



**HMP CHANNINGS WOOD**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**1st September 2011 – 31st August 2012**

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## **Section 1 Statutory role of the IMB**

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Justice Secretary from members of the community.

The board is specifically charged to:

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

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

## **Section 2 Description of the prison**

HMP Channings Wood is a medium sized Category 'C' training prison situated in a rural area of Devon near Newton Abbot. Its numbers fluctuate slightly in excess of 700. It has limited access by public transport with no public transport access on Sundays. Prisoner's accommodation is split into three separate areas: the main wings, the vulnerable prisoner unit (incorporating LB1) and the drug therapeutic community. Contained within the perimeter fence are a sports field and an area which is used for horticulture. Education, vocational courses and offending behavior programmes are provided. All vocational courses are provided by Strode College. A4e are responsible for delivering Social and Life Skills provision and Tribal Group deliver the remainder of courses. Healthcare is provided by the Devon Partnership Trust.

**Both Education and Health Care will have new providers for the coming year.**

## **Section 3**

### **3.1 Executive Summary**

There have been some improvements around the prison this year, notably the impact of the 'Reduction in Violence' strategy. Much has been attempted to combat the 'gang culture' mentioned last year although the drug and mobile phone culture continues to flourish, despite the best efforts of staff. The Board believes that the prison is a safer place than last year despite an acknowledged thriving drug presence and continued, (although reduced) episodes of violence. Restorative Justice has led to more meaningful punishments and as a strong message to those considering criminal behavior in custody. Adversely, the impact of budget cuts has put strain upon staffing levels which in turn leads to more opportunities for prisoners to offend and reduces the likelihood of them being caught. Staff reduction is particularly felt in Channings Wood due to the huge perimeter of the establishment and its rural location. However, the prison has upheld standards of safety to the best of its ability in a very difficult economic environment. The Belief in Change Program has slowly gathered momentum throughout the year and seen its first Graduates. The work to improve the detection of drugs coming over the perimeter fence and also through the Visits Hall is to be commended. The Segregation Unit has again upheld levels of dignity and decency in the face of some difficult prisoners. Staff morale is notably lowered by the changes to staffing and other budget cuts. The Operation Capacity has seen a small reduction which is welcomed by the Board.

## 3.2 Questions for the Minister

1. The Board asks what budget will be allocated to enable the Governor to provide adequate aids for the increasing number of elderly and disabled prisoners. In our view, it is a priority to bring the fabric of the prison up to an acceptable standard - one that meets current legislation, particularly wheelchair accessible cells and showers. Some showers are covered in mould, are unhygienic and have no slip mats. A budget must be made available for upgrading to be carried out.
2. What plans are there to address the needs of the increasing number of prisoners with Mental Health issues? What is being done to increase the number of places available in Psychiatric units for prisoners to receive support and treatment which is unavailable in prison?
3. This establishment offers an excellent drug therapy programme. Why does the unit always have vacancies? Given that the use of illicit drugs is acknowledged throughout the estate, why are other establishments not making use of the facility?

## 3.3 Questions for NOMS

1. The Board wishes to know when there will be an increase in the number of places available for Category D prisoners convicted of sexual offences. It appears to be increasingly difficult to move these prisoners to appropriate prisons.

## Section 4 Mandatory Reports

### 4.1 Last Year's Concerns

#### **a) Health Care – inconsistency of doctors**

This has been covered fully in 4.4. The Board believes there has been deterioration this year in the overall performance of the unit which is evidenced in our applications. There appears to be insufficient cohesion in addressing several areas of prisoners' needs, for example - administration of drugs, mental health, pain relief, sexual health, cancer support and diabetes.

#### **b) Library Services for VPU prisoners**

A big improvement has been seen with extra sessions provided for VPU prisoners and fewer cancelled sessions overall. However, weekend services have been reduced towards the latter half of the year and it is hoped this will be rectified.

#### **c) Drug Therapy Unit used to accommodate prisoners not enrolled on the programme.**

This still occurs and continues to have an adverse effect upon those prisoners trying to turn their lives around. Drugs have been found on the wing this year. Overcrowding on main wings should not be an excuse for placing main wing prisoners within an area where absolute commitment is required from both prisoners and staff to ensure the programme provides maximum benefit and the best use of public money. Is enough being done to fill the places with drug dependant prisoners from other

establishments? In a prison environment where drug use is prevalent why are we unable to fill places on such an excellent programme|?

