



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

HMP Shrewsbury

Prison Rules 2010 (consolidated)
Paragraph 80

Annual Report to the Secretary of State for Justice

Part-year commencing 1st May 2012 and ending 31st March 2013

Date of publication: 7th May 2013

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/corporate-reports/imb>

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD (IMB)

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

- 1.1. The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice and from members of the community in which the prison is situated.
- 1.2. The Board is specifically charged to:
 - 1.2.1. 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.
 - 1.2.2. inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
 - 1.2.3. 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.
- 1.3. To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

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2. DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Shrewsbury was a Category C training prison for sentenced male prisoners. Over 60% were designated vulnerable prisoners. The prison closed on March 31st 2013.

The predominantly Victorian prison buildings were "listed" for planning purposes. The prison had 2 wings comprising 182 cells, a certified normal accommodation of 182 and an operational capacity of 340. Each wing had in-cell sanitation and a shower block. The operational capacity was 319. Due to the lack of adequate screening and ventilation of toilet facilities none of the cells was certified as suitable to house more than one prisoner.

The prison operated with a total staff of approximately 219, this was made up at the beginning of the reporting year as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Managerial grades 15 | 7 operational Governors 8 non-operational Managers |
| Discipline and Specialist Officers | 107 Officers (Inc PE officers); 34 OSGs; |
| Administration | 29 |
| Chaplaincy | 4 Employees 16 Volunteers, Of all denominations and faiths |
| Others | 15 |
| Health Care staffed by PCT | 23 |

During the reporting year the staffing structure changed with regularity as a consequence first of the changes brought about by the Prison Service "Fair and Sustainable" reforms and then by the unexpected decision to close the prison.

All prisoners, able to participate and of working age, attended work or had access to other activities. A variety of alternative arrangements were made for those over retirement age and not working or prevented from working by disability. The regime at Shrewsbury was designed to enable prisoners to follow a structured sentence plan and, wherever possible, to provide them with meaningful employment. Physical well-being was allied to support from probation; the visiting psychologist ; drugs team and chaplaincy, as well as from other outside bodies. This support helped to maintain a well ordered establishment where prisoners were treated humanely and with decency. This was confirmed not only by the IMB but also by the prison service MPQL assessment. The overall aim of the prison regime was to reduce the risk of prisoners re-offending.

3. Executive Summary:

HMP Shrewsbury was a prison largely built in the Victorian era and was a listed building. Despite the constraints imposed by its historical significance, and its limited site, the prison operated effectively, provided a safe and humane environment and enabled Shrewsbury to be regarded as a High Performing Prison. This was borne out consistently in recent years by the observations of the Board and by Prison Service surveys of the quality of the experience of the prisoners. An inspection by HMCIP, in September 2011, had commended its practice under the decency agenda.

The Board was impressed by the response of staff under difficult circumstances to continued restructuring under the “Fair and Sustainable” initiative. However, the sudden and unexpected decision to close the prison seemed to contradict the intentions of these ongoing staffing reforms. One bizarre aspect of the sudden decision was that on the very morning of the announcement of closure candidates were assembling for interview for posts within the prison under “Fair and Sustainable”. The decision to close the prison had a severely detrimental effect on staff morale, given that staff had participated in the ongoing restructuring assuming that its completion would secure sustained employment.

In this situation the members of the IMB have been extremely impressed by the resilience and commitment of the prison staff to the prisoners in their custody, despite the career uncertainty that many staff have faced. It has been most encouraging to note that the attention to safe custody did not decline as a consequence of the decline in staff morale.

In the course of their duties IMB members have had to ask searching questions of staff at all levels. These have consistently been addressed with patience, good humour and professionalism. Thanks are due to the Governor who so clearly values the work of the IMB. The IMB clerk has also provided the board with excellent support in its work throughout the year. The Board also wishes to place on record its appreciation for the unfailing courtesy and co-operation shown to them by all grades of prison staff.

3.1. IMB observations on the process of prison closure:

During the current reporting year Shrewsbury Prison was unexpectedly scheduled for closure within less than three months. The IMB closely observed the process of closure. It has, therefore, been considered appropriate under its responsibilities outlined above (1.2.2) that it should formally report on the closure process so that any lessons can be learned. These observations by the board may prove helpful if and when other closures are planned. Our detailed overall report on closure is attached as an appendix.

4. Matters for the consideration of the Secretary of State:

The IMB urges the Secretary of State to ensure that his officials study the IMB observations on the closure process at Shrewsbury Prison, learn lessons from the issues identified by the IMB and institute procedural reforms to secure more effective practices to maintain morale and to retain valuable skills within the prison service.

