



HMP Erlestoke Independent Monitoring Board

Annual Report

1st November 2011 – 31st March 2013

HMP Erlestoke,
Westbury Road, HMP Erlestoke, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5TU

Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

Section 1

1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

The HMP Erlestoke Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is composed of 12 volunteer members and is independent of the Prison Service and the Justice Ministry.

The IMB obtains information from many sources in the prison and this is reflected in this Annual Report:

- Informal face-to-face conversations with offenders and staff whenever we are in the prison, not necessarily regarding complaints
- Our formal weekly rota visits which generate points for our monthly meeting with the Governor (urgent matters are escalated immediately)
- Verbal and written applications made to us by individual offenders
- Attendance at routine meetings, together with formal and informal briefings by the Governor and members of his management team
- Observation of peoples' behaviour and the state of the prison
- Attendance at incidents when they occur

We are the only independent presence in the prison on a day-to-day basis.

Section 2

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Section 3

3. DESCRIPTION OF HMP ERLESTOKE

HMP Erlestoke is an adult male; Category 'C' closed training prison, built in the grounds of the former Erlestoke Park House. It is the only prison in Wiltshire and is situated in a rural location on the northern edge of Salisbury Plain about 7 miles from the towns of Devizes and Westbury.

Category C offenders are those who have neither the intention nor the resources to escape. Categorisation of offenders is not, of itself, dependent on the offender's offence. Hence even though HMP Erlestoke is a Category C prison, over half of its' offenders are classified as ISP (Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners), being Life and Indeterminate Public Protection (IPP) sentenced.

One of last year's highlights was the completion of the new Silbury Unit; most of the initial teething problems have now been overcome and it is now fully operational providing accommodation and intervention programmes for over 100 offenders. There are seven other residential units; three are standard units, one of which is used for induction, the other four are enhanced units. The total operational capacity of the prison is 494, although this has been temporarily reduced to 488 because of an upgrade of alarms in the site, which are due to be completed by April 2014.

HMP Erlestoke receives adult male offenders from much of England and Wales, and in particular from local prisons in Winchester, Bristol, Gloucester (closed in March 2013) and South Wales. It does not receive offenders direct from the courts immediately after sentence.

Performance of the prison, as measured against targets which are externally audited by the Prison Service, have seen HMP Erlestoke continue its recent year on year improvements - it is now one of the highest performing prisons in the South West Region as well as within its national comparative group. The management and staff are to be commended on their hard work and commitment during a difficult time in terms of the economic and financial pressures placed upon the establishment.

HMP Erlestoke enjoys a good image in the neighbourhood. The Governor and his staff continue to keep local residents involved and informed of relevant developments, with individual letters to households, meetings and presentations in village halls, and events such as cricket matches, talks to societies and so on. In general the Prison has good relationship with the local media.

In March 2011, the management of HMP Shepton Mallet was incorporated with HMP Erlestoke. HMP Shepton Mallet was also a Category C adult male prison although wholly dedicated to the holding of IPP and Life sentenced offenders. However, in January 2013, the Secretary of State for Justice, at very short notice, announced the closure of HMP Shepton Mallet effective March 2013. The contents of this annual report refer to HMP Erlestoke unless otherwise stated.

Section 4

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This has been a period of considerable change for HMP Erlestoke & Shepton Mallet. The management team put enormous effort into merging the two very different prison establishments under one team and to develop a "one prison" culture amongst the staff.

In the Board's opinion, great progress was being made and considerable cost savings were being achieved making the decision to close HMP Shepton Mallet at extremely short notice very perverse. Never the less the closure was managed very well with minimum disruption to the offenders all of whom were re-located to other suitable prisons. External agencies were fully involved with dealing with all displaced staff.

The Board have been satisfied with regard to the resolution of issues raised in our report last year with the exception of the ongoing problem of existing sentenced IPP offenders being held, often for many years, in excess of their tariff.

