuse: End-to-End and RAPt
 - Education, Training, Employment: A4e, the contracted provider; Bounce Back; Working Links; The Clink; Keep Out
 - Children and Families: Spurgeons, the contracted provider for the visitors' centre; PACT.
 - Mental and Physical Health: Care UK
 - Attitudes, Thinking, Behaviour: NOMS Psychology staff
- 5.53 Altogether there were over 90 agencies making a contribution: the Board commends their work.

Residential services

- 5.54 The fabric of the residential wings in Brixton has had no significant investment for years. There was an ongoing cycle of repairs, but wear and tear through usage resulted in many complaints regarding facilities on the wings.
- 5.55 The showers suffered from the peeling of the non-slip paint on the floors and consequent slipperiness; water supply and temperature were variable. A Board member was told by a prisoner that the lack of adequate shower facilities had led to bullying, with some of the older prisoners, particularly on G Wing, "too scared" to use the showers. Modesty screens in some of the showers needed replacement.
- 5.56 There was inadequate ventilation on landings and in cells.
- 5.57 Laundry facilities were regularly out of action and often remained so for several weeks at a time. To the IMB, this indicated a lack of performance management levers available to local management - the contract is centrally let. Some prisoners received red entries for drying their laundry on the landings when they had no practical alternative. It took the contractor an unacceptable time to effect repairs.
- 5.58 The cleanliness of the wings was generally adequate, although C Wing and some cells of D Wing were observed to be very dirty during October and November 2013.
- 5.59 The Board was concerned that the Samaritans' telephones were not always available or in working order. In addition, some of the telephones on the landings of B Wing were out of order for some time, resulting in long waits for the remaining telephones. Wing staff were unaware of the correct procedure for reporting the malfunctioning telephones.
- 5.60 The Board would welcome the provision of tables and seating on all the wings, enabling prisoners to eat meals out of their cells.

- 5.61 There were concerns about the running of the wings, e.g. the issuing of visiting orders, distribution of post, the movement of prisoners to activities and healthcare appointments. Prisoners experienced delays with unlocking because of the late arrival of MITIE to collect kitchen and bin workers.
- 5.62 The Regional Catering Manager accompanied by the prison's catering manager made a planned inspection to assess Brixton's menu planning and meal provision on 17 December 2013. The Board was pleased that the assessment was "good", and that the "kitchen and points of service were clean and tidy", and food handlers were wearing the correct clean and protective clothing.
- 5.63 The assessors noted that although pre-select menus were available from a four-week cyclic menu, the kitchen computer programme worked on a three-week cycle. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no adverse effect on the rotation of menus.
- 5.64 The assessment noted that a portion control system and meal description were in place. However, the Board received complaints, particularly from the VPs on G Wing, about portion control at the serveries. Although, for example, portions of meat pies and desserts can be indicated by kitchen staff by scoring lines across their tops, these can easily be ignored at the servery. Vegetable portions often seemed inadequate.
- 5.65 Food was tasted daily by the duty governor and randomly by members of the IMB. There were complaints that the vegetarian option was inadequate and that the halal option had too little meat and vegetables.
- 5.66 The issue of halal food being ordered by non-Muslims led to an effort to offer halal and non-halal versions of the same dish. Catering for Muslims during Ramadan was carefully planned and efficiently executed.
- 5.67 The range of food choices required – including halal, vegetarian, and kosher, as well as medical requirements – severely tests the minimal budget of £2.02 per prisoner per day, since most 'special requirements' incur additional costs.
- 5.68 Workers in the kitchen were consistently purposeful and positive, and some were undertaking a Level 2 NVQ in food preparation. However, morale among the kitchen workers was low during much of the year as a result of the new IEP scheme. Kitchen workers perceived a discrepancy between their wages and working hours with those of cleaners on the wings.

Safer custody

- 5.69 The prison is to be congratulated on the infrequent use of force. The atmosphere in the prison is generally calm and relaxed.
- 5.70 Safer Custody was the subject of regular monthly meetings, usually chaired by the Governing Governor or his deputy and normally attended by most relevant governors, and staff from Security, Healthcare, Substance misuse, Chaplaincy, as well as two (prisoner) Listeners' representatives (for the 'open' first half of the meeting), Samaritans and the IMB. Staff shortages, cross-deployments or ill-health however meant that some key staff members missed several meetings.
- 5.71 An analysis of statistics for Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents, violent incidents, self-harm, etc. for the previous month and for the past year is presented to these meetings and there is detailed discussion of all prisoners who are causing concern. The meetings were characterised by a commendable concern for prisoners' welfare.
- 5.72 During the past year there have been on average 12 ACCTs open at any one time and 5 incidents of self-harm per month. Management and Support Plans were opened in response to incidents of violence or bullying or when a prisoner said he felt unsafe: there were on average 11 of the former

and 8 of the latter open in any one month through the reporting year. As in previous years, the prevalence of illegal drugs within the prison appeared to be a primary cause of bullying: prisoners were also bullied for their prescribed medication.