5. Matters for the consideration of the Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

The IMB urges the Chief Executive to examine how and why a prison transport contract was authorised which does not secure adequate space for the personal effects of all of the prisoners required to be carried in the vehicle and further urges him to take steps to minimise the disruption occasioned by this situation.

The IMB urges the Chief Executive to clarify the prison regulations relating to the creation, agreement and implementation of sentence plans for those prisoners maintaining their innocence after conviction.

6. Matters for the consideration of the IMB Secretariat

None.

7. Matters for the consideration of the Governor

None.

8. Reports

8.1 Diversity:

An IMB member had specific responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the prison's wide ranging diversity policies, regularly attending the DREAT meetings, chaired by the Governing Governor. There was also regular consultation with officers having direct responsibility for the implementation of diversity policies. Rota visits and the applications received by the IMB also provided a valuable means of monitoring. Encouragingly, IMB applications on equality and diversity were minimal in number.

The proportion of the Shrewsbury prison population within minority groups did not vary greatly during the reporting year, other than when closure approached. On average, about 25% of the population were categorised as 'older prisoners'. Almost 25% self declared as having a disability. Around 15% were categorised as prisoners from Black or other minority ethnic groups. Less than 5% of prisoners were Foreign Nationals. Smaller numbers identified themselves as being in other vulnerable minority groups, e.g. gypsies, travellers, gay or bi-sexual prisoners.

The good practice of the prison in respect of diversity had been noted by members of the Inspectorate during their visit in 2011. As a consequence the Equalities Officer was approached to advise other prisons on policy and practices. The existing good practice at Shrewsbury was also extended during the reporting year. The progress of restructuring under "Fair and Sustainable" had potentially serious implications for the management of diversity by reducing the opportunity to recognise and reward those officers involved. Despite notional downgrading the Equalities Officer continued to ably manage a wide range of responsibilities with the support of the Disabilities Liaison Officer.

Regular meetings were held to explore needs and concerns and to offer support to a variety of minority groups. These groups were comprehensively reported upon in our last annual report. However, during the present reporting year a well planned and properly minuted meeting was instituted to explore priorities for those prisoners aged 50 and over. This group of prisoners represent a growing part of the prison population and have specific needs which need to be recognised throughout the operation of the prison system. Key issues which were raised included the provision of appropriate and appropriately managed gym classes especially for those with physical limitations as well as improved opportunities for creative activities such as basket making and watercolour painting.

UKBA Immigration service support and cooperation for Foreign Nationals with the hub at HMP Hewell have continued to prove effective. The teaching of sign language to both prisoners and prison officers continued during the year. The enhanced care suite, created adjacent to the existing Heath Care suite, was also fully brought into use during the year. It is a tribute to the care offered within the prison community that a terminally ill prisoner chose to end his days within this suite in the prison, where he had friends around him, rather than in a hospital. A member of the prisoner's family was attended by a prison governor throughout a night vigil as the end approached.

The good work of the prison in regard to diversity has continued to extend beyond making direct provision for prisoners. There has also been a commitment to ensuring that the skills of the prison staff have continued to be enhanced. This was achieved not in the main through formal training but through holding events and producing displays designed to raise awareness on key diversity issues. As prison closure approached the diversity team was also involved in completing an equalities impact assessment which then resulted in appropriate action being taken to protect the interests of vulnerable minorities and individuals in the closure process. The contribution of the diversity team in this and other respects has helped the staff of the prison as a whole to maintain a safe and secure environment even for particularly vulnerable prisoners.

8.2 Learning and Skills.

Education:

A member of the IMB regularly monitored the work of the education department. In our last annual report we commended the efforts made to adjust the educational provision to meet the needs of the different population of the prison following its change in role. Examination results were very encouraging and a pass rate of 89% was achieved. Feedback to tutors and to prisoners was of a high standard and was regular. However, early in the current reporting year Manchester College, the education provider in 2011-12, was replaced by Milton Keynes College.

It seemed to be some time before any Milton Keynes based staff developed familiarity with the situation at Shrewsbury Prison. Inevitable adjustments also had to be made by the Shrewsbury based staff in the process of change despite the fact that they were offered employment protection. Such a continuous period of change was not conducive to ensuring the best provision for prisoners. It was a matter of concern that feedback from Milton Keynes College declined in standard and in regularity and was only obtained after repeated requests from the Shrewsbury based teaching staff.

