



# **HMP Erlestoke Independent Monitoring Board**

## **Annual Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

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

*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

## Section 1

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### 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 (this number varies throughout the year as people join and leave the Board) 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

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### 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 Offenders), being Life and Indeterminate Public Protection (IPP) sentenced.

There are eight residential units; three are standard units, one of which is used for induction, four are enhanced units and one is dedicated to intervention programmes. The total operational capacity of the prison is 494, although this has been temporarily reduced to 487 because of an upgrade of alarms in the site (6 cells are being used by the alarm contractors), which are due to be completed by April 2014.

HMP Erlestoke houses adult male offenders of which nearly half are lifers, many with indeterminate sentences and approximately half are serving sentences between one and ten years.

In July 2013, the Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling announced a nationwide network of 70 resettlement prisons, with the aim of releasing offenders in, or close to the area in which they live. As a result of this announcement HMP Erlestoke was repurposed to focus on rehabilitation for longer-term offenders and is now a national resource for the prison estate. The intervention programmes address drug and alcohol issues and offender behaviours. HMP Erlestoke will retain some resettlement responsibilities: approximately 10% of offenders will be released from Erlestoke into Wiltshire each year.

Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, in a recent HMIP report (19<sup>th</sup> March 2014) commented that 'HMP Erlestoke was safe, decent and purposeful and well focused on rehabilitation'. The inspection found that improvements had been sustained since the 2011 inspection and are being built upon.

HMP Erlestoke continues to uphold a good image in the community and the Governor and his staff keep local residents involved and informed of relevant developments. The Board is pleased to note that the Friends of Erlestoke Prison continue to partner with the management team to provide resettlement and rehabilitation services outside the scope of prison service budgets.

Performance of the prison overall has been very strong in the reporting period with only two of the Key Performance Targets being missed slightly, i.e. sick absence which came in at 9.87 days per person against a national target of 9 days, and offending behaviour completions. There has been significant improvement in the Mandatory Drug Testing rate, which was below 7%. This is the lowest recorded in the history of HMP Erlestoke. Education and resettlement targets were also exceeded.

The prison ended the year as the best performing Category C prison in the South West.

## Section 4

### 4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governor, management and staff continue to work extremely hard and successfully in providing a safe and secure prison despite considerable budgetary constraints. The safe environment was specifically highlighted in an excellent unannounced inspection carried out towards the end of 2013 by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons (HMIP)

The inspection report went on to highlight examples of Prison Service good practice such as the innovative links being developed by HMP Erlestoke with local schools and Barnados highlighting the effect on families of having a parent in custody.

The Board have been satisfied with regard to the resolution of some of the issues raised in our report last year. However, we remain particularly dissatisfied with the Government's plans for existing sentenced IPP and ISP offenders being held, often for many years, in excess of their tariff. The National Press have highlighted as an example an offender held at HMP Erlestoke on a 4 month tariff and is still in custody after 4 years. Other issues that remain outstanding are the general point of lost property and the continued lack of association facilities on Sarum, a wing for enhanced offenders.

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.  Examine the number of over tariff IPPs and the reasons.  Finance more courses to reduce the wait times and increase the number of parole Boards.	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)	6
Minister/ Prison Service HQ	Continual reduction in prison staff resources	Increase staffing to offender ratios, particularly on the residential wings	5.1 5.6
Minister/ Prison Service HQ	Removal of art from Education contract	Reconsider the positive impact that art can have on offenders who refuse to engage in the normal regime.	5.2
Deputy Director of Custody	Lack of association facilities in the enhanced wing, Sarum.	This was raised last year and no progress has been made.	5.8
Governor	The splitting of the Equalities Officer role between three Prison Officers is unsatisfactory.	The time allocated for this duty is regularly not met resulting in inadequate investigations	5.1

## Section 5

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### 5. MANDATORY REPORTING AREAS

#### 5.1 Equality & Inclusion

Equality and inclusion encompasses race, disability and sexual orientation. The ethnic profile of the prison remains similar to last year with 75.2% of offenders being white British, 10.9% being Black or Black British, 3.1% Asian and 4.5 % Mixed race, 5.1 % White Irish or other foreign nationals. 1.2 % not stated.

