



## **Annual Report**

Of the

# **Independent Monitoring Board**

For

# **HM Young Offenders Institution Reading**

**01 April 2010 to 31 March 2011**

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## **1. Executive summary**

This report covers the period from 01 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 and throughout the detailed sections there is mention of good work at Reading Prison, but the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) has also reported on an important issue that the Board believes should be addressed at Ministerial level (see section 2), and various other areas of concern throughout the report.

It should be recognised that the Governor and staff have continued to operate the establishment efficiently and humanely, whilst continually striving for improvement through good management and innovation. The Board particularly commends the reorganisation of the management structures within the Prison away from the traditional functional silo's to match outcomes. The Board is also pleased that last years' problems relating to Education and Manchester College are slowly beginning to improve.

Overall the Board is of the opinion that in 2010/11 the prisoners have in the main, continued to be provided with a safe, just and respectful environment and treated with equality and decency.

## **2. Issues**

### **a. For the Minister**

#### **i. Population management**

The Board continues to be concerned about the impact (highlighted throughout this report) of population churn. The board is mindful of the complex requirements of the Prison Service to maximise intake in other establishments but there is no doubt that these young prisoners suffer as a result of being unable to access/complete the services/rehabilitation programmes available at Reading. Effort and resource is invested in trying to provide an environment which will maximise the life chances of these young prisoners when they are released back into society and the Board is often at a loss to understand the lack of attention to this in the population management mandate.

Can the frequency, size and selection of cohorts to be transferred to other establishments be adjusted to increase the stability of Reading's prisoner population?

## **3. Areas that must be reported on**

### **a. Diversity**

i. Diversity remains a priority for the Prison. This is evidenced by regular senior management meetings and a comprehensive set of protocols and plans to educate prisoners, monitor the prison and deal effectively with any issue arising.

ii. The Board continues to commend the excellent Diversity Race Equality Action Team (DREAT) for their focus and thorough planning.

- iii. All staff are regularly trained on issues of diversity and have clear and continual access to resources to allow them to keep up to date with their training. This now includes an awareness package to deal with gay and transgender prisoners.
- iv. The mix of BME and other minority groups remains steady but with the steady churn of prisoners coming through the establishment the DREAT still manages to ensure that they have access to as wide a range of resources to fulfil their needs and the Board remains confident that the existing Action Plan and Impact Assessments put in place by the team afford prisoners the opportunity to have their demands met with the appropriate levels of effort. This is evidenced by the low levels of complaints of inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour. The Board believes that all complaints made are investigated with integrity and in a timely fashion.

**b. Learning and skills**

- i. There has been a slow but sure improvement in the provision of education by the Learning and Skills department this year. The disruption brought about by the transition of providers has subsided, but also, crucially, changes in the local and regional management structures of the Manchester College have led to increased and more meaningful levels of support to the department.
- ii. During the year, the Governor finally gained access to the Manchester College contract and the relationship has now evolved into a far more collaborative one with benefits beginning to be palpable.
- iii. Levels of staffing are now at approximately 75% of establishment whilst levels of staff sickness and turnover have diminished steadily over the year.
- iv. While still in need of much improvement, student attendance has been rising throughout the past year and recently has had an average per session of low to mid 30s. Albeit that this should be compared against the official capacity of 58 places.
- v. Vocational Skills Courses have continued to have some success, although it is regrettable that the painting and decorating workshop was not installed during the year. The shortfall in the figures above between the target and achieved hours in March 2011 can primarily be attributed to the absence of this course. Those such as Health and Safety and the recently installed course on Waste Management and Recycling are clearly linked to employment possibilities and it is very much to be welcomed that staff are involved in helping individuals to be taken on by local employers on release.
- vi. The curriculum offered has been developed and improved significantly over the year, but there is still a need to focus more on quality and prisoner needs.
- vii. The Separated Prisoners Unit has in the past had some problems with education as this was held within the unit itself. This was not an ideal learning environment, lacking computers, visual aids etc. During the last

year, however, a special room in Education has been made over for their use which is well-equipped and is a more appropriate classroom environment in which to hold lessons. The students now have individual lesson plans and levels of concentration and achievement appear to be rising significantly. It should be noted though that some sessions have had to be cancelled due to Prison Officer availability.

viii. Whilst Manchester College is operating more effectively in the teaching of those who attend educational classes, it has become very clear to the Board that there are two issues which are now holding back greater involvement in Learning and Skills activities:

1. The population churn creates a potential obstacle to starting a course as it may not be possible to complete at Reading.
2. To motivate and encourage prisoners to take part in education rather than their being left under-occupied in their cell. Post this reporting period, Manchester College has appointed a Student Support Worker to address this issue which the Board commends.