A decision seems to have been taken externally to discontinue teaching within the areas of Personal Development, Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Healthy Living. Both the Shrewsbury based teaching staff and the IMB found this decision regrettable, as these 'soft skill' issues can have an important impact on the successful resettlement of prisoners. Under Milton Keynes College the new post of Learning Skills Practitioner was advertised and the successful candidate was offered an appointment. However, this appointment did not materialise as the announcement of the closure of Shrewsbury Prison occurred before the candidate had served their period of notice in their previous post. A similar situation arose in respect of the employment of a horticultural tutor to oversee work in the garden area provided for older prisoners.

All necessary adjustments to the change in provider had scarcely been made before the unexpected decision to close the prison was announced. Thereafter, the education staff had less than two months before the last prisoners left the site. During this period the staff made every effort to minimise disruption and enable prisoners to complete courses or to transfer successfully to courses in their new prisons. Early in March education staff

were, apparently without exception, made redundant. The loss of staff skilled and experienced in the prison environment can only be a matter of great regret. The prisoner population, and their opportunities to become more skilled and more productive members of society, are ill-served by such significant losses of expertise. Some of this expertise was highly valued and had wider applicability. There ought to be a concern more widely about recruitment if employment in the prison education service is increasingly perceived as being both insecure and lacking in status.

An example of the importance of retaining an education skills base related to the change in the role of the prison. The arrival of a high proportion of vulnerable prisoners, many of them sex-offenders, necessitated careful and effective liaison between the Offender Management Unit and the education provider. This pattern of liaison aimed to ensure that prisoners were not scheduled to undertake courses or participate in activities that might, for example, enable them to secure employment after leaving prison where their offending behaviour might pose a serious risk. This sometimes demanded of staff considerable skill in careful explanation or negotiation with prisoners, particularly those still maintaining their innocence after conviction.

Workshops:

The prison took a variety of steps to improve the through-flow of suitable workshop based tasks and set up contracts, not anticipating that the prison would suddenly be scheduled for closure. Fortunately some of these contracts could be rapidly run-down without major disruption. Others had to be completed or terminated early in rather unsatisfactory circumstances. This does not add to the confidence of potential employers considering contracting work within the prison system.

One workshop No 5, which enjoys full disability access, remained popular even among some prisoners beyond compulsory working age. Considerable efforts had also gone into reinstating the rail track maintenance project and some prisoners from HMP Shrewsbury had been cleared to participate in this training. Meanwhile, through a separate initiative, the wood from redundant oak gates from the canal system was being reclaimed in a project based outside the prison by prisoners on ROTL. The reclaimed wood was then put to a variety of good uses in cooperation with the prison workshops. Some of the woodwork items produced in the workshops, along with other craft items from the prison were sold in a shop at Christmas time to raise funds for the St. Luke's project.

When the prison closed the contents of the wood workshop were moved to Stoke Heath and the rail track project was also scheduled to be removed there. Stoke Heath also took over responsibility for the ROTL project reclaiming wood from former lock gates.

Shropshire County Council provided a library service staffed by two part time librarians assisted by two orderlies. Supervision was also provided by prisoner officers. The library had a large range of books and DVDs on many subjects to appeal to a variety of taste.

Gym and other purposeful activities:

Since the beginning of 2012 gym staff were scheduled on a rota to keep the gym facilities open at weekends as well as in the evenings. This meant that the facilities were in use by prisoners for many more hours. It also meant that prisoners did not have to be regularly withdrawn from educational or workshop activities. Initiatives continued aiming to engage older prisoners in gentle physical activity if they could no longer participate in contact sports or in physically demanding activities such as weight training. A course in basic yoga was also offered and a teacher was found to deliver this course for prisoners. This was a pilot offered through Oxford University so as to evaluate its impact.

The many activities provided by the gym were exemplified by the different types of events that prisoners took part in when the Dana Olympics was held. Among the voluntary activities undertaken in the Gym one man's effort of rowing over one million metres to be precise 1,647,464 metres raised of £500 for the 'Help for Heroes' charity.

Prisoners participated in a variety of purposeful activities other than in the workshops and gym. These included the publication of a newspaper 'The Shrew' and a newsletter aimed specially at Gay & Bisexual prisoners entitled 'Shrewsbury Rainbow'. Several prisoners won awards in the National Koestler Competition ranging from a stage play, magazine journalism and poetry. Two men were also winners in a national prisons art competition.

A significant proportion of the prisoners at Shrewsbury were either beyond retirement age or suffered some level of disability and were no longer required to work. Most of these prisoners were accommodated in C wing and recreational activities were organised there as appropriate. The adjacent exercise yard, transformed into a garden, offered a sheltered space where prisoners not obliged to work could relax. More frequent planned activities for the non-working prisoners were also being developed through consultation with the older prisoners' forum.

