

Her Majesty's Prison

**KENNET**

The Fourth Annual Report

of the

**Independent Monitoring Board**

**2010**

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## **Statutory Role of the IMB**

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Home Secretary from members of the community in which the prison 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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## **Description of the prison**

HMP Kennet was converted from part of the Ashworth Hospital complex and opened in June 2007. The original buildings were built soon after the Second World War. It is situated close to Junction 1 of the M58 and is a sprawling site, open and airy, but most inhospitable on a windy winters day in the rain. The land is leased from Mersey Care Trust, although we understand the Home Office owns the land.

It is a Category C establishment designed for 342 offenders. Accommodation for offenders consists of seven single storey buildings, holding between 30 and 69 offenders and is generally two per cell. Each cell has a washbasin and toilet and the latter is generally screened by ceiling high curtains. There is standard two bunk sleeping provision with storage for each offender including a small security safe for personal items. Television sets are available for offenders on Standard and Enhanced Status. Cell locking incorporates protection of property with each resident having his own cell key, which the staff can over ride with their keys. There are showers in each unit, which are available during each association period.

There are two administration buildings. Wordsworth House contains offices for the Governor, Deputy Governor, Security, the Performance Monitoring Unit (PMU) and the Staff Training Unit with the remaining Administration work is in the building opposite Wordsworth House. Reception, Healthcare, Prison Chaplaincy, Library and the Workshops are all located in a complex in the centre of the Prison Site. The Gymnasium incorporating an all weather football pitch is situated nearby. Visits take place in a separate single story building. The facilities are limited but comfortable. Refreshments are available and there is a supervised child's play area, but the supervision is sometimes limited by shortages of staff.

Healthcare is provided by Sefton Primary Care Trust. Education and training was provided by The Manchester College.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **4.1 Issues for the Minister**

### **4.1.1 Healthcare**

The Board first raised the issue of overnight healthcare provision in its 2007 Report and again in its 2008 and 2009 Reports. During 2010, there was a further incident which yet again raises concerns. This time after use of force, there was a need for an offender to be seen on site by a health professional at night to check that he was fit. The Governor was not able to get the necessary service. We are aware that this particular aspect and the more general issue of overnight healthcare have been taken up by the Governor with the provider (Sefton PCT). However, it is still unresolved. While healthcare provision at night is very rarely needed at Kennet, it is vital that there is a system in place which delivers it when needed. A failure could have significant implications.

### **4.1.2 Funding**

HMP Kennet has higher costs than other similar establishments, some due to the nature of the establishment eg a kitchen outside the establishment and several small wings. We are monitoring the impact of the reduced funding closely and have not seen any significant reduction front line offender provision during 2010. We continue to be concerned about the impact of outside factors. For example, the current canteen contract has less flexibility than the previous one – during December many orders for Christmas cards went unfulfilled as there were none in stock.

### **4.1.3 Mobile phones**

To repeat the Board's concerns of last year, some offenders at Kennet continue to have access to mobile phones. While there continues to be some success in detecting illicit phones their availability continues to be a cause of concern. The Board hopes that a national technical solution, such as blocking the signal, will become available.

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

### **4.2.1 Double cells**

As stated in our last two reports, almost all the cells are double cells. This led to Kennet being the prison with the highest percentage of overcrowding. Generally the toilet is screened by a curtain which provides little privacy. Many offenders eat meals in their cells. The Board is pleased to note that dining out is now available on all wings and there are sufficient tables in the wing recreational areas to allow for anyone who wishes to 'dine out' to do so. However, these arrangements continue to fall significantly short of good practice.

### **4.2.2 Car parking**

The Board has raised car parking as an issue in its previous two reports due to the relative inaccessibility of HMP Kennet by public transport. The situation has continued to improve though there are still times when there is no space in the car parks, particularly in the one available to visitors. As there is no other reasonable parking within 15-20 mins walk, this results in a large amount of unsafe parking on site - on grass, on pavements and where a car is at significant risk of damage.

