



Independent Monitoring Board

HMP Northumberland

**Annual Report
To the Minister for Justice**

1st January to 31st December 2012

Section 1

Statutory Role of the Independent Monitoring Board

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

inform promptly the Secretary of State or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate any concern it has

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 the prison's records.

Section 2

Contents

	<i>Page No</i>
Section 1	
Statutory Role of the Independent Monitoring Board	2
Section 2	
Contents	3
Section 3	
Description	4
Section 4	
Executive Summary	6
Section 5	
5.1 Equality and Inclusion	10
5.2 Education, Learning and Skills	13
5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health	15
5.4 Purposeful Activity	17
5.5 Resettlement	19
5.6 Residential Services <i>(includes accommodation, canteen and kitchen)</i>	21
5.7 Safer Custody	22
5.8 Segregation	23
Section 6	
6.1 Visitors Centre	26
6.2 Visits	26
6.3 Drugs and Mobile Phones	27
6.4 Escorts	27
6.5 Awards	27
6.6 IEP	27
6.7 Trends	29
Section 7	
7.1 The Work of the Independent Monitoring Board	36
7.2 Board Statistics	39
7.3 Chairs Comments	39

Section 3

Description

1. HMP Northumberland was formerly two separate prisons on adjacent sites. HMP Acklington a Male Cat C establishment opened in 1972, and HMP Castington opened in 1983. Initially a Young Offender Institution housing long-term offenders up to age 21, Castington began accepting remand prisoners from 1999, re-roled to become part of the Juvenile estate in 2000, and re-roled again to Male Cat C in 2010.

2. Significant internal restructuring led to the merged establishments formally becoming HMP Northumberland in October 2010. This created a large prison on a very large site.

3. Operational capacity at December 2012 was 1348 consisting of 486 Vulnerable Prisoners, and 862 Mains Prisoners.

4. Of these 90 were Category D, 15 Foreign Nationals, 119 IPP, and 48 were life sentenced.

5. Staff posts have been falling throughout 2012 and at the end of the reporting year stood at 653 operational and non operational staff.

6. The main prisoner accommodation consisting of 15 houseblocks is spread over two large sites. Accommodation is, in the main, clean with satisfactory décor. There are 5 houseblocks on the Castington Site along with the modern Gateway Unit, and 9 on the Acklington site.

7. During the reporting year, competitive tendering resulted in the rejection of the Public Sector bid and (at the time of writing) an announcement is expected in April to confirm which of Sodexo, Serco or MTC/Amey will assume the running of the establishment.

8. Completion of the physical merge i.e. a new fence making one establishment came about in January 2013 and the move to one gatelodge, one visits area and one reception, is to take place from March 2013. The Offender Management Unit is scheduled to be brought together in one area shortly afterwards. It is expected the move to one Care and Separation Unit and one kitchen will be considered by the new management, and there are currently separate healthcare and education facilities on each site.

9. There appear to be no current plans for the land vacated by demolition of the very old A, B and C wings on the Acklington site but there are plans to further develop the Gateway and Recovery Unit to support those prisoners who have become drug free, and are working towards release.

10. The following agencies provide support to the prison :

- Care UK and Macmillan Nursing Services - Healthcare for prisoners
- Manchester College - Learning and Skills development
- Northumbria Police - Police Liaison Officers
- GEO/Amey - Prisoner Escort Services

11. The following Voluntary Agencies, are amongst those that provide support to the prison :

Provider/Service	Current Provision
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (Prison Service) ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (Probation Service)	2 groups per week – Wed evening Acklington HB9 and Sat morning – multi-faith room in Chaplaincy
NERAF – Northern Engagement into Recovery from Addiction	By referral (works in partnership with NECA)
DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS/JOB CENTRE PLUS	Within OMU Acklington site (local welfare provision moving to Local Authority responsibility)
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION – offers advice and practical support during and post custody	By referral via Veterans in Custody Liaison Officers
SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families – offers advice and practical support during and post custody	By referral via Veterans in Custody Liaison Officers
PHOENIX FEATURES – UK drug charity providing specialist treatment services and residential programmes	By referral – linked to Gateway Unit
SHELTER – Housing advice and debt management service	By referral and offer “thro the gate into community service”
NEPACS – independent community based charity supporting prisoners and their families	Visitor Centre provider open 7 days a week with various facilities and referral information
EASE/Pertemps – advice and guidance on finding work/training post release	By referral
NORCARE – explore accommodation for prisoners on release who are socially excluded, vulnerable or disadvantaged	By referral
SAMARITANS – provides training for prisoners to become Listeners	By referral to become a Listener
VETERANS IN CUSTODY – sign- posting to agencies as necessary	By referral
ADDACTION – drug and alcohol agency with services throughout England	By referral via CARATS department
Via CHAPLAINCY	Projects include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIND Mentoring Project • Junction 42 (Reflex) – social enterprise project linked with catering in community • Pegswood Project – building project • Sycamore Project
FAITH ACTION	Funding/policy advisory service for Third Sector
VETERANS IN CUSTODY – sign-posting to agencies as necessary	By referral

In addition to this list, the Shannon Trust supports the Toe-by-Toe literacy scheme

Section 4

Executive Summary

1. HMP Northumberland, a Category C Training Prison, is the most northerly prison establishment in England. Formed from the merger of HMP Acklington and HMP/YOI Castington it is geographically, one of the largest prison sites in the country. Accommodating both vulnerable and mains prisoners, a small proportion of whom are Category D, the operational capacity at December 2012, was 1348.
2. Change and uncertainty has been constant for Governor and Senior Management Team who throughout the reporting year, not only dealt with merging two very different establishments but were also involved in the Public Sector bid to manage the merged prison. The uncertainty led to low staff morale and at the time of writing the future Private Sector Management of the prison is unknown as an announcement is not expected until April 2013. Staff reductions have led to some very experienced staff either leaving the Prison Service or re-locating to other establishments.
3. The Governor and Senior Management Team are fully committed to the equitable treatment of all prisoners and throughout the year have remained focussed on maintaining a safe, stable and secure environment. Staff/prisoner relations are generally good as are relations between Board members and prison staff.
4. Houseblocks vary in age, standard and state of repair although the prison is generally clean. There are currently two CASU's (Care and Separation Units), two Kitchens, two Healthcare Centres and two Education blocks.
5. Manchester College retained the OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills) contract and In June 2012 Ofsted stated that "There was a clear strategic vision on well developed plans for future developments of learning and skills".
6. Some inadequate Healthcare provision i.e. Dentist and Mental Health Counselling causes concern along with surgery waiting times and the high cost of bed watches, although there has been additional nursing resource in anti-smoking programmes.
7. The HMIP (HM Inspector of Prisons) report highlighted that getting more prisoners usefully occupied must be a priority. Whilst demand for work still exceeds availability of opportunities, steps are being taken to address this and activities for older and disabled prisoners has improved since concern for their well-being was also highlighted in the Report.
8. A Reducing Re-offending Policy was introduced in 2012 along with a Restorative Justice programme. ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) has been developed for a very small number of the Cat 'D' prisoners, and good progress has been made in helping prisoners establish/maintain family links.
9. Staff vigilance has led to significant finds of drugs and mobile phones throughout the year thus preventing their entry into the prison.
10. Staff sickness remains high although the issue is well-recognised by the prison management team.

4.1. Issues in this report requiring a response

For the Minister

13. The Board would ask that the Minister gives careful consideration to the impact on prisoners and their families when they are placed in the most northerly prison in England. (Section 5.5 paragraph 19)

14. The Board would ask the Minister to take steps to ensure that Prisoners arrive at HMP Northumberland with an OASys Assessment already carried out. This matter needs to be addressed urgently to free up valuable time in the already heavy workload of OMU staff (Section 5.5. paragraphs 6 and 11)

15. The Board would ask the Minister to investigate the reasons for the lengthy delay in arranging inquests as HMP Northumberland has seven outstanding dating back to 2008-09 (HMP Acklington) (Section 5.7 paragraph 8)

For the Prison

Equality and Inclusion

16. The prison should make immediate arrangements to assist prisoners entitled to bowel cancer screening to access their NHS numbers. (Section 5.1 paragraphs 3 and Section 5.3 paragraph 4)

17. The prison should develop a specific Action Plan addressing the needs of the recently increased older prisoner and prisoners with disabilities population (Section 5.1 paragraph 8)

18. Dyslexia screening of prisoners should be initiated in order to identify and address this 'hidden disability' (section 5.1 paragraph 12)

19. The bi-monthly bi-sexual/gay group meetings should be consistent so that prisoners can attend on a regular basis. (Section 5.1 paragraph 14)

20. The facilities for Foreign National prisoners should be more widely publicised within the prison so that they can be more aware of what is available to them. (Section 5.1 paragraph 16)

21. The prison should consider the use of a 'Talking Pen', which translates pre-determined phrases in a variety of languages and which would be beneficial as an aid to effective communication with Foreign National prisoners. (Section 5.1. paragraph 17)

22. The prison should develop links with other areas of the country regarding the 'About Turn' project when Veterans in Custody are being considered for release. (Section 5.1. paragraph 19)

23. The vacant Chaplaincy posts should be filled as a matter of urgency to allow this important department to deliver the full range of services and introduce new initiatives. (Section 5.1 paragraph 25)

Education, Learning and Skills

24. The prison should address the issue of teaching and learning time being lost due to the time it takes to move prisoners from houseblocks to education. (Section 5.2. paragraph 13)

Healthcare

25. The prison should investigate the reasons for the extended waiting times in surgeries before and after treatment. (Section 5.3 paragraph 2).

26. The prison should consider the current dental provision and retain the additional sessions if necessary to ensure demand is adequately met. (Section 5.3 paragraph 7)

Purposeful Activity

27. Notwithstanding the opportunities being created for purposeful activity (Section 5.4 paragraphs 8, 9 and 10), the prison should address the shortfall as demand is still greater than availability for those wishing to be purposefully engaged. (Section 5.4 paragraph 3).

Resettlement

28. The prison should devote more time to Restorative Justice schemes as they appear to have long-term benefits for those involved. (Section 5.5 paragraph 10)

29. The provision for ROTL should be extended in order to meet the expectations of the 60+ Category D prisoners now held in HMP Northumberland. (Section 5.5. paragraph 10)

Residential Services

30. The prison should review the national contracts for repair of equipment in the kitchens and laundry to achieve a more effective level of response. (Section 5.6 paragraphs 10 and 11)

Safer Custody

31. ACCT case reviews should be properly timed to ensure as far as possible that relevant professionals such as Healthcare can attend. (Section 5.7. paragraph 3)

Segregation

32. The prison should look at the permanency of staff working in the CASUs to ensure consistency in regime in this very important area of the prison. (Section 5.8 paragraph 6)

33. The prison should ensure that as far as possible CASU reviews are held at the allotted time and give IMB adequate notice of any change. This matter was highlighted in the last Acklington report. (Section 5.8 paragraph 7).