8.3 Healthcare.

A member of the IMB has regularly attended the Clinical Governance meetings. The Healthcare centre was regularly visited and its activities monitored at least weekly by IMB members on their rota visits. Medical care has been nurse led with regular GP surgeries. Out patient care has been available from visiting dentist, optician, chiropodist, primary and secondary mental health services and a range of nurse-led clinics.

The waiting times noted in our last report in particular for the dentist (eight weeks) and optician (twelve weeks) did not decrease, although there was greater consideration given to those needing urgent appointments. With the increase of older men in the prison there were high demands for most clinics. In last year's report concerns were expressed about the number of outpatient hospital appointments cancelled due to insufficient escorts being available. It is pleasing to note that this problem was diminishing and cancelled appointments were less frequent in the current reporting year.

Since the re role there had been a substantial rise in the amount of medicine prescribed. The prison does not have its own pharmacy and approximately eighty prescriptions weekly were dispensed by a local pharmacy. Some problems arose for individual prisoners who had to wait longer than expected for their prescribed medicine. The reason given was the restricted space for storage at the pharmacy and the resulting absences from stock. Some medicines have had to be ordered from another source. Healthcare staff made every effort to alleviate this situation. A member of staff was designated to oversee all requests and the timely delivery of medicines from the pharmacy.

The Enhanced Care Suite was brought into use and a terminally ill patient requested to return to spend his last days in this facility in the prison rather than in hospital. The care and dignity accorded to this patient was exemplary and a credit to the healthcare staff, to individual prison officers and to the governance of the prison.

During the reporting year there were more applications to the IMB over Healthcare than over any other issue. These did not include complaints received by the Healthcare team under their own reporting system; these were dealt within seven days and answers given face to face unless further investigations were required. Examination of applications demonstrated the dangers of drawing simplistic conclusions from raw statistics. The age of the prison population was reflected in the statistics. Moreover almost 20% of the applications were from a single older prisoner with serious health problems. Concerns about waiting times for medicines were also a cause for applications being submitted.

The decision to close the prison caused all the staff in Healthcare serious stress. Medical records necessary for the transfer of each individual prisoner had each day to be compiled, checked and forwarded along with each prisoner leaving the prison. Historical records had also to be sifted to be either shredded or archived. Meanwhile, the daily provision of effective healthcare to the remaining prisoners had to continue.

It rapidly became apparent that the PCT regarded their employment as being site specific. In these circumstances their continued employment in the prison service was unlikely and employment elsewhere within the local PCT, itself under financial pressure, was by no means guaranteed. It is a tribute to the professionalism of these staff that the work of the team continued to be so effective during the closure process.

Those staff offering guidance and treatment for drug dependency were employed quite separately from those involved in Healthcare. Their employers, which were national rather than local, valued their skills and contribution so highly that every one of them has been retained and all will continue to work elsewhere within the prison service.

Since the re-role of the prison to cater for vulnerable and older prisoners far fewer prisoners needed traditional treatment for drug abuse but there was a considerable increase in the number requiring treatment for alcohol dependency. In the reporting year Alcoholics Anonymous visited the prison on one evening each week. Prior to the decision on prison closure arrangements had also been made for Narcotics Anonymous to have a weekly meeting. Both of these peer support groups proved effective and the men can use them when they are discharged into the community.

The two drug related programmes in the prison IDTS and CARATS, which used to operate separately, in the last year amalgamated to offer a more comprehensive service, PSM, the Prisons Substance Misuse service. Joint working proved to be much better with the two services complementing each other particularly in enabling prisoners to reduce and where possible eliminate drug dependency. The layered service provided was more focused on client need rather than offering one treatment to fit all. The paperwork required was also significantly reduced. A Peer Mentoring group was established and a successful fortnightly Service User Forum was held. Effective changes had been instituted by the hard working and dedicated staff and a promising future seemed in prospect for the programme.

8.4 Safer Custody

An IMB member regularly attended Safer Custody Meetings. The applications to the IMB and regular rota visits to the SCCU provided an additional means by which the IMB monitored provision. The operation of the prison in these areas appears to have been exemplary during the reporting year and it continued to provide a high level of safe custody for prisoners. The operation of the prison has been guided by clear policies which have been consistently applied. These include policies on violence reduction and on Suicide and Self-harm Prevention and which aim to ensure open communication.

There were very few reported instances of assault and those reported were at a low level and well managed. There were 2 relatively minor assaults on members of prison staff which were dealt with effectively by internal procedures. One prisoner died of natural causes in the prison enhanced care suite. His family was very grateful for the compassion and care displayed by both custodial and health care staff in the latter stages of his illness. It is a matter of regret that one former prisoner took his own life ten weeks after release whilst staying in a hostel. Both of these cases were referred to the Ombudsman.