**d) ‘Graduates’ of Drug Therapy Unit being relocated on main wings.**

This still occurs and is unsatisfactory. A few prisoners are released on completion of their course but most return to main wing locations, invariably among users.

**e) Loss of IMB Induction slot**

The Board has tried to establish contact with new prisoners within their first week at Channings Wood but has not succeeded due to the reduction of the two week Induction Programme to just two days. We have produced an information sheet for Reception and wings but it does not replace the benefit of face to face contact. We continue to pursue a regular slot.

**f) OMU backlog causing delays. (Both outside agencies and relocation of uniformed staff away from their OMU duties)**

There has been some improvement this year although we still see evidence of outside agencies delaying prisoner’s release, in particular the UK Border Agency, which results in Foreign Nationals being held after their release date. Applications from prisoners have evidenced examples of poor communication between some OMU staff and prisoners.

**g) Relationship between staff and prisoners.**

We continue to have a small number of complaints from prisoners about their relations with staff. It appears that there are a few officers who still maintain outdated modes of dealing with and speaking to prisoners.

**h) Lack of Cat D options for VPU prisoners.**

This still needs a solution.

**i) Bullying and Gang Culture**

There has been an improvement this year due mainly to the ‘zero tolerance’ policy which has filtered from the top downwards. When incidents occur, (there have been some isolated, very serious injuries,) the staff are diligent and professional in dealing with them and are to be commended.

**j) Older Prisoners**

This is dealt with under 4.4. We are concerned about the need for a clearer pain relief policy to prevent prisoners who are genuinely in pain from being discriminated against. We also request disability aids on all wings (see 5.2)

**k)VPU Child Centred Visits**

Some prisoners are still unhappy about restrictions but it is the view of the Board that restrictions imposed are fair and necessary. The Family Days have been well supported and the staff are to be congratulated for their efforts, particularly on the field events where various outdoor family activities have been enjoyed and money raised for charity.

**l) Screening of cell toilets**

Some improvements are in place but there are still some cells lacking privacy curtains.

## 4.2 Diversity and Race Equality

Equality Action Team meetings are held on a regular basis where in depth analysis of a variety of issues is dealt with as they arise. It is the Boards view that due diligence is given to matters raised and action plans are implemented as necessary. The Rainbow Club is well attended and safer sex information readily available. There has been an increase in the number of staff trained this year and it is hoped this trend will continue. It has been brought to our attention that, despite such training, a small number of staff persist in using inappropriate language and treatment of prisoners.

## 4.3 Learning and Skill

The Education Department has achieved good results this year both in the quality of the courses and the success of prisoners in gaining awards and certificates. Strode College, Tribe and A 4 e have been the providers. Enthusiasm from staff has been noted and the diversity of courses,(from Business studies to Parenting) is to be commended. During the latter part of the year, however, morale has diminished due to fears for staff jobs and the expected reduction in budget and courses by the incoming provider. The change of provider has lacked clarity at every level and has caused this uncertainty which has impacted on prisoners.

## 4.4 Health Care and Mental Health

Concerns were raised by Board members in the early part of the year regarding the quality of the Health Care. We instigated thematic monitoring which has validated our concerns and revealed yet further problems. The issues have been the subject of a letter to the PCT which received a full response. As an overview, the unit has difficulty in meeting the standards laid down by the PCT. It is regrettable that some of the concerns raised in last year's report have seen no improvement and some are worse. The main thrust of our concerns is as follows:

