



# **Annual Report**

# **HMP High Down Surrey**

**December 2012 to November 2013**

*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## **HMP HIGH DOWN IMB DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

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*The members of High Down IMB have all read and understood the HMP High Down Diversity Statement below. We recognise our work should be consistent with that statement, and behaviour which conflicts with it is not acceptable.*

*“HMP High Down is fully committed to all Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policies and procedures.*

*Discrimination, prejudice, harassment, bullying and negative stereotyping on the grounds of colour, ethnic or national origins, religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender or any other factor is unacceptable.*

*Everyone who lives, works in, or visits HMP High Down should treat each other with respect, decency and kindness.*

*We do not accept, and aim to change, any behaviour that does not meet these high standards.”*

### **Section 1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

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

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 prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

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*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

## **Section 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

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3.1 HMP High Down is a Category B male local prison serving the Crown Courts of Guildford and Croydon, and the surrounding magistrates' courts. It holds Category B and C prisoners, sentenced and on remand. With the expansion in 2008/9 it is now certified to hold 999 prisoners, though with the doubling up of some single cells it can currently hold 1103. During this past year the prison has again held a large number of foreign nationals and young offenders (YOs). Since the autumn other prisons in the Greater London area are also holding YOs.

3.2 A large number of prisoners coming in to High Down have mental health problems, legal and illegal drug use problems and/or physical and learning disabilities. Many have a low level of literacy and numeracy.

3.3 Healthcare is managed by Virgin Health Care. A4E took over as education and training contractors in August 2011. Voluntary and community sector organisations have played a significant part in underpinning the work of the prison.

## **Section 4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### **Overall judgement**

4.1 The new Governor, Ian Bickers, took up his post at High Down in January. He arrived with a host of new ideas, eager to put them into practice. At the same time the full impact of the two NOMS nationwide changes became clear. Planning for "Fair and Sustainable" (F&S), the policy to rationalise, i.e. cut, staff was already underway. Following agreement by the Minister that public sector prisons could avoid going out to competition if they met the required budget cuts by April 2015, "New Ways of Working" (NWoW) also came into operation. This is a way of cutting costs by bench-marking. The ministry team visited High Down in January and had their report on the Governor's desk by March, setting out the limits within which High Down would have to operate. Thus the prison went into the year with a triple whammy.

4.2 Many of the Governor's innovations were much appreciated. He is a high visibility, listening governor, much out around the prison talking to staff and prisoners. He believes in communication as a means to carry people with him. Staff are encouraged to attend the early morning meetings. His attitude to the IMB is very positive. Among his many initiatives he has introduced an extended Induction programme, TASAs (Tackling Anti-social

Attitudes): a method tried elsewhere of improving behaviour, prisoner movement controlled by determined free-flow periods and has plans to increase jobs and training. August saw the successful move round of house block functions, achieved smoothly and well within time frame. The older sex offender population was accommodated in facilities more appropriate to its needs, the Induction unit moved closer to Reception for new arrivals, all resettlement functions were centralised in one unit and the layout of other areas was rationalised.

4.3 On the negative side the changes and, more especially, the uncertainty associated with the changes still to come, were unsettling for all. From December 2012 sick absence was high and morale low. As F&S and NWoW kicked in, officer numbers were significantly reduced. There was no longer time to interact with prisoners. Men spent longer locked up. Staff worried about their safety. Morale plummeted. More than ever the system depended on a degree of consensus. This is described below in greater detail (para 6.12). From contacts with other IMBs we know this state of affairs is national. No-one outside the prison service can understand quite what these changes have meant. It feels pared to the bone and beyond. The Area Manager himself has told the Board that this has been the most difficult period he has ever known.

4.4 In order to avoid numbers of redundancies it was decided to accomplish the required loss of officers and OSGs (support grades) by voluntary redundancy (VEDS). This would have been a good strategy, had it not been for the number lost for other reasons. As management tackled long-term sickness, under-performance and other disciplinary issues there were resignations and dismissals, leading to a shortfall of 13 officers. In retrospect the Governor would probably agree that too many went on VEDS. This was hugely exacerbated by the abysmally slow public sector recruitment process (para 6.13).

4.5 In summary 2013 has been a dreadful year for High Down. The many changes, most outside the control of anyone working within it, have produced an unhappy prison for those that live and work within its confines. Nevertheless, and within the imposed limits, the Board notes that High Down still makes every attempt to treat prisoners humanely and fairly. There have been many examples of good and dedicated work by officers and managers, with a continuing commitment to safety and security. The Governor and Deputy deserve much praise for holding their nerve and steering High Down through these difficult times.

### **Issues for the Minister**

There is only one overriding question the Board would ask. Has the Minister truly taken on board the effects that these cuts will inevitably make on the avowed policy of reducing reoffending?

### **Issues for the Prison Service**

- Hospital escorts – officer numbers are no longer sufficient (para 5.13). An urgent solution is required nationally, such as subcontracting the escorts.
- Resettlement (para 5.31-34) is of importance in all establishments holding offenders. Sex offenders and YOs are particularly disadvantaged.
- Public Sector Recruitment processes (para 6.13)

### **Issues for the Prison**

- Huge backlogs in OASys, Recategorisation, Public Protection interviews (all in para 6.8), Basic Skills Assessments (para 5.25)
- Visits Booking Line and Mail Room (para 6.6)
- Inadequate out of cell time, Gym, Library (paras 5.38, 6.4, 5.28)
- Complaints procedure (para 6.1)

## **Section 5 SPECIFIC AREAS**

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### **Equality and Inclusion**

5.1 Unsurprisingly, Diversity has not received much attention from the prison this year. There were several changes of lead management as the prison adjusted. Meetings which had already been reduced to bi-monthly ceased altogether in March and each prison department was instructed to include Diversity as an agenda item in its own meetings. This may sometimes have occurred but in our judgement led to no serious discussion, little direction and no forum to examine trends or discuss action plans. In November the Governor re-instigated the bi-monthly HEAT (High Down Equality Action Team) meetings and improvements are expected. Similarly specific annual events such Gypsy and Traveller Awareness and the Black History Week events either failed to happen this year or were very much reduced due to lack of funding.