Until November 2013 a designated prison officer investigated all offender complaints relating to these issues. Since that time the role has been shared between three prison officers. One specialises in race and ethnic issues, one in disability issues and one with issues of sexual orientation.

All new arrivals at the prison are questioned in detail about their ethnicity, perceived disabilities and sexual orientation. This is a system that has been introduced since the publication of the last annual report as prison records on arrival were often found to be incorrect. The healthcare department who refer offenders to appropriate NHS departments mainly deals with matters of disability. It is noted that the waiting time for such services is often shorter than for the general public.

In 2013 there were 100 complaints concerning the issues relating to disability, race, religious belief, age and sexual orientation. All were fully investigated, following which 8 were withdrawn, 7 proven and 85 dismissed. This includes complaints made by and about offenders, staff and visitors. All categories of complaints are analysed on a regular basis to ensure there is no racial bias in their frequency and management. The Board is satisfied that this is the case.

The Board have been concerned that the time spent investigating complaints is considerably less than the time officially allocated for that purpose. This is due to the detail duties that the officers do in addition to their equality duties. As a result the time lag between receiving a complaint and investigating it has lengthened significantly. The Board are aware that measures have now been taken to address this problem.

#### The Older Offender

Erlestoke relies on the expertise of organisations such as RECOOP (Resettlement and Care for Older Ex-Offenders and Prisoners) to meet the needs of the older offenders. Based on the "Monitoring Checklist for IMB's (Age Concern "Older Persons in Prison", July 2011), HMP Erlestoke largely complies with the recommendations with the exception of the following:

- There is no prison policy focusing on the older offender. However, the governors are at present working with the NHS to develop a social care policy, which will include the long and short-term needs of the older offender.
- Prison staff receive no awareness training on the needs or care of older offenders.
- An Older Offender Forum (overseen by RECOOP) is voluntary and, unfortunately, not well attended. Neither is there a representative from each of the units. The output from these meetings is fed to the Equalities Team via a Forum representative. Older offenders have no direct access to the prison regime except via a prison officer who sits on the Equalities Team.

## **5.2 Education, Learning and Skills**

In the last annual report the Board felt it too early to offer a considered verdict on the effects of the introduction of OLASS 4 (Offender Learning and Skills Service) and the change of education provider to Weston College. It must be said that this has not been without its problems. As the HM Inspectors commented in their recent report, the employment related and vocational training is good, but 'there is insufficient English and mathematics teaching' which is less than effective with resultant poor outcomes. The achievement rates in all courses are at 90%, with the exception of English and mathematics, which stand at 50%. The Inspectors also commented that too many sessions were being cancelled and the offenders were being unfairly deprived of the pay they would have received for those sessions (72p per session). This problem is currently under review.

In the kitchen, the process of training the staff as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) assessors is under way but not yet completed.

It has proved particularly difficult to recruit suitable staff for Literacy and Numeracy and, despite the new Curriculum Manager's best efforts, this problem has not yet been solved. Three more tutors are still required to bring the staff up to strength, with the result that Literacy and Numeracy are not, at present, being run. However, some excellent work is being done in Functional Skills which is 'contextualised' within vocational courses and groups in the workshops and on the wings, so that offenders are taught in short bursts at their place of work material which relates to their skills (though this is currently only true of English and not of mathematics).

The problems in the areas of literacy are being compounded by the malfunctioning of the 'Toe-by-Toe' scheme through which offender mentors teach mentees on the wings. Mentees (mostly the younger offenders) often do not cooperate with the scheme and new ways of encouraging them to do so need to be found.

The Board is concerned that art and drama are no longer provided through the OLASS contract. There is much evidence (Prison Reform Trust reports) to prove that this has a positive impact on rehabilitation and is often the only way to encourage some offenders to engage in the prison regime.

On a more positive note, all the vocational courses are running and adequately staffed, and the achievement rates are good.

