

HMP FORD

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

November 2012 to October 2013

**To the Rt. Hon. Christopher Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Justice**

Statutory Role of the IMB

Monitoring fairness and respect for people in Custody

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and the 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 concerns 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.

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Description of the Prison and its Role

HM Prison Ford is a Category D Open establishment with an emphasis on resettlement. It was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station. It is situated 3 miles south of Arundel in West Sussex and covers an area of 110 acres bisected by a busy Class B public road.

The open estate is required to cater for all Category D prisoners assessed as suitable for open conditions within the criteria agreed between the Governor and the Area Manager. Prisoners selected for transfer to Ford should present a low risk of absconding and a low risk to the public. The operational capacity is 521 male offenders.

The accommodation comprises single and two-person rooms. There is accommodation for fifteen prisoners with disabilities.

Healthcare is provided by the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Education and Training are provided by Manchester College and the National Careers Service.

Contractors within Industries at Ford include LMB Recycling, British Institute of Cleaning Science and World of Books. Voluntary organisations providing assistance to prisoners include the Samaritans, The Citizens Advice Bureau, The Terence Higgins Trust, Positive Lunch, The Gypsy and Travellers Community Support Team and Relate

All available spaces at Ford are offered to the Prison Service's Population Management Section.

Executive Summary

HMP Ford continues to move forward in many areas, however there is still much room for improvement.

The Board fully recognises the need for cost cutting and accepts that this will have an effect on manpower. However the Board is very concerned that the level of reduction in staff is likely to have a serious effect on the efficient running of the prison. The constant pressure under which staff are now expected to work leads to increased levels of sickness which in turn places even more pressure on those who report for duty. Frequently, staff have to be taken off normal duty to cover for those who are not available.

While the Board does not consider the stability of the prison to be compromised, it remains concerned at staffing levels at night and also in Reception where the Board believes more security checks should be carried out.

The Board continues to be concerned about the Offender Development Unit, although recent management changes have brought about a significant improvement (see Section 5.4).

For many years the Board has complained about inadequate accommodation (see Section 8.1). In his Inspection Report of August 2012 (published in this reporting period), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons repeats a previous recommendation that the cells in B wing should only be used for single occupancy. It is the Board's view that if single occupancy is unattainable, the existing accommodation should be significantly refurbished as some aspects are unfit for purpose.

Great efforts are made to find work experience and outside employment for offenders. Every offender is engaged in some form of purposeful activity (see Section 4). This is a significant achievement and the management in this area should be congratulated.

Andrew Isaac
Chairman
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ford
Arundel

1. Equality and Inclusion

1.1 The Equality Duty under the 2010 Equality Act requires the Board to have due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. (Protected characteristics are disability, race including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality, sex and sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.)

1.2 The establishment takes all forms of Social Inclusion seriously and the system works well.

1.3 A monthly meeting is held where representatives of all the above groups have an opportunity to report on activities or concerns. Any issues raised are openly discussed and any agreed actions by staff are monitored. The Samaritans are also represented at these meetings and they train and monitor the Listeners. All racist incidents are registered and issues of concern are investigated and remedied.

1.4 The Board has been concerned that on occasions during the year paperwork is late coming from the UK Border Agency, and that Foreign Nationals are less likely to be given release on temporary licence (ROTL). There are 25 Foreign National offenders in this category, and there are 17 different nationalities among them.

1.5 At the end of October there were 300 White British Offenders, 183 BME Offenders with an average age of 39. There are 25 offenders aged 60 and over and 93 over 50. There is no significant change from the previous year.

1.6 There are 7 offenders who have served in the forces with an average age of 45 years.

1.7 The overwhelming majority of offenders surveyed by HMIP declared they feel safe and respected. That is the Board's experience.

1.8 As a result of the new tenure rules, the Board will no longer have an ethnic mix of members from January 2014.

2. Education, Learning & Skills

2.1 This is the first full year of provision by Manchester College under their new contract which was renewed in October 2012. The College has worked hard, with staff training and one-to-one meetings, to resolve issues in staff morale and relationships in the department. This has gone some way to resolve the disquiet of a year ago within the department, although some staff are still concerned about the way they are managed.

2.2 The role of Head of Corporate Services and Business Development was combined with that of Head of Enterprise in April 2013 to provide a joint approach to learning and work. This approach is supported by the National Careers Service, starting at Induction. A career path is highlighted, with options discussed, that link to employment on release. Offenders are given continued support throughout their stay at Ford including assistance with applications for courses and training beyond their release date.