- 5.73 The Board were usually informed in advance of ACCT reviews and those we attended were handled sensitively. Explanatory booklets on ACCTs were available to prisoners in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Polish, Chinese and Arabic.
- 5.74 Prisoners on ACCTs should be observed at approximately hourly intervals through the night: the Board repeatedly expressed concern at the regularity and predictability of these checks which might allow a prisoner to plan self-harm without detection for almost an hour.
- 5.75 Reception procedures for prisoners transferred to Brixton were generally good, including an assessment of the prisoner's risk of self-harm and an explanation of the Listeners. In March a transferee from another London prison had seriously self-harmed there the day before being moved to Brixton (against his will). The other prison had not raised an ACCT and it was the vigilance of the Brixton reception nurse that spotted this injury. On occasion Brixton had to accept transferees without prior Cell Share Risk Assessment.
- 5.76 The IMB were however concerned to see actions agreed at Safer Custody meetings taking too long to be completed: some of these delays were rolled over from month to month for trivial reasons (e.g. the inability to get authorisation for a credit card facility to spend a modest sum of money to buy a remote doorbell for the Listeners) and some for what appeared, more seriously, to be lack of management coordination. An example of the latter was the proposal in September 2013 to introduce Tackling Anti-Social Attitudes (TASA), a new method of assessing prisoners at risk and the causes of bullying, which had proved effective in another prison. After being carried over through successive Safer Custody meetings till July, it was finally abandoned in August after wing officers had in July been invited to offer input to an alternative system. The Board was told that there was only one response to this invitation: the Board hopes that whatever violence reduction measures are instituted will have wholehearted support from staff. In this context, the IMB commend the involvement in August of the Centre for Peaceful Solutions to run a workshop on conciliation for a selection of prisoners who will act as violence reduction mediators on the wings (see 6.4 below).
- 5.77 To assess prisoners' views on their own safety, the Safer Custody team conducted a survey of 80 prisoners in August 2013. The team were however under-resourced to analyse and share the results of this survey. The Board considered this a wasted opportunity to gauge the opinions of prisoners.
- 5.78 The number of prisoners seeking support from the Listeners was higher in the past year than in the previous year, mainly due to call outs to the VP Wing. There were on average 8 Listeners within the prison, but it was agreed that there was a need for more publicity on the wings for the Listeners. The availability of the Samaritans telephone was erratic on A and B Wings and remained unavailable to prisoners within the CSU, despite repeated requests from the IMB for this to be remedied.
- 5.79 The IMB was not routinely informed when prisoners were placed on constant supervision. In one case of constant supervision, the nurse on duty was seen by the IMB to be engrossed in reading rather than observing the prisoner, and staff in the CSU (where the man was being held) also relayed their concerns that the nurse was not fulfilling the task properly.
- 5.80 There were four deaths in custody during the past year. One of these prompted a review of procedures for newly arrived prisoners, including the presence of Listeners at Reception and a new

first night suite in a separate wing. The Board commends the prison's trained family liaison officer and other staff involved for reacting promptly and sympathetically in the immediate aftermath of this death.

- 5.81 There are currently 7 inquests ongoing, with a backlog that includes deaths in March 2010 and February 2012. The effect of this delay was to prolong the uncertainty and distress of grieving family members.

Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision

- 5.82 The CSU has six cells, a holding cell and one special cell and is located on the ground floor at the end of B Wing. Although for most of the reporting year the CSU suffered from severe dilapidation, the walls and floor of the shower, as well as the walls of cells, have recently been much improved. However it remained cold and damp during the winter. Prisoners often requested, and were given, extra blankets. One of the cells, requiring repairs to the walls and floor, was out of use for a time; the window in the shower room needed repair; the cells' window catches could be used to assist self-harm. Redeployment of staff led to delays in prisoners being able to take showers or exercise. There were more occasions when only one officer was to be found in the CSU, meaning prisoners could not be unlocked, and thus the quality of interaction between prisoners and visitors, including IMB members, was reduced.
- 5.83 Board members were satisfied that the majority of prisoners in the CSU knew the reason why they had been segregated and had received the appropriate paperwork. Paperwork within the CSU seen by the Board was for the most part completed and up-to-date. However, daily log sheets did not always document the name of the adjudicating governor or independent judge presiding over adjudications: from September 2013 to May 2014, at least 60 adjudications lacked the name of the person presiding. Nevertheless, the majority of reviews and adjudications observed by the Board in the reporting year were conducted in a fair and thorough manner. Prisoners had the opportunity to have representation, and when prisoners requested legal representation and/or witness attendance, their cases were adjourned.
- 5.84 There was no consistency in the use of interpreters in reviews and adjudications, which may result in misunderstandings or injustice. The IMB observed one adjudication where another prisoner was used as interpreter, even though he did not share a mother tongue with the prisoner on adjudication; both men spoke falteringly in a second language. It was clear that communication was inadequate but when asked, the presiding governor said that the telephone interpretation system available was slow and cumbersome. In a separate adjudication presided over by another governor, the IMB member present expressed concern that the man did not understand the complex discussion, and was told by the governor that the "usual test" he used to test a man's understanding of English was to offer him a smoker's pack.
- 5.85 Increasingly during this reporting period, prisoners have refused to return to the wing following the end of their time on Rule 45 or the end of sentences of cellular confinement. Prisoners refusing to go back to the wings, some wanting to remain in the CSU for their own protection, some wanting to remain until transferred out to another prison, filled the CSU to capacity at times. The Board deplores the lack of a consistent exit strategy to deal with such refusals.