5.2 Figures are available for the various groups which should be monitored. The number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) prisoners has been fairly constant through the year at about 42% of High Down's population. There were 190 prisoners with a declared disability in August, representing 17% of High Down's population, though rising slightly by the end of the year; mental health being the most frequent cause declared. In August there were 110 older

prisoners (over 50 years), 10% of the population, dropping by November. Nevertheless, we think it fair to say that little attention has been given to this area while management has had so much with which to contend.

5.3 It has been very difficult to maintain the network of Diversity peer workers and reps who help prisoners with their individual problems. At the beginning of the year the process of clearing prisoners to work as peers involved both Job Shop and the Offender Management Unit which caused considerable delays. Although the process of clearing prisoners has been streamlined, the September regime changes have hit home and prisoners can no longer freely move around the prison. In consequence it became much more difficult for peer workers to see their clients unless they were on the same house block. The number of volunteers to replace the constant loss as men transfer onwards or are released dried up. Diversity peers working on the Induction house block with men new to High Down were hampered by the difficulties implementing the new Induction programme.

5.4 This reporting year 129 Discrimination Incidents (DIRFs) were reported to the Equalities Manager. This is a fall of 42% but we are told will in part be due to some being dealt with through the normal prison complaints system. DIRFs should be investigated at Custodial Manager (CM) level but there was some evidence mid-year of senior officers doing so, and complaints were received by the IMB. Under work pressures in the latter part of the year a backlog of unanswered complaints built up.

5.5 Despite the difficulties outlined above the IMB has seen little evidence of discrimination in High Down and those tasked with Diversity have done the best they can within their limited time resources. Under changes planned for 2014 the Board expects that High Down will once again work positively to promote racial equality and diversity within the prison.

#### **Foreign National Offenders (FNOs)**

5.6 The number of FNOs has remained relatively static throughout with year-end figures showing 205 prisoners; 19% of High Down's population. The top five nationalities were: Romanian (10%); Jamaican (9%); Nigerian (8%); Irish (7%) and Albanian (6%).

5.7 The Criminal Casework Directorate (CCD) team attends High Down weekly to deal with individual cases and serve the necessary paperwork for foreign national prisoners they wish to see: the longer-term prisoners who are expecting deportation. Decisions continue to be made by case workers based elsewhere and there is no discernible improvement in the length of time taken to establish whether a man should be released or his continued

detention authorised under immigration powers. Through the year the Home Office was “renting” 1000 spaces in prisons for this purpose. In August there were 30 and in November 28 detainees held at High Down. As colleagues have said before: this may be legal but it is not right. The Local Immigration Team (LIT) visits as necessary to deal with lesser issues. The prison holds a long list of men who wish to discuss their cases with LIT. Since the Home Office team chooses who it sees and does not appear to report back to or work with the prison this list quickly becomes out of date.

### **Health and Mental Health**

5.8 This year has seen a somewhat uneasy relationship between prison and healthcare. The new Governor and new Commissioner put different emphasis on the way healthcare should operate in the prison setting compared to the past. This has resulted in some friction as adaptations were made at managerial and operational level. Nevertheless, the Board judges that the delivery of healthcare at High Down by Virgin Health Care and the team of medical and nursing staff continues at a very high standard.

### **Out-patient Services**

5.9 The Board is satisfied that the primary care department continues to provide a high level of medical attention to prisoners. Nurse-led weekly clinics cover many aspects of health. The Pain Relief Clinic continues to thrive with 15-20 patients a month, proving highly successful in reducing prisoners’ dependency on strong painkillers by promoting the benefits of a healthier lifestyle, physiotherapy and exercise. As well as benefiting the patient this measure has cut down on the drugs available for trafficking and reduced the drug budget for prescribed remedies. The Head Pharmacist and one of the GPs were invited to contribute to the Criminal Justice Conference where considerable interest in the initiative was shown. A secondary effect has been an increase in complaints to Virgin Health Care and applications to the IMB from prisoners unhappy with the loss of the drugs with which they feel comfortable. It would be outside the IMB’s remit to comment on clinical decisions.

5.10 Nurses have always provided initial screening and identification of medical issues for prisoners arriving in Reception area. Under the changes and in order to reduce the delay in new arrivals reaching their cells the main screening was moved to the Induction house block in September. In some instances prisoners were moved directly to other areas and missed the nurse’s screen, which could have had serious consequences.

5.11 The local practice of GPs contracted to healthcare continues to give a satisfactory service. After many problems with the out-of-hours service it was, therefore, with great relief

that they were awarded this contract as well. This enables continuity of care, access to medical notes on the prison healthcare computer system and a good working relationship between members of the medical team. It has proven a good decision.

5.12 Over the years the IMB has commented on the unacceptably long waiting lists to see a dentist. Many prisoners have a high level of need because of their previous lifestyles. During 2013 the wait for a routine appointment has varied from 10 -14 weeks, with 96-130 names on the list. There has been absence of the dentist through sickness or annual leave, failure of prisoners to attend their appointments and the breakdown of the X-ray machine for a six-week period. Particularly since the regime changes of September, prison lock-downs have meant the cancellation of clinics and officer shortages cause prisoners to remain locked up. A new X-ray machine was installed in November and the availability of the HMP Downview dental team while that prison is closed is easing the situation but it will take time to reduce the backlog. We are told that urgent appointments are meeting targets though there is still some way to go with routine ones.