2.3 The regime of the prison allows for offenders to attend courses on a part time basis, up to a maximum of five sessions a week. A total of 13,500 hours of classes are delivered per annum. Across Employability, Literacy, Language & Numeracy and Personal & Social Development, there are 20 courses leading to regulated qualifications. In 2012-13, 16% of new arrivals were identified as being at Entry level in literacy and 21% in numeracy, at level 1 (GCSE Grade D-G), 46% in literacy and 46% in numeracy and at level 2 (GCSE, Grade A*-C), 37% in literacy and 32% in numeracy.

2.4 Approximately 140 students attend classes each week. Provision is located in the Education Block and in purpose built workshops, such as Carpentry or Painting & Decorating. Food Preparation & Cooking and Barista operate from the coffee shop. NVQ 1 Catering is delivered in 3 sessions in the main kitchen, where learners are employed full time.

2.5 There is opportunity for all offenders to access embedded literacy and numeracy support from workshop classrooms across the prison, which is successful in supporting those reluctant learners who would not otherwise attend a formal class in the Education Department. The transition from SLF Adult Literacy/Numeracy to Functional Skills has in the last year presented specific challenges (such as 'free writing' exam based assessment, fixed exam windows) which have had an impact on achievements.

2.6 The focus of the establishment is to develop progression routes into the community and employment. Training is delivered in dedicated training workshops such as PICTA, BICS and also embedded in the core working day in a number of vocational activities including Horticulture, Engineering and Laundry. Training is provided in workshops run by our commercial partners DHL and World of Books. This training is upskilling offenders to meet the needs of the business, whilst also allowing 'qualified' offenders the potential of work experience with the companies and ultimately employment within the last 12 months of sentence.

2.7 Distance Learning is supported and higher level learning is available on site and in the community. Those involved in Learning & Training work closely with other departments in the prison to ensure offenders are offered a co-ordinated and integrated service; for instance, when working with the Sentence Management Unit, when it is appropriate for an offender to undertake learning in the community, the prison has effective links.

2.8 The Board's view is that education and training is an essential part of the programme to reduce re-offending. The department has increased and strengthened the provision to enable this to happen in the last year.

3 Healthcare & Mental Health

3.1 Healthcare is provided by the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

3.2 On arrival, all offenders are interviewed by a member of Healthcare, and their immediate needs are attended to. The unit is open weekdays from 08:15 to 17:15 and to 19:00 on Wednesdays to allow offenders who are out at work to attend. At weekends, offenders' needs are catered for by the West Sussex Out of Hours Service.

3.3 Outpatient care is provided within a reasonable time. The waiting time for dentistry can be up to five weeks.

3.4 There is no inpatient care, but arrangements are in place for offenders to be treated at secondary care facilities should the need arise.

3.5 Healthcare accommodation is suitable.

3.6 Offenders with mental health problems receive regular care and support. A Cognitive Behavioral Therapy regime has been introduced in the last year. Acupuncture is also available.

3.7 Physical health is promoted by excellent facilities in the newly built gym, although use is sometimes curtailed because of a lack of staff to supervise offenders .

3.8 88% of offenders who have attended Healthcare rated the quality of the service good or very good

4 Purposeful Activity (including Work)

4.1 All offenders are involved in a purposeful activity of some kind.

4.2 The prison aims to provide every offender with a structured day similar to that which he would experience in the community.

4.3 At October 2013, 39 were out on Community Service, 29 on work experience that can lead to paid employment, 28 out at paid work and 15 at outside education.

4.4 Of the remainder in the establishment, many are engaged in education (including an award winning prisons' IT training course PICTA), DHL, BICS, World of Books, waste management and recycling, engineering, injection moulding, horticulture, carpentry, laundry, and the prison kitchen. Many of these lead to formal qualifications.

4.5 Offenders are also engaged in work parties around the prison as well as working as orderlies in many departments.

4.6 Their first work placements in the community are unpaid – working in charity shops is common. Offenders must do community service work for 60 days before they can apply for paid work outside. Staff put a lot of effort into finding local employers who will give work to offenders. Many prisoners also find paid work for themselves through personal contacts or through a 'virtual campus' in the prison.

4.7 Places of employment are checked out by prison staff before an offender can start work, but because of the limit on staff numbers, few on-the-spot checks are made to ensure the offender is actually attending his work. In most cases the prison has to rely on employers informing them if an offender has not turned up. It is not a satisfactory means of ensuring offenders are not abusing their day release conditions, but within the economic constraints the prison faces, the Board feels that officers are doing as much as they can to safeguard the public.

4.8 The staff organizing work placements go out of their way to help the prisoners in their resettlement programmes. They are to be commended for their efforts.

5. Resettlement

5.1 Preparing offenders for re-integration into the community is HMP Ford's primary role and it appears to be working reasonably well. Every month there are more than 2000 releases on temporary licence (ROTL) of one sort or another.

