

# INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD



HMP STAFFORD

ANNUAL REPORT  
1 May 2013 to 30 April 2014

## SECTION 1

### STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

1. The Prisons Act 1952 and the Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) to be monitored by an Independent Board appointed by the Justice Secretary from members of the community in which the prison is situated.
2. 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 s/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 custody.
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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## SECTION 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

4. HMP Stafford is a category C, adult male, training establishment with a certified normal accommodation of 741. On 30 April 2014 273 sex offenders and 459 mainstream prisoners were held. **The end of this reporting period marks the beginning of a very significant change for the prison which, by autumn 2014, will re-role as a 100% sex offender population.** The prison is near to the town centre and is one of the oldest prisons in the country; many areas are “listed” for planning purposes.

5. Each of the six residential blocks has accommodation for over 100 prisoners. Each wing has in-cell sanitation and a shower block. The Main Hall comprises A, B and C wings which accommodate mainstream prisoners. D wing also holds mainstream prisoners; it is also used for induction and accommodates the Healthcare Centre and the Segregation Unit which is located below. The Crescent houses E and F wings for vulnerable prisoners, with E wing also being used for induction.

6. G wing, which is a single cell, two storey, prefabricated building for 40 prisoners, was constructed in 2004. The good quality of accommodation and facilities on G wing is in stark contrast to the remainder of the prison. It holds an integrated population of both mainstream and vulnerable prisoners.

7. There is a visitors’ centre in a building opposite the prison and a visits hall and a tea bar within the prison itself. There are 10 workshops providing a variety of activities.

8. **As at 30 April 2014 the number of full time or equivalent staff was 298, 31 fewer than the previous year. Efficiency savings of £1,100,000 were achieved in 2013-14, £638,000 more than the previous year.**

9. Healthcare facilities, including dentistry and chiropody, were provided by Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Primary Care Trust (PCT), education services by Milton Keynes College and library services by Staffordshire County Council. Transport for prisoners was provided by Geo Amey and canteen by DHL.

10. There were many voluntary organisations supporting the prisoners. Among them were Samaritans (support for Listeners), Halow Trust (Visitors’ Centre), Shannon Trust (“Toe By Toe” reading project), official prison visitors, chaplaincy volunteers, Bereavement and Loss Counselling service and refreshment provision in the visitors’ centre by Friends of Stafford Prison.

## SECTION 4

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

11. It is the Board's opinion that HMP Stafford is well managed and that staff make determined efforts to ensure that prisoners are treated humanely, safely and justly. This is against a background of a) continuing budget and staffing reductions and b) a re-role to sex offender population.

12. The Board wishes to raise the following issues with the Minister, particularly in relation to IPP offenders which was highlighted in its previous report.

Respondent	Issue	Action Required	Section
Minister and NOMS	IPP offenders continue to remain in prison, some beyond their tariff date.	An action plan to address the needs of existing IPP offenders.	5.5
Minister and NOMS	IMB receives an increasing number of complaints in respect of prisoners' property lost during transfer between prisons, which are often difficult to resolve.	A plan to address this problem. Why does it recur?	7
Minister and NOMS	Catering budget of £1.96 per prisoner per day is considered inadequate.	Clarification as to why budget is so small and increase to alleviate ongoing challenges.	5.8

13. None of the concerns from the Board's previous Executive Summary (as in number 12 above) were fully resolved.

#### Issues to be raised with the Governor 2013-14:

**The Board was aware that many of the following problems stem from staff shortage as a result of recent initiatives across the estate:**

a) Equality and Inclusion

The temporary lack of a Disabilities Officer caused concern that this important area would need closer monitoring.