5.13 Every attempt is made to meet the NHS target of 18-week waiting times for hospital appointments but the reduction in the number of officers has obliged the prison to limit the escorts it can provide – only two men could go out to hospital each morning and two each afternoon. An unexpected admission to hospital (on one occasion a triple cardiac by-pass) or a need for regular treatment (the dialysis above) meant the cancellation of other prisoners' appointments, which had to be re-booked, sometimes six-eight weeks later. On one occasion a prisoner had received his pre-med for an operation and had to be returned to High Down because the escort was needed. In August 60 scheduled hospital appointments were completed, while 20 were cancelled by the prison. This ratio worsened in September. Medical staff had to make choices as to whose need was greatest. As we write things have deteriorated further. The IMB deplors the situation.

5.14 The development of Telemedicine, which last year was being touted as an exciting new plan to ease the logistics of getting prisoners to hospital appointments, was put on hold during the year, though it is believed to be back on the agenda for the future. More positively, and in response to a prisoner's need for thrice-weekly dialysis, there was a good example of joint work when the hospital deemed it more cost-effective to buy a dialysis machine so that treatment could be given in High Down. This is being monitored by the Home Dialysis Team and is proving highly successful; it saves escorts, is better for the patient and nurses are enjoying developing specialist skills. This initiative is practically unique in the country and is being looked at with interest for future development.

5.15 Since December there has been a new Patient Advice and Liaison manager handling prisoners' complaints about healthcare. The number has risen this year, as have IMB applications with a healthcare theme. Most refer to the withdrawal of pain killers discussed above or to other medication that the prison doctors have decided they will not prescribe.

5.16 An outbreak of Novovirus caused the isolation of one of the house blocks for a week in January. The Board monitored the situation and can report it was successfully contained.

### **In-patient Services**

5.17 High Down has 22 beds in its 24-hour manned Healthcare Centre (HCC) providing a therapeutic environment for a range of patients, many of whom have mental health issues. The regime is very flexible, with prisoners being allowed out of their cells for longer daytime periods, subject to their unlock status and sufficient staff being available. The IMB observes that staff, both nurses and officers, are very supportive of, and interested in, the progress of those in their care who, by nature of their illness, are often very challenging. As in previous reports the Board questions the propriety of dealing with these often highly disturbed men in a prison environment.

5.18 Facilities are largely good. Funding enabled the replacement of worn passageway flooring earlier in the year and work is programmed to upgrade the showers. There is a pleasant garden/exercise area for finer weather. It is to be regretted that it is usually thought necessary to serve meals through cell hatches. Cross-deployment of officers to man other areas of the prison has continued to be a significant problem. This becomes a real issue when there are insufficient officers available to unlock patients for nurses to deliver treatment or to allow prisoners out-of-cell time. It is often unsafe to unlock patients together and officers have to manage several regimes. There have been occasions when multi-unlock prisoners have not been out of their cell for two days. The use of floating officers who were unfamiliar with healthcare to cover gaps was partly responsible for a nasty assault on a senior officer in February.

### **Mental Health Inreach**

5.19 The Inreach team continues to play an important role in High Down where so many prisoners have significant mental health issues. In line with all departments Inreach has had a difficult year. It was well-staffed until August when, for differing reasons, most of the team left, since when it has been functioning with a very small number of staff. This unfortunately coincided with the regime changes in the prison and a very busy period with many complex

cases; ten mental health patients being transferred in a two-month period. Despite this it has continued to work with prisoners to improve their symptoms and with nurses and officers to help manage some very difficult situations. During the year 22 prisoners were diagnosed as needing the specialist care of mental health establishments and most were transferred within the four-six week guidelines. As was to be expected with current staffing levels, the provision of an escort for a patient's transfer has not always been easy to arrange.

5.20 The Board is pleased to report it has heard of many new initiatives in the pipeline: an improvement in psychiatric interventions (more therapy should be available from 2015), day time activities to be provided for mental health patients in the Centre, groups set up with the MIND charity, more involvement with prisoners in the Segregation Unit and in Induction and on-going training for staff.

5.21 Learning disabilities at High Down have been given a higher profile thanks to a specialist appointment. Prisoners are identified through the reception screening process or at a later stage through referrals. Ten of the 34 who agreed to screening this year were found likely to need help. It might be as simple as ensuring that information is presented in an understandable format so that a man can manage his own health issues. Complicated cases may require close cooperation between Inreach, Learning Disabilities and Healthcare and has led to prisoners being transferred to more appropriate establishments. Autism is being identified more frequently. Listeners and officers are being trained to recognise and understand prisoners with these special needs – for instance abruptness might not be a sign of intentional rudeness. High Down is in the forefront of a national trend with this work.

5.22 In conclusion the Board reports once again that Healthcare in High Down has maintained its high standard of care, despite operating in a very difficult environment. The Healthcare Manager and her strong team of specialist and nursing staff are continually reviewing their service provision with a view to introducing new and more efficient ways of working within the constraints of budget and system.

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

5.23 The Stephen Prior Centre (SPC), with its state of the art educational facilities, has now been open for six years and offers prisoners opportunities for both learning and training. There are approximately 210 spaces available with a further 84 computer workshop places. Comments from IMB rota members through the year follow the same theme as those in the 2012 report, that better use could be made of the Centre and that the sight of empty classrooms is one of the most dispiriting aspects of the prison.