34. Security Department representation at SMARG meetings needs to improve to allow all relevant Departments to input and share information. (Section 5.8 paragraph 10).

35. The doctor should make regular visits to CASU. (Section 5.8 paragraph 12)

36. CASU staff should be more consistent in informing the Board of prisoners located on the units. (Section 5.8 paragraph 14).

Visits

37. Provision for visitors to make bookings on-line should be given priority. (Section 6.2 paragraph 2)

38. The prison should give consideration to child free visits where resources allow. (Section 6.2. paragraph 6)

Trends

39. Staff sick levels remain unacceptably high and the Prison needs to carefully manage the situation to ensure it does not impact on prisoner safety and welfare. (Section 6.7 paragraph 11)

40. The prison needs to monitor the use of force figures which were showing an upward trend towards the end of the reporting year. (Section 6.7 paragraph 18)

Section 5

5.1 Equality and Inclusion

1. The Board believes that Senior Management remains fully committed to the equitable treatment of all prisoners, adhering to all relevant policies and doing everything possible to make prisoners feel safe and respected, ensuring access to regimes and facilities equally.

2. A committed Diversity Manager produces regular reports and the Senior Management Team discuss equality and diversity monitoring each month, looking at data, impact on assessment and prisoner concerns. The recent Inspection report recommended “that equality and diversity work should be informed by a needs analysis and Discrimination Incident Reporting processes should be freely available to prisoners in all residential areas, and subject to external scrutiny”.

3. Care UK initiatives on health checks for prisoners include Well Man Clinics, and it has come to the Board’s attention that problems are encountered by prisoners, over the age of 60 who are entitled to take part in the Bowel Screening Programme. There are a number of prisoners who are not aware of their NHS number, do not have a previous GP and/or a regular/previous address (homeless) without which it would appear they cannot access this Programme. The issue is currently being investigated by prison staff but the Board wish to draw attention to this as a matter of urgency so that prisoners in this category receive equal treatment with over 60’s generally.

Training

4. Staff receive appropriate equality and inclusion training via the “Challenge it, Change it” course to enable them to carry out their statutory responsibilities.

5. An up to date Diversity and Race Information file is kept on each houseblock which includes current policies and procedures on what HMP Northumberland expects from both staff and prisoners.

6. Since the previous IMB Acklington Annual Report the prison has involved outside agencies to support and help both staff and prisoners. Two Diversity Open Days are organised each year with local organizations invited into the prison to give help and support, and prisoners views and opinions are sought throughout the year via group forums and surveys.

Complaints

7. The IMB is satisfied that all complaints are fully investigated and appropriate action taken. Prisoners, visitors and staff are made aware of the system for reporting incidents of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and staff are also made aware of their responsibilities in responding appropriately to such incidents. Complaint forms are available in all areas of the prison, with envelopes to ensure privacy.

Older Prisoners and Prisoners with Disabilities

8. Merger of the two establishments has meant that HMP Northumberland has mixed accommodation originally designed for young offenders and juveniles as well as adults who, in the main were active and physically fit. The prison now accommodates adults only with a steady rise in the number of older prisoners and, mainly as a result of the ageing process, those with disabilities. HMIP noted that ‘the prison needed to be more proactive about the wellbeing of older prisoners and those identified as disabled’. The

Board feel that although some work has been done in this area, it is important to assess the longer term needs of this group as it is likely they will become more dependent as they age and particularly if sentences become longer.

9. At the end of this reporting year there were 213 prisoners over the age of 50, the oldest being 84.

<i>Age range</i>	<i>No.</i>
50-59 years	114
60-69 years	76
70+ years	23

10. Most of the older prisoners have been re-located to Houseblock 14 to allow them easier access to Healthcare facilities. There are regular Older Prisoner meetings but the Board have discovered that not all older men were aware of them.

11. There are some excellent, spacious adapted cells for men with disabilities in the newer houseblocks on the Acklington site and currently one adapted cell on the Castington site. Lifts and ramps have been installed to allow greater access to most areas of the prison and prisoner carers have been trained and are now employed to push wheelchairs.

12. In a recent survey undertaken by HM Inspector of Prisons approximately a fifth of prisoners indicated that they considered they had a disability, at the time, this was more than double the number identified by the prison. Twenty-four per cent of the prisoners said that they had mental health problems. There is currently no screening for “hidden” disabilities such as dyslexia and prisoners who considered themselves to have a disability were significantly more negative about their experiences at the prison than those who considered themselves non-disabled.

Gender Dysphoria

13. A Prisoner Transgender Policy and Local Sexual Orientation Policy are both in place to support any prisoners who are in the process of acquiring a new gender.

14. A recent survey indicated 2% of prisoners consider themselves to be gay or bi-sexual and there are no issues with prisoners at HMP Northumberland. Bi monthly group meetings are scheduled on the Acklington site which prisoners value but are somewhat frustrated that meeting dates are inconsistent.

15. The prison works with a number of external voluntary and statutory agencies in order to support this complex work.

Foreign Nationals

16. There is a designated senior manager responsible for coordinating the work of the Foreign Nationals. At the end of 2012 there were 13 Foreign National prisoners accommodated. During the course of the year one Foreign National prisoner was notified he was to be deported and officials from the UK Border Agency (UKBA) attended the prison on an ad hoc basis to take this forward. There was little translated information for prisoners and interpretation services have been rarely used. It is concerning that not all Foreign National prisoners were aware of the availability of free phone calls and air-mail letters to help them maintain family contact. There were also no special visiting arrangements for families travelling to the UK from abroad. These

issues are currently being addressed by the Diversity Manager along with Senior Management.

17. Although there is provision to overcome language barriers this could be enhanced by the acquisition of a "Talking Pen", a device which can instantly translate pre-determined phrases in a variety of languages. The Board feel this would be of obvious benefit to staff working with Foreign Nationals and also to the prisoners themselves in developing the process of effective communication.

Gypsies and Travellers

18. There is a significant group of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller prisoners who are well supported by the Diversity Manager as well as a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Outreach Worker. Group support meetings commenced in May 2012 and are continuing.

War Veterans

19. The Veterans in Custody scheme is developing some good links with community based provision, e.g. the "About Turn" project provides an excellent support network. However, links with projects in other areas of the country were not well developed, causing difficulties in maintaining support for prisoners released to areas outside of Northumberland.

20. There are approximately 60 Veterans within the prison and plans to hold a Veterans in Custody Open Day some time during 2013 will involve relevant organizations i.e. Royal British Legion, SAFFA.

Strategy – 2012-2013

21. The Equality Action Plan includes the following objectives which are reviewed on a regular basis :

- 1 Disability – Prisoners
- 1(b) Disabled Members of Staff
- 2 Transexual/Transgender Prisoners
- 2(b) Transexual/Transgender Employees
- 3 Other Protected Characteristics (Prisoners)
- 3(b) Other Protected Characteristics (Staff)
- 4 Discrimination Incident Reporting
- 5 Monitoring

Black Minority Ethnic

22. There are 36 (3%) black and minority ethnic prisoners. Few tensions are evident between prisoners from this group and white prisoners. Arrangements to identify and monitor prisoners convicted of a current or previous racially aggravated offence, or of involvement in a racist incident are good with alerts put on to prisoners' case notes in order to inform staff.

Chaplaincy

23. The Chaplaincy Team works extremely well with staff, prisoners and management in meeting the religious needs of all faiths. They provide pastoral support to both prisoners and staff as well as carrying out faith based services.

24. There are currently three full-time ministers within the Chaplaincy Service – Free Church, Methodist, Catholic and an Anglican minister who works 10 hours per week.

25. Chaplaincy have lost two full-time ministers throughout the course of this year who have not been replaced. The Imam works part-time and all other religions are catered for. Where a death in custody occurs, Chaplaincy are particularly involved and relatives are also offered their services if required.

26. The Chaplaincy respond to applications within 24 hours, and although they would like to introduce new services they are significantly restricted due to shortage of staff.

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

Operational Issues

1. On 1st August 2012 the Manchester College retained the OLASS contract and the chosen provider for HMP Northumberland as well as at the other 6 North East prisons. This resulted in stability for staff and learners until 2015. The curriculum provides opportunities for nationally recognised accreditation. It is delivered on both sites of the prison, in and out of the scope of the OLASS Contract. This is reviewed through the year via a Curriculum Review which incorporates Manchester College, Prison and NOMS

2. "In Scope Opportunities" throughout the year included:-

- Construction Skills
- Trowel Trades
- Woodworking
- Painting and Decorating
- Maths
- English
- Business Enterprise
- Art
- IT
- Catering
- Hospitality
- Barbering

3. Personal and Social Development was embedded in all activities with a strong focus on employability skills and the setting of ILP targets related to the development of social, emotional and behavioural development

4. The numbers accessing Literacy and Numeracy provision increased significantly through outreach work in prison industries and the introduction of Functional Skills Workshops for in-scope vocational learners. A more effective activities allocation policy was devised in order to maximise efficiency and ensure that learning was aligned to the requirements of sentence planning and career aspiration of learners

5. ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) provision was been scaled down in response to a significant reduction in need, following a central initiative to relocate Foreign National prisoners to a single location.

6. Art provision was transferred to a design techniques qualification which is linked to employer required skills.

Personal and Social Development and Interaction

7. Instigated in 2011, this area has continued to be developed during 2012 and has been incorporated into all learning areas with evidence recorded on ILPs. Progression Awards have been developed with a strong focus on employability and learners are encouraged to develop independence in learning by recognising their own achievements and progression.

8. The Progression Awards are to be replaced with Personal Employability Achievement and Reflection for Learning (PEARL), providing a stronger link to the employment needs of learners. Open University courses are supported for all eligible prisoners

9. “Out of Scope” Opportunities

Several initiatives were developed to promote reading to all prisoners :

- Creative Writing Workshops led by professional writers in residence now exist on both sites
- The “Toe by Toe” Reading Scheme continues to promote learning opportunities beyond the classroom though mentors do outnumber learners.
- The appointment and training of inclusion champions will enable the implementation of a system to identify the need for additional learning support.

10. The Education Managers believe (and IMB would support) that the efficiency gains resulting from sharing the strengths and best practice of the merged sites will have positive impacts upon learning for prisoners

Ofsted Inspection

11. In June 2012 Ofsted stated that “There was a clear strategic vision on well developed plans for future developments of learning and skills. Operationally, Education, very good and well managed.”