5.2 Prisoners are risk-assessed about 8 weeks after their arrival at Ford, to decide whether they are suitable for temporary release. Many prisoners have been transferred to Ford without an OASys (Offender Assessment System) report which is meant to form the core of the risk assessment process. These reports should have been completed at the offenders' previous prisons and we are told that Ford has not been staff-resourced to do the time-consuming initial assessments. Despite these difficulties, the Board believes that the risk assessment process at HMP Ford is effective. The number of absconds and failures-to-return of about three per month is low, considering the number of times offenders leave the prison on ROTL.

5.3 The first resettlement step for an offender is a familiarisation visit to a local town which can be daunting for a man who has been cut off from the outside world for a long time. Lifers and ISP prisoners still get two visits escorted by a prison officer, but due to staff cutbacks most of these prisoner visits are now either unescorted or much delayed. Prisoners progress to home visits including Overnight Release, enabling them to reconnect with their families.

5.4 The Offender Development Unit which manages the prisoners' sentences has been in a state of upheaval during the reporting term. Attempts to introduce multiskilling to teams where

sentence planning had been compartmentalised in the past, caused distress and confusion to some members of staff during the earlier part of the reporting period. At times parts of the ODU were dysfunctional with numerous complaints from prisoners about late decisions on ROTL and a poor information flow. The Board found these complaints to be fully justified in many cases and considered that there had been a lack of provision for retraining and an inability by some staff to adjust to new ways of working.

5.5 In the later part of the reporting period, however, following some staff and management changes in the ODU, there was clear evidence that the system was working much better and that the new procedures for Managing the Custodial Sentence were being delivered. Complaints from prisoners reduced and the atmosphere in the unit by the end of October 2013 was much more business-like and communicative. Cooperation with outside probation seems to be effective in most cases, although responses are not always quick.

5.7 The current ODU staff and the Governor in charge of the department have made great efforts to get to grips with this vital department in the prison in recent months.

5.8 The prison should have a three year action plan for Reducing Re-offending but no such plan has been in place this year. In the reorganization of the management structure at HMP Ford responsibility for this area has not been clearly defined. The Board would hope to see this situation corrected in the near future.

6. Safer Custody

6.1 The HMIP Report in August 2012 made some minor criticisms of safer custody procedures at Ford, mostly relating to staff training. By April 2013 all staff had been brought up-to-date on ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody Teamwork) document management. A safer custody audit at the end of March produced a good result.

6.2 By the end of the reporting period there had only been 12 ACCT documents opened in 2013 and the procedures were well recorded. All officers carry anti-ligature knives.

6.3 Complaints about violent behaviour or bullying are rare at Ford. The use of force by staff is also uncommon. When incidents of bullying occur they are investigated by the Safer Custody Officer. Bullies who fail to correct their behaviour are usually returned to closed conditions.

6.4 There is a monthly Safer Custody meeting which is attended by all relevant departments, including a Listener representative. Listeners report that their services are not often called upon at Ford.

6.5 The very nature of an open prison means that few of the men who arrive at Ford suffer from the mental or behavioural issues that make Safer Custody a major concern in closed prisons. Ford is fortunate to still have a dedicated and proactive Safer Custody Officer in post and it will be interesting to see if the benchmarking process currently underway will allow that state of affairs to continue. If the role becomes subsumed into the duties of other staff it will need careful monitoring to ensure it is still effective.

7. Segregation, Care and Separation, Close Supervision Units

7.1 It is very rare for an offender to be kept in Segregation for more than 24 hours, before he is transferred to closed conditions or returned to his billet. The Board is always informed when an offender is put into Segregation and can attend. However the Board is concerned that if offenders are kept in Segregation for more than 24 hours there are no adequate facilities for fresh air or exercise. We have been advised that the fence around the exercise yard is not deemed to be secure.

7.2 All records are properly kept and the unit is clean and secure.

7.3 Members frequently attend adjudications and they are carried out professionally and fairly by either a Prison Governor or the District Judge.

8. Residential services (includes accommodation, food, catering and kitchens)

8.1 For several years the Board has expressed concern about the age and construction of the B-Wing billets and this continues to be the case. There have been many plumbing problems in a large number of the billets during the reporting period and the Board intends to monitor accommodation issues very closely in the coming year. For most offenders in this Wing, the accommodation is shared with one other. This is far from ideal, particularly for those nearing the end of a Life or IPP sentence, when they transfer to Ford having had a single cell in a previous establishment.

8.2 Catering (Food & Kitchens): Generally, we believe the food at Ford is very satisfactory in terms of both quality and quantity. The kitchen is run efficiently, and hygiene, in particular, is excellent.