5.24 On average, most areas only had around 60% occupancy, falling rapidly through the session as prisoners excused themselves from class. Docking pay for an uncompleted session had some impact. The Board asked last year if part of the problem was a failure of courses to meet prisoners' interests or needs. Frequent cancellation of classes was recorded owing to absence or lack of tutors. There was a proposal to remove construction classes from the curriculum because they failed to provide the wherewithal for employment. The Board was able to provide information that prisoners can, for example, proceed to a further six-week course at Croydon College, leading to the necessary qualifications and CSCS card to get work in the building industry, the matter was reconsidered by management and construction was saved.

5.25 Since the new Induction programme was introduced in September a major problem in finding prisoners purposeful activity is the backlog of men who have not done their Basic Skills Assessment (BSA), without which they cannot be allocated to any activity. This should happen within the first week of a prisoner's arrival so he can go straight to an activity on leaving the Induction unit, but often this has not been the case. Those waiting have at times exceeded 150. The IMB is aware that urgent steps are being taken to rectify this.

5.26 An exciting development was the opening of the National Prison Radio Service station in January in the SPC, employing two prisoners and broadcasting programmes via cell TVs. Sadly, by the end of the year the project had been quietly dropped for lack of funding.

5.27 It is, therefore, hugely encouraging to talk to the new Head of Education who has looked long and hard at the provision of courses. The principal driver is employability. There has been a review of the curriculum with some exciting new additions starting in the New Year: construction qualifications are being pursued through Lambeth "Build It", barbering is to be re-introduced, and there are new courses on First Aid at Work, Responsible Dog Care with input from the Battersea Dogs' Home, bench joinery, and business-related courses. Sex offenders are included in the plans with sessions to be extended to four afternoons a week and a new course of Book Keeping for them. The IMB looks forward to reporting on a much improved 2014.

## **Library**

5.28 In the past the Board has praised the Library and their staff for their contribution to prison life. In August 2011 the Chief Inspector reported as satisfactory that about 40% of the prison population used the Library once a week. The position has changed for the worse.

Attendance plummeted with the regime changes. What had been 200-300 visits a week reduced to an average of some 110. On many occasions over the last few months the IMB found it closed or empty. Staff illness or annual leave has been a factor: with the uncertainty it was decided not to recruit to replace the librarian who left in April. More often it is because of prison-related reasons such as lock downs, and limits on prisoner movements to fixed free-flow times. Prisoners can no longer collect books and go on elsewhere. They seem less willing to come at the start of one free-flow when they have to remain until the next. There has been talk of the Library moving to smaller quarters in the SPC. It will take the Library from its place in the centre of the prison to the farthest point possible on the upper floor of the SPC. Who will visit other than men in education? There is talk of extending the opening hours to evening and weekend sessions to fit in with the new Category C regime for workers planned for April 2014

### **Laundry**

5.29 The Laundry has continued to suffer similar problems to those reported last year. It is still hampered with machinery constantly breaking down. In May the laundry was shut for three weeks when the boilers broke down and there were no funds to repair them. NOMS blinked first and funding was identified to replace them. There is also a long-standing issue with the drains still unresolved. Annual leave and sickness of one instructor has long meant halving the men who could work. The retirement of one instructor in February and annual leave of the other meant for a period the Laundry could only open two days a week by a manager cross-deploying. This affects the throughput of High Down's own laundry and the contracts it holds for other establishments. Even more significantly it is the main area in the prison where prisoners from the VPU are employed. There appears to be no plan to fill the vacant post.

### **Workshops and Recycling**

5.30 Throughout the year the Board has continued to be extremely impressed with the workshops and recycling unit which have provided first-class opportunities for training in a friendly and supportive environment. The Board was, therefore, particularly disappointed to learn that the three instructors who had been responsible for developing excellent areas of work were being moved back to work as officers on the landings. We hope all their good work can be maintained by others.

### **Resettlement**

5.31 This year has seen a complete turnaround for resettlement at High Down. At the start of the year what had been a fairly comprehensive programme partly funded by charities was

dismantled and the excellent Pathways & Interventions Manager lost. The IMB were told prison policy dictated that a Resettlement programme was inconsistent with the role of a Category B local prison and that no funding was available for interventions or courses. The introduction of the charity "Circles" to work with sex offenders being released was shelved. Payment by Results, that is of reducing re-offending, was abandoned. This was hard to accept and we lament the loss of much good work over previous years.

5.32 As part of the changes implemented by the new Governor all resettlement functions have been centred in one unit. Outside agencies are now all housed together with the prison departments Offender Management and Job Shop. Prisoners can attend by appointment on free-flow but have to wait for the next one to move elsewhere. The weekly Resettlement Clinic is held in the chapel for those prisoners due for release within weeks. St Giles and Job Centre Plus are in the prison daily and arrange to see prisoners before release to assist them with issues relating to accommodation and benefits. The National Careers Service (NCS) takes part in the new prisoner induction programme. They are funded to see prisoners serving sentences below one year to give employment/education advice. The IMB is concerned that sex offenders, who only spend their first night on the Induction house block before transfer to the VPU, do not benefit from this.

5.33 Last year we reported that the pilot scheme between the charity Unlock and HSBC to open bank accounts had been suspended. We are content to note its reinstatement and 52 bank accounts were opened with HSBC for the period June to November 2013. These bank accounts will help prisoners prepare for release. During the year there have been 95 applications for a Citizen Card, a Home Office recognised identity card which is essential for prisoners who need to claim benefits on release.

5.34 The IMB is pleased that "through the gate" resettlement has continued in the current financial year although its future is uncertain if funding is withdrawn. This is an excellent scheme whereby an Integrated Offender Management Liaison Officer works with short sentence prisoners pre- and post-release into the Surrey & Sussex areas, excluding sex offenders. It provides individual support in dealing with agencies both in and out of prison. The officer has been working with 31 released offenders, half of whom have been in the community for over a year. Only seven have returned to prison: better than national figures.