Comments included:-

- “Good skills developed and demonstrated in many areas
- Good, strong teaching and learning and high expectations of learners
- Good standards of work across curriculum and development of employability skills
- Applaud prisoners’ attitude to work, responsibility of learning and ownership.
- Very good peer mentoring support
- Quality of accommodation was good and well maintained
- High achievement rates on many courses and outstanding on some.
- Extremely safe environment, friendly learners and received positive feedback”.

12. The IMB considers that the Education, Learning and Skills Department is functioning at a very effective level, however, the merger has resulted in a change of provision for some learners and the effects of this on results may need to be monitored.

13. There is also some concern regarding the time it takes to move prisoners from the houseblocks to Education – resulting in a loss of teaching and learning time.

Library

14. An application system allows access to the Library for any prisoner, regardless of whether or not they are engaged in education. Time-tabled Library access is also promoted on both the Acklington and Castington sites.

5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health

1. Healthcare is commissioned by The North East Offender Health Care Unit (NEOHCU) and the service provider is CareUK. The IMB have no input or relationship with NEOHCU and it is their responsibility as Commissioners to ensure that their contract with the service provider is fit for purpose and satisfactorily implemented.

2. Prisoners experienced long waits in surgeries before and after treatment as well as congested waiting rooms. This may be down to prison operational problems but patients often waited for over an hour in Healthcare before they were seen by a practitioner. This has been highlighted by prison staff as well as HM Inspector of Prisons but the problem still exists.

3. Waiting rooms on the Acklington site are particularly uncongenial with no evidence of health promotion.

4. There appears to be continued problems with bowel cancer screening for patients who are required to provide NHS numbers before tests can take place. Many prisoners do not appear to have this information and are therefore unable to be screened. This has become a Diversity issue as prisoners are not receiving the attention they would were they on the 'outside'. The IMB are concerned that no organization has taken ownership of this problem.

5. The Board are pleased to note additional nurse capacity to run anti-smoking programmes. There is often a time lag before prisoners are enrolled, which can be very frustrating for them. The Board note a proposal to have a smoke-free prison and are interested to see how this develops.

6. CareUK is attempting to reduce the cost of bed watches. These are also extremely expensive for the prison service. HMP Northumberland is remote being the most northerly prison in England, and the nearest prison in-patient facility is at Holme House some 60 miles away. There were in-patient facilities on the Castington site when young people occupied the establishment and the physical cells are still there.

7. The Board are aware of major concerns from patients accessing dental treatment. The main service provider for dentistry is Weymouth Dental and although extra sessions have been provided in an attempt to resolve this, at the time of writing, they are about to come to an end. The NEOHCU have a responsibility to commission adequate dental services as highlighted by HM Inspectorate and the Board are concerned that if these extra sessions are dropped then demand will not be adequately met.

8. Mental Health staff within the prison are employed by Northumberland, Tyne & Wear Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

9. The Board would wish to highlight, again, the concern raised in the last IMB Acklington annual report, that a contracted Counselling Service, which ceased a year ago, has not been recommissioned. The Counsellors have given their services voluntarily but this is not guaranteed.

Complaints

10. Care UK have their own Healthcare complaints system and the IMB refer complainants to that system if appropriate, advising of the services of ICAS

(Independent Complaints Advisory Service) whose staff can visit the prison and assist with complaints at the invitation of an individual prisoner. Monthly statistics are passed to the Board via the member with Special Responsibility for Healthcare.

Physical Education

11. The Physical Education Department continues to make a significant contribution to the well-being and support of prisoners and prison staff.

12. One manager plus 14 staff oversee a number of specific sessions with prisoners.

13. As part of their Induction, all prisoners attend the gym for mandatory lifting and handling instruction plus First Aid awareness training.

14. A Sports Clinic includes an educative health role and is offered weekly to those who have mental health, drug or alcohol addiction issues. This Clinic was recently re-named in order to provide a psychologically positive outlook for those prisoners involved.

15. Remedial physical education is offered in the afternoon for those prisoners not required for work that day and sessions are made available for the unemployed.

16. The Gymnasium facilities are made available to prison staff at lunchtimes as they now have to maintain a physical fitness level which is verified on a yearly basis.

17. To ensure prisoners who are meaningfully employed are not disadvantaged, sessions are organised at 4pm to enable them to visit the gym after work. This enables incentivised prisoners to continue to fit physical education into their prison-based regimes.

18. The P.E. Department is open every day including 9.00am – 4.00pm at weekends. Occupying 3 gyms (2 Acklington site and 1 Castington site) it plays a major positive part in the lives of prisoners.

19. 62% of all prisoners attend the P.E. Department resulting in between 3,500 – 4,000 attendances each week.

20. There is an emphasis on Re-settlement in the provision of a 12 week course which fosters potential employability links to the labour market in the North East and the opportunity to achieve qualifications to NVQ Levels 1/2 to facilitate this.

21. Close links are maintained with the Offender Management Programmes within the prison to support and sustain the work they take forward with individual prisoners.

22. There is a well-established football team in The Sunday League, with all games played on prison facilities.

23. Community-based initiatives are also taking place, linked to the Voluntary Agency Turning Point. This takes the form of the manager of the PE Department contributing to monthly Football/Sports sessions in the community where males with identified chaotic lifestyles (known to Turning Point and Probation Service) and where there is a strong possibility of them ending up in the criminal justice system and losing their liberty, are invited to attend in an endeavour to offer them a positive alternative. This initiative is at

an embryonic stage, but the first session was very successful and it is anticipated will continue into the future.

24. The P.E. Department has again been nominated for a Criminal Justice “Team of the Year Performance Recognition Award” which they achieved in 2010/11.

25. As with other areas in HMP Northumberland, the current privatisation process led to some reduced morale for staff but now that the second stage has been reached, morale has increased and staff look forward to the future. The recent HM Inspector of Prisons report was very complimentary of the service offered by the P.E. Department and this is confirmed by the Board who recognise the significantly important role that this Department plays in supporting both prisoners and staff.

5.4 Purposeful Activity

Type and Range of Work and Numbers of Prisoners Involved (at 31.12.12)

Type and Range of work	No of places	Vacancies
Cleaning: Wings, Kitchens, Offices, Bio-fluids	150	none
Enterprise Assembly: electrical work	16	none
Engineering Shop: Welding, Fabrication, Turning	20	none
Laundry & Clothing Exchange: operating machinery, washing, processing, pressing, warehousing, distribution	28	1
Gardens: Market gardening, General Gardening and Wildlife	26	none 4 places reduced due to security risk.
Tailors: Sewing, Cutting, Batching, Packing, Ironing, Pressing	48 expected to increase by 16 places when new instructor in place Feb 2013	none
Waste Management & Recycling: Recycling mattresses, double glazing units, tables, lockers and waste from estate	50	2
Woodwork: Carpentry skills	12	6
Gym Orderlies	Acklington site 4 Castington site	

Suitability in Developing Skills

1. All employment encourages a pattern of working and co-operation with fellow workers.

2. No nationally recognised qualifications are available at present available for Gym orderlies, Clothing Exchange, Waste Management or Recycling. However Qualifications which are available to prisoners are:-

- BICSc (British Institute of Cleaning Science) – 4 levels and Diploma
- NVQ Guild of Cleaners and Launderers

- NPTC (National Proficiency Test Council)
 - Level 1 in Practical Horticulture
 - Level 2 in Machine Operations and Lantra
- NVQ Level 2 and Diploma in PMO (Performing Manufacturing Operations)
- Engineering Levels 1 to 3
- Woodwork NVQ Levels 1 and 2

Allocation of Work

3. During Induction prisoners are visited by the National Careers Service who advise them on the type of work that would be suitable for them. Vacancies are advertised on the houseblocks and prisoners must then complete an application form. At the end of the reporting year there were 136 vacancies, mostly in education and 266 prisoners waiting for work.

4. It would appear that work is rarely cancelled except in areas where there is only one specialist supervising, e.g. Woodwork. If that person is away from work due to sickness, then work is cancelled.

Reasons for Lack of Engagement by Prisoners

5. Some prisoners come from a culture of non-working families and they are harder to motivate. Prisoners may wish to work only in a specific area and there may be no vacancies. However, over the year, more prisoners started working as there were more motivating factors for them as well as rewards for positive involvements.

Conflict between Activities/Work

6. There has been much improvement in this area with workers receiving Methadone treatment in the mornings before going to work and Remedial Gym Sessions taking place first thing, so that the working day is less disrupted and prisoners who work are not disadvantaged. There are also gym sessions for workers after work (on the way back to their cells) and workers also get priority at the weekends.

Links between Work in Prison and On Release

7. Noticeboards in the Tailors' Shop advertise jobs so that the prisoners can see the opportunities available on release. Pertemps visit prisoners whose release is imminent, to help them with job applications, c.v.'s and finding work. Job Centre Plus assists and Job Club Employability session are held in the Education Department. Student Support Workers are also active in education.

Future Changes

8. A Bicycle Workshop is due to open in February 2013 providing 16 workplaces. In the longer term there are developments to include the refurbishment of wheelchairs. The refurbished bicycles will be sold cheaply through a UK charity. This is not a "money-making" venture but will allow prisoners to gain new skills from its inception.

9. A new initiative which will include a major restructure in how Education is delivered, by increasing the Day Release Scheme, is also planned to be introduced during 2013.

10. The amalgamation of the Waste Management and Recycling, for both sites, will see more jobs available, with "Big Hanna" and the bio-diesel processing being added. This should give an opportunity to make a wider range of qualifications available to prisoners. The amalgamation of the Clothing Exchange may also result in additional qualifications being made available.