5.1

- b) Education and Learning and Skills
- Problems with staffing reduced prisoners' chances of improving themselves and of preparing for the future. Access to the library was a particular problem, also Access to the gym and a lack of adequate sex Offender treatment programmes. Weekends were especially difficult for prisoners locked up for so long. 5.2
- c) Healthcare
- Problems with staffing led to cancelled appointments which could put prisoners' health/lives at risk. 5.3
- d) Resettlement
- More positive steps should be taken to inform prisoners of the resettlement process. 5.5
- e) Safer Custody
- Increases in bullying amongst prisoners seemed to correlate with the open door policy. 5.6
- f) Segregation
- Problems with staffing led to daily exercise being Unavailable sometimes. 5.7
- g) Residential Services
- The Board was concerned about the length of time it took to repair inoperative machinery in the Kitchen. 5.8

## SECTION 5

### 5.1 Equality and Inclusion (Includes Foreign Nationals)

14. The Equality Duty under the 2010 Equality Act required the IMB to monitor equality of opportunity for prisoners who shared a protected characteristic and those who did not. Characteristics which were relevant and monitored at HMP Stafford were disability, age, race, foreign national prisoners, religion and belief, sexual orientation, ex services, marriage and civil partnership and, lastly, gypsy, migrant Roma Travellers.

15. HMP Stafford continued to manage these characteristics, using senior members of staff as lead for each strand; overall responsibility lay with the Deputy Governor. Equality Action Group meetings were held monthly when reports were submitted by strand leaders, although it was noted that not all reports were presented at the appropriate time. Data was shared and analysed at each meeting. Trends and anomalies were discussed and, where appropriate, investigated.

#### Positives

16. During the reporting period 41 Discriminatory Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFS) were received compared to 99 in the previous year. Responses were quality checked by the Deputy Governor to ensure consistency. The Board noted that not all responses were delivered within the time limit and 3 were over 8 months late. It was understood that systems were put in place to prevent a reoccurrence.

Complaints/DIRFS were categorised as follows:

Disability 11

Religion/Belief 9

Race 8

Sexual Orientation 8

Transgender 3

Age 2

17. Although there were no disability cells, the Board welcomed initial plans to remedy this as part of the re-rolling programme. At the end of the reporting period more wheelchairs were provided; training in their use had yet to take place.

18. A bid had been successful to provide much needed larger accommodation for the Senior Support Group. It was pleasing to note that older prisoners had been involved in planning the initial layout of the building.

#### Negatives

19. Although Equality representatives on the wings worked proactively with staff to resolve issues which arose, the Board was of the opinion that not all officers were fully conversant with the process of recording incidents or with the submission of DIRFS.

20. Foreign nationals comprised 20% of the population, 6% less than the year before.

## 5.2 Education Learning and Skills (EL&S)

#### Positives

21. The performance in this area was affected by several factors, including 80/20% funding from OLASS4 (mentioned last year), Benchmarking, Fair and Sustainable, New Ways of Working and, not least, the Re-Role, all of which impinged on the functioning of EL&S at HMP Stafford. It was to their credit that the personnel involved in the delivery of EL&S worked hard to secure the best possible service delivery to prisoners.

22. New vocational courses at NVC Levels 1 & 2 were introduced, giving prisoners a chance to succeed eg Biohazard Training, Recycling and Window Washing at Height.

23. Learner Champions were trained by the Shannon Trust and operated on each wing. They also delivered and promoted “Press for Time”, the Education Department Newsletter, containing puzzles, letters and poems contributed by prisoners. The prison piloted the national Toe by Toe booklet.

24. Proposals for a “Creative Hub” to operate from above the Library were made to enhance Level 1 and 2 skills and develop visible employment skills through writing and performance.

25. Storybook Dads continued to be offered on an appointments system in the Library.

### Negatives

26. Under New Ways of Working, only 10% of prisoners were unlocked after 1815 hrs. Most of those who were able to, chose to go to either the library or the gym, leaving very few to attend choir, band etc. Prison officers stuck rigidly to the bench mark report and were inflexible in the early days of bench marking.

27. Throughout the year, learner hours on Toe by Toe (Shannon Trust) decreased owing to time available to mentors on the wings and to library use. This was due to the core day being designed for work/education, not to be interrupted by recreational activities. New mentors were recently recruited and trained.

28. Lack of access to library continued and worsened: 20% reduction in attendance, book issues down by 6%. Library visits, as laid down by NOMS, of 30 minutes weekly for all did not happen. Lack of access to Open University courses was also an issue.