8.3 Food produced in the Education Department's kitchen is provided for sale in the Coffee Shop. Where offenders have sufficient funds, they have also been able to buy food and drinks from the Coffee Shop.

8.4 "Connexions" - the catering facility in the Visits Hall - also continues to be successful.

8.5 All the above areas provide good opportunities for offenders to gain qualifications to enable them to get jobs in the catering business upon release.

9. Lifers: (ISPs) Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners

9.1 At October 2013 there were 95 Lifers or ISPs at Ford.

9.2 Following the abolition of the Lifer Unit, supervisors and clerks who had not previously had anything to do with Life Sentence Prisoners were found to be struggling with Lifers' different needs and requirements and many complaints were being recorded.

However towards the end of the reporting period, ODU have got to grips with these Lifer Programmes and complaints have reduced significantly. Many more Lifer Surgeries are now run and it is easier for the men to speak with their Offender Supervisors in the jail. The recent addition of a Lifer Orderly who is able to process most Lifer requirements more quickly, and the establishment of a monthly Lifer Meeting Forum with Management is a great improvement.

9.3 The main problem now lies with the men's outside probation Officers (Offender Managers). In many cases, contact is very difficult. Offenders find this very frustrating and it also impacts severely on staff in ODU who are trying hard to provide their service as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

9.4 The Board is concerned that some long serving offenders have no money to enable them to go out on town visits. They have to rely on charity. We believe that prison funds should be made available in those circumstances

10. Security

10.1 Drugs remain a problem at Ford as they are across the whole prison estate. This is made more difficult by the problems in identifying Spice, due to the ability of those who make it to change the constituent elements. Notwithstanding this the prison has worked hard at seeking it out and in returning users and dealers to closed conditions. The Board regrets that sniffer dogs are no longer kept at Ford to help in this process.

10.2 There have been some well publicised reports in the press of incidents taking place while offenders are out of the prison on home leave or town leave. This is common to the open estate and not particular to Ford. As a result, since the reporting date, no new offenders are allowed to be transferred to open prisons unless the sending prison has completed an Offender Assessment (OASys) report on them. This was always supposed to be done but often wasn't and in practice it was difficult to send offenders back due to lack of capacity in the closed prisons and the cost to Ford of returning them. The new regime is now being strictly enforced but is resulting in a heavy workload for the staff at Ford. They are having to do the OASys reports for those offenders without them who are already in the prison. The Board welcomes the new regime but believes that some budgetary adjustment should be made so that the cost of returning offenders is met by the sending prison which failed to complete the report, rather than being an unnecessary cost to Ford.

11. The work of the Independent Monitoring Board

11.1 The Board enjoys a constructive working relationship with the management of Ford.

11.2 Every month, a different member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) talks to the Board before the Board meeting, and the Chair attends the SMT meetings. Also the Chair and Vice Chair have a monthly meeting with the Governor.

11.3 Applications are heard twice a week, and an induction talk is given to new arrivals also twice a week. Two members are on rota at any time and each rota period lasts two weeks, although consideration is being given to shortening the rota period to one week. Rota members attend adjudications on an ad hoc basis.

11.4 Segregation reviews are not held, as offenders are rarely held in the Unit for more than a few hours before being returned to closed conditions or back to their billet.

11.5 Members are allocated Areas of Special Interest and attend meetings accordingly.

11.6 In this reporting period, much time has been devoted to correspondence with Ministers concerning the new tenure rules for members of IMBs. The Board regrets that four valuable members will be leaving at the end of 2013.

12. Board statistics

November 2012 – October 2013

Recommended Complement of Board Members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	18
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	4
Number of members leaving within reporting period	0
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	511
Total number of segregation reviews held	NIL
Total number of segregation reviews attended	NIL
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	14 November 2012
PLEASE NOTE: On November 30 th 2013, one Board Member is leaving On December 31 st 2013, five Board Members are leaving.	

13. IMB Applications

November 2012 – October 2013

Code	Subject	
A	Accommodation	5
B	Adjudications	1
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)	NIL
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP	15
E 1	Family/visits inc mail & phone	8
E 2	Finance/pay	4
F	Food/kitchen related	NIL
G	Health related	4
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	3
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	18
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	1
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	30
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc bullying	4
K	Transfers	5
L	Miscellaneous	3
	TOTAL NUMBER OF IMB APPLICATIONS	101

13.1 The total number of Applications has risen in this year by over 60% but the total still remains low. Direct comparison cannot be made with previous years as the statistics are now collated under different headings. However, those areas that attract the most Applications continue to be Sentence related (Code I) and Property (Code H2). The total under code D is not statistically significant. It largely concerns one event that attracted a number of Applications but was quickly resolved.