Exit surveys identified low levels of bullying month on month. There were very few instances of self-harm. The main consistent concern has been the use of medication and tobacco as currency by prisoners, with bullying arising as a consequence of non repayment. The economic recession has resulted in families being less able to send in money. This coupled with low levels of prison pay fuelled the use of alternative currencies. The low rates of prison pay have only tended to exacerbate this problem. Close working with the security team permitted the identification of those responsible for managing illicit trade leading to bullying and several were relocated.

Some prisoners attempted to use the SCCU as a means of their own protection from the kind of debts outlined above. There has been a core of repeat offenders in this respect. By attempting to make the Segregation Unit a less attractive option, for example by ending privileges and increasing the use of anti-bullying strategies there was a reduction seen in the use of the SCCU in the latter months of the year. However Exit Surveys provided evidence that the majority of prisoners felt able to talk to either prison staff or anti-bullying prisoner representatives.

Another area of concern was a certain amount of intimidation of prisoners while waiting in the queue for medications. This was only eliminated by greater vigilance by staff. There was a steady and reasonably consistent demand during the year for the services of the prisoner Listeners and for the Samaritans. No specific trends were highlighted by the nature of demands on either team. The Listeners were made more visible by the wearing of T-shirts that specifically identified them to other prisoners.

The new ACCT document was introduced in May. The majority of staff underwent foundation and new document training. There was a worrying trend mid year of prisoners being transferred in to Shrewsbury despite an open ACCT. This is not good practice and clearly not in the best interest of the prisoners or of those responsible for their care. There was some concern that prison staff in other prisons had not completed checks before departure due to other demands on their time. This was highlighted and later improved.

Most cells in Shrewsbury prison were equipped for double occupancy and all those prisoners transferred in to Shrewsbury ought to have been cleared to be housed in double occupancy cells. The criteria for transfer to Shrewsbury specified only prisoners not requiring single cells. However, a small number of prisons seem to have ignored this specification. On average 12 cells were needed for single occupancy to accommodate prisoners identified on arrival, or in Shrewsbury, with medical or mental health issues.

The planned training programme had to be curtailed following the decision on closure. However training on the new ACCT documentation did take place and additional staff underwent ACCT assessor training. By the time of the announcement of closure 85% of prison staff had completed safer custody training. Work being undertaken to develop mental health awareness training and mediation training had to be curtailed.

The S.C.C.U. accommodation was limited in capacity but was rarely full. The reporting year saw the introduction of a new Safe Cell on A wing, created from 2 existing cells, and a further safe cell in the smaller C wing. There was some concern at one point about one prisoner being kept in the S.C.C.U. for a more than usually extended period but this issue was resolved by a transfer before the IMB had to raise it formally.

The incidence of mental health or personality disorder problems among those confined in the S.C.C.U. was low. Greater familiarity with individual prisoners, early intervention and better training enabled prison staff to manage any aberrant behaviour more effectively, minimising avoidable confrontation. In the period after the announcement of closure the S.C.C.U. facility was no longer in use. Any prisoner whose situation would normally have resulted in confinement was immediately sent to another prison.

Safer Custody Statistics 2012/13:

The tight timescale for the closure of Shrewsbury Prison dictated an even earlier closure of the S.C.C.U. facility. As a consequence the detailed documentation of the work of the unit was archived and removed to prison service storage at an early stage of the closure process. This has meant that the detailed statistics of the operation of this facility during the course of the year have not been available to the IMB in compiling this report. This

is regrettable. However, as the report above makes plain the IMB had no major concerns about the operation of the S.C.C.U. during the reporting year.

8.5 Induction.

All prisoners were provided with a written guide to the work of the IMB as part of the induction process. They were also introduced to the Listener and to the Personal Officer systems within the prison. Any disabilities were identified and means to access the diversity team were outlined. Prisoners were also assessed by their offender supervisor so that their specific needs could be identified. Sentence planning was considered taking into account any public protection implications. Prisoners also had induction into specialist areas such as the gym, education, the workshops and chapel.

8.6 Resettlement.

An IMB member regularly attended resettlement meetings and the effectiveness of the resettlement process was also monitored through rota visits and applications received from prisoners. There were few applications directly on this issue though a number of those applications relating to family issues may have resettlement implications.