## **Residential Services**

### **Catering and the Kitchen**

5.35 It has been a busy year for the High Down kitchen with many changes. The divorce of

the prison catering from the Clink restaurant meant a new Catering manager promoted internally, which has had a positive effect on the prison team. More responsibility has been given to the kitchen supervisors and we are told that staff morale has improved. As High Down started to go through the NWoW process kitchen staff would often say that they had no idea what was going on and they were 'forgotten' by senior managers, none of whom ever seemed to visit. This has now been rectified and governors regularly visit the kitchen.

5.36 Following a survey of prisoners a new menu was introduced in December and the Board was pleased to note the inclusion of more vegetables. The kitchen experimented with moving from the system of pre-ordering menus to allow prisoners to choose at the servery. The trial was later abandoned as being more costly. With the latest regime change a cold lunch was introduced. Prisoners have a choice of baguette, delivered with soup and fruit. Working practices had to be adapted but the staff and prisoners in the kitchen now have lunch ready for the house blocks to collect by 9.30 am each morning. The change is proving cost-effective. An issue of hygiene remains to be resolved as the kitchen is currently not properly equipped for the preparation of the baguettes, but bespoke tables are on order. Prisoners are able to address complaints about the food directly to the kitchen using the comment book in each servery area. This would be a useful way to avoid choking up the complaints system if only these books were always on view.

5.37 The ongoing issues with broken equipment have improved, although there is still a constant battle with Works to get equipment mended speedily. Periods when chefs had to work around the problem of faulty ovens, fryers, boilers and brat pans, were frequent and the two trolleys used to transfer hot food to the house blocks were unserviceable. The Clink will be taking over training in the New Year and the BiCS (food premises cleaning) certificate will also be restarting with two trusted prisoners carrying out the training. Food hygiene training will also continue with the intermediate level taking six weeks.

### **Other Residential Matters**

5.38 Quality of life on the house blocks has suffered in common with all else. Officers often spoke of staff numbers as unsafe but tended to work round the problem by only unlocking one spur at a time. Everyone **usually** got some time out of cell in 24 hours. The new regime came into operation in September with new staffing profiles. The reaction from both prisoners and officers was negative. Complaints were numerous. Morale went through the floor. Prisoners were not being unlocked in time to get to work in the kitchen; there was often insufficient time for domestics such as showers and phonecalls; library visits fell off; gym practically ceased; exercise and association were insufficient and unpredictable. The

move to limited free-flow times, with undoubted benefits for the overall control and security of the prison, affected Listeners and all peer workers. As officers decreased IMB applications increased

5.39 Members noted dirty shower areas on occasion and frequent notes were made about the state of rubbish being ejected through cell windows on to communal areas.

Replacement kit was not always available. The under floor heating has never been satisfactory on the two newer house blocks and the IMB has regular complaints in these areas, especially from older prisoners in the VPU during the colder weather.

### **Safer Custody**

5.40 The safety of the prison environment, for both prisoners and officers is recognised as paramount though this area has not been immune to the year's difficulties. In particular:

- The monthly meetings to examine trends and discuss improvements have been subject to postponement, often at the last minute when staff have simply not been free to attend.
- The introduction of TASA, a system challenging anti-social behaviour and creating compacts with prisoners, was an interesting initiative which failed to develop properly and is to be re-introduced.
- ACCTs, the documents which are opened when there is suspicion that a prisoner may self-harm, were being opened at the rate of about 40 per month, with a spike of 58 in November. The prison acknowledges that they have not always been maintained to the highest standard. This may reflect the reality that officers do not always have time for "quality" conversation and reviews. An instance which nearly resulted in a fatality (para 5.44) was a stark wake up call.
- There was a peak of violent incidents in August, predominantly between white adults during association periods. These fell once NWoW with more controlled movement was introduced, though, interestingly, there was a similar peak in August of 2012.
- There were four deaths in custody during the year: two men died, one in hospital and one in a hospice, of very serious medical conditions; one was post-release though technically a death in custody. One prisoner died in April of an over-dose and his inquest is still to be held. The Ombudsman investigated each and made his recommendations to the prison and to Healthcare. There are three deaths from 2011 still awaiting hearings at the coroner's court.

### **Segregation Unit (ex-Separation and Reintegration Unit)**

5.41 Segregation is a large unit with 22 standard cells and two Special Accommodation cells, the latter only for use in extreme circumstances and for the shortest time possible. IMB members have specific duties in the Unit: they sit on reviews, monitor the use of the special cells and must speak each week to every prisoner through the unlocked cell door. Early this year the IMB expressed considerable concerns about the SRU, as it was then known. These included incorrect paperwork, staff in the same posts for much longer than the three years stipulated, the regime which did not always adhere to prison service rules and a culture of difficult-to-manage prisoners staying in the Unit for long periods. These issues were gradually addressed during 2013 by the new Governor and his team. The Board has close involvement with the Unit and knows the management of this area is not easy. In general it is satisfied that the officers run a safe, decent and respectful unit.

5.42 Under the aegis of new management there was a refreshing of personnel with a complete rotation of officers and SOs. Cross-deployment became an issue from April, as for much of the prison. It was particularly problematic for officers with no Segregation experience suddenly expected to work in a different and difficult environment with very specific rules and without training. With all that was going on in the Unit (reviews, adjudications, visits of the external judge, etc) the Board began to have trouble finding an officer with time to help with the weekly unlock. The pressure on staffing undoubtedly contributed to a very serious incident when a prisoner nearly succeeded in hanging himself in the Unit, staff having failed to note that he should have been on frequent observation because he was on a self-harming document.