During 2010, there was a regular bus service from Liverpool to HMP Kennet running during the day every thirty minutes each day except Sunday. However, the Board understands there are plans to reduce the service. The service is promoted by staff in the visitor centre. It is unfortunate that there is not a shelter at the bus stop used by visitors leaving Kennet.

### **4.2.3 Educational provision**

Progress continued during 2010 with Category D offenders starting work in the kitchen outside the establishment. Current educational and training provision includes painting and decorating, joinery, bricklaying, plastering, tiling, industrial cleaning, catering and horticulture. Qualifications offered to offenders have improved, with an industry recognised Diploma being offered in some areas (eg bricklaying). However, the Board noted many occasions of low attendance at workshops. While the Board recognises that offenders may have legitimate reasons for absence (eg visits or gym), this does result in underuse of resources.

There is a range of other classroom based activities including creative writing, IT and business. The Substance Treatment Offending Behaviour Programme (STOP) ceased in March. In September, the Prisoners Addressing Substance Related Offending (PASRO) Course started and some offenders have completed it. Overall, demand and provision appears to be in balance - at the end of the year, there was a short waiting list for only one course.

During 2010, HMP Kennet moved to having functional Residential Wings with one wing being a Resettlement Unit. Offenders within six weeks of discharge have access to resettlement services including a surgery which includes partner agencies such as NACRO and Job Centre Plus.

The Board is pleased that HMP Kennet is exploring making more use of Category D offenders including in the laundry, library and grounds as this will provide a good quality educational and occupational experience for those offenders.

#### **4.2.4 Library**

During 2010, the library use improved though it continued to be underused. Additional facilities are in place (eg computers) and some educational activity now takes place there. The Book Challenge which involved offenders writing reviews of six books was very successful. However, there continued to be problems with the availability of officers to escort offenders to the library. It is a waste of resources for the library to be open when there are no officers available to escort the offenders there.

### **4.3 Overall judgement**

In 2010, the good relationships between offenders and staff at HMP Kennet continue. There is a positive culture with staff generally treating offenders with respect. The Board is pleased to note the improvement in the Key Performance Targets in 2010 with almost all being at an appropriate level. In particular, the numbers of assaults and level staff sickness have reduced significantly. The introduction of new corporate systems continues to be problematic, but staff have worked hard to minimise the impact on offenders with significant success. At a local level, there is a culture of continual improvement and staff generally value and use feedback, eg from the offender Focus Group and from the Monitoring Board. A notable success has been the change in the system of internal movement. The previous escorted system had led to delays and hence missed healthcare appointments and difficulties when an offender had to leave an educational activity part way through its session.

The Board wishes to record its thanks for the help it has had from the Governor and staff at HMP Kennet during 2010.

## **MANDATORY AREAS**

### **5.1 Diversity**

Due to the lay out and construction of the establishment, generally all that is necessary to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is 'reasonable adjustment' for the specific needs of an individual. There are some wings with a cell designed for an offender who has limited mobility. Now that the wings are organised on a functional basis, at the suggestion of the Offender Focus Group, the establishment is considering whether such cells are needed on other wings so as to ensure equality of access.

An offender with a disability should have information on his needs recorded in the records which transfer with him from his previous establishment which would then be used at HMP Kennet. However, the Board did find a couple of instances where the information had not been transferred with the offender and this had caused some difficulties. Any unrecorded needs should be identified during the reception process with the information being passed to the Disability Liaison Officer for follow up. Similarly a gay, bisexual or transgendered offender should be identified during the reception process if it is not already recorded.

The Race Equality Action Team (REAT) meets regularly and Offender representatives attend. The mandatory Race Equality Impact Assessments were completed. These fed into the Race Equality Action Plan which is updated regularly and is overseen by the Governor. Two IMB members did a spot check of the log of racial complaints and found it in order.

The number of offenders having minority ethnic backgrounds fell from 25 (7.4%) in December 2009 to 15 (4.6%) in December 2010. While it was lower in the summer of 2010, in January 2009, 11.45% of HMP Kennet's population was from a minority ethnic background. Information leaflets and instructions for offenders in many languages are on the Prison Information pages of the computer so they can be accessed or printed as needed. The establishment put on activities for Black History Month in October and celebrates Muslim religious festivals.