5.5 Resettlement

1. HMP Northumberland's policy for the reduction in re-offending was introduced in 2012 and the Action Plan and pathways provide a good basis for monitoring progress.
2. The Reducing Re-offending Group brings together all key players involved in reducing re-offending in monthly meetings to take forward policy issues and monitor progress against the agreed Action Plan. The IMB has attended meetings and can report that good progress has been made throughout the year. Follow up actions are highlighted with names of responsible officers and target dates.
3. Offender Management Unit (OMU) plays a key role in these meetings and is now more closely integrated into resettlement procedures than previously. OMU also take the lead on three out of the seven pathways for reducing re-offending – Accommodation, Finance/Benefit and Debt, Children & Families.
4. Currently located on both sites, the OMU will merge in the Spring of 2013 and re-locate to the Castington site. This should make for a more unified approach across the prison. The Board have noted the comments made by the HMP Inspector in June 2012 and believe that progress is being made though it will probably take a further year for the benefits of this new way of working to be realised. A Quality Assurance Plan has been introduced and this has improved co-ordination and co-operation between officers/agencies.
5. The size of the merged site will pose problems in direct contact with prisoners and the Board are informed it is unlikely there will be an increase in staff in the foreseeable future. Increased electronic communication, video links and integration of the Parole Board closer to information points will assist, but much work still requires face to face contact if it is to be effective. Caseloads are still high and likely to remain so. Changes in the future will depend greatly on who is the preferred private provider for the prison and what areas of work they wish to expand.
6. In regard to the management of custodial sentences, OMU is carrying out the specification PSI14 of 2012 using a Case Management process with one officer allocated to each prisoner for the duration of their sentence. This aims to improve co-ordination of the 'offender's journey.' This system has been in operation at HMP Northumberland for some time and seems to be working with most prisoners aware of whom they should contact for assistance. Individual Officers carry a high caseload resulting in considerable pressure but despite this, morale in OMU remains high.
7. Work on the seven pathways for reducing re-offending appears to be going well and is leading to some interesting developments, particularly with the voluntary sector and agencies such as Safer Sunderland, Safer Northumberland and Safer Newcastle, in developing local public protection policies.
8. Efforts to introduce an extended working day throughout the prison proceeded well although at the end of the reporting year it was not in operation in all areas. The Board are aware there is still a lot of work to be done in generating new contracts and being able to offer employment to every prisoner.
9. The establishment of the Gateway Recovery Unit in October 2012 provided a good base for prisoners to become drug free prior to their release into the community.

10. The prison's effort to establish a Restorative Justice programme, was welcomed and since introduction, two prisoners have been through the process. Implementation of the process is time-consuming but it is felt there are good outcomes and a number of prisoners are waiting to take part.

11. Efforts to improve multi-agency working as part of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are leading to some interesting new developments and opportunities for a range of prisoners. However, many prisoners arrive at HMP Northumberland without an OASyS Assessment having been completed. This involves already overworked OMU staff having to spend additional time completing this essential risk assessment/reassessment.

12. The Board are of the opinion that prisoners are generally able to seek and access a range of advisory services when required but a lot of work in co-ordination/extending links goes on without prisoners being aware of what is being done on their behalf eg. Troubled Families Initiative and the re-establishment of informal Bereavement Counselling through Macmillan nurses.

13. The 'Listeners' and 'Insiders' offering assistance to vulnerable prisoners has benefited from three newly established co-location suites providing more opportunity to offer this service to prisoners. The loss of experienced members of staff in the Chaplaincy and the subsequent increased workload has had a major impact over past eighteen months but the Board are informed that a new member of Chaplaincy staff has recently been recruited so the situation should improve.

14. Five secondees, working in the OMU, provide a close working relationship between the prison and the Probation Service. The Head of OMU is also currently seconded from Probation, and an excellent initiative operates which dedicates two Prison Officers to work with offenders and their Probation Officers post release, in a monitoring and support role in both North and South Tyneside.

15. Significant improvements have been achieved during the year in developing ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) schemes for the 60+ Cat 'D' prisoners held at HMP Northumberland. This has involved ground works outside the prison, work at the Alnwick Garden and at Doxford Hall, with prisoners making their own way to and from work. The first town visit was held before Christmas to allow a prisoner to visit Newcastle and have a meal with his family before returning to the prison, and it is anticipated that more visits of this nature will follow. The scheme is in the early stages but the Board feel it is an area which should be given priority to ensure all Cat D prisoners have the opportunity to take part.

16. Initiatives in establishing Restorative Justice have also been introduced during the year with two prisoners going through the process with good outcomes and more waiting to take part. The Board recognises the investment in time required to develop these schemes but see it as valuable for those who wish to engage.

17. The problem of securing sufficient post-release accommodation continues but some progress has been made in via open days with local councils. Links to accommodation for prisoners released into the local area are also being found through the Chaplaincy and voluntary sector agencies.

18. The Board are delighted at the progress in helping prisoners establish/maintain family links, particularly with their children. Father and child visits and a Story Book Dads scheme have been established and fathers encouraged to help their children with school work over the summer holidays.

19. During the reporting year, there has been a large influx of prisoners from North West England whose families have difficulty in visiting HMP Northumberland, and this is causing considerable stress for prisoners. It is unlikely that this problem can be easily resolved given the lack of prison places in the north-west and the IMB continue to receive a considerable number of applications/queries in regard to transfers and visits. Over the year, and particularly in the latter months, the number of prisoners using the general complaints procedure in this matter substantially increased.

5.6 Residential Services (including Accommodation, canteen and Kitchens)

Accommodation

1. There are 14 Houseblocks spread over the prison site. Houseblocks 1- 5 and 8 - 10 are clean and the décor is satisfactory.
2. Houseblock 7 has a problem with paint flaking from the ceiling area but all areas are otherwise clean. This has been brought to the attention of senior management and making good is in hand.
3. Houseblocks 11,- 14 are in need of further refurbishment and at the time of writing, some work has been carried out on the shower units.
4. Asbestos has been found in wall linings on houseblocks 11 and 12 and the necessary precautions regarding this have been taken.
5. Houseblock 6 is a modular temporary unit approximately 12 years old. It is clean and the décor is satisfactory but has an ongoing problem with water leaks to windows and roof.
6. The Gateway Unit is a modern block, where cells and leisure facilities are to a high standard with good décor.

Canteen

7. The prison 'shop' is a central canteen, contracted out to DHL. A 'bagging system' operates where prisoners order goods from a defined 'facilities list' and these are issued once per week, currently on Fridays. The IEP Policy and preferred suppliers determine what prisoners can order/have in their possession and where goods can be sourced. Changes to suppliers often causes confusion although there are usually 'periods of grace' to allow prisoners to get used to the new lists/suppliers.

Kitchens

8. The planned merger of the kitchens has been put on hold until further notice. Environmental inspections from Local Authorities have culminated in the Kitchens gaining 5 star certification.
9. The IMB receives very few complaints about the food supplied and the kitchen/food quality are monitored weekly via visits to the kitchen, observing service at serveries and

food tasting. With an allowance of only £2.10p per head, per day, the Board feel the Kitchens provide a good choice and varied menu where all religious festivals and dietary needs are catered for.

10. Both Kitchens have a problem with reliability of food preparation equipment and the length of time taken to repair this equipment. e.g. ovens were out of commission on the Acklington site for several months. The Board are informed that maintenance and repair is handled on a national contract and feel that in such a large establishment with so many people to cater for, where food is of the utmost importance, more attention should be given to timely repair of such equipment.

Laundry

11. An area of concern for IMB, and the subject of several applications throughout the year, is that laundry machines frequently break down. Prisoners clothing is often being returned to them in a "wet" state. This could be that too many items are in the bags or more often, that drying time is insufficient. These facilities are essential to prisoners in their day to day living arrangements.

5.7 Safer Custody

1. Central to the settled and smooth running of the prison is the Safer Custody programme which aims to manage those prisoners who react to the pressures of prison life by self harm or by acts of violence towards other prisoners or staff. The programme aims to encourage an environment in which prisoners are given every opportunity to progress through the system or, at least, to complete their sentence without violent incident.

2. Efforts to co-ordinate work on Safer Custody within HMP Northumberland have improved within this year with regular monthly meetings held on both sites. Meetings are attended by relevant officers dealing with Violence Reduction, self-harm as well as officers with direct responsibility for Safer Custody so that issues can be discussed and a co-ordinated response achieved.

3. IMB members received a briefing on the new ACCT document (Version 5) and several members observed an ACCT training session for prison officers. The ACCT procedures seem to be working reasonably well with the number of ACCTs remaining fairly constant throughout the year. Current workloads, and sometimes the time of reviews to take place at weekends, make it difficult for Healthcare staff to attend reviews, though their contribution is often essential.

4. With the departure of Governor responsible for Safer Custody and ACCTs Officer, there is a small team of three staff to carry out this important area of work. In the light of the moves towards privatisation, it is unlikely that the senior posts will be filled in the foreseeable future. Meetings are organized regularly and accurate minutes disseminated.

5. Three co-location suites have been introduced during the year throughout the prison in houseblocks 1, 9 and 11 to allow prisoners privacy and space to talk to a 'Listener' or an 'Insider' and the Board consider this is a positive step. 'Listeners' and 'Insiders' are selected prisoners who are trained by The Samaritans and provide a valuable service to 'first night' or prisoners who feel vulnerable and/or the need to talk. There are currently

22 Listeners on the Acklington site and 4 on the Castington site, as well as 2 Insiders on both sites. All prisoners are given information at their induction, on how to contact use this service.

6. The prison's Anti-Bullying policy is in process of being updated to include three stages instead of the present two. Stage 3 will involve the perpetrator being moved and placed in the CASU, although it is recognised that this could have implications and continued problems for the person subjected to bullying. This policy is being closely monitored by the prison in order to achieve the right balance.

7. Whilst prisoners do not attend Safer Custody Meetings, Safer Custody issues are discussed at Prisoner Consultative Committees with information given on trends and issues surrounding violence, bullying and self-harm. Prisoners are able to highlight areas of concern, followed up by officers and reported back to the next meeting.

8. During the reporting year, there have been four deaths in custody, two of which were suicides and the remaining two by natural causes. IMB members have attended meetings at the prison when a death in custody has occurred and have also attended inquests. There is currently a long delay in arranging inquests dating back to 2008-9 with seven inquests outstanding. In regard to the past two inquests, no recommendations were made by the Coroner in respect of prison procedures, although there were recommendations for action in respect of Healthcare.

9. The IMB wish to particularly highlight as a model of good practice, the work of the Family Liaison Officer/Death in Custody Liaison Officer (FLO) at HMP Northumberland. This officer has received a number of commendations for the thoroughness of her work. and has put together a checklist of information to be obtained as soon as death in custody occurs, along with a briefcase containing all the relevant documents. This enables speedy response and immediate attendance with the appropriate information to hand. The IMB has confidence in the FLO's ability to respond compassionately, efficiently and effectively to resolve the complex matters often resulting from such incidents.

5.8 Care and Separation (CASU)

1. The current reporting period is characterised by the impact of the political decisions to merge Castington and Acklington prisons and the market testing which has resulted in imminent privatisation of the new establishment. The resulting impact on the morale of staff to these decisions has been significant.

2. The formal merger of the two prisons has allowed a review of the CASU resource and the Board anticipate greater consistency in the prison's approach to the management of the prisoners located in the CASU facilities. The Board anticipates that the introduction of a manager of the CASU will aid this process. Perhaps inevitably at this stage of change, there remain issues in relation to the cross deployment of staff between the old Castington and Acklington sites and this has perhaps resulted in slower than hoped for progress towards greater consistency in approach.