### **c. Healthcare and Mental Health**

- i. The Board continues to recognise that the Healthcare team has been pro-active in the provision of medical, mental health and dental care, together with general wellbeing and sex education. Generally appointments are being kept and there are minimal applications to the Board relating to healthcare issues.
- ii. There have been no prisoner applications to the IMB in regard to the provision of healthcare services this year.
- iii. Healthcare's attendance at Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) reviews has improved but is still not at satisfactory levels.
- iv. During the year, nursing cover on a 24 x 7 basis was introduced, primarily for the care of prisoners who are undergoing detoxification from drug or alcohol addiction.
- v. Even though the level of prisoners registered on the Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork process (ACCT) has on average declined, the Board believes that all vulnerable prisoners are being identified and suitably cared for. This will need to be continually monitored as the current low levels may not be representative of the demographics of the prison population.
- vi. It should be noted that the Board identified one occasion when the Prison and Healthcare were not in sync in regard to open ACCT's, which led to one prisoner not being correctly monitored for a period of time. Care should be taken that both organisations and their systems should be always in sync.
- vii. There were no recorded instances during the year, where the Board was concerned that a prisoner was seriously mentally ill and was not being handled suitable i.e. relocated to a mental hospital.

- viii. Healthcare is currently funded and managed directly by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Board has some concerns on how Healthcare will be provided in the future following the Government plans to abolish PCT's.

**d. Decency (including safer custody and violence reduction)**

- i. During the past year the Prison has initiated a Decency Strategy which encompasses Safer Custody. The Board is impressed with the scope and implementation of this, which sets the tone for the relationships of staff to prisoners, prisoners to staff, prisoner to prisoner, staff to staff. Of particular note is the new Decency Meeting which takes place weekly and replaces the previous High Dependency Meeting that concentrated only on prisoners giving cause for concern, in terms of suicide and self harm. The new meeting expands this to bullying and violence reduction and the Board feels the comprehensive nature keeps all parties well advised with good minutes, providing an excellent framework for monitoring duties. A slight concern is that attendance at this meeting has fallen away somewhat in recent times but this point is recognised and is being addressed by senior management.
- ii. The Safer Custody Group continues to provide an effective forum for managing this area and all measures of safer custody except complaints have shown a continuous improvement in recent months. The inclusion of prisoners who are active Samaritan trained Listener's provides valuable feedback to the group.
- iii. The benefit of the Listeners is recognised by all involved and another 8 prisoners are currently being trained. Unfortunately due to the high population churn the stability and continuity of this service is a constant challenge.
- iv. The introduction of a new ACCT document next year will necessitate a major training programme and management are aware that this will cause a backlog of training which will need to be managed.
- v. The new operation for first night and induction is running well and increases the scope and time of the induction that will allow the establishment to find out more about the prisoners and especially those at risk.
- vi. In regard to Violence Reduction, there have been significant issues with bullying during this reporting year. The establishment generally keeps a firm hand and, again, the inclusion of this issue in the weekly Decency Meeting places an important emphasis on the need to deal with this difficult and insidious side of prison life. As well as the obvious requirement of all officers to be vigilant, the cohesion of this area with a dedicated officer working closely with the safer custody team, in the Board's view keeps control on what could so easily become a major problem. Reading is a small establishment and splitting up bullies and their victims is not always easy geographically, so a strong, well coordinated approach really is key.
- vii. The inquest on the Death in Custody reported on in previous Annual Reports finally took place over four years after the death. Board

members attended and were impressed with all of those involved. The coroner was satisfied with the performance of the prison service and made no recommendations other than to Social Services and the need to pass on information. There are no further inquests pending at the present time.

- viii. The Board commends the introduction of a monthly Prisoner Consultative Meeting to be able to canvas and communicate to the Prisoners representatives about their concerns across a whole range of issues which the Board commends. However due to short duration stay at Reading (high prison churn) there is no stability in the membership and sometimes meetings become a discussion about individual personal concerns rather than a true reflection of the location that they represent.