- 5.86 The Board was more frequently informed of Rule 45 review panels in the CSU, although sometimes notification came too late for Board attendance. Notification to the Board of prisoner movement to the CSU was also good, and the removals which were observed were conducted calmly and effectively. No use of mechanical restraints occurred during the reporting year. There were fewer incidents which involved the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the reporting year. However, 26 hours after the end of a dirty protest in the CSU, the cell had still not been cleaned.
- 5.87 The Board were concerned that Healthcare staff were not always present at reviews where they were required (see 5.32 above).
- 5.88 There were long delays where serious allegations, e.g. of assaults on prisoners or staff, were referred to the police. The IMB were informed that such cases were sometimes eventually dropped as the individuals involved had moved on from the prison. This is concerning as it undermines the adjudication system, meaning that some of the most serious charges go unheard. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Metropolitan Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Prison Service to address this issue and resolve such cases expeditiously.
- 5.89 One prisoner on Rule 45 was permitted to attend the TSP offending behaviour programme while resident in the CSU. The Board would like to see this progressive approach to the reintegration of prisoners into the general population used more widely to address the reasons for each prisoner's presence in the CSU and agree an exit strategy.

Section 6 ADDITIONAL REPORTING AREAS

Chaplaincy

- 6.1 The Chaplaincy Department continued to be well run and valued by prisoners. There were 70 key-carrying chaplains including employed and sessional chaplains and volunteers. Faiths were supported by representatives including Church of England and Roman Catholic chaplains, Imams, Buddhists, Rabbis, Sikhs and Jehovah Witnesses amongst them. The Sikh ran the Hindu worship.
- 6.2 Every prisoner was offered at least one hour a week religious practice. The Chaplaincy Department played a valuable role supporting prisoners with bereavement and other traumatic family issues.
- 6.3 The Chaplaincy continued to run a successful course, 'Faith in the Future', completing 5 courses in the reporting period. Each course ran over 4 weeks, 5 days a week, 6 hours a day and 120 prisoners graduated within the reporting period. The Imam also ran a popular course with 5 classes a week and regularly filled the 10 places available. Each wing had its own Bible study class each week and VPs had two evening classes a week.
- 6.4 A new mediation project, which is not faith-based, started in August. Two officers were trained for it over 6 intensive sessions. Prisoners with a history of conflict within the prison were to be invited to take part. Prisoners would also be invited to train as mediators themselves with a view to continuing this work when they are released. The course dovetails with the aim of violence reduction within the Safer Custody goals.
- 6.5 The Board very much appreciates the work of the Prison Visitors, who work under the aegis of the Chaplaincy.

Complaints procedures

- 6.6 The prison received approximately 200 COMP 1 and COMP1A complaints a month throughout the reporting period, and the Governing Governor received approximately 20 COMP2 complaints a month. The main issues of complaint related to the OMU (HDC, ROTL, re-categorisation), Learning and Skills, wing issues and healthcare issues. There were continuing reports from prisoners that COMP 1 and 2 complaint forms were lost in transit, but these were difficult to verify. Certainly, a number of COMP1s were lost during summer 2014.
- 6.7 The prison did not log general apps and, although they were on multi-part stationery, responses were not filed by most departments, so there was no means of checking quality or even whether any response had been given at all. Prisoners regularly told Board Members that general apps went unanswered, especially by the OMU.
- 6.8 Applications to the Board rose again this year, and this has to be seen as an indication that the prison was failing to satisfy prisoners' expectations. The Board was aware that 'general apps' and 'requests and complaints' were sometimes lost, and were often not dealt with within the prescribed timescales, and the result was that prisoners called increasingly on IMB intervention.
- 6.9 The Board considered that the response to most complaints to the prison was reasonably good. Some were excellent, and set out how the issue would be resolved or what steps the prisoner could take himself. A minority failed to acknowledge the frustration of what prisoners were experiencing, and were unclear about how the issue would be resolved. For example, several responses from the OMU simply stated that an offender supervisor would visit the prisoner (with no timeframe). For prisoners who had been waiting for several months already, and had no idea how much longer they would need to wait, this was unhelpful.