3. Prior to the decision to privatise the prison, plans were formulated to create a single, refurbished CASU that would result in a reduced number of places from 30 to 18. In order to manage the impact of this, in October 2012 the Adjudication tariffs were

amended and work is ongoing in terms of reviewing the criteria for the use of the reduced number of bed places. This momentum has been compromised somewhat pending the announcement of the private company that will manage the establishment in future.

4. Any confirmed decision to reduce the number of available bed spaces will be a very important one for the prison as too great a reduction in resource could have significant repercussions for the operation of the establishment.

5. Associated with this review there is an acknowledgement that the prison needs a creative and flexible response to those prisoners going into debt on main location and generally restrict or limit the occasions when houseblock staff move prisoners to the CASU. There has also been concern expressed by the IMB regarding the problem of “long stayers” on the Unit and the care of prisoners with mental health issues.

6. Rostering of CASU staff remains problematic. This impacts on consistency within the CASU regime.

7. In the last Annual Report for Acklington, the IMB highlighted practical problems in relation to the timing of reviews with adequate notice for IMB representation. Although the allocated time for such reviews is in place there is still a need for greater consistency in approach and further improvement could be made – contingent upon staff availability. Review panels however have been found to be properly conducted with (usually) the requisite specialists in attendance, the necessary information available, and the opportunity for the prisoner to make the correct representations.

9. Adjudications were found to be consistently, fairly and correctly conducted. The recent review of the Adjudication Tariff Guidelines includes reference to those cases which need to be referred to police, e.g. possession of mobile phones. Unfortunately, despite this being in place, prosecution rarely follows. An unintended consequence of this is to create a crime “hot spot” in mid-Northumberland.

10. The SMARG (Segregation, Monitoring and Review Group) chaired by the CASU Governor, now meets monthly following criticism by the Inspectorate. This allows management to be increasingly proactive in their approach to the management of prisoners located in the CASU. The success of the SMARG is contingent on representation from all relevant departments if all relevant information is to be shared. In this regard, the Board are of the opinion that Security Department contribution to these meetings needs to improve.

11. All assaults on staff and other prisoners are referred to police as part of the National Violence Reduction measure. Liaison with Northumbria Police is good in this and other regards

12. Another area for ongoing concern is in relation to the attendance of the doctor at the CASU. An audit in July highlighted this as being an issue on several occasions and in August the doctor failed to attend the CASU on two occasions.

13. Paperwork in the unit including daily log, segregation history sheets, initial segregation, health screens and open ACCT/ACDT forms have all been found to comply with the prescribed directives and are inspected regularly on all IMB visits to the unit.

14. There have been concerns about the IMB being informed within 24 hours of prisoners moving to the Segregation Unit and the clear procedures the Board has put in place have been highlighted on a number of occasions. However it has been found that CASU staff are not consistent in following these, although at the time of writing, some improvement has been noted.

Section 6

6.1 Visitors Centre

North Eastern Prison After Care Society (NEPACS)

1. NEPACS is an organisation that looks after all those visiting HMP Northumberland both as family and those visiting on a professional basis. The organisation consists of 6 paid staff and some 10 volunteers. Their duties include managing and working in the Visits Centre, the Prison Visits Areas, tea bars, play areas, family liaisons and on various projects. Their duties also include representing NEPACS at prisoner induction classes. NEPACS hold quarterly meetings to which the IMB are invited.

Family Support

2. NEPACS funds one Family Support worker who answers questions from families who may have problems, taking forward any issues that families may be experiencing, such as child bullying and mental health issues. She is the interface between prisoners and their families.

3. A volunteer who has completed over 40 years with NEPACS achieved a Reducing Re-offending Award, and NEPACS also won the Rhyme Challenge for Category C Prisons – this is a national competition run in prisons by the Book Trust and PACT/KIDS VIP to encourage young children to read. Children made nursery rhyme story sacks which included a poem and a matching knitted character. The IMB congratulate NEPACS on these two awards.

4. The Board recognises the valuable work of NEPACS and supports their interest to become involved in Parenting Courses should they re-commence at HMP Northumberland.

5. Additionally, NEPACS staff feel they could make a contribution to the work of the recently established Drug Recovery Unit by talking to prisoners who are drug users, explaining the impact that their habit has on their families.

6.2 Visits

1. In addition to the normal visits programme, five Family Day and seven Father and Child visits took place during the reporting year.

Booking Visits

2. Visits are booked by telephone. At the time of writing there is only one line into the prison for visitors to use and this line is only manned during office hours. Very long delays are experienced by visitors before they can get through to book a visit. This is hugely frustrating for all concerned. More recently, legal visits can, for the first time, be made on line. The IMB are informed that this facility will be offered to all visitors soon and would encourage its early implementation.

Father and Child Visits

3. These visits allow eligible fathers to spend time with their children without mum's presence. One child, when asked what she thought of the experience said, "It's more better without mum, I've got dad all to myself."

Family Day Visits,

4. These allow families to socialise in a more relaxed way e.g. visiting the gym where the staff set up activities in which the whole family can take part. The Board consider time spent by PE Department staff in organising these activities is very well spent. One child was heard to say "It was like going on a big family holiday."

Bespoke Visits for Children with Special Needs.

5. Currently, arrangements are made for one child who suffers from cerebral palsy, and finds it difficult to cope with other children about, to see his father without other families being present. The father is allowed to wear non-prison clothing during the visits and this facility has the potential to be expanded if the need should arise.

Child Free Visits.

6. Although such visits do not currently take place, the possibility of such visits is being looked at and the Board feel given the diverse population of HMP Northumberland, and the increasing number of 'older prisoners', the matter should be given priority as some prisoners, especially older ones would value such arrangements.

7. At the time of writing, the visits hall on the Castington site has been extended and this is now the only visits area. This has necessitated some changes to visiting regimes and due to the size of the site, careful planning to ensure prisoners are able to maximise their visit time. Additionally, an application to the Board brought attention to the fact that there is not now a physical barrier between mains and VP visitors although the Board are informed this is the general practice across the estate.

6.3 Drugs and Mobile Phones

1. These continue to enter the prison, but staff vigilance has led to significant finds throughout the year and the planned provision of netting on the fence should help prevent packages entering the establishment by that method.

6.4 Escorts

1. With an elderly population and no hospital in-patient facility, a considerable amount of staff time is still taken up in escorting prisoners to Wansbeck General Hospital. Although the cost is picked up by the NHS, it remains a matter of concern as it reduces available staffing in the prison at a time when sick levels are unacceptably high.

6.5 Awards

1. Throughout the reporting year, staff at HMP Northumberland have been recognised for their commitment and nominated or received awards both internally and externally.

2. A number of people from a variety of departments have been commended for excellence and/or initiative in their work on Reducing Re-offending. These include staff who have :

- set up and championed ROTL work placements for prisoners
- supported the allocation of prisoners into appropriate activity
- contributed to the children and families pathway through work in Visits.
- supported the children and families pathway via work in NEPACS
- supported the children and families pathway via visits bookings
- work in the area of public protection
- work on Restorative Justice
- supported prisoners in the delivery of employability skills
- championed prisoners and promoting the work they do in the gardens

In addition, two members of staff were successful at the Area Awards in :

- Reducing Re-offending
- Diversity and Equality

Whilst three others were runners-up in the categories for :

- Safer Custody
- Staff Support
- Lifetime Achievement

A members of NEPACS has been short-listed for the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) Awards and the ATOS Advisor received a national ATOS Award in recognition of her contribution to HMP Northumberland.

6.6 Incentive and Earned Privileges

1. The Board feel that the IEP scheme works well and is effective. Prisoners earning privileges can have goods in their possession which gives them a sense of normality and e.g. in-cell TV has a knock-on effect in staff savings because prisoners are occupied, and re thinking twice' about offending and losing privileges.

2. Applications to the IMB re IEP are usually around the facilities list and what can and cannot be purchased or held in possession. Such complaints are usually the result of misunderstanding, especially when lists are changed, but The Board feel the rules are clear. However, many prisoners are confused by the fact that due to the autonomy of the IEP scheme across the estate, they can have something in one prison but not in another.

3. The IEP Policy at Northumberland has recently been reviewed and updated. Some areas have been adjusted so staff and managers find it easier to operate and prisoners more able to understand.

4. The biggest impact from this process has been whereby a prisoners can be downgraded straight to basic regime if found guilty of a number of offences via the adjudication process. The changes were made so the IEP policy would run in tandem with the establishment 'Drug supply and Reduction Policy' so it has a bigger impact on individual prisoners.

5. The Board are informed that the prison receives very few appeals against downgrade decisions, and the policy gives a greater level of authority to the Senior Officers to manage prisoners via their staff.

6.7 Trends

The Board has the following observations to make on trends within HMP Northumberland.

Prison population

1. The prison has an operational capacity of 1,346. The population peaked at 1,325 (98% of capacity) in March / April and averaged 1,290 (96% of capacity) through December 2012.

2. During the merger of the two sites in September 780 prisoners swapped location. Total population reduced to an annual low of 1,186 in advance of this move, and has recovered since. By the end of the year the population had changed little compared to 1,278 at the start of the year.

3. The move itself went smoothly, but relatively large numbers of incoming transfers since the end of September have caused some short-term pressures on security and population management.

4. The proportion of Vulnerable Prisoners in HMP Northumberland stands at 36% of the population (486, compared to 456 on the last IMB report, an increase of 7%).

5. The proportion of prisoners from ethnic minorities has fallen from 5% to 4% during 2012, and remains very low compared to national figures (26% nationally). White British account for 95% of the population. Asian - the second largest group - accounts for 2% of the population (mainly of Indian and Pakistani background).

6. The number of foreign prisoners declined during the first half of the year, but has risen since the re-location, reaching a maximum for the year at the end of 2012 with 13 foreign prisoners, across 12 different nationalities. However, this remains relatively low at 1% of the total prison population (13% nationally).

7. Throughout the year, an average of 51% of prisoners have been on Standard regime, 48% on Enhanced and 1% on Basic. The proportions have varied little through the year, except during September and October (through the move) when the proportion of prisoners on Enhanced Regime exceeded the numbers on Standard for two months.

8. The number of lifers has not changed since the last IMB report (48), the number of prisoners on IPP has fallen slightly (119 compared to 128 in 2011).

9. HM Inspector of prisons has identified that HMP Northumberland needs to be more proactive about the well-being of older prisoners and those identified as disabled. At the end of the reporting year, 92 prisoners were registered with a disability, of which 18 had more than one disability. This represents an increase of 15% over 80 prisoners with disability at the end of 2011.