1. From September 2011 until June 2012 Devon Doctors failed to provide the required number of GP surgeries. Prisoners faced unacceptably long delays for appointments and, at times, resistance from nursing staff when requesting to see a doctor or dentist.
2. Agency nurses have been used all too frequently as staff shortages/illness has been commonplace. Too few agency nurses are security checked which leads to difficulties when emergency cover is required. **The unfamiliarity of temporary medical and nursing staff with both prisoners and prison systems has resulted, in our view, in a failure of prisoner's rights** (i.e. their right to receive a standard of medical care commensurate with that received by the wider community.) Additionally, it is the belief of the Board that long term medical care, particularly of prisoners presenting with chronic conditions, can slip under the radar as a result of the above problems.
3. It has been brought to our attention that older and/or disabled prisoners with pain issues, (some severe,) can be discriminated against by having painkillers withheld to comply with the drive to prevent the trading of drugs. There is a distinct reticence to prescribe analgesics, particularly the more potent categories of drugs. We recognize this is a delicate area when commenting on professional prescribing regimes but the end result is prisoners in pain and often unable to sleep. This leads to a debilitated quality of life and often a lack of mobility. Where issues arise regarding the safety and security of drugs being held in cells by prisoners we suggest they should be more readily distributed daily, as required, from Health Care. It has also been brought to our attention that when a prisoner is caught with illegal prescription drugs in his possession it is not unusual for other prisoners on the wing, (to whom similar drugs are prescribed,) to have their prescription withdrawn without any investigation of culpability. A better way forward needs to be found. We have evidenced a small number of prisoners arriving at the prison on potent but necessary painkillers which were discontinued by doctors at Channings Wood, sometimes with immediate effect. This leaves prisoners in distress.

4. The Dentistry service has also figured frequently in the number of complaints to the Board. We appreciate that the refurbishment to the facility has caused a backlog but the waiting time for acute toothache has been unacceptable for the whole of this year. There appears to be a rather ‘hit and miss’ system in place when differentiating between those with toothache and those prisoners merely seeking analgesic drugs. Unfortunately, this leaves some genuine prisoners in acute pain for unacceptable lengths of time. (The worst reports we received included a prisoner with an abscess being turned away for treatment every day for three weeks. Another prisoner had tissues hanging from holes in his teeth in an attempt to relieve pain and waited nine weeks before being seen, despite attending Health Care for analgesics every day.) The staff admit there are difficulties in identifying genuine cases but a more humane attitude would reduce the number of complaints we encounter.

5. There have been increasing concerns about the operational management of the Healthcare Department, specifically with drug administration, timely attendance of nurses in the Segregation Unit and taking prisoners' health concerns seriously. Much appears to be in place for new administration/training systems and long term plans, (all to be commended) but we believe more attention to basic nursing care would benefit prisoners. We have found (in cells) out of date drugs and some which should have been stored in a refrigerator. It had been brought to our attention that prisoners with known mental health issues can find it difficult to see a doctor when concerned about a physical illness. Sometimes they are pre-judged and prevented from seeing a doctor as they are regarded as ‘a nuisance’.

It is pleasing to note that when the above issues were raised with the PCT (supported by similar concerns from the Governor), that the PCT responded swiftly. GP provision improved. However the Board continues to monitor and is still finding GP surgeries being cancelled and staff shortages. The length of waiting time for dental appointments has improved but they are still not acceptable.

In line with the Establishment as a whole, a significant number of prisoners at Channings Wood suffer from severe and enduring mental health problems. The work of the prison Mental Health team and the work of MIND are commended. However, their work is merely scratching the surface and more budgetary allocation to this area is essential. As in the general population at large, diabetes amongst the prison population is continuing to rise. The Board feels that diagnosis and support for diabetic prisoners needs to be improved.

The Board has one of its members present as an observer in the quarterly meetings between the PCT and the Prison Cluster.

## **4.5 Safer Prisons**

This has been a challenging year. Endeavour and good teamwork by staff to combat the instigators of violence and bullying have seen many successes. However, prisoner’s ever more ingenious methods of concealment and the reduction in staff numbers suggests that little real headway has been made. It is hoped that the mobile phone signal blocking facility will be brought into operation in the coming year and that the focus on safety will continue. It is the Board’s opinion that Channings Wood is a safer prison than last year however, we have raised concerns about the lack of offenders logged in the Anti Bullying Register. This happens from time to time and it sits uncomfortably that in an establishment of over 700 men there can ever be a period of time without a single incidence of bullying. Continued vigilance and more resources are required to root out the main causes of violence and bullying – namely mobile phones and drugs.

## **4.6 Segregation Unit**

This has been a busy and demanding year for the Segregation Unit which, for much of the time, has been occupied by difficult, demanding, recalcitrant prisoners. There have been several dirty protests.

The staff continue to handle such prisoners and events in a capable and professional manner. The Staff are well supported by their delegated Governor who ensures that support and training remain in place.