- 6.10 The Board discovered at one point that a small number of Comp 1 forms had been filed straight away as though resolved, when in fact they were unlogged and unanswered. The prison acknowledged this significant breakdown in the system and attributed it to a new member of staff not having been properly inducted into the role.
- 6.11 As stated in last year's report, the Board consider that there should be formal logging procedures and a fixed deadline for response for the separate appeal forms for re-categorisation, ROTL and HDC, since they are at least as important as standard complaints. This has not occurred, and waiting times for responses to these appeals seemed to be extremely long and unpredictable.
- 6.12 This resulted in key factors in prisoners' lives being determined on an arbitrary basis. The timing of decisions about when prisoners could be released on temporary licence or HDC was often on the basis of the availability of particular members of staff (i.e. the prisoner's offender supervisor and team) – not on the basis of their sentences. This led to extreme frustration for prisoners, and was not conducive to prisoners feeling able to take responsibility for their futures.

Drugs

- 6.13 The very high use of illicit drugs in Brixton at the start of the reporting period continued to be of significant concern to the Board. Very large quantities of drugs found their way into the prison, with as many as a third of prisoners testing positive for illegal drugs on some wings. However, the Board welcomes mandatory drug testing (MDT) statistics from the last few months suggesting that this was now improving, and hopes this is a trend which will continue.
- 6.14 At the start of the reporting year, 22% of prisoners reported illegal drug use on arrival at Brixton, 6% said they had developed a drug habit whilst in prison, and 30% said it was easy or very easy to obtain drugs in Brixton.
- 6.15 For much of the year, positive results in mandatory drugs tests continued to be unacceptably high. The problem was particularly acute on A and B Wings (the residential wings for the main Category C population) where the positive test results for Sept – July were 27% and 32% respectively¹. Prisoners reported drug-taking simply as a way to "get them through the experience of prison". Large numbers of prisoners, including some with no history of drug use, questioned the accuracy of the results, a doubt reinforced by the Governing Governor's positive result after eating poppy seeds. The Board would like reassurance that this incident and others like it are taken seriously, and used to ensure drug testing in the future is more accurate, especially given the significant implications that a false positive result could have on prisoners awaiting HDC or ROTL decisions.
- 6.16 The Board's previous report recommended that the Governor ensure that a clear and co-ordinated strategy is consistently implemented to prevent drugs, mobile phones and other illicit items coming into the prison, including more searches and better liaison with local police. A strategy was produced in 2013, but it laid out no specific additional actions or areas of change. The strategy identified several routes of drugs into the prison, 3 of which are described below – one as a strong area, and the other 2 as areas of concern.

¹30 out of 113 prisoners tested on A Wing, and 23 out of the 72 prisoners tested in B Wing from Sept 2013 to July 2014 tested positive in mandatory drug tests. August 2014 results were not prepared in time for this report.

- 6.17 Prisoners re-entering the prison were routinely searched - 50% of prisoners returning from ROTL received a full search, the other 50% a level A rub down. No drugs were found in recent months and the Board considered this potential drugs route to be reasonably effectively managed.
- 6.18 In contrast, the searching capability in the Visitors' Centre was relatively weak, with no dedicated Visits team and no SO to oversee the work.
- 6.19 Finally, it was clear that a significant route for drugs into the prison was via staff. The cannabis use within the prison was said to have dramatically reduced after a contractor was discovered allegedly to be bringing it in. His case is currently being investigated by the police. If staff are able to traffic drugs into the prison undetected, this seriously undermines staff/prisoner relationships, encourages bullying, and undermines the commitment and responsibility of the vast majority of staff who are uninvolved.
- 6.20 During the reporting year organised searching of staff took place three times; each search involved approximately 110 members of staff coming on shift. New Ways of Working, under which there are drastically fewer dedicated security staff (5, down from around 29), makes this kind of searching much more challenging, and it is now only possible through collaboration with other prisons, and only following specific security information, rather than as a routine preventative measure. This means the prison is unable to maintain the level of security set out in the Local Security Strategy, which suggests 3 routine searches a year *in addition* to searches triggered by specific intelligence.
- 6.21 The Rehabilitation of Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt) provided substance misuse services within the prison, supporting a caseload of around 300 prisoners who requested treatment or support. They provided a mixture of structured 1 to 1 support, group work and aftercare, and dealt with a wide range of drug and alcohol abuse issues. They reported a relative increase in cannabis use throughout the year compared with other drugs, and an increase in alcohol abuse. The Board felt that the provision of drug treatment services within the prison was generally good.
- 6.22 Overall, RAPt reported a cooperative working relationship with the prison, but some officers were unwilling to cooperate with RAPt staff, for example when prisoners needed to be unlocked for drug treatment.
- 6.23 During the reporting period the Drug Recovery Wing (DRW) was located on the top landings of a normal residential wing (A Wing) and housed around 60 prisoners. Some of those prisoners had requested to be on the DRW, others simply found themselves there due to lack of space in other parts of the prison.
- 6.24 At mealtimes, there was no physical separation between the DRW and the rest of the wing, so drug dealers had easy access to those on the DRW. The positive drug test rates on the DRW were similar to the rest of the wing, suggesting the DRW was not effective in its current form.
- 6.25 The Board is in favour of plans to relocate the DRW so that it is smaller and urges the prison to make best use of the facility by only admitting prisoners who have expressed a desire to stop their drug use.