Respondent	Issue	Action Required	Ref
Minister/ Prison Service HQ	IPP offenders continue to remain in prison beyond their tariff date. This creates uncertainty and a destabilising influence in the prison.	A finite action plan to address the needs of existing IPP offenders within the system.	4
Minister/ Prison Service HQ	Amount of offenders' property, which is lost during transfers between prisons.	Clarification as to why this continues to be a problem and an indication as to how it will be addressed. (this is not unique to Erlestoke)	7
Minister/ Prison Service HQ	Catering budget of £1.94 per offender per day is considered inadequate.	Clarification as to why the budget remains so restrictive and an increase to alleviate the ongoing challenge to the kitchens.	5.8
Governor	Lack of association facilities in the enhanced wing, Sarum.	Implementation of improved association facilities for Sarum enhanced offenders.	5.8
Governor	Poor heating arrangements in Wessex and Alfred (6 cells).	Provide an action plan to bring the 6 cells up to the same standard as the others in these units.	5.8

Section 5

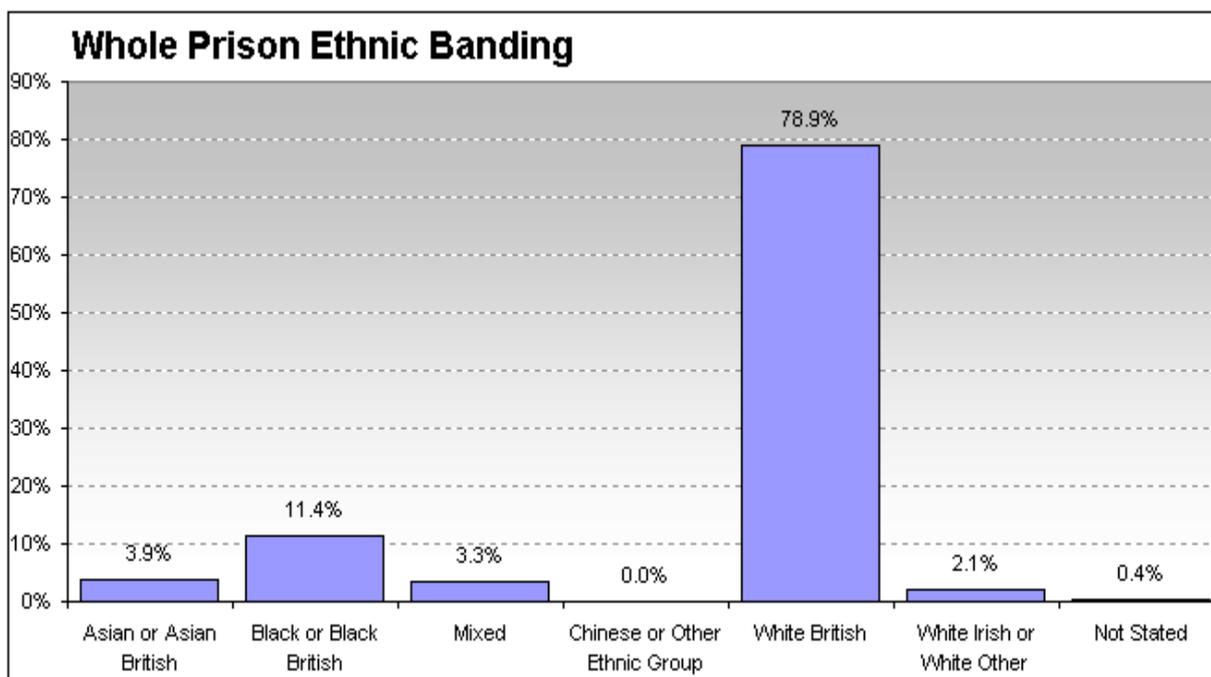
5. MANDATORY REPORTING AREAS

5.1 Equality & Inclusion

As at April 2013 the BME (Black, Minority and Ethnic) offender population at HMP Erlestoke was 21% this is slightly lower than the October 2011 figures of 23% and there are currently 10 foreign national offenders.