### **5.2 Learning and Skills**

There are vocational courses in painting and decorating, bricklaying, joinery, plastering, catering, tiling and horticulture. The Physical Education facilities include an all weather football pitch and a wide range of traditional gym equipment. Various courses leading to Sports training qualifications are available and trained offenders can work as a gym orderly. There is also a range of classroom based activities such as numeracy, literacy, ICT, business administration and creative writing. A notable success this year is the provision of new courses which are more advanced and lead to industry recognised qualifications eg Diplomas in Bricklaying

and Catering. The introduction of Category D offenders in the Kitchen and their training in a genuine environment is a further example of better provision. There are further plans to develop the provision with the introduction of the 'Virtual Campus' during 2011 which will facilitate a much wider range and higher level provision.

There is also a well stocked library, though there have been problems with access (see 4.2.4).

### **5.3 Healthcare and mental health**

There is a well equipped healthcare centre. There are regular nurse led, GP and dental clinics as well as many specialist clinics such as chiropody, mental health, g, psychiatric. There are targeted sessions such as stop smoking. The PCT has found it difficult to recruit a permanent dentist, but an effective service is provided using sessional locums. In 2009, HMP Kennet started taking IDTS offenders and their successful integration and support continued during 2010. IDTS arrangements have enabled some offenders to come off opiate based drug treatment such as methadone. There were occasions, where the transfer of offenders to HMP Kennet was hindered by a lack of accompanying records supporting their treatment.

The Board's main concern is with the provision of care overnight which is covered elsewhere (see 4.1.1)

### **5.4 Safer custody**

There are three safer custody cells on wings. The ACCT's and TABs system in HMP Kennet is one of its strengths with excellent training of all staff and the officer responsible for the system being a strong advocate of its benefits

As a whole, we feel the regime fulfills the criteria of humane and just treatment of those held in custody. In addition to our regular discussions with offenders, we have seen letters to the Governor with positive comments.

### **5.5 Segregation Unit**

The Segregation Unit is the only purpose built unit in the Prison. It is very rare to find more than two or three offenders in the unit. The quality of the care is high and the cells are comfortable, clean and airy. There is closed circuit television coverage on the Unit generally and in two of the ten cells which comprise the residential section and in the two reception cells. They have safety provisions to prevent self harm. Alarm calls from the cells are linked to the Communications room for monitoring by staff.

Few offenders are in the Unit for more than a few days. It was very unusual for an offender to report an issue other than the slowness of arranging a transfer.

# **AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE AND AREAS OF CONCERN**

## **6.1 Adjudications**

Adjudications are held in a room adjacent to the segregation unit and those accused of offences against prison discipline are held in two specially set out rooms opposite the adjudication room.

During 2010, adjudications were held as needed with no fixed pattern. Those the Board has observed were fair and unrushed. The awards have caused little concern to the Board.

## **6.2 Catering and kitchens**

The Kitchen is outside the perimeter of the Prison, staffed by industrial grade staff and a catering manager, and during 2010 Category D offenders based at HMP Kennet started to work in the kitchen.

The menus are checked for quality and dietary balance. There is a good selection and different menus for special times eg black history week and Christmas. The catering manager has continued with the regular survey of offenders which asks them to rate six dishes in each category. The top three in each category are then incorporated into the main menu and less popular options are dropped.

Food is loaded in trolleys and then transported by van into the prison then the trolleys are used to transport the food to each wing. Trolleys and used containers are returned to the kitchen for cleaning. Temperature records are well kept by the offenders who serve the food in each wing servery.

The kitchen building has continued to needed a significant amount of maintenance during 2010. There have been delays but the work is nearly completed with the outstanding work due to be finished when the weather improves.