5.43 Prisoners in Segregation are reviewed after 72 hours and then again after seven or 14 days. The Board attended nearly all reviews during the reporting period. It had raised a number of issues: relevant information not always available to the panel; the absence of representatives from the multidisciplinary team managing the prisoner; agreed actions not always being implemented, and, above all, constant changes to the review governor failing to provide a consistent approach to decisions taken about a prisoner's future. From April reviews became the responsibility of the Segregation governor, and only exceptionally another, giving much better continuity.

5.44 The high numbers and the length of stay of some was underlined in last year's report. The Board was pleased to find the new Governor had similar views and one of his early acts was to tackle this. He empowered the Segregation governor to take a firm stance and the decision was made to challenge prisoners who had been in the Unit for long periods, either

because they found it a safer or easier option, or because their behaviour on the house blocks was problematic. Gradually men were moved back to mainstream or transferred to other prisons. Duty governors who moved prisoners into the Unit had to have an exit strategy in mind. On the whole the Board judges this policy to have been successful and prisoners are now returned to house blocks as soon as possible.

5.45 There was a small group of prisoners of particular concern to the Board, who could not be dealt with easily because of the nature of their crimes. They had been in segregation for very long periods yet no plan was being made for their onward progression. Their moves would require assistance from the Area Manager. Eventually these, too, were transferred to prisons better suited to their needs. One prisoner remains and is likely to see his sentence out in High Down Segregation. The Board has raised this with the Governor and Area Manager and has been given explanations as to why this must be so. We understand the reasons and acknowledge attempts have been to engage with him. The prisoner himself is not unhappy with the situation but the IMB still believes it is inherently wrong to separate a man in this way for 18 months and more.

5.46 The Segregation Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG), which met quarterly throughout 2012, has not met since January. Its role was to ensure the Unit adhered correctly to prison policy on the use of segregation and separation, examining trends, etc. The IMB hopes this will be resuscitated as soon as staffing allows.

## **Section 6 OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON**

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### **Applications and Complaints**

6.1 Around August the IMB became aware of a significant increase in the number of applications it was receiving from prisoners, since when it has been hard-pressed to keep abreast of the constant flow while making time to attend to its other monitoring duties. Comparative figures for the last four months of the year show this:

	<b><i>August</i></b>	<b><i>September</i></b>	<b><i>October</i></b>	<b><i>November</i></b>
<b><i>2012</i></b>	55	59	61	58
<b><i>2013</i></b>	85	92	92	111

From what prisoners have told us on the wings and subjects raised it was obvious wing officers were taking the position that they no longer had time to make phone calls and follow up inquiries and that the IMB was the body to approach. The increases reflected the

problems that certain departments were having and is raised elsewhere. Table 2 shows how this divides into subjects. It is worth noting that 35% of the miscellaneous category were applications to the IMB about the prison's failure to answer complaints within the established time-frame. Confidential applications received by the IMB chair also reflected this inability of the prison to deal with its own procedures – we estimate that 75% were not of a confidential nature and should have been dealt with through the normal channels. The Governor has commissioned a study of the whole subject.

### **Drug Strategy**

6.2 RAPt (Rehabilitation of Addicted Prisoners Trust) continues to work within High Down facilitating the Bridge Programme: a six-week drugs course which relies on total abstinence from drugs. All substance abuse-related prisoners and specialist staff were moved to a designated recovery wing in September. Early issues regarding cell and shower conditions have been resolved. The move meant prisoners lost their privileged single cells and the unit manager believes this will motivate prisoners with a real desire for a drug-free life rather than comfortable quarters. The programme has seen an impressive 78 starters in our reporting period with 68 completions. Unscheduled "shut downs" under NWoW has caused the cancellation of some group sessions and some fellowship meetings due to staff shortages.

6.3 The presence and use of illegal drugs in High Down continues to be a problem. The prison reports that the preferred method of entry is over the walls or through visits. Mobile phones are also trafficked and may be used to arrange drug drops over the wall or via visits. The frequent cross-deployment of security staff to cover essential functions in the prison became a real problem in the second part of the year, leading to a fall in the number of random and targeted drug tests carried out. Nevertheless, security officers work hard to tackle the problem, collecting information and targeting suspects with searches, with some success. The transfer out of a number of prisoners known to be involved in the drug trade and the arrest of three officers suspected of involvement gave some relief. There have also been some major exercises with the support of Surrey Police and High Down's team of trained dogs and their handlers work indefatigably. In common with other London prison High Down tries its best to reduce the supply and halt the trade.

### **Gym**

6.4 After the positive things said about the role of the Gym last year the Board is sad to report a disastrous 2013. Throughout the year gym instructors have had to be cross-deployed to other essential areas of the prison and sessions have been cancelled. At first

this was weekends and evenings only but the situation worsened after the September changes and there has been very little gym available for the rest of the year. A crying shame and a cause of much complaint to the IMB.

### **Job Shop and Purposeful Activity**

6.5 The Job Shop is a prisoner's access to work, processing applications and allocating positions. In common with all departments it has spent the year short of staff, which has reflected on the prison's ability to fill employment spaces. Thus in January unfilled spaces were in the order of 48, in the 90s in April and May, rising to 105 in June, and peaking at 119. One member of staff absent has a big impact when there are a number of other tasks Job Shop also has to cover. The sentence plan backlog; an issue between security and Job Shop as to who should be doing the risk assessments mid-year; and, most recently, the delay in the Basic Skills Assessments (para 5.25) have all slowed things down. In view of the prison's expressed desire to get men into work the situation needs urgent address.