The Board remain seriously concerned that given BME account for around 10% of the national population (3% of the Wiltshire County population), it appears that the Criminal Justice System continues to deliver over twice as many BME as non BME offenders to HMP Erlestoke as are represented in the national population.

The current ethnic mix of the offender population at HMP Erlestoke is as follows:



In April 2011 a new procedure was introduced to facilitate the reporting of all forms of discrimination and victimisation to ensure all strands of Equality were given equal weight. In the 17 months covered by this report there were a total of 119 alleged discrimination incidents reported. All incidents were dismissed after being fully investigated by a dedicated member of staff reporting to the Governor. The Board are satisfied that the systems and reporting standards are robust and that the prison management team are totally committed to Equality in all areas.

Facilities in HMP Erlestoke continue to improve with two dedicated and modified cells with wider door openings providing more space for wheelchairs. The staff at HMP Erlestoke work extremely hard to ensure that all disabled offenders including those with severe sight and hearing difficulties are cared for to a very high standard.

Equality issues are fully discussed and monitored at the monthly Equality Management Team meetings at which the Board plays an active part.

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

The introduction of OLASS 4

The Board's last report noted the changes planned for 2012 as to how education was to be delivered within the prison, and expressed the hope that the changes would not prove too disruptive.

Those changes happened, in August 2012. Unlike many other prisons HMP Erlestoke had to cope simultaneously with a change of education provider (which is now Weston College) and with the change to the new framework for education (OLASS 4). The new arrangements are based on 'need' rather than 'want', with tight time limits for completion of courses, and funded on a 'per learner' basis – 80% of the payment for each learner is based on adequate attendance and 20% on successful completion of the course.

It is too early for the Board to give an informed assessment of the impact of the changes. It took until February 2013 to complete the restructuring, during which time 28 of the education staff left. There are still vacancies, which have led to difficulties in providing some courses.

The new approach means courses are generally shorter than previously, with fewer courses running concurrently. There are now fewer offenders in education at any one time. The intention is that they are more focused on their work whilst there, and that over the course of a year the number of offenders who will have undertaken a course will be no less than previously.

One area of particular concern was the loss of the dedicated NVQ trainer in the kitchen. The prison has now made alternative arrangements, which to some extent appear to be filling that gap. The relatively low numbers of offenders requiring basic literacy and numeracy training, coupled with shortage of staff, has also led to a gap in delivering basic numeracy and literacy courses. The Board understands that this has now been addressed. There was also a period of adjustment whilst staff and offenders got used to planning use of the gym, healthcare visits and so on to avoid offenders missing classes.

The Board is conscious of a risk that the focus on successful completion of courses could lead to less able or less motivated learners being inadequately provided for, and will keep this under review. The Board does not, however, wish to appear critical of the changes, which clearly offer opportunities and encourage a more focused and professional approach to teaching and learning. The Board looks forward to monitoring how the changes will bed in during 2013/4.

Other education issues

The library, run by Wiltshire Council, continues to be a popular resource, with almost all offenders joining the library, and an average of around 300 offenders a week using it. Initiatives organised by the library team have included a two-day book making session, visits by authors and a poet, and the Six Book Challenge.

The IMB have also noted the following:

- Additional learning support is offered to offenders through a peer-mentoring scheme.
- In December 2012 HMP Erlestoke received the bronze award in the Good Prisons Award for its education programme
- The level of use of the gym has remained around the level of previous years (around 67%)
- A play by a recently-released HMP Erlestoke offender, written whilst he was in prison, was performed at the Royal Court Theatre
- Offenders from HMP Erlestoke won 13 awards, including 2 gold, a silver and 2 bronze awards, in the 2012 national Koestler Awards for arts by offenders.

5.3 Healthcare & Mental Health

Health care is provided by Great Western Hospital Healthcare Trust and Avon who subcontract mental healthcare services to Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. Services for Substance Misuse were taken over by RAPT (Rehabilitation for Addicted Offenders Trust) in April 2013.

The team of Healthcare Manager and 7 nurses are to be congratulated for achieving green light status in all categories of the Prison Quality and Performance Indicators for the second year running.