- Library is well used and has been involved in a 'Six Book Challenge' to encourage reading. 300 visits per week are made to the library, and c. 400 out of 488 offenders use it per year. The staff have recently carried out a survey of offenders' views on the library with very pleasing, complimentary results.
- The prison newsletter, 'Paper Soldier', was not produced for a while but is now again in production.
- The Gym provides a wide range of courses, with specific provision for the over-40s and over-50s, and is used by c. 250 offenders per week. The inspectors commented that it is 'well managed'.

## **5.3 Healthcare & Mental Health**

Great Western Hospital Healthcare Trust, who subcontract mental healthcare to Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP), provides healthcare. Services for substance misuse are provided by Rehabilitation for Addicted Offenders Trust (RAPT).

The healthcare team consists of one Healthcare Manager and seven nurses plus two administration staff. The staff are to be congratulated for achieving green light status in all

categories of the Prison Quality and Performance indicators for the third year. HMP Erlestoke is the only prison in the southwest to achieve this.

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 from a psychiatrist, and a cognitive behavioural therapist attends. The sessions have been increased to fulfil a perceived need. Waiting time for mental health assessment is short. A mental health needs assessment is being carried out in preparation for changes in the prison. Dental service provision has been increased and the waiting time is currently short. Some appointments are missed which is costly to the budget.

The overcrowding in the waiting area has been a problem; this has been significantly eased by a change in the prison regime, which now allows for offenders to be returned to their wings after 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 and those who are prescribed medication, which is known to have an illicit use, have their medication checked on the wings on a random and regular basis every week. Those found to be misusing their medication have their needs re-assessed by the GP.

Missed healthcare appointments remain unacceptably high. The average for the period is 81 per month, which is a reduction from the previous reporting period of 122 per month. The healthcare and prison staff are to be congratulated for this. The healthcare team are now able to issue a warning of reduction in incentive and earned privileges (IEP).

Healthcare is now able to offer bowel screening for offenders over the age of 60 and abdominal aortic aneurysm screening for offenders.

#### **5.4 Purposeful activity (includes work)**

There is a wide array of purposeful activity provided in the prison with which offenders are required and expected to engage. Offenders are paid for engaging and complying with the prison regime; the pay structure supports and encourages constructive participation in regime activities.

Examples of industrial work include the Speedy Hire contract which remains in place and provides work for up to 60 men in two workshops, one servicing and repairing power tools and the other vacuum cleaners, industrial water pumps and lights. This workshop has recently been achieved 2 Elton Trophy awards for excellence: they were the Cat C winner and also won the overall award for business partnerships. Speedy Hire also employs offenders on release.

The Opella workshop also remains operational with men undertaking plumbing parts assembly. A full time member of the senior management team is responsible for generating contracts of work to ensure employment opportunities for offenders inside the prison and for those on license outside the prison (normally Cat D offenders).

The Farms and Gardens section continues to offer work opportunities in horticultural work and in building garden furniture for the prison's Community Interest Company (CIC). The CIC is a joint venture with local community volunteers and continues to sell items built by the offenders to staff and the general public through a catalogue system. The plan is to grow the company sufficiently to establish a shop outside the prison gates.

The prison recycles cardboard, paper, which is packaged by offenders and sent to Wessex Waste as part of a their contract. It is planned to appoint a Recycling Manager to improve overall how recycling is organised and managed in the prison.

Erlestoke continues to run several key programmes to address drug, alcohol and offending behaviours including the 12 Steps Drug Treatment programme.

Other options for purposeful activity at HMP Erlestoke include:

- Peer Tutoring (12 Steps, Literacy, Numeracy)
- Health trainers
- Orderlies (e.g. Learning and Skills, Clothing Exchange, Library, Reception, Visits, Works, Chapel, Diversity, Induction Support, Care and Separation Unit, wing cleaners)
- Kitchen work

The Board is impressed with the range of purposeful activity provided by the prison as 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.

## **5.5 Resettlement**

Resettlement has continued to be a key focus at HMP Erlestoke, although this will change with the repurposing of the prison to rehabilitation.

The seven nationally recognised pathways to Resettlement continue to be addressed:

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

There was a 2013 Resettlement Fair, which is now an annual feature at HMP Erlestoke and gives offenders the opportunity to talk with organisations, which offer resettlement support and services.