The Board is pleased to note that the trial period during which prison staff have handled all adjudications rather than using the services of a Judge appears to have been successful. Prisoners have responded well to the new regime. The Annex D regime, although rarely used, has been an effective, additional deterrent. The Board continues to attend Segregation reviews and adjudications on a regular basis. The effort of the Unit to keep regular time slots for Reviews has been appreciated. As reported in the last two Annual reports, the Board continues to have concerns about the number of prisoners seeking segregation for their own protection. Such prisoners can be extremely difficult to locate either within the main prison or at another establishment.

## **Section 5 Other areas of the prison the Board has issues to report.**

### **5.1 Industries**

There continues to be insufficient work in the woodwork shop and, at times, the laundry which results in prisoners being idle for periods of time. However, both areas have now successfully competed for outside contracts which will, hopefully, keep more prisoners employed in the coming year. The incentive pay scheme and rotating of prisoners to ensure fairness of earnings for the woodwork contract is endorsed by the Board. The recycling plant is to be congratulated on excellent work again this year.

### **5.2 Care and facilities for disabled prisoners**

The Board has requested the prison to consider various facilities for disabled prisoners over the last year. When marginal cost has been involved the Governor has responded positively to our request. The availability of wheelchairs has been noted. However, the more pressing needs require investment. The most urgent, outstanding needs are:

- 1) An accessible shower for disabled prisoners on each wing (with seat and ramp)
- 2) Provision of at least one cell providing wheel chair access.

Due to the increasing number of older and disabled prisoners throughout the Establishment it is the view of the Board that more funding is required without delay. Respect and dignity are lacking when disabled prisoners are unable to shower and move in and out of cells in a wheelchair if required. Installation of more disability aids are urgently needed. It is the view of the Board that able bodied prisoners could be trained to care for the basic needs of disabled prisoners who find collecting their meals, washing and dressing and coping with everyday life a struggle. This would in turn create additional wing jobs for prisoners. We believe this is under consideration at Channings Wood and await the outcome. It should not be budget dependent to provide standard care for those with physical needs. **It should be a priority to bring the Establishment in line with the outside community.**

It has also been brought to our attention that older and disabled prisoners with pains issues can be discriminated against by having painkillers withheld (see 4.4 Health Care Section.) Non consistent attendance by doctors adds to the problems for disabled prisoners. Locum doctors are often unwilling to embrace the long term needs of prisoners whose medical history is unfamiliar to them.



### **5.3 Drug therapeutic unit**

This area continues to experience difficulties despite some dedicated staff. Much good work has taken place this year but it is disappointing to find that, for yet another year, empty cells have been used for main wing prisoners. **A way must be found to attract prisoners from other Establishments into this programme.**

### **5.4 Food**

The Board is diligent about tasting food both at the point of service and in the kitchen. Although complaints about food are in one of the highest categories of complaints, in the main, the diet is well balanced. The introduction of breakfast packs has not been well received by prisoners. They state it is insufficient in quantity and quality, a view we endorse and due to the higher cost involved question the decision. We will monitor the further, imminent budget/staff cuts which are likely to adversely impact on prisoners. The kitchen remains clean and well run and staff are to be commended.

### **5.5 New Vulnerable Prisoner Wing (LB1)**

Effort has been made by staff to create a pleasant living environment for prisoners on this wing who are amongst the most vulnerable and often fail to cope with prison conditions. We have received complaints about 'over - zealous officers' who lock down early and unlock late which can impact on work regimes and recreation. There has been the expected rise in ACCT's but the staff deal with them professionally. In the main, it is the Board's view that the change of use has been successful but there is still scope for further improvement.

### **5.6 Older prisoners**

Recognition of increased prisoner numbers over the age of fifty has been responded to by the prison where cost is not a major implication. Additional warm winter clothing has been provided, a programme of activities by outside agencies is well attended and the allocation of an excellent meeting room has been well received. However, investment in updating facilities is urgently required, (see 5.2)

## **Section 6 Areas of Good Practice**

### **6.1**

Prisoners nearing their release date have, this year, been refurbishing old bicycles which are passed on to charities. The project has helped the Torbay local authority to win a national partnership recycling award. Bicycles brought to the household waste recycling centre are sent to the jail allowing prisoners not only to give something back to the community but also to work towards a qualification. Excellent work has been achieved in training prisoners to NVC level 2 in the men's hairdressing shops.