The team includes visiting physiotherapists, opticians and chiropodists. Medical cover is provided by a local GP practice. A full-time mental health worker provides mental health services with monthly visits by a psychiatrist. A cognitive behavioural therapist attends and their sessions have been increased in the last year to fulfil a perceived need. Waiting time for mental health assessment is short.

Dental service provision has been increased and the waiting time is currently short. Some appointments are missed which is costly to the healthcare budget. Unlike the outside community offenders are not charged for missed appointments.

The crowding in the waiting area, previously a problem, has been significantly eased by a change in the prison regime which now allows for offenders to return to their wings after their appointments.

There is concern about the illicit use of prescribed medication by offenders. In order to minimise this compliance checks are carried out regularly. Offenders who are suspected of misuse of medication and those who have been prescribed medication that is known to be used illicitly have their medications checked on the wings by the healthcare staff on a random but weekly basis. Those who are found to be misusing their medication have their needs reassessed by the GP.

Missed healthcare appointments remain unacceptably high. The average for the period of this report is 122 per month. As in the outside community, there are no sanctions for this. It is hoped that with the start of the new prison day regime in April that this number may decrease.

5.4 Purposeful activity (includes work)

Offenders at HMP Erlestoke are required and expected to engage with 'employment'. This is a key factor affecting reoffending rates and a lack of skills, experience, qualifications and a poor attitude to workplace expectations inhibit successful employment on release.

Offenders are allocated to all employment through the 'Activities Allocation' process on the basis of needs identified through Sentence Planning and assessment. Every offender has an interview with the Careers Information and Advice advisor, who will create an action plan based on his needs. If their skills in English, Maths and IT are below Level 1, they are required to engage in tutor led course to secure achievement at this level. Offenders are paid for engaging and complying with prison regime; the pay structure supports and encourages constructive participation in regime activities.

There are various options for activity ('employment') within the regime and there is daily reporting about engagement levels, which are discussed in the daily management meetings. Offenders receive nil pay if they are not engaging unless they are on temporary or full time incapacity' or if they are 'retired'.

The options for purposeful activity at HMP Erlestoke include:

- Substance Misuse groups
- 12 Steps Drug Treatment programme
- Offending Behaviour programmes
- Peer Tutoring (12 Steps, Literacy, Numeracy)
- Health trainers
- Orderlies (e.g. Clothing Exchange, Library, Reception, Visits, Works, Kitchens, Chapel, Diversity, Resettlement, Induction Support, Care and Separation Unit, wing cleaners, Farms and Gardens – e.g. Carpentry, Recycling, Inside Grounds, Greenhouse)
- Learning and Skills orderlies and support (approximately 25 offenders)
- Farms and Gardens courses
- Outside workers (Visitor Centre cleaner, Farms and Gardens workers)
- Kitchen work
- Unit barber
- Industries
 - Opella (plumbing parts piecework)
 - Speedy Hire (2 workshops – service and repair of equipment)
 - BAG4SPORT
 - Bevans (chamois leather packing)

Dextra left HMP Erlestoke in December 2011 as there was not enough work for all the prisons in which they were located.

HMP Erlestoke's performance in workshops and activities is higher than the South West average and significantly higher than the national average. HMP Erlestoke's target is 100% offender employment; HMP Erlestoke has achieved between 91% and 99% during this reporting period. The 2011 average for offenders to be in some form of employment was 95%. (in 2010 it was 92%).

Other items worthy of note are the supply of vegetables from Farms and Gardens to the prison kitchens and the excellent refurbishment of classrooms and offices in Farms and Gardens by the offenders.

HMP Erlestoke has also established a Community Interest Company, (with local community volunteers) which sells items built by the offenders to staff and the general public through a catalogue system. It is hoped to expand this into a shop outside the prison gates in 2013.