29. Payment for engaging in education remained lower than that offered in the lowest paid workshop, and thus minimised the incentive for prisoners to go to Education or Vocational Training.

30. There were no Saturday Clubs running towards the end of the reporting period due to staffing levels and new core day limitations.

31. Re-role and the consequent transfer and reception movements made planning of courses difficult due to the churn generated.

32. Disruption in EL&S arose in part because mainstream and vulnerable prisoners both had to be accommodated. The Board hoped that after re-role many of these difficulties would be overcome.

33. The Board still saw an unfair system of gym allocation places, especially recreational ones.

34. The national withdrawal of low level sex offender treatment programmes courses left many vulnerable prisoners without hope of completing their sentence plans.

### 5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health (Includes Drugs)

#### Positives

35. Health Care was provided by Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership. The working relationship with the prison seemed to be satisfactory.

36. There were several vacancies for nurses and sometimes staffing was on the verge of being critical. This impacted on what could be delivered, but the staff did well to provide a high level of service to the prison.

37. The Deputy Governor chaired a Health Promotion Action Group. The Health Fair in March was well organised and attended. The prisoner Health Champions scheme continued to work well.

38. Ultrasound scans were provided within the prison and there was also an aortic aneurism screening process for those aged over 64. This was helpful and reduced the need for prisoners to be escorted to hospital.

39. The IMB received relatively few complaints about Health Care. The majority concerned the dental service. Earlier in the year the waiting time for treatment had been nearly six months but another session was commissioned and the list was steadily getting shorter in the latter part of the reporting period.

#### Negatives

40. The state of the prisoners' waiting rooms in the Health Care block was often appalling: dirt, graffiti on the walls and damaged furniture.

41. Accommodation was also a problem, particularly finding suitable rooms for the Mental Health In Reach teams, and for visiting consultants. Smoking Cessation, for example, would have come more frequently had rooms been available.

42. The Head of Health Care was given the same role at HMP Featherstone and was consequently able to attend Stafford less. This was demanding for her and unsatisfactory for prisoners.

43. Although benchmarking allocated the equivalent staffing for the three appointments per day, demand usually outstripped resources and appointments were not kept; on average between 20% and 25% of appointments were missed. This caused anxiety and resentment for the prisoners and extra work for the staff as these incidents had to be logged in detail.

44. The administrative staff were responsible for organising these hospital appointments, but only someone clinically qualified could prioritise the patients and it was sometimes difficult to locate an appropriate member of staff. The nearest hospital proved to be understanding about these difficulties but next nearest was not prepared to re-book the appointments.

#### 5.4 Purposeful Activity (Includes Work)

##### Positives

45. There were eight workshops together with the prison gardens within the establishment. The planned roll for these activities was 259. On a daily basis, prisoners' attendance rate was 90% +.

46. The atmosphere and relations between prisoners and supervisors were good with everyone occupied and keen to talk about their roles. Types of work available were varied, factors which were reflected in pay rate/bands. Pay rates remained the same during the reporting period and was an area of contention amongst prisoners.

47. The board welcomed the efforts of the Industrial Manager in increasing activities (sales) to outside customers by 19.8% compared to the previous year. Staff in the Activities hub strived to maintain a maximum allocation of meaningful work on a daily basis.

##### Negatives

48. There were areas in workshops which reflected the age of the building and required work to the building structures and facilities within eg leaking roofs and broken showers. Furniture in workshops was in the process of replacement via a rolling programme.

#### 5.5 Resettlement (Includes Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection IPP)

##### Positives

49. The resettlement record for this year was, as with the previous year, generally at or above target in all the key performance indicators achieving, at the year end, over 90% for settled accommodation.

50. Resettlement meetings were held on a bi-monthly basis when the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) was reviewed.

51. During the year Resettlement Fairs had been held on a bi-monthly basis and these had originally been very productive but there had been a decline in

their effectiveness because of difficulties in persuading accommodation providers to attend.