The accommodation pathway includes a Housing Support Worker, funded by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison, who helps offenders find accommodation prior to their release. The Board agrees with the recent HMIP report, which summarised this as a 'good practise initiative' and 'effective'.

Offenders continue to have access to Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) and Job Centre workers. Offender's families also now have access to a CAB worker on visit days, funded by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison.

Family contact is encouraged and special family days do take place, but the number of days per year has been reduced due to insufficient staff to supervise the activities. Barnardos continue to work with offenders and their families.

A Custodial Manager has been seconded to Barnardos during the year to work on scooping and building a business case for a Family Interventions Unit at Erlestoke. 7% children are nationally affected by custody (236k) and 65% of boys whose fathers are in prison, will also come to prison. Since April 2013, the Manager has been building links and relationships with schools, nurseries, Wiltshire Council, Early Years leaders and has put together a plan for family interventions based on the successful Group 4 Securicor (G4S) model in Wales which has been running for 8 years. The Board is pleased to report that the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) approved

the Interventions Unit Plan, which will be opened in summer 2014. It will be a 40-bed unit and will be home to offenders going through the 'Fathers' Inside' and 'Family Man' programmes (both 18 weeks). Statistics show that 39% of offenders who have family support do not reoffend, so the Board welcomes the decision to develop the Unit in Erlestoke.

#### Visitor Centre

This facility, when open, continues to offer a haven and a welcome for visitors, some of whom travel long journeys to reach HMP Erlestoke. The centre received praise from the Inspectors on their last, recent visit. However since then, the manning of the centre has been taken over by a rota of four Officer Support Grades (OSG) grades, and is not always as regular as hitherto. The facilities within the centre remain as before with adequate seating, toilet facilities, a child's play room and a kitchen where volunteers make hot drinks for the visitors and welcome them when they arrive.

The Board has drawn attention to the fact that visitors, when reaching the main prison gate in inclement weather have nowhere to wait until they are given access to the prison. Prison management have responded by committing to unlock the portacabin by the main gate when the weather is poor.

#### Visits Hall

Since the last IMB report, the Hall has had a complete makeover; the floor is now carpeted, and soft furniture has replaced the fixed metal tables and chairs that were there before. This has all had a profound effect on the acoustics in the Hall, which has become a much more congenial and comfortable place for families to meet up. The children's play area has been enlarged and redecorated offering a fun space for young family members during visiting times.

#### Offender Management Unit

Since April 2013, the Offender Management Unit (OMU) as with all other departments, has been managing the changes and challenges brought about by the 2012 Benchmarking exercise. The OMU have made significant structural changes particularly in response to the national reconfiguration of the Probation Service.

Probation staff are no longer based in the prison and the Board is concerned that the prison has lost the experience and knowledge of so many staff and the long serving Head of OMU. Prison staff have been reassigned to the OMU but the Board notes that these staff have not received specific training for the role, but are expected to learn 'on the job'. The Head of OMU has been replaced by an experienced Operational Governor, but the offender risk assessment and management element of the department may be impacted by the loss of so much Probation Officer experience.

The Board is cognisant that the Governor and the senior management team are fully aware of the situation and to date, have done a sound job rising to the challenge of this particular period of transition.

### **5.6 Safer Custody**

The New Safer Custody policy was introduced on a national basis and detailed in the last annual report. This new policy kept the mandatory requirements of the original Prison Service order but reduced the number to enable prisons to write local policy better equipped to cover individual establishments.

The care of isolated and vulnerable offenders continues to be a concern. Referral forms are still on wings and notices giving information for offenders who are isolated, sometimes without regular visits or contact with family can access support. The Listening service, which involves specially, trained offenders offering support to other offenders who are distressed or may have suicidal

thoughts. There is a special cell available on Alfred wing where a listener can stay with a vulnerable offender overnight. The scheme is run with the support of the Samaritans who offer training and supervision to listeners. There are currently 8 listeners providing this service.

The mental health charity MIND has also been involved in running information sessions at Erlestoke.

There has been an increase in the last year in offenders taking overdoses which has been attributed possibly to offenders seeking hospital treatment in order to get drugs to settle debts, this is being investigated further by safer custody prison officers.