10. The proportion of prisoners aged 55 and over in HMP Northumberland is 9% of the population (close to the national average). Although the long-term indication is for the proportion of older prisoners to rise, the figure of 124 at December 2012 does not show a significant increase over the 122 at the end of 2011. The oldest prisoner is currently aged 84 years.

Prison Performance

11. The measure of greatest concern on prison performance remains the ongoing issue of staff sickness. This was also recognised by the IMB as an issue in 2011, and the position has continued to deteriorate through 2012. The measure stood at 13.98 (November) against an annual target of 10.35.

12. The Board believe that the main contributory factor has been continuing uncertainty over the new contact procurement. It is therefore unlikely that any significant improvement in this figure will be seen until the contract is awarded, and the future direction becomes clear. Meanwhile the board are concerned that the shortage of available staff could impact on safety and prisoner welfare.

13. The Board acknowledge that the issue is well-recognised by the prison management team, which has put a number of initiatives in place to mitigate any impact, and to date we see no firm evidence that regime has been majorly affected.

14. The Boards other area of concern on prison performance is the Mandatory Drug Testing measure, which broadly tracked the annual target for the first half of the year but then began to deteriorate. This measure stood at 15.24% in August against a target of 17%, but by November the monthly figures were hitting 26%, while the annual total had risen beyond the target measure at 17.78%.

15. The Board are satisfied that the rise in the number of positive tests is partly the result of an increased drugs problem caused by relatively large numbers of incoming transfers since September 2012 (including many arriving at HMP Northumberland within 48 hours of conviction). It is also partly a side-effect of the measures that have been implemented recently to improve control over access to illicit drugs. This remains under scrutiny, but should prove to be a short-term issue.

16. Measures related to rehabilitation, education, employment and accommodation on release have been presented to the board through 2012, but as they have been broadly on target, they have not been highlighted as issues. However, we note that these are not areas of strength for HMP Northumberland in comparison to similar prisons. There have already been a number of new initiatives at HMP Northumberland in these areas, and the recent HMIP report highlighted that the prison's priorities must be to deliver on the work begun in resettlement, and to get more prisoners usefully occupied.

Prison security and prisoner welfare

17. In 2012 the prison handled an average of 172 adjudications each month, but the trend is downwards, having peaked at 305 in March.

18. From monthly statistics provided to the Board, use of force occurred 11 times per month on average. There were significant variations from month to month, but the Board note that the trend rose slowly, with the annual peak at 19 in October. Most other indicators of security and welfare show variations from month to month, but no underlying trend. (see *Diagram 4 below*.)

19. In 2012 the prison received an average of 192 prisoner complaints each month, with some variation from month to month. Over the second half of the year the monthly number of complaints rose from a low of 123 in June to a peak of 281 in October.

20. The total number of application forms received by the IMB during 2012 was 410. These included several forms containing more than one discrete subject. Counting each of these subjects separately, the total number of applications received was 419. (see *Table 1 below*.)

21. The monthly average was 35, with a low of 11 in May and a peak of 60 in November. This is an increase of 29% in the monthly average over the previous reporting period (27 per month over 2010-11 in HMP Acklington).

22. The underlying trend during 2012 is broadly in line with the rise in the number of complaints received by the prison. (see *Diagram 1 below*.)

23. Despite an increase in the number of applications, and a relatively low number of members with experience of dealing with them, 69% of applications received in 2012 were resolved within 7 days of submission, and fewer than 3% took longer than 28 days to fully resolve.

24. During 2012 applications were raised by 242 different prisoners, with 162 raising a single application and five 'serial complainers' (each submitting more than 5 applications) account for 15% of the total.

25. Issues with transfers have remained as the most common category for IMB applications this year, (see *Diagram 2 and 2a below*), although the number has not increased as quickly as the total number of applications, so, in reality, the proportion of applications related to transfers has declined from 19% in 2011, to 16% in 2012.

26. Healthcare was the second most common category in 2011, the proportion of these applications has fallen, from 17% of all applications in 2011 to 9% in 2012 (5th most common issue). The Board recognise this drop is due to Healthcare developing their own complaints system.

27. On the other hand, it is of concern that the monthly number of applications related to staff and prisoner issues (including bullying) shown in Table 1 below, has almost doubled, rising from 9% to 16% of all applications, and becoming the 2nd most common category in 2012.

28. The number of applications related to family and visits has also risen significantly (from 7% to 13% of all applications).

29. However, the number of applications related to property has remained stable – falling from 15% of the total in 2011 to 11% in 2012. This group is principally concerned with property issues within HMP Northumberland.

Table 1 Applications to the Board

Comparison with previous years is with figures from HMP Acklington as that was the establishment which held the comparable prisoner group.

2010/2011 figures are for a 17 month reporting period covering the end of IMB Acklington's normal reporting year up until merger.

Code	Subject	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11 NB 17 months	2010/11 month avg	2012/13
A	Accommodation	12	16	12	0.7	17
B	Adjudications	8	9	1	0.05	7
C	Diversity Related	18	4	19	1.1	10
D	Education/Employment Training	20	25	34	2	30
E1	Family/Visits	2	4	31	1.8	53
E2*	Finance/Pay					14
F	Food/Kitchen related	3	2	6	0.35	6
G	Health Related	46	40	76	4.5	42
H1	Property (in HMP Northumberland)	15	25	67	3.9	37
H2*	Property (during transfer/ in another establishment)					10
H3*	Canteen facilities, catalogue shopping Argos					12
I	Sentence Related	48	35	23	1.35	29
J	Staff/Prisoner/related	12	11	43	2.5	67
K	Transfers	45	40	87	5.1	68
L	Miscellaneous	43	30	58	3.4	17
	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	287	241	457 (324) <small>(12 months)</small>		419
	Monthly average	24	20	27		35

* Although part of the overall total, E2, H2 and H3 were not separately accounted for in previous years