### **Mail Room and Visits**

6.6 A significant problem through the year was the Visits' Booking Line. Officers staffing it were frequently cross-deployed to other areas of the prison. Staff temporarily brought in to man the phones did not always seem to know what they were doing. Lines were not answered. Visitors indicated that it often took days of constant calls to get through to – one told the IMB she had phoned 297 times over four days to book a visit. Visitors have been turned away through no fault of their own because of incorrect processing. Both Governor and IMB received angry letters of complaint and for a period the IMB office was taking phone calls from an irate public. The problem was exacerbated by general backlogs in the Mail Room responsible for sending out the Visiting Orders. By April it was affecting the numbers in the Visits Hall. It is with relief the Board can report that a solution seems to have been found. The booking lines are now being run by those that know the system best – the Visits' Centre manager and his staff from Downview and High Down. They have worked hard and there are no longer complaints, visits are being booked by phone and by email and the Visiting Orders sent out speedily.

6.7 On the other hand, the cancellation of visits on Monday and Friday afternoons and enhanced prisoners' visits in the mornings is causing problems. There are 88 places in the hall available over five days. Convicted prisoners are allowed two visits a month with an extra one if they are enhanced status. Remand prisoners are allowed three visits per week. Legal visits must also be fitted in. There is, therefore, pressure on the spaces available. A further aggravation is the length of time it is taking some visitors to get from where they

check in at the Visits' Centre to the Hall, partially as a result of new security measures, which shortens visits. Lastly, there is an on-going problem with mice in the Visits Hall and tea bar attracted by the presence of food. Unsuccessful efforts have been made to remove them.

### **Offender Management Unit (OMU)**

6.8 The backlog of OASys has been year-long without solution. These essential documents provide a risk assessment and sentence plan for individual prisoners, each taking an average five-and-a-half hours to prepare, and without which prisoners cannot hope for parole or transfer to other prisons. In August there were 150 waiting for assessment. Re-categorisation, enabling men to move to lower category establishments to continue their sentences, has likewise suffered. It was five months behind in September. Public Protection interviews under PSO4400 were also behind. The solution has long been obvious – the employment of 12 urgently needed Offender Supervisors to do the work. The IMB understands that recruitment to cover these posts was delayed to avoid making staff redundant when cut-back time arrived. In the meantime a large number of prisoners were prevented from progressing. The good news is that recruitment is to start in the New Year.

### **Reception and Induction**

6.9 Late arrivals on Fridays from Guildford Magistrates Court and Croydon Crown Court, both of which sit late that day, continue to delay the work of Reception. Regular meetings between senior prison staff and the private escort contractor GeoAmey have led to a better working relationship. The contractor has agreed to recruit more staff so prisoners finished at court can return earlier. When implemented this will spread the workload and allow a smoother processing of arrivals. In line with other changes, reception was streamlined in September. The principle was to reduce the time a man was held in the reception area so he could move quickly to his house block, this being a vulnerable time for new arrivals.

6.10 Demands on reception staff, including frequent cross-deployment, have caused delays with the processing of prisoners' property, reflected in the increase of applications received by the IMB over the year.

6.11 A large local prison will have many new arrivals each day who require an introduction to prison life. As staff numbers reduced there were growing instances when Induction was cancelled. As part of the September changes all Induction-related processes were moved to a specific house block nearer to the Reception area. A new five-day Induction programme was introduced. Problems mentioned elsewhere are that some new arrivals have missed out on health screening (para 5.10) or Induction (VPs/Seg/HCC). However, it also became

apparent that the programme was failing due to a shortage of officers to run it. It was simply not happening on a daily basis. Five days became four but even then did not always take place. This was responsible for the huge backlog in the Basic Skills Assessment (para 5.25)

### **Staffing**

6.12 From the beginning of the reporting period the IMB has been recording staff shortages. Illness was the principal cause early on (31 recorded off sick 19 Dec) and cross-deployment of officers was already an issue as staff were moved to keep the essential areas functioning. “Floating” senior officers were introduced who might have no knowledge of the unit they were covering. From April High Down knew what the situation would be with regard to future staffing numbers under NWoW: a 20% loss translating into the departure of 28 officers, 20 OSGs and 6 CMs. VEDS as the chosen method to achieve this cut back has been discussed above (para 4.4). The Governor and his team have been working hard to reduce sickness both long-term and short-term with the result that there are far fewer officers now than predicted in April when decisions were taken.

6.13 Outside High Down’s control and therefore more problematic, the national recruitment mechanism used by the prison service has been a major stumbling block. Once it became obvious that the prison was going to be short-staffed a recruitment process should have swung into action. We are told the system is inflexible, not easy to use and incapable of allowing forward planning. The problem is London-wide and the Area Manager eventually intervened. A recruitment campaign is at last planned.

6.14 Staff taking VEDS started to leave in August and the introduction of new shift patterns in September with fewer staff on the house blocks inevitably meant that only mandatory duties could be carried out. The prison was running with 29 officers below complement on 17 September. The Personal Officer Scheme was an immediate casualty. The backlogs in paperwork and fall off in Gym and Library are a direct consequence. The Board heard constant complaints from officers and prisoners about the effects on daily routine. Officers started to talk about feeling unsafe with the new staffing levels of five officers and one SO per house block of 181 prisoners.

### **Vulnerable Prisoners**

6.15 High Down now has a complete house block dedicated to sex offenders in single cell accommodation. “Poor copers” or those vulnerable for other reasons were previously housed on the VPU but are now being managed on other house blocks or have been

transferred to other prisons. The process of moving prisoners was slow and the Board reported on sex offenders being 'lodged' for their own safety in the Segregation Unit and Healthcare until a cell became available, which was far from ideal. After a long period of stagnation the transfer of prisoners to dedicated sex offender prisons has recommenced.