Foreign Nationals

- 6.26 At any time, there were in the region of 100 foreign nationals in Brixton, a number of whom were sentence-expired detainees. The pressure on places at Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) meant that, often, sentence-expired detainees were transferred to an IRC only when their removal was

imminent. Foreign nationals were seen by UK Visas and Immigration (formerly the UK Borders Agency), which ran a weekly surgery with ad hoc appointments for VPs.

- 6.27 The Board received 24 applications relating to immigration issues in the reporting year, several of which expressed both bewilderment about what was planned for them and despair at the lack of information available to them. In more than one case, a prisoner only became aware of his detainee status on the expiry of his sentence and, over the ensuing months, attempted suicide resulting in an ACCT being opened and periods of constant supervision being required. In addition, several prisoners who consistently expressed their desire to be repatriated remained in custody and in limbo. An attempt to contact a prisoner's immigration worker resulted only in a message that the answer phone was full and could not accept further messages. None of this reflected on the prison but these circumstances were an additional call on very limited prison resources.
- 6.28 Although UK Visas and Immigration ran regular surgeries, both prisoners and staff were often left without adequate information on individual cases. They both need clearer information and quicker action.

Gym

- 6.29 The prison gained a new gym in the new build. There was a variety of equipment available including running machines, cross trainers, bikes, steppers, rowers, circuit bars, medicine balls, spin bikes and resistance machines. Various competitions were held, including a football World Cup which ran in tandem with the real one. First Aid training was also offered.
- 6.30 However, the gym in the new build is on the top floor of the building and this meant that the less able prisoners were reliant on the lift (which was permanently out of order). There was no classroom facility in the gym meaning that there is currently a demand but no ability to deliver accredited PE courses to prisoners.
- 6.31 The gym was open daily and advertised on all wing notice boards. 70% of the prisoner population took part in some sort of PE programme with an interest from older prisoners as well as the younger population. The new facilities allowed staff to offer the over 50s many more sessions, with more variety. Classes generally tended to exceed 30 participants (compared to a national average class size of 14).
- 6.32 Staff capitalised on the weights room popularity to instigate an initiative linking its use to the IEP scheme (see below), with prisoners being offered time and facilities according to their IEP status.

Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

- 6.33 In the autumn of the reporting year, the IEP scheme was changed to make the requirements for "standard" and "enhanced" more stringent, and "basic" the default status for a longer period of time. Local implementation of the national scheme did not acknowledge the status of prisoners transferring in, and prisoners with enhanced status were often downgraded to standard.
- 6.34 In principle, encouraging positive behaviour for transition to enhanced was in line with the prison's emphasis on resettlement. In practice, the downgrading of many prisoners at Brixton was seen as unfair, especially if they had been reviewed on entry and had not had time to acquire evidence for positive behaviour. As a consequence, their pay and visits were reduced, as they felt, without any deterioration in their behaviour. Some men had difficulty - because of disability, for instance - in meeting the new criteria. Others failed to get the requisite evidence on their case notes. This was

because, with fewer wing staff and more prisoner time off-wing, officers saw less of prisoners. Education and training workers were not sufficiently aware of the new requirements and the need to record achievements as well as failures on CNOMIS.

Induction

- 6.35 The prison worked hard this year to introduce a resettlement-based induction programme which was delivered during new prisoners' first week in Brixton, and included separate sessions for the VP population. The induction included an education assessment, interaction with substance misuse workers and short presentations from resettlement partners and the Governing Governor. More could be done to ensure that these induction sessions are well-structured and supervised, and that all new arrivals attend.
- 6.36 Assessments fed into an allocations board at the end of the week at which a suitable programme of training and work was put together. This took into account the prisoner's sentence plan where possible but, because of the continuing OASys backlog, for a large number of prisoners no sentence plan was available.
- 6.37 Towards the end of the reporting period these Induction sessions were suspended in order to cope with the rapid influx of new Cat C prisoners to replace the VPs (although allocations boards continued for these new arrivals). Sessions were scheduled to restart on 15 September, with a simplified timetable made possible by the loss of the VP population.
- 6.38 First night induction at Brixton has suffered ever since the prison re-rolled in summer 2012, when it lost the capacity to induct all new arrivals together and began offering first-night induction on a wing by wing basis. With the introduction of the resettlement-based induction sessions, on-wing induction had an even lower profile, was delivered without staff supervision, and on at least one wing did not happen at all. The prison gave all new arrivals a brief introductory leaflet on Reception, but this was no substitute for a proper officer-led induction session, the absence of which was, in the Board's view, a disservice to new prisoners, especially those who arrived close to the start of their sentence. The IMB strongly supports the prison's plans to re-introduce a first night unit in which all new arrivals will initially be housed, and trusts that inductions will be more thoroughly conducted.