DIAGRAM 1

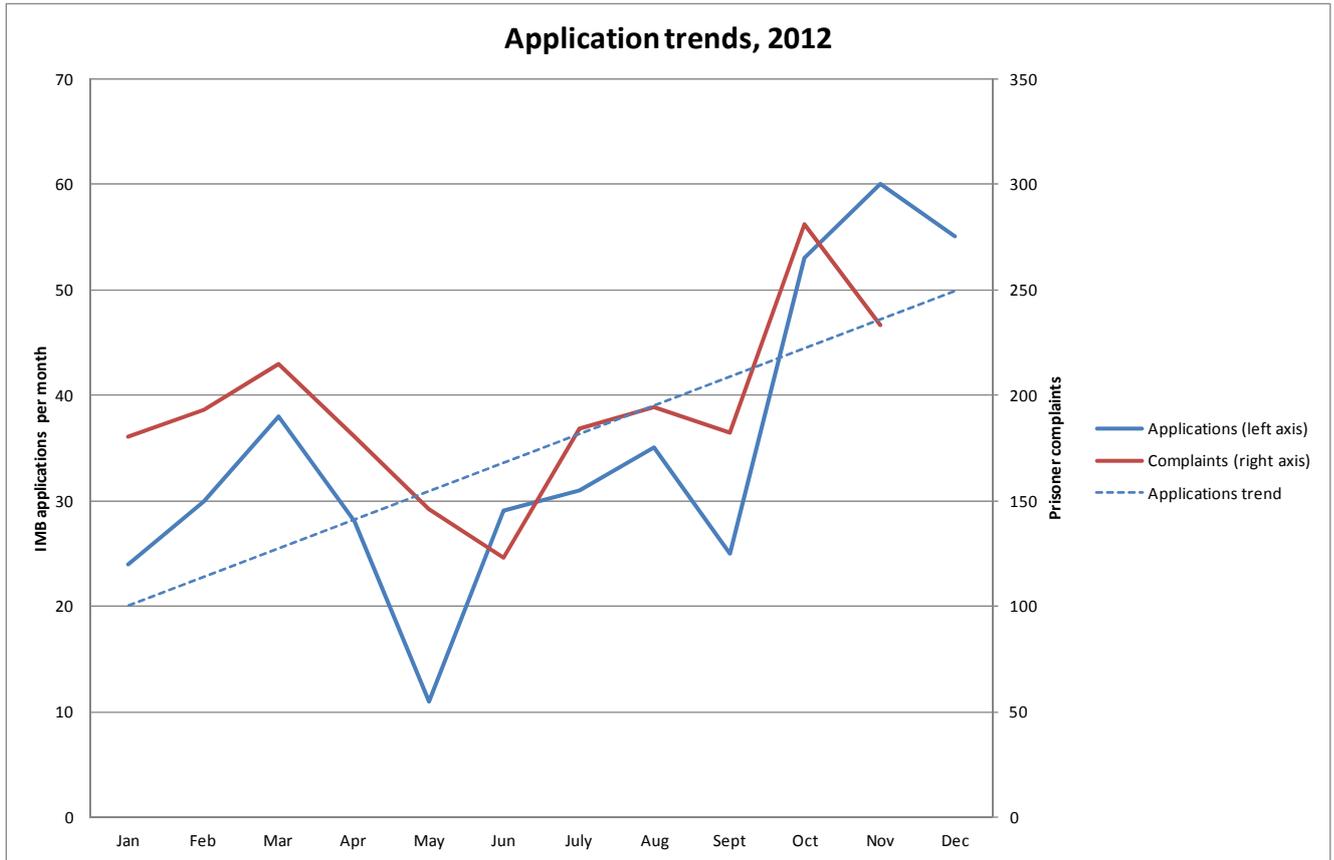


DIAGRAM 2

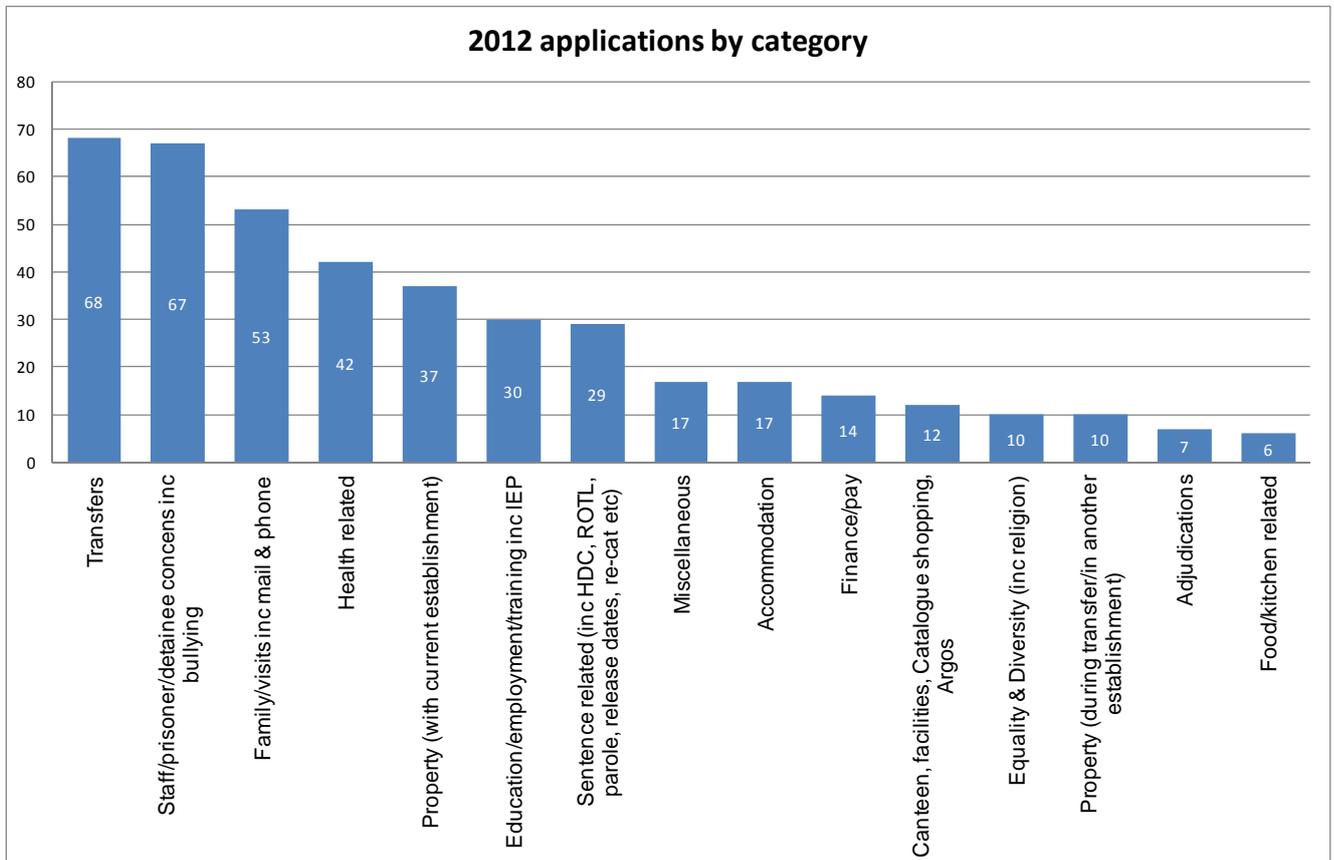


DIAGRAM 2A

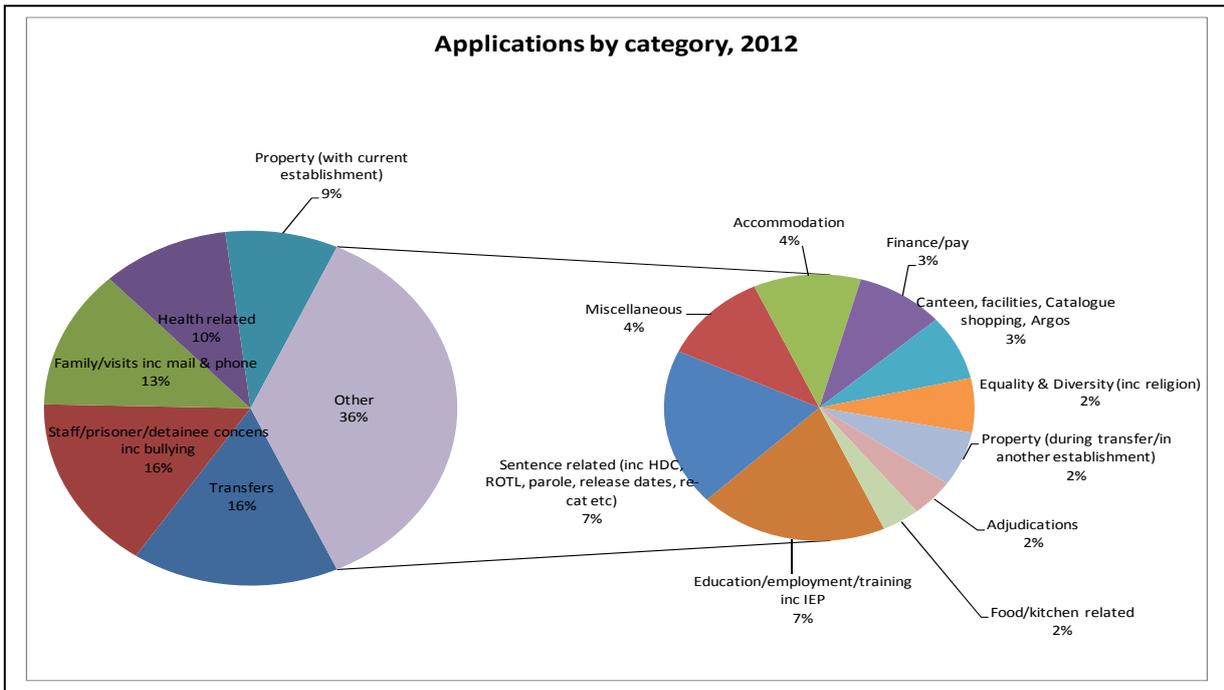


DIAGRAM 3

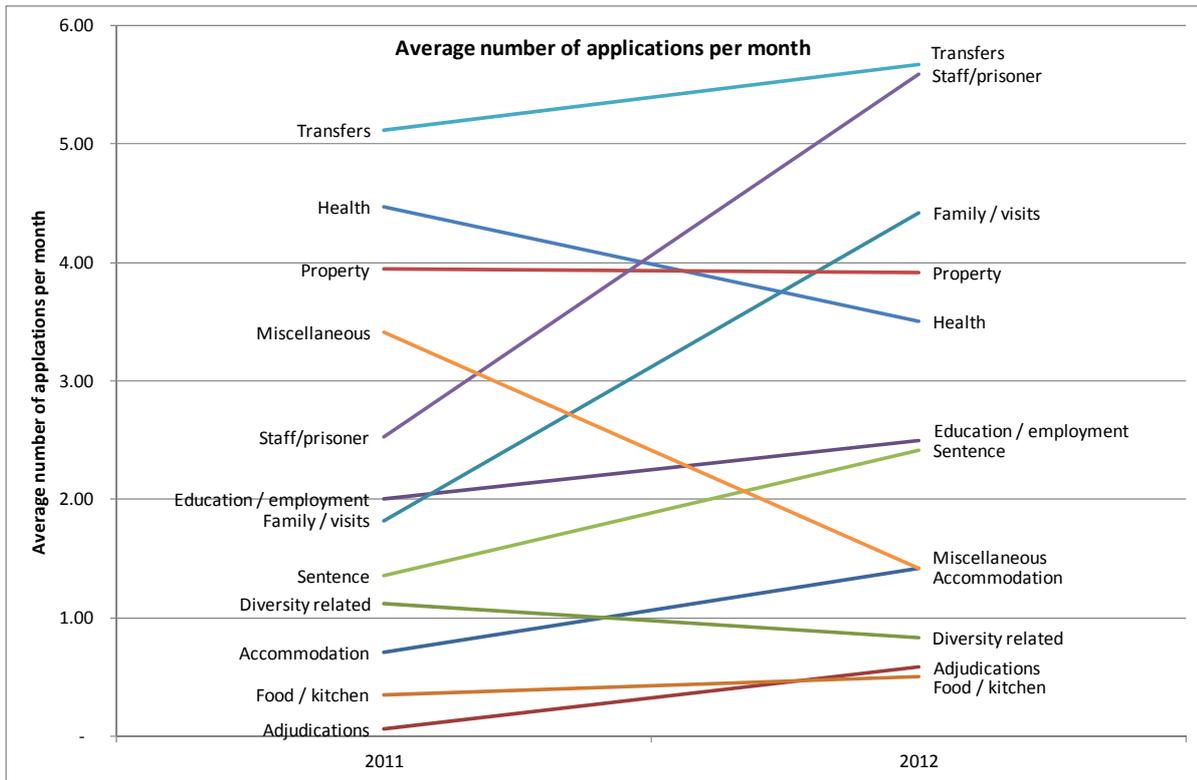
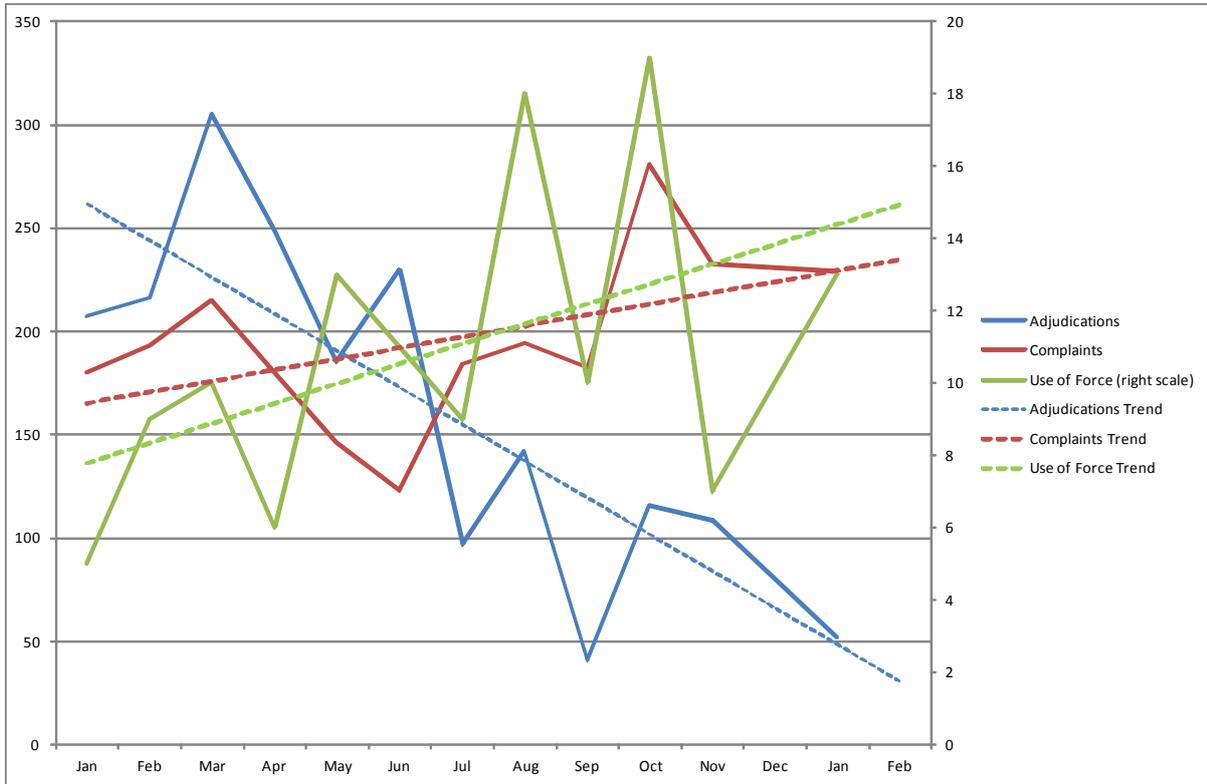


DIAGRAM 4



Section 7

THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

Rota and Other Visits

1. Members of the Board visit the prison every week in order to carry out their duties. The site is now extremely large and rotas have been designed to cover an area which is manageable in one visit. To this end, three separate rotas currently operate as well as a weekly panel dealing with applications.