The incidents of threatening words and behaviour increased between April-July 2013 particularly incidents of verbal abuse and threats. During this period Erlestoke received an Amber rating for safer custody. This was improved by a more robust and consistent policy of appropriately challenging incidents being adopted by all prison staff.

There were 51 'Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork' (ACCTS) opened up to July 2013 as opposed to 46 last year. There has been an increase in ACCTS opened by offenders themselves during the year.

Her Majesties Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report stated that on the whole safer custody was well managed but there were some concerns over new risk assessments not being followed robustly enough for offenders during induction process.

The Board continues to be concerned about the staff to offender ratios, particularly on the residential wings. There are times during the day when only one officer is on duty, responsible for over approximately 50 offenders. The Board considers this to be unsafe for the officer and for offenders.

### **5.7 Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision**

The Care and Separation Unit (CSU) is managed and run well by patient, tactful staff who strike a delicate balance between support for vulnerable offenders and discipline for the recalcitrant. Use of the special cell is infrequent and there have been only four 'dirty protests' this year.

Each offender, on arrival in the CSU receives a hand-book. Currently the book is being up-dated.

An exercise walker has been installed in the small exercise yard.

Redecoration and deep cleaning of the entire Unit takes place on a rotational basis, and in general the Unit is kept clean and tidy day by day by the two resident orderlies. The no-smoking order is still in force and applies to all cells as well as to the public areas.

The Board have frequently raised the issue of the condition of the holding cell in the CSU – the toilet sink and toilet are very discoloured and although 'chemically clean' look dirty. The Board understands that the prison will be replacing the sanitation in the coming months.

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

#### **Induction**

The 2-week induction process for new offenders was reviewed earlier this year, which resulted in minor changes. The Board is given a 10-minute period of time each Tuesday morning to meet with new offenders, which sometimes works well and on occasions, can be chaotic. Offenders are

sometimes ill-disciplined and occasionally do not turn up. There is no member of staff present – the session is ‘managed’ by a prison orderly. This concern has been raised with the Governor.

#### Food Budget

There has been an authorised £12k overspend on the catering budget this financial year which means that £2.03/offender/day has been spent. This is supported by an under-spend in other budgets. The benchmark spend for a prison of this category and size is £1.96 which will be the start point for the 2014/15 year, based on an operational capacity of 494. (from IMB March 2014 minutes)

#### Silbury

The 12 STEP (self change) courses, which run for 3 - 6 months at a time, continue to be highly regarded and waiting lists are lengthy. Offenders attending these residential courses come from other prisons as well as from Erlestoke. In the past offenders not attending the courses have, for various reasons, also been accommodated on Silbury. This has added to the waiting list problem. As from 28th April 2014, with the exception of special circumstances, only offenders taking the 12 STEP courses will be housed on the unit.

#### Sarum

The IMB reported last year that the Sarum unit had very poor recreational facilities for the offenders and this remains the case. A number of solutions have discussed but as of yet nothing has happened. The Governor and Senior Management Team were considering a proposal around providing fitness suites on the unit, but nothing has yet materialised.

## Section 6

### 6. THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

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<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving within reporting period	3
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	11 (no meeting in August 2013)

The Board welcomed two members who transferred from the HMP Shepton Mallet IMB, on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. Sadly one long-standing member left the Board in July 2013 and two newer members left during the year for personal reasons.

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

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year: 1 Nov 2011 – 31 Mar 2013</b>	<b>Year: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014</b>
A	Accommodation	9	8
B	Adjudications	9	5
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)	4	4
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP	14	13
E 1	Family/visits inc mail & phone	8	15
E 2	Finance/pay	12	3
F	Food/kitchen related	8	4
G	Health related	32	9
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	10	8
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	21	23
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	5	5
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	27	13
J	Staff/offender/detainee concerns inc bullying	18	9
K	Transfers	15	9
L	Miscellaneous	4	22
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	196	157
	Of total: number of IMB Confidential Access was:	4	(included in the above figures)

*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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

The percentage of applications according to category is shown below:

