



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

HMP AND YOI LOW NEWTON

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE PERIOD 1 MARCH 2011 – 29 FEBRUARY 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB	3
DESCRIPTION OF PRISON	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY –	5
(a) Issues for the Minister	5
(b) Issues for the Prison Service	6
(c) Other matters and general overview	6
HEALTH CARE and MENTAL HEALTH	6
DSPD (Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorders)	7
SAFER CUSTODY	8
DIVERSITY	9
CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT and DISCIPLINE	10
LEARNING AND SKILLS	11
REGIME	12
Reception and Induction	12
Resettlement	12
Catering/Kitchen	13
Canteen	13
Prisoners' telephone facilities	13
WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD	14
GLOSSARY OF PRISON-RELATED ABBREVIATIONS	16

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Home Secretary 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.

DESCRIPTION OF PRISON

Low Newton opened in 1965 as a Remand Centre with four Wings holding young men up to 21 years of age, and a discrete Wing for women of all ages on remand and sentenced.

The Prison was re-roled as a women's Prison in 1998, when it was refurbished, and now consists of 8 residential wings, together with general prisoner use areas, e.g. Healthcare Centre.

CNA (cells in use at end of reporting period)	-	298
Operational Capacity	-	336

During the year a series of works was completed on the upgrading of the heating system in the accommodation blocks and all accommodation has now been returned to full availability.

Most cells are single-occupancy, with a small number of double-occupancy cells to cater for "at risk" women, i.e. women assessed as unsuitable for single cell accommodation.

Low Newton holds women of all ages from 18 years, on remand and sentenced; short sentences to life sentences, and also restricted status (high security) women.

Adult prisoners and young offenders are integrated. The mix is no more than 30% of Youth Offenders on each Wing, and all relevant risk assessments are carried out before it is decided on which Wing a YO should be located.

Facilities include :

Learning and Skills Centre : - an excellent facility providing a wide range of full-time and part-time education courses and employment and training programmes. The Centre Manager is also responsible for –

The Learning Shop - “drop-in” computer-driven learning, staffed by a charitable organisation (New Bridge), and used by women in their own time, including evenings and weekends, for computer-based learning, e.g. languages. The facility is also used during weekdays by women on education courses, employment and training programmes, or direct learning courses; sometimes vulnerable women who feel more secure there than in large groups in the Learning and Skills department. The Learning Shop is a very popular educational facility.

Pitstop - initial educational needs and training assessments for all women; also vocational and creative industries courses.

A team of 4 prisoners work here making up weekly beverages packs. Up to 3 women are employed machining cloth bags for Barnardos. Greetings cards are manufactured to a very high standard and are available for purchase by prisoners and staff.

The contract for the Learning and Skills service is with City College Manchester.

Library - service provided by Durham County Council.

Healthcare Service - Care UK were granted the contract for providing the healthcare provision to inmates from April 2011. Initially there were problems which seemed to centre on the new management team not establishing good communication paths from the centre at the outset but these now appear to have been resolved (See also p.6 Healthcare and Mental Health).

Chaplaincy - Diocese of Durham, and Diocese of Newcastle and Hexham. An Imam visits regularly. The Chaplaincy takes care of the pastoral and emotional needs of prisoners.

Gymnasium - programmes available for key work skills. Part of Learning and Skills. The facilities are also available to staff when off duty and a number attend to ensure that they meet fitness standards.

Housing Advice - office run by risk-assessed prisoners trained and in contact with outside housing agencies, supported and supervised by prison staff.

Visits Room - modern, spacious and pleasant. Mother/child visits take place every Friday.

Visitors' Centre - situated immediately outside the Prison – run by NEPACS (North East Prisoners After Care Service) staff and volunteers.

Outside Agencies and Voluntary Support Services include :

New Bridge (Learning Shop)
NEPACS (North-East Prisoners After Care Service) – register visitors on arrival and provide assistance and advice to visitors, and provide volunteers for Visits canteen and creche.
Citizens' Advice Bureau
Samaritans – train approved prisoners as Listeners
MIND – engage with Healthcare day services – counselling (e.g. bereavement, sexual abuse, physical abuse)
CARATS – work with prison DIPS team on drugs intervention programmes
NACRO
Open Gate – (Community Chaplaincy – mentoring)
Youth for Christ
JobCentre Plus
Job Club
Parentline Plus – work in Visitors Centre
After Adoption – work on the repercussions of adoption and liaison.
Clearspring – provide accommodation for women eligible for bail who cannot return to their own address, or women eligible for HDC but who cannot provide a suitable address.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Issues for the Minister

1. As reported previously the Board must draw attention to the continuing high number of prisoners who have mental health problems, Although the Healthcare Unit refers prisoners for assessment with a view to their transfer to hospital accommodation the Board again must question whether prison is the correct location for these women.

Mental health assessments and provision of an appropriate placement in a secure hospital continues to conform to the the timeframe set by the Ministry of Justice, but the Board believes still earlier interventions are necessary, e.g. direction of prisoners from courts to establishments specialising in mental health care for reports

2. The Board is disappointed with the introduction, by the Prison service, of charges for delivering packages to the prisoners and feels that this is unjustified and should be removed.

Issues for the Prison Service

Prisoners Monies has been a topic that has been regularly raised with the Board. It is the view of the Board that the way of presenting income and expenditure on PNOMIS printouts can be confusing and would benefit from some work to improve this aspect to make it simpler for prisoners to track their financial positions.

During the year a particularly disruptive prisoner was transferred to Low Newton and remained in the establishment for three months before being moved on. Whilst the Board has no criticisms of Low Newton in the way that the individual was managed, the Board feels that it is not an appropriate method of managing disruptive prisoners simply by moving them on every few weeks. This is unfair on several counts: firstly the behaviour cannot be properly addressed if an individual is to be resident for only short period; secondly Low Newton did not have proper facilities for dealing with such a prisoner and she had to be housed in the care and separation unit; finally although this was a significant additional resource cost to the prison no extra funds were allocated to support the additional costs.

It is the Board's view that a single unit should be instituted for all difficult prisoners and that it should be resourced to enable it to properly to challenge the behavior of these prisoners.

As previously recommended by the Board it is felt that prisoners should receive a regular statement of monies earned, personal monies received, and monies spent, with detailed lists of all their purchases. This should be in the format of a comprehensive statement like a bank statement, which would in itself be good preparation for release into the outside world.

Other matters and general overview

The Board feels that prisoners are kept in a safe and supportive environment. During visits Board members regularly note that there is a good atmosphere within the establishment. The Personal Officer scheme seems to be working well and this has been reflected in the reduced number of applications that have been made to the Board during the year.

It is the opinion of the Board that the establishment is well run with officers having due regard to the welfare of the prisoners, the Governor and his senior staff are regularly seen in prisoner areas and are readily approachable.

Self harming continues to be a continuing problem but there are robust processes in place to identify women at risk, to monitor, provide support and treat any injuries quickly.

The Board was pleased to see that the establishment received a good report at its last HMIP inspection and feels that it was fully warranted. Officers have good and professional working relationships with their charges and demonstrate genuine concern regarding their welfare.

HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Prisoners requesting a first appointment visit nurse-led clinics, e.g. nurse prescribing, triage, where the nurse judges urgency and either prescribes or refers the patient to a GP or an appropriate clinic. The majority of nurses are qualified to prescribe.

The colposcopy clinic is of great benefit to prisoners, reducing the number of visits to outside hospitals - a procedure which many women find unsettling. A consultant and nurses from a local NHS hospital visit the clinic to deliver treatments, assisted by Low Newton's nursing staff.

Visiting professionals from the PCT and the Acute Trust include GPs, physiotherapist, optician, dentist, midwife, chiropodist, visiting hospital specialists, psychologists, psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses. Mental health counsellors visit from MIND to provide bereavement, sexual and physical abuse counselling. Learning disability workers visit to assess prisoners. Specialist nurses visit to work with women with Hepatitis C; also nurses specialising in diabetes. Clinics include Well Woman, health promotion, vaccination, GUM, prenatal, acupuncture, group therapy and relaxation therapy.

Drugs detoxification – a very large number of prisoners arrive at Low Newton with mental health problems, very often serious and usually drugs or alcohol related. There is accommodation for 22 prisoners on E Wing (a discrete wing) where group work, drugs counselling, etc., are available.

Except in emergencies, prisoners make written application for medical attention, or they may contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) by free phone. They may also raise any queries, e.g. check times of medical and dental appointments through PALS.

The many of women received at Low Newton have mental health problems – it is a huge issue, as is self-harm. It is not unusual for women to have to be kept under constant or frequent watch for periods for their own safety.

The Healthcare Manager and his staff cope admirably for long periods with the many seriously mentally ill, and often volatile, women who pass through their care. As mentioned in previous years, the Board believes these women should not be in prison but should be sent for assessment directly by the courts to hospitals specialising in mental health care.

DANGEROUS AND SEVERE PERSONALITY DISORDERS (DSPD)

(known as The Primrose Unit)

The project (the Primrose Unit) is a joint initiative between the Prison Service, the Department of Health and the Home Office. Its purpose is to deliver more effective interventions to dangerous women to reduce risk to themselves and others. The programme offers skills for life, including “life minus violence” programme, therapy to address unsolved psychological trauma, and behaviour therapy to treat personality disorders and self-harming behaviour.