2. Rotas 1 & 2 are carried out on the larger Acklington site.

- Rota 1 covers geographical and physical areas designated by the Board and is the member 'on call' should there be a Serious Incident.
- Rota 2 also covers the Acklington site but specifically visits CASU, Healthcare and observes food quality.

Rota 3 visits the smaller Castington site incorporating at least one visit to CASU as well as visiting Healthcare, observing food quality and a range of areas designated by the Board.

3. All visits are reported and issues of immediate concern addressed with appropriate departments. Rota reports are seen by the Governor and discussed in his presence at Board meetings.

4. Applications are dealt with by a weekly Applications Panel consisting of two Board members. There was a significant increase in the number of Applications during the year and due to size of the site, and the two-hour patrol state over the lunch period when it is very difficult to speak to staff or prisoners, on occasions, re-visits have been necessary in order to deal with the volume and complexity of applications.

5. All prisoner applications to the IMB are acknowledged on receipt and they are kept informed if there is to be any delay in response.

6. At the time of writing, the Board is reviewing its Rota and Applications Policy to ensure that the most efficient process is in place, making best use of the Boards time as the physical merger of the sites is proving challenging given the geographical size of the prison and the IMB member resource.

Segregation reviews

7. At the beginning of the reporting year, the Board often found that planned review days were changed at short notice and reviews held before members arrived. The situation became more stable with the 14-day reviews being held weekly, once on each site on designated days. Members attend if carrying out rota visit on the day of reviews but devoting resources to recruitment and training, rota visits and an increasing number of applications has led to a lower percentage of attendance than we had hoped to achieve. This will improve in next reporting year as probationary members take up full rota duties.

8. 72-hour reviews by their very nature are held when needed and currently, are unlikely to be attended by the IMB, unless they are carried out with the 14 day reviews when IMB are in attendance.

9. Whilst attendance at Segregation reviews has been limited by the Board's capacity, papers are reviewed, and we find that they are conducted to a consistently high standard. A member of the Board sees every prisoner in each of the Care and Separation units at least once per week .

Areas of Special Responsibility (AoSR)

10. Areas of special responsibility drawn up by the former Acklington Board were initially adopted by the Northumberland Board and as far as possible an experienced and a newer member were teamed up and asked to monitor and report on these areas.

11. At the time of writing, these AoSR's are being revised to become co-terminus with the production of the Annual Report and members rotated in turn, to cover a different AoSR to the previous year. Whilst providing some continuity of reporting as well as different and changing observations, this will also ensure each member of the Board gains in experience and knowledge.

Meetings

Establishment meetings

12. Board members observe establishment meetings throughout the year prioritising attendance where resources allow to attend SMARG, Adjudication Standardisation, Safer Custody, Equality and Inclusion, Health and Safety and the various Prisoner Consultative Committees. Members also attend establishment meetings which relate to their particular Area of Special Responsibility.

13. The Board does not attend every meeting in every department as it does not have the membership resource or the desire to do so, nor does it wish to become an agenda item. Members attend purely as observers, and report back to the Board. Minutes are sent to the Clerk and held on the shared computer drive for all to access.

Board Meetings

14. The monthly Board meeting is usually well-attended and the Governor or his Deputy gives a report. Thirty minutes before each meeting is devoted to 'Development Time' when invited internal and external speakers provide information on a variety of subjects. Throughout the reporting year, representatives from Human Resources, Manchester College, the Security Department, Offender Management Unit, CASU, Safer Custody, Complaints Clerk, Aquilla Way and the IMB National Council have all given presentations and talked about their work.

15. The Chair and/or the Vice-Chair attend the quarterly Area Chairs meeting facilitated by the National Council representative, and the Chair attended the Annual Regional Meeting with the National Council. In 2012, two members of the Board attended the IMB National Conference.

IMB Clerk

16. The IMB Clerk and Deputy Clerk worked for the former Acklington and Castington Boards respectively and together provide excellent support to the Board via a Service Level Agreement with the Governor. With a background in each of the individual establishments, their combined knowledge of the whole site has been particularly helpful to the Board as has their support throughout the merger and recruitment of new members.

IMB Secretariat

17. The IMB Secretariat has provided support throughout the year.

Communication

18. An increasing amount of information is communicated in electronic format both from the IMB Secretariat, the Prison Service and the establishment. In recognising this, although it is not the most user-friendly system, the Board uses Criminal Justice Secure Email (cjsm). The Board also has a 'private' folder on the establishment shared drive, where electronic records of meetings and reports etc are kept.

Recruitment

19. HMP Northumberland is located in a remote part of a very rural County and historically, the Board has had difficulty in recruitment. Despite this, 25 people responded to the Boards carefully planned and extensive recruitment campaign which began in November 2011 and which resulted in the appointment of 7 new members in June 2012, who then made up one third of the Board.

20. At the time of writing, these new members are three quarters of the way through their Probationary Year and are to be applauded for the way in which they and their mentors have so readily invested a great deal of time in embracing their training. All have played an active role in Board meetings, assisted with applications and have recently achieved a level where they are confident to go 'solo' on rota visits.

21. The Board is proud of this 100% retention and feel its profile has been raised within the establishment by the additional presence required during their recruitment and initial training, and in the contribution they are making on a day to day basis.

22. At the time of writing, a further period of recruitment is being undertaken. The Boards Recruitment Policy which was successfully adopted in the previous campaign has been used again to ensure that prospective candidates are well-informed and it is hoped that any new recruits will be as committed as the previous intake.

Succession Planning

23. Such is the nature of the work that it is difficult to get replacement officers but the Board recognise that succession planning must be an integral part of what it does in order to continue its valuable work. I am sure the Board at Northumberland is not alone in experiencing difficulty in people putting themselves forward to take on the roles of Chair, Vice-Chair and Board Development Officer at a time when the onus on such posts is ever increasing. Succession planning is high on the Boards agenda but losing experienced members and the fact that a high proportion of the current Board are members still in their probationary year makes this a particularly difficult task.

7.2 Board Statistics

Recommended Complement of Board Members	20	
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14	includes two probationers
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	17	includes 7 probationers
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	7	allowed one over complement in view of impending resignation
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	4	
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12	
Total number of visits to the Establishment	778	
Total number of segregation reviews held	<i>See section 7, para 7 of this report</i>	
Total number of segregation reviews attended		
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	January 2012	

7.3 Chair's Comments

1. After much speculation, the announcement that Acklington and Castington prisons were to merge, was finally made in October 2010. The merge of two very different establishments created a great deal of work for the prison and also for the respective Boards. The Acklington and Castington Boards were successfully merged and commenced monitoring as IMB HMP Northumberland on 1st January 2012.

2. It should not be under-estimated the amount of time and effort this 'coming together' involved for the Boards. Not only did members have to learn the 'geography' of both sites, the additional responsibility and commitment placed on all members throughout the process was enormous. At the same time as working together to agree new policies and procedures to effectively monitor what was to be a very large prison, each Board had to continue to monitor their own very different establishments at a time when those establishments themselves were going through the same merge process.

3. What is often forgotten is that Board members are all volunteers, and those volunteers are to be commended for carrying out their role conscientiously and with enthusiasm during some very difficult times. That two very different Boards came through a lengthy process emerging with energy and positivity as one entity is to their utmost credit.

5. Initial disappointment amongst staff at the rejection of the Public Sector bid has, in the opinion of the Board taken a positive turn, possibly at the prospect of job security. Change is something the management and staff at HMP Northumberland have embraced in good measure in recent years. A tremendous amount of time and effort was devoted to the bid process at the same time as the enormous amount of work involved in the arduous process of planning the merge of the two establishments. Staff, led by a strong management team, continued to approach their role positively and professionally, and the Board feel it is to their credit that things have gone as smoothly as they have. The Board were satisfied throughout that the focus remained on maintaining a safe, stable and secure environment across both sites.

6. The news in the autumn of 2012 that the Public Sector bid had not been successful once again left the establishment in a 'fog of uncertainty' as to who would manage the prison in future. Whilst this will not affect the Board's monitoring role, constant speculation does not enhance morale within the prison. Initial reaction has taken a positive turn and morale seems to be rising but, at the time of writing, this uncertainty remains with an announcement not due until April 2013.

7. The additional work involved in putting together the Public Sector bid when market testing was announced in the summer of 2011 could easily have led to the establishment 'taking it's eye off the ball'. The Board recognised at the time that it was also to the credit of the management and staff that this did not happen

8. In June 2012 HMIP recognised that their full and unannounced inspection "had taken place at a time of significant change and uncertainty for HMP Northumberland", and that "Castington and Acklington had integrated well and felt like one entity, which was a real achievement". The Inspectorate were also "impressed by the energetic and committed management team".

9. The Chair, Vice-Chair and Board Development Officer worked well together during the reporting year in the huge task of planning and implementing the recruitment and training of new members, at the same time taking their share of rota visits and allocated Areas of Special Responsibility. Sadly, and for a variety of reasons, a number of members left the Board during the reporting year. The contribution of those long-serving and experienced members is greatly missed.

11. Whilst the principal of Tenure is not in question, the uncertainty surrounding it and the way in which the final decision was brought to the Boards attention left long serving members feeling their was a lack of appreciation of their contribution over many years and was a contributory factor in one resignation.

12. The first year as IMB HMP Northumberland, has been a particularly busy and demanding one for the Board. I am grateful to, past and present members for their commitment, individual support, and team working, during and since the merger and particularly the former Chair of the Acklington Board for his support until retirement in October 2012. Although I submit this report, it is the work of the whole Board, co-ordinated by the Vice-Chair, with valuable contributions from experienced and newer members alike.

Mrs. Christine Fitch
IMB Chair HMP Northumberland
31st December 2012