6.16 A major concern of the IMB has been the absence of sex offender specific courses at High Down. Convicted sex offenders were never intended to spend long periods in a Category B local prison, yet between January and August only six had been transferred to specialist prisons. Some had been in High Down for two years. Three were YOs for whom transfers proved especially difficult to arrange. The Board knows this is a national problem but it is clearly unfair that a prisoner is unable to progress his sentence plan and work towards his release.

6.17 Inadequate provision of purposeful activity for sex offenders was highlighted in last year's report as a major concern. There are 178 prisoners on the new house block with 49 work spaces and a further 40 education spaces. At the end of the year education for these men was moved to the SPC. Classroom space is better there but only two weekly sessions and five subjects (maths, English, music, art and assertiveness) are on offer. Plans for the New Year should see improvements. The IMB would advocate the introduction of a CV & Disclosure course, to help these prisoners in particular apply for work on release.

6.18 The laundry is the main work place for sex offenders but numbers are restricted by the vacant instructor's post (para 5.29). This is a real shame. The laundry's work could be expanded and new contracts developed while giving more opportunity for men to be out of their cell. New areas opened to VPs during the year were eight places in the industrial Sewing workshop and a few taking apart photographic equipment for recycling. Final stage discussions should mean the Fine Cell Work charity commences embroidery sessions with a group in the New Year.

6.19 There are other areas where the IMB considers these prisoners at a disadvantage over those on the mainstream. Their induction has not been equivalent (para 6.9) since sex offenders only receive their 'first night in prison' induction on the Induction house block and do not always complete the programme on their own unit. Until recently there was not equal access to the Listeners who are on call for distressed prisoners needing to talk to someone. The new incentives scheme may likewise disadvantage sex offenders unable to show progress to prove their right to enhanced status. Similarly, a sex offender at High Down receives very little in the way of a resettlement programme to help him on release.

6.20 On the whole the Board acknowledges that the custody of sex offenders has shown progress over the year. However, more purposeful activity is required since only about 50% are able to take up a place in education or work; and attention should be given to the lack of resettlement opportunities compared with those available to a mainstream prisoner.

## **Section 7 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

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7.1 Board meetings take place monthly. The Governor attends the meetings to inform the Board of developments in the prison and answer questions. Four members of the Board monitor the prison every week on rota. Their duties involve talking to prisoners and staff, looking at all aspects of prison life, and ensuring that prisoners are held in a fair and decent environment. Individual prisoners apply to see a Board member if they have any concerns. Rota members cover these applications. Members also have special areas of interests linked to the Annual Report. They attend relevant meetings and report back to the Board.

7.2 Training usually takes place before Board meetings. It includes helpful presentations by either prison staff or representatives from other services within the prison. In addition, all members attend appropriate National IMB courses. New members receive in-house training in the form of shadowing experienced members and each is assigned a mentor. A formal review of the Board's work takes place annually, when working practices are reviewed. Board members also visit other establishments during the year. Inter-prison visits to other Boards are valuable and this year members of High Down's Board have visited HMPs Downview, Swaleside and Brixton, while hosting visits from HMPs Pentonville, Downview and Coldingley. It has also welcomed the head of the IMB Secretariat and the Area Manager to meetings.

7.3 The recommended full board membership is 20. There are currently 18 members, which has proved adequate, with a rolling programme to replace members who leave. Two new members were successfully recruited and welcomed this year and a further campaign is planned to replace those members leaving under the 15-year tenure rule. The Board is committed to continue broadening its membership to reflect the population.

**Table 1**

<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	18
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	18
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within reporting period	2
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	791
Total number of segregation reviews held	357
Total number of segregation reviews attended	354
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	30/11(cancelled. Rescheduled for January)

**Table 2 Applications to see the Board**

Code	Subject	2009/10	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/13
A	Accommodation	13	9	21	47
B	Adjudications	10	7	19	29
C	Diversity related	8	2	8	19
D	Education/employment/training	33	50	36	100
E	Family/visits	79	108	116	190
F	Food/kitchen related	18	20	31	30
G	Health related	54	60	77	106
H	Property	111	115	114	201
I	Sentence related	61	80	71	139
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee related	80	83	60	104
K	Transfers	32	22	22	44
L	Miscellaneous	57	54	106	90
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	556	610	681	1099

Confidential accesses are included here since 75% of the 99 received were not confidential and fit into the above categories. Of those recorded under “Miscellaneous” 34 were applications about the prison not responding to complaints.

## Section 8 **GLOSSARY OF PRISON-RELATED ABBREVIATIONS**

**ACCT** Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork – replacement for self harm document F2052SH (see below)

**BME** Black & Minority Ethnic

**CARATS** Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Throughcare Scheme – drug & alcohol team.

**CCT** Criminal Casework Directorate

**CM** Custodial Manager – staff grade

**DIRF** Discrimination Incident Reporting Form

**FNO** Foreign National Offender

**GOOD** Good Order or Discipline – Segregation under Rule 45/49

**HEAT** High Down Equality Team

**HCC** Health Care Centre

**HMCIP** Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons

**IMB** Independent Monitoring Board

**IPP** Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection

**LIT** Local Immigration Team

**OMU** Offender Management Unit

**OI/OR/OP** Own Interests/Request/Protection – Segregation under Rule 45/45

**OSG** Operational Support Grades

**PALS** Patient Advice and Liaison Services

**PCT** Primary Care Trust – National Health component previously responsible for healthcare

**PSI** Prison Service Instruction

**PSO** Prison Service Order

**SPC** Stephen Pryor Centre

**SCT** Safer Custody Team

**(S)IR** Security Information Report

**SRU** Separation and Reintegration Unit now known as Segregation Unit

**TASA** Tackling Anti-social Attitudes

**VO** Visiting Order – sent out by prisoners

**UKBA** United Kingdom Borders Agency (Immigration)

**VP** Vulnerable Prisoner

**YO** Young Offender