There are spaces for 12 women, who live on F Wing and associate with other prisoners on the wing but attend therapy and programmes on the Unit (a pod attached to F Wing) during work and education hours and on some evenings.

The programme is available to the whole of the female prison estate. To be eligible for the programme prisoners must have at least four years of their sentence remaining. Women who meet the criteria transfer to Low Newton for a 3-6 months assessment period. A woman assessed as suitable is set a programme individually tailored to meet her needs. The 12 places available are always filled, and there is a long waiting list.

SAFER CUSTODY

The Head of Security and Safety takes the chair at meetings of the Safer Prisons and Violence Reduction Committees. Prisoner Listeners and Insiders attend part of the meetings to give their reports which are then fully discussed. The group produce Action Plans which they work through and update at monthly meetings.

ACCTs While on their rota visits Board members check a random selection of files to ensure that they are up to date.

Listeners - Risk-assessed prisoners are recruited for work as Listeners – currently there are insufficient prisoners trained as listeners but the recruitment of suitable candidates is always sought. Listeners are involved in the induction programme for new prisoners, informing women of Listener availability (24 hrs per day when sufficient Listeners are in place) and also encouraging women to apply to train as Listeners. Insiders and Listeners attend and report to the prison's Safer Custody meetings.

Drugs These are always an issue in the establishment and are often the cause of intimidation. Drug test statistics are provided to the Board on a monthly basis and the board is pleased to see that any possible infractions are dealt with robustly by staff.

Mobile phones The continuing presence of mobile phones within the establishment is suspected. These can be the source of prisoner dealing and can lead to bullying etc. With the availability of modern technological measures we are puzzled that more is not done to eliminate them.

Anti-Bullying programme In September 2011 a new Anti bullying programme, challenging behaviour and promoting change, was introduced. The programme places a greater emphasis on the use of incentives and earned privileges scheme when addressing such behaviour. Individuals found behaving in an anti social manner are given either a verbal / written warning and are monitored for 14 days. Individuals involved in bullying are managed via a multi-disciplinary approach where an appropriate strategy is agreed. This will include working with a Staff Welfare Representative to understand and address their bullying behaviour.

Integral to the new policy is support for all victims of bullying which is offered from a designated Staff welfare representative. They will work with prisoners to develop skills to assist in reducing the risk of future victimisation focusing on assertiveness skills to promote of their self-worth.

Support for victims of bullying A Victim Support Plan is opened which ensures that the personal officer is aware, location reviewed, whether ACCT required, cell share risk assessment if appropriate, whether psychology referral required, etc. The support plan is reviewed within 7 days of being opened and at all stages consideration is given to the risk of self-harm or suicide.

Personal Officer Scheme Following the introduction of the revised scheme all prisoners have a clearly identified personal officer to whom they can address issues, it is noticeable that the number of applications to the Board has reduced following the relaunch.

Death in custody There have been no deaths in custody during the reporting year. It should be noted that on many occasions staff have had to remove ligatures or give/seek emergency treatment for serious self-harm incidents.

DIVERSITY

The prison service has a positive duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote Equality of Opportunity and good relations between people of different racial group, religion, age group, ability and sexual persuasion. This it does by reviewing its policies, by education and investigating complaints raised by prisoners and taking action against any member of staff, prisoner or visitor who uses insulting language or behaviour.

Policy is driven by monthly meetings of the Diversity and Race Equality Action Team (DREAT) attended by section heads at Low Newton and chaired by a Governor. The meeting, attended also by prisoner representatives, serves to review prison policies and actions which are relevant to minority groups including Foreign Nationals.

Monitoring of Black, Minority, Ethnic

In the North East, the percentage of the population which falls into this group is relatively low compared to other parts of the country. The percentage in the prison population at Low Newton is in the 5% range. The low number of staff in this group (one manager, one prison officer, one OSG and one cleaner (who works with prisoners on the industrial floor cleaning team) reflects the low proportion in the local population and difficulties in recruiting. (A further female officer will take up her duties at Low Newton early in May). Data on adjudications, complaints, prisoner releases, prisoner status, segregation and use of force is collected and reviewed by the meeting. Any statistically significant deviation from the proportion of prisoners from the BME category compared to the whole population is highlighted and explained where necessary.

Foreign Nationals

A Foreign National is defined as a person who is not a British Citizen and includes people from other countries in the European Economic Area, migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees and immigration detainees. The proportion at Low Newton has fallen over the past 12 months (currently less than 2%) due to national policy to locate them elsewhere in the prison estate.