Finally, HMP Erlestoke provides a number of 'enrichment' activities. Examples include working with Grange Park Opera and their 'Pimlico' arm of the organisation to deliver excellent performances of 'Les Miserables' in March 2012 and 'West Side Story' in March 2013. These involved a significant number of offenders in either performing or helping backstage, and working alongside professional performers. Each involved a six week, full-time, rehearsal schedule for offenders, followed by performances open to the public. This has provided an exceptional and stimulating opportunity for the offenders involved to develop skills and self-confidence. Another example is the prison band; the Changing Tunes charity works with the Chapel to encourage offenders to engage in musical activities.

The IMB notes that although HMP Erlestoke is effective in the area of purposeful activity, there are always some offenders who opt not to engage, even when encouraged.

5.5 Resettlement

Resettlement continues to enjoy a high profile at HMP Erlestoke in recognition of the need for offenders reaching the end of their sentence to have had adequate preparation for their release.

On arrival at HMP Erlestoke and during the induction process all offenders are interviewed on a 1:1 basis by a National Careers Service Provider and assessed for their skills, their educational needs and asked what their goals are.

A booklet is given to each inductee which includes a forward by the Head of Rehabilitation and Business Development emphasising that the help and advice offered by the prison is only one element in successful rehabilitation and resettlement. There also needs to be the genuine desire by the offender to help himself by fully engaging with all the services available to him so that he can equip himself with the tools needed to lead a law abiding life both during his time in custody and in the community after his release.

There is focus on the seven nationally recognised pathways to Resettlement:

- Accommodation
- Education, Training and Employment
- Health
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Finance, Benefits and Debt
- Children and Families
- Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour

HMP Erlestoke has also identified and implemented an eighth pathway which addresses the diverse and specific needs of Veterans in custody, those of older offenders, and those who are gay or transgender or transsexual.

Over 300 offenders attended the 2012 Resettlement Fair, which has become an annual feature at HMP Erlestoke. The event gives offenders the opportunity to talk with organisations, which offer resettlement support and services.

Towards the end of their sentences offenders are encouraged to attend a course covering CV writing and preparation for job interviews. There is also a Job Centre employer who provides a once a week surgery for offenders in the final 6 weeks of their sentence.

Family contact is encouraged and special family days take place approximately 5 times a year, enabling offenders who are fathers to have one-to-one contact with their children. These important days are preceded and followed by a mandatory workshop session designed to help teach fathers how to engage in quality time with their child or children.

The IMB are pleased to report that the 'Friends of Erlestoke Prison' charity, launched in 2011 is now a registered charity and continues to raise money to help support offenders with the challenges of resettlement and keeping in touch with their families whilst completing their sentence. The Friends fund resettlement activities that are beyond the scope of current prison budgets and have recently included funding a Citizen's Advice Bureau representative in the Visitor Centre for offender's families

5.6 Safer Custody

Early in the year National Safer Custody introduced a new countrywide policy that resulted in the writing of a completely new local policy that also had to incorporate the Shepton Mallet site. The new National Safer Custody Prison Service Instruction (PSI) kept in the mandatory requirements of the original Prison Service Order (PSO) but reduced the number to enable prisons to write a local policy that was better equipped to cover each individual establishment

From the new PSI it was noticed that there were also some audit baselines that were not tested

under the old PSO. There was also a need identified to introduce new systems in order to reach achieved status for those baseline tests. One important introduction was the support for isolated prisoner's service where posters and referral forms are available on units and throughout the establishment for offenders, who have no visits, no phone calls, limited or no family contact and no peer support.

In October the external safer custody audit resulted in a green/amber rating. Staff need to make only minor adjustments to current procedures in order to ensure a full green rating at the next audit. HMP Erlestoke has, over the past 12 months, significantly improved its performance in this area.

The number of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents opened in 2011 was 99; the number in 2012 was 89. Documents opened for 24 hours or less was 27. Improvements are ongoing with the management of the ACCT documents although the care and support given to those offenders on ACCTs or in crisis, continues to be very good, which was noted in the audit.

The Anti Social Behaviour Strategy and the results have been pleasing but there is still room for improvement. Staff have embraced the strategy and we see that more and more they now understand its importance and are gaining confidence in using this tool.