The IMB was concerned at the abrupt cancellation of the 'Fresh Start New Beginnings' project in the autumn of 2012. The IMB were proactive in examining the reason for this. It had been a vibrant limb of resettlement work with prisoners which had seemed viable in offering valuable support during resettlement. It seemed that lack of funding was the predominant reason for the sudden closure and in part this reflected the pressure on charitable sources as a result of the economic situation.

The 'SORI' project also had its last session in 2012 despite evaluation having shown its effectiveness. In this case the reason was more understandable, given the high proportion of sex offenders in the prison since the change in role. These sex offenders were not eligible for participation in this programme and there were not enough other clients within the prison to warrant the course. It must be hoped that the success of the project may ensure its successful implementation elsewhere.

Sentence Plans and Offender Management.

The high proportion of sex offenders maintaining their innocence in HMP Shrewsbury, caused significant problems for offender managers in sentence planning. Prison regulations in this respect are ambiguous or, at least, easily capable of misinterpretation.

It is clear that prisoners whose appeal against conviction is already underway are not required to participate in sex offender courses. What is less clear is the situation of those whose appeals are not current. Guidance on sentence planning indicates that all prisoners should be involved in developing and approving their own sentence plan. However, the IMB received several applications from prisoners maintaining innocence who claimed that they had not approved the part of their sentence requiring them to undertake sex offender courses. However, their failure to participate in these courses was being used as

a means of censure. In several cases, for example, such prisoners were being denied enhanced status. There is a need for the prison service to clarify the situation in writing within regulations so that the IMB is not in future placed in an invidious situation.

A further concern also arose over sentence planning when prisoners were transferred from one prison to another. The evidence of statements from several prisoners suggested that prisoners are given no indication, before or at the point of transfer, about what relevance, if any, the transfer has to the completion of their sentence plan. This seems at odds with the theoretical importance accorded the sentence plan by the prison service. If in reality completion of sentence plans is central to the policies of the prison service then the impact of each prisoner movement should be assessed before it is approved. Moreover, ideally each individual prisoner should be informed of the intention of the move and how the move is likely to impact on the completion of their sentence plan. This will substantively confirm the importance of sentence planning.

Pre-release provision.

The pre-release provision continued to improve and cooperation with external agencies has been gradually extended. The plans outlined in the 2012 annual report to improve opportunities for release on temporary licence (ROTL) came to fruition. This has aimed to support resettlement for those prisoners who have been judged suitable for ROTL. There were inevitable problems in making it clear why some prisoners were not judged suitable for ROTL despite their easy compliance with the regime within the prison.

Families and children.

The strengthening of family links continued to be a priority for the prison and prisoners. Difficulties in clarifying rights of access to and/or contact with their own children have continued for a significant minority of prisoners because of problems in liaison with probation and social services. Family days have been supported with assistance from the Chaplaincy, Shropshire Council's Children's Services, Education and the Gym. The family friendly visits centre has continued to offer activities for a wide age range of children with a crèche facility.

Chaplaincy.

The strong multi-faith chaplaincy team has provided support to the whole prison community; to those who have faith and those with none. In its pastoral role the chaplaincy continued to operate effectively until the last prisoner has been transferred from the prison. Voluntary counsellors have also continued their work with individuals within the prison in a service available to all prisoners. Voluntary recreational activities including Music and Art groups were offered throughout the year.

Unfortunately during the course of the year several valuable and successful initiatives such as 'SORI' and 'Fresh Start – New Beginnings', detailed in previous IMB reports, were discontinued. The benefits to the resettlement of prisoners of these successful schemes should not be lost nor should the experience gained in running them.

During the course of the year the IMB approved the allocation of charitable funds, through a chaplaincy initiated charity, to purchase tools to support a ROTL scheme. The

scheme enabled the reclamation of timber from items such as discarded lock gates. This timber was then used in the workshops to create items for sale and to enable prisoners to develop their skills. It is encouraging to note that this scheme and its equipment will continue to be well used after closure through the prison at Stoke Heath.

The former exercise yard of 'C' wing was also successfully used during 2012 for growing greenhouse plants. The IMB monitored this use of the space and was pleased to note that there were many prisoners taking in interest in garden produce and in the plants. The IMB has witnessed the sadness felt by staff and prisoners as these projects have been closed down. Those who gave so much time to them are to be commended on their work.

8.7 Kitchen.

IMB Members have visited the kitchen and servery at least once every week and have been impressed by the smooth running of this department. Few complaints have been received from prisoners relating to quality, variety or sufficiency of the food despite the budgetary constraints on the Catering Manager. Having the freedom to source food locally would have benefitted both prisoners and the local economy. This might also have made it possible to improve food quality by introducing more fresh vegetables and salads without incurring undue extra cost. The needs of ethnic and religious minorities have consistently been recognised and met within the prison. Controversy nationally over food labelling has, however, had some impact on confidence.