Lifers (including Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners (ISPs))

- 6.39 Over the reporting year Brixton had up to 50-60 Lifers and ISPs, the majority (80%) being VPs in G Wing (after the VPs were transferred out there were 21). Through the course of the year, Lifers were disadvantaged by reorganisations (New Ways of Working implemented in January and transfer of responsibility for Lifers from the Prison Service to the Probation Service in April), resource shortages and the fact that Brixton has been, since its rerole two years ago, an unsuitable prison for them.
- 6.40 Meetings between OMU officers and Lifers were held bimonthly and the IMB has seen a sample of the minutes. They allowed frank discussion of prisoners' concerns.
- 6.41 Common criticisms by prisoners have been the perceived lack of planning and engagement by OMU, the unavailability of (or long waiting list for) obligatory courses/facilities in Brixton (Healthy Sex Programme, Healthy Sexual Functioning Programme, ROTL for VPs) and the delays in getting such prisoners transferred to where they can be achieved. The OMU however managed to resolve

this in some cases though were hampered by '1 for 1' prisoner exchange pressures from other prisons. The result was an unpredictable length of future sentence after their tariff was completed, with consequent risks for morale and mental health.

- 6.42 Brixton's rerole to a resettlement prison was inevitably to the detriment of Lifers, who commented that they did not feel understood here. They were demoralised by the concentration of investment on facilities for pre-release prisoners. The backlog of OASys and Sentence Planning that resulted from OMU under-resourcing impacted disproportionately on Lifers. It is to be hoped that the transfer of the VP population out of Brixton will be of benefit both to them and to Brixton's stretched resources.

Offender Management Unit (OMU)

- 6.43 Of all applications, the IMB received by far the most (around one third) in relation to issues falling under the remit of the OMU, including HDC, ROTL, recategorisation and transfers. The IMB was concerned throughout the reporting year that the department was unable to fulfil its responsibilities, due to a combination of both external and internal factors.
- 6.44 The main problem consistently raised by the IMB, and acknowledged by the prison, was the lack of any or up-to-date OASys reports for a large number of prisoners (at the end of the reporting period there were an estimated 132 prisoners with incomplete OASys forms, 161 with none at all, and 198 prisoners whose OASys were up for annual review), preventing their resettlement. This was due to large numbers of prisoners transferring in without a report as well as the inability of the Brixton OMU staff to provide one, as each takes approximately eight hours to complete. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that when prisoners were transferred out of Brixton without an OASys they would be returned, effectively turning Brixton into a hub for those with no OASys and without the wherewithal to address this. The Board wrote to the previous Minister about these concerns on 8 April 2014 and was grateful for the response received from his successor on 4 August 2014. The response stated that the scale and pace of the benchmarking process currently ongoing in public prisons had inevitably exposed some difficulties such as these, but that benchmarking would ultimately address them by introducing more robust offender management systems. While the Board was reassured to hear that the National Offender Management System (NOMS) was taking steps to address the OASys backlog, it considered it unacceptable that the rehabilitation of so many prisoners has already been impacted.
- 6.45 At the start of the reporting period, the physical space in the OMU was unacceptable, with piles of files stacked around the office. The IMB witnessed on more than one occasion delays caused by files going astray and not being locatable in the office. While files are still occasionally mislaid, the area is much tidier thanks to the efforts of both governors in charge during the year.
- 6.46 During the reporting period, the OMU has undergone 2 changes of governor, lost 3 of the 11 offender supervisors, and three administrative staff. It has seen the introduction of a new case administration system. The IMB commends the work of both the governors who have attempted to overcome the challenges of the department, including by trying in the first instance to understand how bad the problems were and by tidying up the physical space.
- 6.47 While the IMB commends the rationale behind the restructuring of the department, i.e. to reduce the disjointedness of having one HDC clerk, one ROTL clerk etc. by requiring offender supervisors to deal with all aspects of the sentences of prisoners on their caseload, it cannot be said that the new

system had bedded in by the end of the reporting period. The unintended consequence of all these changes has been to cause disruption and reduce morale among staff who felt they were being asked to do too much, including new jobs for which they felt unprepared.