**e. Segregated and Separated prisoners**

- i. The Board recognises the work done by the Segregation Unit in dealing with prisoners who need to be removed from normal wing location due mainly to breaches in discipline, disruptive behaviour and bullying.
- ii. The Unit's systems are robust and work well with the staff running a structured regime whereby the prisoners are treated decently and are given ample opportunity to address their behaviour. There is a constructive incentive system so prisoners have goals to aim for and can earn small privileges whilst on the unit. This prepares them well for return to the wings.
- iii. There are regular and compliant GOOD reviews which the Board make a priority to attend.
- iv. As part of it's regular rota visits, the Board will visit and speak to all separated prisoners at least twice a week throughout the year.
- v. However the Board is concerned that prisoners in the Segregation Unit do not appear to be offered education on a regular basis, resulting in prisoners having very little to occupy themselves, other than library books delivered on a regular basis and in some cases television.

## **4. Other areas**

**a. Alcohol and Drugs**

- i. Over 50% of Reading prisoners are found to have an alcohol or drug related issue and therefore it is key for them to quickly have a care related programme in place
- ii. During the reporting period the Board commends the improvements made in this area including:
  - 1. The induction screening process for alcohol and drugs programs are now consistently completed within 24 hours of arrival with a full assessment completed within 3 days
  - 2. The Integrated Drug Treatment Service ( IDTS ) went fully live in August 2010, and has together with the Counseling, Assessment,

Referral, Advise and Through care Scheme ( CARATS ) improved prisoner treatment.

3. The introduction of a process of monthly assessment of each case to ensure correct follow up focused (in line with Government policy) on recovery rather than harm reduction only. In addition given the short stay and churn of prisoners every effort is made to ensure a continuity of care with outside agencies or the next prison.

**b. Food, Kitchen and Canteen.**

- i. The manager and staff are to be commended for providing a healthy and wholesome menu each day with a choice of fresh fruit for a per capita cost of approx £2 per day. Menus are varied and always include halal and vegetarian choices.
- ii. Board members not only regularly observe the serving of meals but also at random sample the food and have always found it to be well cooked, varied and tasty.
- iii. Supplies for the kitchens are sourced from one specified wholesaler which provides a good quality service.
- iv. The kitchen also offers the opportunity to prisoners of a four month N.V.Q. level 1 cookery course. Unfortunately due to the high level of population churn the prisoners are not always able to complete the training.
- v. In addition there is Staff/Officers Mess which offers a fairly limited menu together with snacks and fruit. Two Blue Band prisoners are also able to take N.V.Q level 1 and 2 in cookery while they work in the mess.
- vi. The prison also provides prisoners a wide range of goods (tobacco, snacks, toiletries etc) ordered from a standard list via the in house Canteen Service. The Board commends the canteen for it's efficient service and responsiveness to new demands as evidenced by receiving no complaints during the year in regard to this area.

**c. Foreign nationals (FN)**

- i. A total of 88 FNs entered the prison during the reporting period which is down on last years figure of 123 with only 1 prisoner at 31st March 2011 being held on IS91 after completing his sentence who was awaiting transfer to an Immigration Removal Centre.
- ii. As part of the overall management restructuring around required outcomes, the review of the FN's has now been successfully consolidated into the weekly Decency Meeting with the relevant outside agencies being engaged at pre arranged times.
- iii. In line with the standing Prison Service Order (PSO), each FN is given a telephone allowance of up to £5.00 per month to contact their family. This is in lieu of one visit per month, and cannot be carried forward to subsequent periods.

**d. Reception**

- i. Whilst the Board understands the physical constraints of a small Victorian prison in this area, it repeats the past Annual Report comments that more should and could be done to provide a better experience for vulnerable prisoners on their first contact with a prison.
  - 1. In the opinion of the Board the following are unacceptable: Initial interviews being conducted in a public office.
  - 2. Lack of privacy whilst being searched.
  - 3. Sub standard toilet facilities.
- ii. However improvements are being made such as mandatory drug testing now done in Reception rather than Healthcare, with a discrete room being provided to Healthcare for their initial assessment before the prisoners are sent onto Induction.
- iii. The Board recognises the significant decrease in the number of prisoners arriving late from the courts.

**e. Induction into the prison**

- i. The Board commends the creation of a distinct and exclusive area on Wing C1 where new prisoners will be accommodated for induction and assessment.
- ii. In addition the induction period can be increased from the standard 24/48 hours to 7 days if needed. This will allow the prison, if required more time to evaluate the prisoners' potential problems and needs whilst allowing the prisoner to settle into the prison regime more progressively.
- iii. Early in 2011/12 induction will be further enhanced with the introduction of a new in house video loop which will give new prisoners access to information and services in greater detail and in their own time than the current methodology allows.