There continued to be some relatively minor problems with equipment breakdown and delay in repairs, but this did not markedly disrupt the provision of meals. Some valid complaints were received about the standard of packed lunches provided for prisoners on ROTL. These complaints were effectively addressed.

The closure of the prison has been an extremely unsettling time for both prisoners and staff. Thankfully the Catering Manager was allowed to retain experienced prisoners to keep the kitchens running smoothly during the closure procedure so that standards did not decline. The kitchens coped impressively with the daily reduction in numbers and continued to provide acceptable meals throughout a difficult period. As stock was reduced options were inevitably somewhat limited. The professional kitchen staff offered re-deployment to other establishments would have welcomed better and more timely support and information in making decisions about their future.

9. Board Operation and Statistics

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|---|-----|
| Recommended complement of board members | 12 |
| Number of board members at start of reporting period | 12 |
| Number of board members at end of reporting period | 11 |
| Number of board members joining within the reporting period | 0 |
| Number of board members leaving within the reporting period | 1 |
| Total number of board members during the reporting period | 12 |
| Average number of attendances at board meetings during the reporting period | 9 |
| Number of attendances at meetings other than board meetings | 57 |
| Total number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)* | 194 |
| Total number of applications received | 138 |
| Total number of segregation reviews held | ** |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended | ** |

* Other than Board Meetings. ** Statistics not available as data archived and removed.

| Code | Subject | 2009/2010 | 2010/2011 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| A | Accommodation | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| B | Adjudication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| C | Diversity related | Nil | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| D | Education/Employment/Training | 4 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| E | Family/Visits | 14 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| F | Food/ Kitchen | 3 | 5 | Nil | 1 |
| G | Health related | 12 | 38 | 38 | 29 |
| H | Property | 9 | 14 | 6 | 25 |
| I | Sentence related | 3 | 22 | 35 | 21 |
| J | Staff/prisoner/detainee related | 1 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| K | Transfers | 5 | 17 | 33 | 13 |
| L | Miscellaneous | 11 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| | Total number of applications | 62 | 133 | 143 | 110 |

The large overall number of applications seemed to reflect issues implicit in the role of the prison. However, the reduction in the number of applications from the previous two years reflects the reduced length of the year and number of prisoners as the prison was gradually closed. The number of health related applications remained high, despite a separate reporting system instituted by the healthcare team. A significant number of the sentence related complaints derived either from sentence plans, recall review, parole, ROTL, IEPs or re-categorisation. Several transfer related applications derived from problems over possessions unaccounted for on transfer from other prisons. Most of the others arise from the undesirable consequences of unexpected and/or inconvenient transfers, for example, upon family contacts, medical appointments and the completion of sentence plans. Particular individuals originated many applications on health issues.

Appendix: IMB Observations on the closure procedure.

It is not within the remit of the IMB to comment on the decision to close Shrewsbury Prison. However, the IMB is required to report both on the impact and implications of that decision on the safety and the welfare of prisoners. In this respect maintaining the morale of the staff has a special significance in a prison with many vulnerable prisoners.

The record of the prison in recent years in securing safe custody has been exemplary. Assessment of the prison under MPQL has confirmed its high performing status. The IMB has reported positively on the quality of the leadership and the positive ethos. The state of maintenance of the buildings had been found to be good. In the light of these and other positive judgments the decision to close the prison was greeted with something approaching incredulity by the prison staff, by the prisoners and by IMB members.

Very valuable institutional values, associated particularly with the limited population of the prison, have had great benefits for all prisoners. These have been particularly important for the very large proportion of vulnerable prisoners in Shrewsbury in recent years. The anxieties of prisoners following the closure decision rapidly became apparent to the IMB. These centred around concerns that they were likely to be transferred to a much larger prison. In such a prison the positive institutional values of Shrewsbury might not be replicated. Vulnerable prisoners feared that they might not enjoy the same largely supportive relationships with the staff that had characterised their time in Shrewsbury.

Prison Service Management of the Closure:

Staff morale was severely and adversely affected by the fact that the decision to close HMP Shrewsbury was taken while staffing adjustments under “Fair and Sustainable” were still underway. Indeed, on the very morning of the closure announcement candidates arrived for interview. This situation created an immediate feeling of resentment, especially among those staff newly appointed to Shrewsbury on the assumption that the prison would remain open. It was difficult for staff not to conclude that the sacrifices of the protracted and stressful process had proved neither “fair” nor “sustainable”.