Typical of their specific needs:

Language barriers needing more opportunities to develop English skills.

Cultural barriers

Food e.g. Afro-Caribbean, Halal

Maintaining family links

Legal advice on immigration procedures

Local policies are in place to meet the needs of Foreign Nationals when at Low Newton who, on occasions, have complimented staff and fellow prisoners on the efforts made on their behalf, e.g. the use of Big Word telephone translation service.

Other issues

In addition to their confidential healthcare assessment, all prisoners are invited on arrival to make staff aware of any specific needs they have (e.g. hearing, sight, mobility) so that any specific measures are put in place. The prison is turning its attention to wider issues of diversity by, for example introducing prisoner buddies for the disabled and the needs of those in the 50 plus age range.

The prison is to be commended on the progress made in recent years to address the many diversity issues and in particular for achieving a 100% level of training under the 'Challenge it Change it' programme for addressing attitudes of its staff.

CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT AND DISCIPLINE

Care and Separation Unit

There are three cells in the CSU, an Adjudications Room, and an interview room. Staff in the Unit are very good at building up a rapport with prisoners and encouraging them to improve their behaviour. Comparatively few women are placed on Good Order or Discipline, rarely for more than 14 days, and more often up to 7 days. Occasionally, a woman known to have or suspected of possessing drugs (e.g. on return from court) may be there longer.

A Board member is informed of any move to the Unit and, if possible, visits the prisoner before observing the 72 hr. GOOD review. Review panels are conducted by a governor, attended by the appropriate members of staff, the necessary information is to hand, and prisoners attend and are encouraged to make their representations. Reviews subsequent to the 72 hr. review are aligned to take place on Wednesday afternoons when a Board member can be available to observe, i.e. the Board member who will have taken part in the prisoner's induction programme earlier in the afternoon.

Discipline

During the reporting year There have been 798 adjudications averaging at 66 per month.

Prisoners awarded cellular confinement at adjudication are listed on a board in the CSU, but are usually located on landing cells and where possible on the landing and in the cell where they normally live. Visiting IMB members check the board and then visit anyone on cellular confinement.

Board members occasionally observe adjudications while making rota visits.

LEARNING AND SKILLS

All prisoners at Low Newton are given the opportunity to improve and develop their skills to improve their life opportunities.

Learning and Skills is currently provided by Manchester College who won the contract in August 2009 replacing the previous incumbent Newcastle College.

Manchester College have a core of full time staff but most tutors are employed on an hourly contract per session basis.

On arrival women undertake an initial period of assessment and appraisal to establish which programmes would best suit them. Women with poor literacy and numeric skills are offered plans to improve these skills and research has shown that improvement in these basic skills reduces the likelihood of reoffending upon discharge.

Manchester College delivers mostly vocational based course designed to improve employability upon discharge, courses include hairdressing, call centre duties, beauty care and catering. The courses on offer are regularly reviewed and it is intended to introduce vocational cooking, creative industries and business in the future.

Suitable prisoners can be given the opportunity to complete the British Industrial Cleaning Sciences course (BICS) and are found around the prison using their skills to clean the establishment.

The prison gardens provide horticultural training for women some of the produce being used in the prison kitchen.

Formal educational qualifications such as GCSE and Degree courses are supported by "Women in Prison" rather than Manchester College.

The College takes advantage of prisoners who have particular skills by using them to support the learners by providing one to one support and relating experiential stories.

The Employer Engagement Unit actively supports women in securing opportunities by building relationships with businesses and preparing women for employment by ensuring they have the appropriate qualifications, such as the food hygiene certificate, and preparing them for interview and work situations.

All the staff spoken to by Board members have been very enthusiastic about the work that they do and employ success stories from previous prisoners to inspire the current class members.

REGIME (Other areas)

Reception

During the year GEOAmev won the contract for the movement of prisoners, although initially there were some minor problems these seem now to have been eliminated. The Reception Area is always tidy usually with cleaners in attendance.

Although the Board has received some applications regarding property, primarily these have related to discrepancies in the property brought by women being transferred into HMP Low Newton from other establishments.

Resettlement

This is a core function of the Prison Service, directly related to the Prison Service's objective "To reduce crime by providing constructive regimes which address offending behaviour, improve educational and work skills and promote law-abiding behaviour in custody and after release". It has come into sharp focus with the new Government's policy to reduce the numbers of prisoners nationally.

Low Newton is actively engaged with civic, corporate and faith alliances to provide support when they are released.