**f. Regime and Out of Cell Hours**

- i. For the year average out of cell hours for the prison were only just below the key performance target (KPT) set. This was despite performance being badly impacted by staff availability due to the snow and bad weather.
- ii. It is understood that for 2011/12 the KPT in respect of unlocking and purposeful activity will not be monitored by the Prison Service (PS) but will continue to be monitored at Reading by senior management on a 'best practice' basis.
- iii. The Board has concerns; as previously reported, that these metrics are averages for the total prison, which can hide unacceptable levels of confinement in cells for certain areas and prisoners at various points in time.

- iv. Although slightly better than last year, the KPT for purposeful activity however was not met which the Board believes is unacceptable. This was partly due to the poor performance by Education in the first half of the reporting year, which whilst now an improving picture, still fails to attract full take-up of the places available.
- v. The Board commends the increased attention that is being focused on providing more purposeful activity, not just through education, but believes considerably more needs to be done.

**g. Resettlement**

- i. The main strategy for resettlement continues to be the '7 Pathways' as previously reported. However during the year a new policy including revised terms of reference was published to further co-ordinate resettlement activity within the prison.
- ii. In regard to the housing and employment pathways, the good work within the prison has suffered from poor, inconsistent or not joined up support from outside agencies and therefore the new policy seeks to promote and co-ordinate links/partnerships with community and voluntary sector agencies. The Board will closely monitor the developments in this area to measure the effectiveness of the new strategy.
- iii. During the year, staff received additional training re Finance and Debt education to strengthen the support for this pathway.
- iv. Positive prisoner links with the family/community/society continue to be encouraged through initiatives such as Storybook Dads, Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and the Family Days.

**h. Chaplaincy**

- i. The Chaplaincy Team (representing Church of England, Salvation Army, Methodist, Sikh, Roman Catholic and Muslim religions and faiths) continues to make a positive contribution to the stability and ethos of the prison, encouraging spiritual and personal development whilst responding to any prisoner or member of staff in time of crisis or need, regardless of their religious affinity.
- ii. The Board commends the Chaplaincy for their work during the year including:
  - 1. Provision of a Multi Faith room.
  - 2. Greater use of the Chapel for non faith activities (courses and meetings).
  - 3. Promoting the rich diversity of all religions and cultures within our society.
  - 4. Celebration of all religious festivals including special menus for not only members of the particular faith but the whole prison.

5. Introduction of a series of “Sycamore Tree” courses that involves prisoners with victim awareness and restorative justice.
  6. Provision and posting of Mother Day cards.
  7. Training of prisoners as Listeners to provide support for fellow prisoners.
- iii. However, the Board has concern that the prison’s high churn factor impedes the Chaplaincy Team in establishing long term relations and mentoring with prisoners to potentially the detriment of their rehabilitation.

**i. Visits**

- i. A major improvement in this area has been the introduction of a biometric system for visitors, which after initial set up makes subsequent visits easier and quicker.
- ii. The Board commends the prison for:
  1. Organising 6 Family Days per annum for up to 10 prisoners who can spend time socialising and enjoying time with their children.
  2. Continuing to give Blue Band and Kennet prisoners the opportunity to have an extended visit using the Jubilee area (near visits). The large floor area and informal seating allows them to have easier contact with their children and to be able to sit next to their relatives.
- iii. However the Board regrets:
  1. The weekend Samaritan support for visitors held in the waiting area prior to a visit no longer takes place due to their workload/funding.
  2. That the crèche has not been open for a few years due to volunteer recruitment difficulties, mainly related to CRB checks.
  3. That babies and toddlers cannot bring toys into visits and boredom becomes an issue. The Board would like to see a determined effort to get volunteers running the crèche.

## **5. Annexes.**

### **a. Statutory role of the Board**

- i. The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and Immigration Removal Centre to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated. The Board is specifically charged to:
  1. Satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
  2. Inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
  3. Report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.
- ii. To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner, all areas of the prison and prison's records (excluding medical details).

### **b. Description of the Prison**

- i. Reading Young Offenders Institution & Remand Centre is a local prison in a Victorian building built in 1844 on the site of a former goal.
- ii. In 1992 it became a YOI for males between 18 and 21 and is a Category B prison with a Certified Normal Accommodation of 190. The prison has an operational capacity of 293 and has had an average population during the reporting period of approximately 250.
- iii. A small prison in a large town, the corner site location is restricted by a canal, a dual carriageway and an adjacent church, thereby not affording any room for expansion. Expansion of non-cellular accommodation has been in the form of porta-cabins.
- iv. Accommodation comprises three main wings of mixed single and double accommodation cells plus a small Segregation Unit and E Wing, which is used as a 16 bed Separated Prisoners Unit. There is also a 20 bed resettlement unit, known as The Kennet, mainly occupied by prisoners who are local to the prison's catchments area, but it forms part of the wider prison estate's resettlement policy.
- v. Reading has good access by rail and road for visitors and its excellent position in the town allows pre-release prisoners to benefit from outside work experience.