Subsequent decisions on the future of individual officers did nothing to reassure staff that their skills and their contribution to the prison service were being adequately recognised. The loss of the kinds of skills displayed by many staff at HMP Shrewsbury is something that IMB members regard as not being in the wider interest of prisoners or of the service.

The situation of staff employed within the prison but not by the prison service was in some cases equally if not more invidious. Those in the education team, for example, had just been reassigned to Milton Keynes College after being employed by Manchester College for many previous years. This reassignment may have adversely affected their prospects of continued employment as, lacking long term engagement, all were made redundant. There were also inconsistencies between the way in which staff were treated who worked closely together. Those working in Healthcare, employed by the local PCT, were less favoured than their colleagues working in drug treatment and rehabilitation.

The IMB members were also concerned by serious initial failures in communication. These avoidably added to the anxieties of staff and prisoners. The following failings, for example ought and might easily have been avoided -

- The initial information leaflets to staff were insufficient in number for all the staff present at the meeting following the closure announcement.
- The HR staff at this meeting seemed ill prepared to answer basic questions.
- The HR staff seemed not to have anticipated the impact that closure might have upon leave arrangements for individual staff members and for the prison.
- There was no confirmation that sufficient vulnerable prisoner places were available elsewhere in the W Midlands to accommodate such prisoners from HMP Shrewsbury.

An impression that the closure was hurried, poorly planned and taking place in isolation from, and ignorance of, the true situation was also created by other deficiencies observed by IMB members during the process of closure such as the following –

- Decisions by the Population Management Unit to designate prisoner movements which could not be fully delivered in the transport available from Geo-Amey.
- Requirements upon staff to take potentially life changing decisions without timely access to the specific information that they required.
- Decisions and attempts to remove IT and phone access from prison premises in advance of staff having received vital information about their future.

Management of the closure within the prison:

The Governors and staff are to be commended upon the steps observed within the prison to maintain morale in the very difficult situation described above. These ensured that the overall regime continued to be as supportive as possible to prisoners throughout their phased departure. The steps taken have included the following –

- Ensuring that prisoners due for release in the closure period were transferred early to a new prison so that any recall could be properly documented.
- Ensuring that prisoners about to complete courses were permitted to do so before departure.
- Ensuring that skilled kitchen staff were retained to keep up food standards.
- Ensuring that meals continued to be of a high quality despite the decreasing variety caused by the rapid run-down of stock.
- Ensuring that proper impact assessments informed arrangements for the departure of ethnic, religious and other minorities.
- Ensuring that full documentation from the prison service, health service, education and other services was provided to receiving establishments with each prisoner.
- Ensuring that HMP Shrewsbury transport was made available to transport prisoner's personal effects where the Geo-Amey transport proved inadequate to the task.
- Wherever possible and appropriate allowing staff, due to transfer after closure, to transfer early to their new posts.
- Asking an IMB member to participate in the group managing the closure.
- Ensuring that a prison managed ROTL activity was transferred to another prison.

Some ongoing concerns:

Transport.

It is not within the remit of the IMB to comment on the transport of prisoners per se. However, where the transport system impacts on the operation of the prison and upon the welfare of prisoners within the prison we are obliged to record our observations. The operation of the transport system for prisoners proved seriously problematic during the prison closure. The vehicles in use do not all provide enough room for the possessions of the number of prisoners they are designed to carry. The prison may be left with the alternatives of providing supplementary transport or of returning one or more prisoners to their cells after they have been prepared for departure. This situation is unacceptable and is made considerably worse as the prison may not always be informed in a timely manner either about the size of the vehicle due to arrive or of its estimated time of arrival.

A further avoidable complication is the waste of space in vehicles occasioned by the lack of any standard size possessions boxes within which prisoners may store their possessions in transit. As a result possessions are frequently secured in irregular bundles which do not make the best use of the limited space available.

Initiatives:

Significant work has been undertaken at Shrewsbury to address offending behaviour and also to work productively with those prisoners still maintaining their innocence. This experience and expertise ought not to be lost to the prison system simply because the main drivers have either been deployed elsewhere or have retired. Steps ought to be taken to ensure that skills are transferred and that lessons are learned.

A similar process of ensuring continuity of practice ought to be undertaken to preserve the benefits of such schemes as 'Fresh Starts New Beginnings' and 'SORI'. These initiatives aimed to produce the kinds of benefits in terms of rehabilitation that the government is seeking. Efforts should be made to build on what was achieved.

Funds:

Where funds have been provided specifically to address the problems of offenders within Shropshire those funds ought to continue to be available only to assist offenders within the limits of the historic county.