- 6.48 Many staff underwent training which took them away from their desks for prolonged periods. Others had to wait for training that was nationally organised and only available on specific dates, meaning they could not fulfil their roles effectively in the meantime.
- 6.49 Staff training, sickness and the fact that the OMU was usually the first port of call for any urgent cross-deployment when unanticipated events arose all contributed to the reduced number of hours available to spend on addressing the backlog. Cross-deployment alone reduced the department's man hours by an average of 75 each month over the reporting period. At one point at the end of July 50% of OMU staff were off sick.
- 6.50 A case management database, mooted in December 2013, did not materialise. As a result, it was not immediately possible to find out at what stage any particular prisoner was in e.g. achieving ROTL, unless it was possible to locate the actual offender supervisor.
- 6.51 Prisoners regularly complained that they were not visited by their offender supervisors or informed of how their case was going.
- 6.52 The limited OMU resources available were allocated to Cat Ds as a priority, unfairly disadvantaging Cat C prisoners.
- 6.53 The IMB welcomed the provision of two extra staff members from a contractor in November 2013, but despaired that as soon as they departed the backlog quickly built up again. The Board was informed any possibility of their return was delayed pending agreement with the Prison Officers' Association, who opposed it.
- 6.54 Despite the desire of the Activities Department to see Offender Supervisors physically present and involved during prisoner induction, where activities are allocated, this was often impossible due to the OMU already being overburdened.
- 6.55 Brixton's local Reducing Reoffending Policy states that "OASys was designed to provide a seamless system for the assessment of offenders throughout the sentence, whether in the community or in custody." The IMB strongly condemns the fact that not every prisoner in Brixton has one, and considers this a major impediment to resettlement.
- 6.56 Transfers remained problematic, with few prisoners achieving them and many experiencing extremely long delays creating uncertainty and frustration. This was despite the efforts of staff in the prison, and attributable in the IMB's view to systemic national problems regarding transfer. In his response to our last Annual Report, the previous Minister stated, "the PMU does not case manage individual prisoners or their required movements around the estate or check whether allocations meet the receiving prison's criteria. This is a matter for both the sending and receiving prisons to agree locally on the basis that those prisons involved will have a better understanding of the prisoner's individual needs and offending behaviour requirements." However, the IMB has seen cases in which the PMU is not implementing the Minister's stated policy; Brixton has on occasion been overruled by the PMU when it wants to refuse transfers who do not meet their criteria in preparation for national benchmarking of the open estate (e.g. not transferring Cat Ds without

OASys) and there have been cases where Brixton has agreed an outward transfer with another prison but the PMU was not willing to move the man on.

- 6.57 Brixton warned sending prisons that those transferred in without an OASys would be returned. In practice this was difficult to enforce as the transporting companies would not take them.
- 6.58 One prisoner held in the CSU for a prolonged period awaiting transfer staged a dirty protest.

Personal Officer Scheme

- 6.59 Both prisoners and officers see the value of the Personal Officer Scheme but its operation during the reporting year was challenging and inconsistent. Some prisoners said that they had no relationship with their Personal Officer, and some said that they did not know who this was or what their role was. Some reported that not all Personal Officers introduced themselves, which made it harder to establish a relationship.
- 6.60 Officers reported that the Personal Officer Scheme was not working, as they did not have the time, and the scheme was not enforced or prioritised. However, the IMB saw records on NOMIS showing management checks on the scheme, and remained unconvinced that lack of time was in fact the problem. This area should be a priority. Some officers said that, even with the best of intentions, establishing relations with prisoners via the scheme was difficult. Large wings and landings and low officer to prisoner ratios meant that Personal Officers were often based on different landings from the prisoners assigned to them in the scheme. That meant that prisoners did not see their Personal Officers very often and had to seek them out if they were needed. That challenge was exacerbated when staff were redeployed to cover elsewhere in the prison.
- 6.61 The Board considers the scheme an important resource, especially for prisoners who do not have other avenues for officer or other support. Improvement is needed, with clearer leadership and communication in the prison on what is expected of prisoners and staff, if the scheme is to be successful. The prison made an effort to ensure that prisoners know the names of their Personal Officers by displaying their names above cells doors. However, the names were often missing or out-of-date.

Visitors and Visitors' Centre

- 6.62 Visits to the prison took place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, with additional visits for Enhanced prisoners on Sundays. The prison offered a range of visits of various lengths, depending on a prisoner's IEP status. Visits could be booked online through the .gov portal or by telephone, which for many made the organising of visits easier. However, visits booked online are initiated by the visitors and may not always suit the prisoner.
- 6.63 The Visits hall was redecorated, creating a more pleasant atmosphere. While the vending machines remained in use, the addition of a small cafe, run by the Bad Boys Bakery, was another improvement. The cafe offers drinks, sandwiches and snacks to prisoners and their visitors, as well as to prison staff.
- 6.64 Identification bibs were replaced with sashes, less demeaning for the prisoners. The Board welcomed the wider use of the visiting facilities for prisoners' courses and graduations. A number of family days were organised during the reporting year.