The quality of the provisions is clear from the offender feedback at the regular meetings held with the catering team and the lack of applications to IMB concerning food

## **6.3 Chaplaincy**

The Chaplaincy is led by the Church of England Chaplain who manages the Unit, and is one of the Chaplains. Chaplains are on regular and visible duty around the establishment. The Chaplaincy team has an innovative approach. All faiths are catered for either with full time or sessional ministers. Any offender wishing to speak to a chaplain can do so very quickly and easily and if requested a minister of the religion to which the offender belongs can be seen very soon after the initial request.

The Chapel is multi-faith, with curtains available to produce a screen to ensure that items associated with other faiths and denominations can be out of sight

Chaplains play a key role in the emotional wellbeing of HMP Kennet. They see offenders in segregation, those who are on cell rest or who have newly arrived at HMP Kennet. They also work with offender's families running the Family days and, under contract, they manage the visitor centre.

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

## **7.1 Membership and workload**

In January 2010, there were 8 members on the Board at HMP Kennet. All the members had joined the Board prior to Autumn 2008. One was on a sabbatical for a year due to ill health and resigned in Summer 2010. Another went on sabbatical in October 2010 due to family commitments. Three members were also members on another Board and helped to set up the original Board at HMP Kennet.

During 2010, the Board spent a lot of time on recruitment and induction of new members. Interviews were held in March and September and eight new members were appointed. Six remain as two quickly decided that IMB work was not for them. At the end of 2010, the Board had 13 members.

The Board registered with the Sefton Volunteering website and was involved in a recruitment initiative aiming to recruit as wide a range of members as possible. The eight new members came from a range of backgrounds and ages and from many different recruitment routes.

Facilities provided by the Governor to the Board are very good. We have a small but comfortable room, with desks, storage capacity, telephone and a computer.

We held 11 Board meetings in the Boardroom in 2010, one in each month except December. Attendance averaged 78%. The Governor or an appointed representative attended every meeting.

During 2010, the Board has made 102 Rota visits and dealt with 108 applications from offenders. There have been very few incidents in the prison, all minor. In addition to this, the Board has focused on recruiting and supporting new members though there were some attendances at Committees, particularly the Offender Focus Group. This is due in part due to the burden of the members being engaged in the work of two Boards and the relative inexperience of the Board. Board members have attended National training, including the Board Development Officer Course and the National Conference. They are also involved in the North West meetings of Chairs of Independent Monitoring Boards and other regional meetings.

## 7.2 Key IMB statistics 2010

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Recommended Complement of Board Members                       | 12  |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period  | 8   |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period    | 13  |
| Number of new members joining within the reporting period     | 8   |
| Number of members leaving within reporting period             | 3   |
| Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings) | 263 |
| Total number of applications received                         | 108 |
| Total number of segregation reviews held                      | 31  |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended by IMB           | 10  |

### 7.3 Applications to IMB

| Code | Subject                             | Jun- Dec<br>2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|------|-------------------------------------|------------------|------|------|------|
| A    | Accommodation                       | 3                | 2    | 2    | 2    |
| B    | Adjudications                       | 0                | 1    | 2    | 4    |
| C    | Diversity related                   | 0                | 7    | 1    | 0    |
| D    | Education/employment/training       | 4                | 2    | 17   | 3    |
| E    | Family/visits                       | 5                | 8    | 19   | 6    |
| F    | Food/kitchen related                | 2                | 0    | 1    | 1    |
| G    | Health related                      | 3                | 9    | 6    | 21   |
| H    | Property                            | 3                | 7    | 17   | 13   |
| I    | Sentence related                    | 8                | 25   | 16   | 22   |
| J    | Staff/prisoner/detainee related     | 2                | 3    | 6    | 8    |
| K    | Transfers                           | 9                | 7    | 14   | 10   |
| L    | Miscellaneous                       | 6                | 11   | 20   | 18   |
|      | <b>Total number of applications</b> | 45               | 82   | 122  | 108  |

This number is low compared to some prisons that Board members have served in. In part, this is due to the low number of offenders in the establishment. However, the quality of the Personal Officer system means that officers deal effectively with many issues which would otherwise become applications to the Board.