### **6.2**

The increase of prisoners working in the community is to be commended. It is hoped that the ongoing negotiations to obtain salaries for those men will be successful. Prisoners have been provided with a van (with tracker) to get themselves to work. Acquiring further placements would be a big step forward.

### 6.3

#### Belief in Change

This programme has seen the first prisoners 'Graduate' and is showing good results. The early days were inevitably a 'settling in' period but as the year has progressed staff and prisoners alike are now 'owning' their roles. It remains to be seen how sustainable the course will be and what the long term effects on individual prisoners will be. The Board hopes funding will be made available to further this vital work.

### 6.4

#### Restorative Justice

The introduction of Restorative Justice has had a positive impact on the prison. The visiting Circuit Judge has been replaced, on a trial basis and this has given greater powers to Governors to combat bad behaviour. Their ability to punish bad behavior in immediate and more meaningful ways, for instance, longer terms of withholding privileges rather than addition to sentences, is starting to show results. Fundraising and contributions from prisoners have surpassed £4,500 this year and the money has benefited charities. It is hoped this system will be made permanent. Significant savings have been made.

### 6.5 Drug and Hooch success.

Diligent staff continue to report success in combating both of the above but in real terms there is still further work required. The work is hampered by the reduction of staff and the loss of a dog.

## **Section 7 Work of the Board**

This has been a difficult year for the Board due to reduced numbers of experienced Board members. Those remaining, as a consequence, have worked exceptionally hard. The significant fall in numbers is due to the retirement of four members after many years served, one emigration, three new recruits failing to complete their probationary year, one member on long term sick leave and another on a one year sabbatical. Our new recruits have arrived and are working with enthusiasm but we have only four members able to train them and carry the majority of the work load. It is hoped this will ease as the year progresses and our new members become fully operational. Our situation will not be helped by the new fifteen year rule due to be enforced by the Secretariat. This will incur two further losses of experienced members. It is our view that this directive is a waste of public money, particularly in the light of the economic crisis and the difficulty of acquiring and training good quality members. The Board has had a busy year. Some issues brought to our attention have been particularly serious and complex and have taken many hours of work to document. The provision of a new office by the Governor gives us excellent facilities in which to work and is much appreciated.

## 7.1 Review of the Year

### THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>                                      |     |
| Recommended Complement of Board Members                      | 16  |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period | 10  |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period   | 10  |
| Number of new members joining within the reporting period    | 8   |
| Number of members leaving within reporting period            | 8   |
| Total number of Board meetings during reporting period       | 12  |
| Total number of visits to the Establishment                  | 509 |
| Total number of segregation reviews held                     | 132 |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended                 | 43  |
| <b>Date of Annual Team Performance Review</b>                |     |

**Section 7 (cont.)**

**Applications by subject**

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Subject</b>   | <b>Year<br/>2009</b> | <b>Year<br/>2010</b> | <b>Year<br/>2011</b> | <b>Year<br/>2012</b> |
|-------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| A           | Accommodation  | 7                    | 1                    | 1                    | 16                   |
| B           | Adjudications  | 5                    | 5                    | 1                    | 3                    |
| C           | Equality & Diversity (inc religion)                                  | 3                    | 7                    | 4                    | 0                    |
| D           | Education/employment/training inc IEP                                | 18                   | 23                   | 32                   | 21                   |
| E           | Family/visits inc mail & phone                                       | 7                    | 16                   | 17                   | 7                    |
| F           | Food/kitchen related   | 3                    | 8                    | 9                    | 11                   |
| G           | Health related   | 18                   | 19                   | 31                   | 36                   |
| H           | Property   | 50                   | 67                   | 39                   | 24                   |
| I           | Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc) | 37                   | 55                   | 37                   | 36                   |
| J           | Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc bullying                        | 11                   | 23                   | 29                   | 16                   |
| K           | Transfers  | 19                   | 49                   | 29                   | 19                   |
| L           | Miscellaneous  | 18                   | 39                   | 33                   | 49                   |
|             | <b>Total number of IMB applications</b>                              | 226                  | 312                  | 264                  | 238                  |