Key resettlement components which research has shown reduce reoffending are identified as nine pathways:

- Accommodation***
- Employment, enterprise, learning and skills***
- Health care***
- Drugs and Alcohol***
- Financial management***
- Children and Families***
- Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour***
- Domestic Violence***
- Prostitution***

These nine pathways form a key component of Low Newton's Reducing Re-offending Strategy and Action Plan which sets targets for each three month period of the year. Each of the pathways is lead by the appropriate head of department in the prison who is responsible for the key links within the prison and to external agencies.

We are disappointed; once again, to note that more is not being done to help prisoners tackle their alcohol problems, which have often been one of the key factors leading to imprisonment.

It is encouraging to hear of links with industries that are willing to employ prisoners during and after their sentences and to hear of inspirational speakers who are willing to share their experience of overcoming obstacles in their lives to succeed in their chosen careers.

The resettlement initiatives are broad and ambitious with the laudable aims of reducing reoffending. We would like to see more measurement of the effectiveness of the various programmes by the monitoring of re-offending (or otherwise) both locally and at a national level.

Catering/Kitchen

Prisoners are able to select from weekly menus that are issued to them. Although the catering budget is low, prisoners are offered meals which are nutritious, well-cooked and presented, and of good variety. Meals are planned and prepared and options are available to meet cultural, religious requirements and medical dietary requirements in accordance with food and hygiene regulations. Healthy eating options are also available.

Board members are usually invited to taste the meals on their visits and when this is done they are always to be found to be good. There is a booklet available for prisoners to note their opinions about the meals that they are receiving..

Surveys are taken to assess prisoners' views on food and menus, and menus are adapted to include popular preferences where possible. Prisoners have the opportunity of raising issues at the monthly Prisoners' Council meetings.

NVQ courses are undertaken by prisoners working in the kitchen, with a good success rate.

Canteen

Canteen purchases are provided by the private firm, DHL, and the Board has received no prisoner complaints about the service.

Prisoners' telephone facilities

There is a telephone on every landing. Calls can be made between 7.30 and 8.00 a.m., 11.30a.m.-1.30 p.m., and from 4.30-7.00 p.m. Time is not restricted unless there is a queue for the telephone, in which case staff ensure that prisoners share the time available.

THE WORK OF THE IMB

The Board at HMP and YOI Low Newton is below strength, with 7 members against a possible complement of 10. The Board has managed well with seven but has been in the process of recruiting an additional member towards the end of the year. The Board feels that 8 members are the optimum number giving a satisfactory interval between rota visits.

The Board organises its duties with two weekly rotas. A member visiting on the first rota will deal with any applications received both in writing and "On the hoof". Prisoners in the Care and Separation Unit and those on cellular confinement will be seen and the healthcare and kitchens visited. When GOOD reviews being conducted during the time of the visit these will also be observed.

The second rota is for Wednesday afternoon when the member will give an induction presentation to all new prisoners and any further GOOD reviews after the initial 72 hour Review. These are programmed to take place on Wednesday afternoons so that the induction rota member can be available to observe.

The Governor, or if he is unavailable the Deputy Governor, attends the Board's monthly meetings to present his report and respond to Board queries.

As part of its training plan, the Board frequently invites a member of staff from one of the various disciplines within the establishment to attend prior to the monthly Board meeting to discuss his/her area of work. This has proved an effective means of keeping up to date and learning of change.

IMB Statistics

Recommended Board Complement	10
Number of members at beginning of reporting period	7
Number of members at end of reporting period	7
Number of new members within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving during the reporting period	0
Total number of Board meetings (including Annual Team Performance Review)	12
Average number of attendances at Board meetings	6
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board Meetings	3
Number of visits to the Prison (including Board meetings)	193
Number of applications (Requests/Complaints)* received	79

*Breakdown of applications –

Transfers	7
Food	3
Visits/Telephone Calls	5
Prisoners Monies	0
Healthcare	6
Resettlement	7
Property	17
Security	4
Legal	2
Bullying	2
Miscellaneous (not captured above)	26

MR. D. BRAND
CHAIRMAN,
On behalf of HMP and YOI LOW NEWTON INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

Glossary of Prison-related Abbreviations

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork
BEM	British Ethnic Minority
CARATS	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice, Throughcare Services
Cc	Cellular confinement
CSU	Care and Separation Unit
DSPD	Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorders
DREAT	Diversity and Race Equality Action Team
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETS	Enhanced Thinking Skills
IDTS	Integrated Drug Treatment System
ISPP	Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection
FOR	Focus on Resettlement
FN	Foreign National
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders
PASRO	Prisoners Addressing Substance Related Offending
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RRO	Race Relations Officer
REAT	Racial Equality Action Team