The introduction of the investigation stage has been a real help in getting information early in order to act upon it and see any developing trends emerging. Offenders are being challenged sooner, offenders are being supported sooner and the message of zero tolerance to violence is being promoted across the establishment.

The department have also introduced thought provoking systems in order to make offenders realise that any form of anti social behaviour is not tolerated. One very successful but simple introduction was the implementation of a poster on each wing updated per month with how many offenders across the prison have been challenged for their anti social behaviour, supported as victims of anti social behaviour and how many cases have been referred to the police for investigation.

There have been some challenging self harming offenders in the establishment and the staff working with them across all departments have been excellent in their approach, not only in reducing the crisis to the offender, but also offering support in making self managed changes.

HMP Erlestoke continues to manage those that are more challenging in terms of harm and mental health illness in a caring yet structured approach.

5.7 Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision

The Care and Separation Unit (CSU) continues to be run satisfactorily, and the staff, through their patient and tactful management, continue to succeed in striking the right balance between support and discipline.

All offenders who are in the CSU are given a handbook, which describes the Statement of Purpose of the Unit, the general rules and regime, information about applications, health and safety issues, telephone restrictions, and what will happen if someone refuses to leave the Unit.

Occupants fall into two main categories:

- those offenders whose continued presence on a normal wing can no longer be tolerated because of poor and anti-social behaviour
- those offenders who require protection from other offenders

IMB members visit the CSU whenever they are in the prison and speak to each offender, this results in approximately two visits a week.

There have been two dirty protests during the last 12 months. 16 cells have been vandalised by offenders during this reporting period, resulting in prosecutions. The 'observation' cell, used for offenders exhibiting extreme and disruptive behaviour, has been used on 4 occasions throughout the reporting period. The prison management team are diligent in pursuing legal action for vandalism where appropriate.

5.8 Residential Services (includes accommodation, food, catering and kitchens)

The Silbury unit opened in August 2011; it was disappointing that the unit opened with so many problems at the time of commissioning. The unit still has some minor problems, which are being dealt with, but on the whole the unit is running very smoothly and offers an excellent standard of accommodation.

The Sarum unit has very poor recreational facilities for the offenders and a solution seems to be elusive. A number of solutions have been talked about but as of yet nothing has happened. The Governor and Senior Management Team are considering a proposal around providing fitness suites on the unit.

A number of the residential wings have undergone significant improvements including external painting of Kennett and re-roofing of Avebury. There remains an issue with regards to six cells within the Alfred and Wessex units (three cells in each) which do not have adequate heating – this was a particular problem during the recent severe winter weather.

The catering team continue to provide high-grade food for the offenders on a budget of £1.94 per day for three meals, including drinks. The kitchen staff continue to be creative with the assistance of the Farms and Gardens department who are providing produce to the kitchens. However, the Board feel that given food cost inflation levels over the past 12 months, this budget is inadequate to provide basic levels of nourishment.

Section 6

6. THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	7
Number of members leaving within reporting period	6
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	15