- 6.65 The changes to the organisation of visits and to the Visits hall contributed to the prison's resettlement role.
- 6.66 The Board, however, regrets that around 30% of timetabled slots available for visits do not provide a children's play supervisor. The Board understands that this is the result of restrictions in the contract with Spurgeons and would urge that future contracts reflect the need for increased childcare provision. In addition, managing a centrally controlled contract so as to provide the best service for local needs is not always straightforward.
- 6.67 Further, the new visits booking system introduced nationally towards the end of the reporting period suffered teething problems. 400 requested visits did not go ahead. The prison acknowledged the frustration this caused and committed to responding to new visit requests within 3 working days. It could be helpful for some visitors if the Visitor Centre staff could take an active role in facilitating online booking, especially for visitors with limited computer experience or access. At the time of writing the online booking system was working but was not being fully utilised as those booking visits had lost faith in the system. This, along with the inability of some visitors to use an online booking system, was resulting in ongoing significant problems with the telephone line for booking visits. Since the introduction of the online booking system, the telephone line was only available in the afternoons rather than throughout the week. Demand for use of the telephone line far outstrips its capacity, resulting in callers being put on hold for unacceptably long periods of time – sometimes over an hour – which is costly as well as being a poor service.

Vulnerable prisoners

- 6.68 The most significant event to arise in the course of the year relating to VPs was the move of almost the entire VP population from Brixton to HMP Littlehey. This was achieved with the least inconvenience and disruption possible and in a way that allowed VPs undertaking courses such as sex offenders' treatment (SOTP) and other psychological training to complete them before transfer. A small number of VPs remained at Brixton, housed in D Wing, to help maintain kitchen services. It was planned that the remaining VPs would be relocated to Littlehey soon after the end of this reporting period.
- 6.69 The efforts that the prison had made earlier in the year and in previous years to develop activities, work and training, benefited VPs, and at least some of those activities will be continued for the benefit of the general prison population. The garden located behind G Wing flourished and included polytunnels for training in market gardening skills. A textile and design workshop was established which was popular with VPs and, in the relatively short time since it began, many examples achieved a very high standard.
- 6.70 The departure of the VP population will simplify the management and operation of the prison.

SECTION 7 THE WORK OF THE IMB

- 7.1 Two new Board members have been recruited during this reporting year; two members have left the Board.
- 7.2 Monthly Board meetings are held and are attended by the prison's Governing Governor or his nominated deputy. Each Board member is expected to carry out one rota visit between Board meetings. This allows for three to four members to carry out a rota visit each week. During a rota visit a Board member is expected to complete some outstanding applications and to attend segregation reviews and adjudication hearings in addition to monitoring the day to day operation of the prison. This year, due to the very high number of applications received, one member on each weekly rota has been tasked solely with responding to these. Each member also has an area of special interest that they focus on for the reporting year. This involves attending prison meetings on the area, arranging information-gathering meetings with the relevant prison management and staff, and additional monitoring e.g. of completion standards of ACCT documents.
- 7.3 The IMB remained at the mercy of the prison management with regard to the number of hours it was allocated a clerk. These were reduced in the reporting period, due to the dictates of the new hub system and benchmarking.
- 7.4 The Board is grateful to prison management and members of staff who have facilitated the work of the IMB, whether by attending Board meetings, by making time to explain their roles to the Board or by more general assistance. The Governing Governor, Edmond Tullett, continued to be helpful and approachable in response to our queries.
- 7.5 Early in the reporting year the IMB was warned that it would be losing its own office (and separate key), and would have to rely instead on lockable cabinets in an office accessible to all prison staff. In the event, the locks were changed by MITIE, the external works contractor, without prior notification of the date of the change to the IMB, or indeed the Governor, Deputy Governor or Security Governor. This was absolutely unacceptable. Not only were some members of the Board left unable to access the office with their allocated keys, the confidentiality and security of IMB information, including prisoner applications, were severely compromised as the offices could be accessed by any prison staff and no lockable cabinet had yet been put in place.
- 7.6 The total number of applications to the IMB during this reporting period was 1098.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Edmond Tullett' written in a cursive style. The signature on the right is another name, possibly 'John', also written in a cursive style.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended complement of Board members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	18
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	18
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	2
Total number of Board meetings during the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	566
Total number of segregation reviews held	Not recorded
Total number of segregation reviews attended	36
Date of annual Team Performance Review	January 2014

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
A	Accommodation	41	36	44	15	21
B	Adjudications	11	9	11	12	26
C	Equality & Diversity (including religion)	18	16	21	36	23
D	Education/employment/training including IEP	24	28	49	65	107
E1	Family/visits including mail & phone	61	72	76	37	53
E2	Finance & pay				19	34
F	Food/kitchen related	27	36	30	14	15
G	Health related	55	62	68	56	114
H1	Property (within current establishment)	92	112	123	26	51
H2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)				59	72
H3	Canteen, facilities, catalogue shopping, Argos				9	67
I	Sentence related (including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	15	22	59	145	317
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns including bullying	38	36	45	57	82
K	Transfers	29	34	40	24	31
L	Miscellaneous	64	69	150	28	85
	Total number of IMB applications	475	532	716	602	1098
	Of total: number of IMB Confidential Access				57	154