### **c. Work of the Board**

- i. Membership and diversity

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 the Board consisted of 11 members. The Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses and promotes greater interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status and age. The Board values this approach to diversity within its own recruitment and board development practices. All members will undertake their duties in a manner which ensures that it is accessible and without prejudice to everyone within the establishment regardless of their background or social situation.

ii. Training

The Board undertook a variety of training throughout the year with Prison staff giving presentations. In addition Members have attended numerous training courses organised by the prison, the IMB nationally and a variety of internal training including a planning and development day.

iii. Duties

The Board held 11 meetings during the reporting year with 1 cancelled due to snow. Members continued to receive applications from prisoners and fulfilled all other rota and statutory duties. These included attending Segregation GOOD Review Boards and meetings reflecting their areas of interest as observers.

iv. Board activity statistics:

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>
Recommended Complement of Board Members	10	10
Number of Board members at the start of the year	8	10
New members joining in year	3	3
Members leaving in year	-1	-2
Number of Board members at the end of the year	10	11
Total number of visits to the prison (inc meetings/training)	303	329
Total number of applications received	78	52
Total number of segregation prisoner reviews held	52	48
Total number of segregation prisoner reviews attended	39	40

v. Applications to the IMB analysed by nature of concern.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>
Accommodation	1	9	4	4	3
Adjudications & Segregations	13	5	3	7	5
Diversity	4	1	2	4	0
Education/Training/Employment	1	14	5	14	12
Family/visits	13	6	4	15	8
Food/kitchen related	3	2	4	3	0
Health related	11	5	5	3	2

Property	24	26	5	9	12
Sentence Related	17	3	5	2	4
Staff/Prisoner/Detainee related	13	8	7	8	5
Transfers	3	8	0	3	1
Miscellaneous	3	5	3	6	0
<b>Total applications</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>52</b>

As in past years, the Board continues to receive a relative low number of applications. There does not appear to be anything sinister or untoward about this and the Board believes that the generally good relationships between prisoners and their Personal and/or Landing Officers have played a major part in the reduction.

However, even though the work of the IMB is covered at Induction sessions, the actual experience of the members going around the prison and talking with prisoners is that the actual awareness of the IMB and role could be improved and that in 2011/12 we are working with the Prison to ensure our inclusion in the information that is going to be provided to prisoners via the Life Channel video loop.

vi. Development

During the year, the Board has continued to invest effort in developing its procedures and especially its documentation of monitoring activities.

vii. Acknowledgements

The Board would like to acknowledge and thank the Governor and staff for the good working relationship that they have with them.

**d. Glossary of abbreviations and terms**

The following terms have been used in the report of abbreviations and prison related terms:

ACCT	Assessment, care in custody & teamwork process
BLUE BAND	A trusted prisoner employed in positions of responsibility housed in a separate area with an enhanced regime.
BOARD	Independent monitoring board
CARATS	Counselling, assessment, referral, advice & through care scheme – drug & alcohol team
DREAT	Diversity race equality action team
EIA	Equality impact assessment
E Wing	See SPU
FN	Foreign nationals
GALIPs	Gays and lesbians in the Prison Service
GOOD	Good order or discipline – segregation under Rule 45/49
HMCIP	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
IDTS	Integrated drug treatment service
IEP	Incentives and earned privileges – Prisoners can be on basic, standard or enhanced
IMB	Independent monitoring board
IS91	Detention order
KENNET	Resettlement unit at Reading with an enhanced regime and conditions where prisoners are daily allowed to work outside the prison on license.
KPT	Key performance target

LSC	Learning & skills council (now the Skills funding agency)
MC	Manchester College – Education provider at Reading
NOMS	National offender management services
OLASS	Offender learning and skills service (part of LSC)
PCT	Primary care trust
PS	Prison Service
PSO	Prison Service Order i.e. regulation
REAP	Race equality action plan
ROTL	Release on temporary licence - e.g. to work in mess; town visits; home leave
RRLO	Race relations liaison officer
SCG	Safer custody group
SDP	Short duration programme
SMART	Smart, measurable, attributable, relevant and time bound objectives
SPU	Separated prisoner unit for vulnerable prisoners (now E Wing)
VDT	Voluntary drugs testing
VTC	Vocational training centre
YOI	Young offenders institution