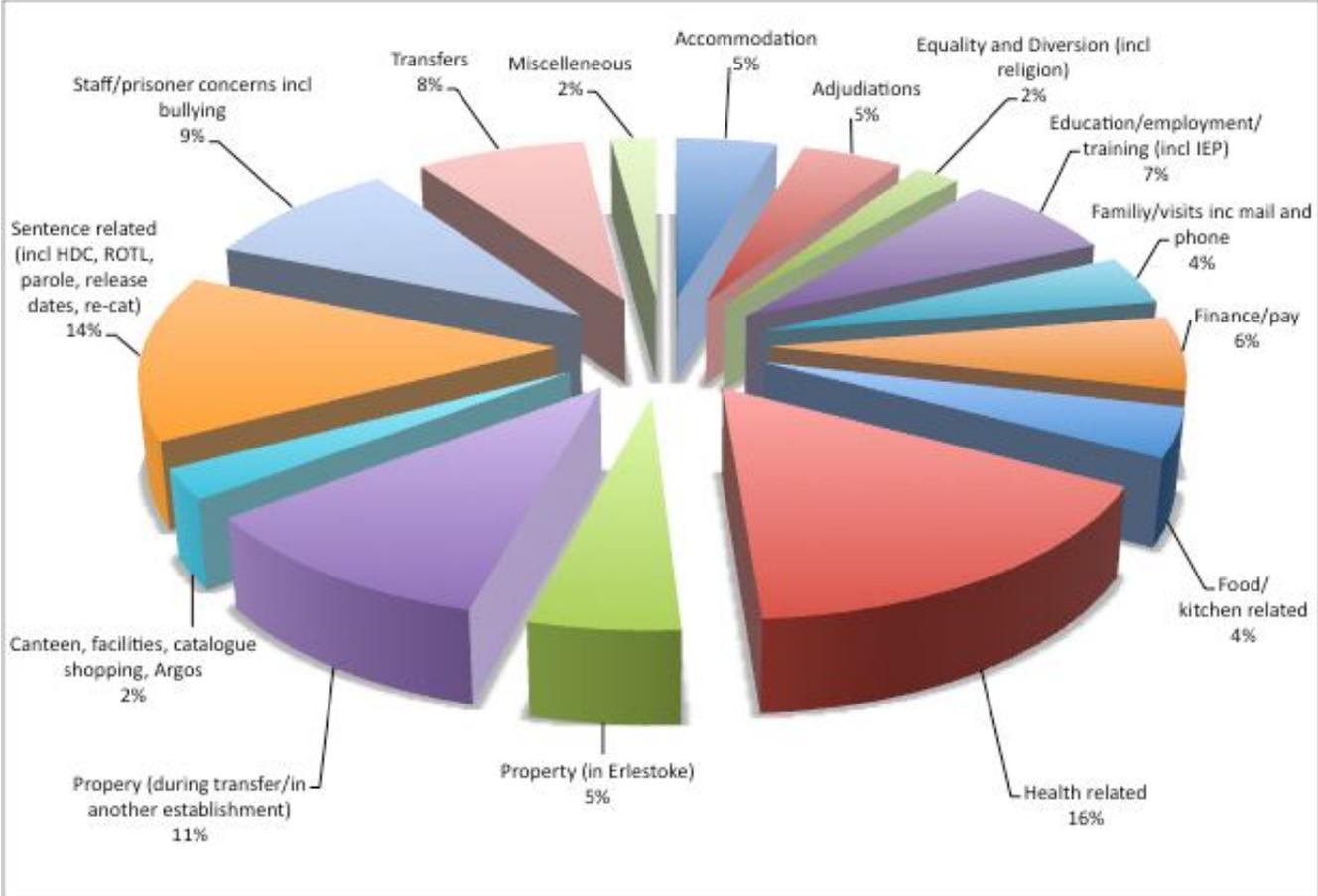
Section 6 (cont.) – Applications received by the Board

This is the first year of collecting data in these categories, hence no previous year's comparisons.

Code	Subject	1 Nov 2011 – 31 Mar 2013	Year	Year	Year
A	Accommodation	9			
B	Adjudications	9			
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)	4			
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP	14			
E 1	Family/visits inc mail & phone	8			
E 2	Finance/pay	12			
F	Food/kitchen related	8			
G	Health related	32			
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	10			
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	21			
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	5			
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	27			
J	Staff/offender/detainee concerns inc bullying	18			
K	Transfers	15			
L	Miscellaneous	4			
	Total number of IMB applications	196			
	Of total: number of IMB Confidential Access was:	4			

Section 6 (cont.) - Applications received by the Board

The percentage of applications according to category is shown below:



For most of the reporting period the Board has operated with seven members. Full strength should be twelve and a recruitment campaign was initiated in April 2012, resulting in the appointment of five new members in January 2013. Sadly one long-standing member has resigned and will be leaving the Board in July 2013.

Note: The Board is also welcoming two members who are transferring from the HMP Shepton Mallet IMB, which takes the Board to fourteen members from the 1st April 2013.