52. Visits had been made to other sex offender prisons to discuss the various issues concerning re-role and the Board was pleased to note that lessons would be learned which would be applied to continue the excellent work already undertaken at HMP Stafford.

53. During the year there had been a problem with the air conditioning in the Virtual Campus area which had led to difficulties with its use. The Board was pleased to know that these difficulties had been resolved and the Virtual Campus was now up and running and training was being provided to enable it to be used effectively.

54. Many successful family visits had been held during the year and would continue in the following year but, as discussed at Resettlement meetings, the Board understands that, with the re-role, there could be public protection issues and the visits might have to be restructured.

55. The prison has been offering a 6 week programme entitled “Building Stronger Families” to help support prisoners and their family members to prepare for release. The content of the programme is currently being reviewed in readiness for attendance by prisoners following re-role.

### Negatives

56. Some Pathway leads failed to attend some Resettlement meetings and their part of the RAP had not been updated which, as in previous years, was not helpful to Board members in keeping up to date with progress. Changes in personnel also impacted upon this.

57. The Board was concerned to note that there had been a cap on funding for various courses which was lower than the actual cost which could have a serious impact on their future provision.

58. The Board noted that the Government had introduced “Impact Claimant Commitment” training, a new criteria which required anyone on Job Seekers Allowance to spend up to 35 hours per week looking for work. Financial penalties would be imposed on anyone failing to meet this target which could have a serious impact on reoffending rates.

59. Resettlement Fairs had stopped by the end of the year because of the impending re-role.

60. The Board was concerned to learn that Job Centre Plus had indicated that they did not see a role for themselves in the prison post re-role. However, the Board was encouraged by the fact that the prison did not share this view and would be seeking to ensure their on-going presence as an essential part of resettlement.

61. Prisoners were still not being informed of how the resettlement process worked, especially towards the end of their sentence.

## 5.6 Safer Custody

### Positives

62. Overall the Board's perception was that prisoners at HMP Stafford were safe.

63. The safer custody team valued the support given by Listeners to prisoners in need and recognised that because of the confidentiality of their work, much went on which the prison was unaware of.

64. The prison's relationship with The Samaritans was said to be the best it has been.

65. The Board was pleased that the constant watch cells were moved from within Healthcare to an area which can provide more privacy.

66. Constant watch was utilised 10 times during the year, mainly for 2-3 days, but for one prisoner, a duration of 2 months until his release. His family was briefed by the Family Liaison Officer, who discussed his needs and informed them of outside agencies who would be able to give support.

67. The Board was pleased to see that a register was now kept at the gate listing those prisoners who were on ACCTs, constant watch, TABs, or located in the segregation unit. This register was updated daily and a copy was sent to all the Senior Management Team (SMT) and to Offender Supervisors. The Board also welcomed the fortnightly meetings of the Multi Agency Safer Health (MASH) group which discussed the needs of those currently on an ACCT document and those who had recently been taken off one. The group included representatives from Security, Healthcare, Chaplaincy and Mental Health.

68. Unusually there were 2 deaths in custody, although one was through natural causes and the other followed a long spell in intensive care after a fall caused by epilepsy.

#### Negatives

69. However, there was a sudden increase in alleged assaults following the open door policy on the wings from October onwards. More frequently, this was drug related.

70. The management of this violence was more difficult when there were no visible injuries, when prisoners would not name the culprit, and when CCTV was not available. Although investigation took place, with no evidence little could be done.

71. There were 168 strategies used for tackling bullying (TABs) during the year at levels 1-3, an increase over the previous year. This trend, monitored by the prison, seemed to correlate with the open door policy.

72. The number of Listeners fluctuated during the year, the lowest being 15 and the highest 25. There were more vulnerable prisoner Listeners than mainstream but this was where there was more need.

#### 5.7 Segregation, Care and Separation, Close Supervision/Constant Watch

#### Positives

73. Use of Force and Adjudication Governance paperwork was available for scrutiny. Use of Force meetings took place on a weekly basis, an improvement on last year.

74. The Segregation Unit's offices were rearranged so that material could not be read by prisoners, a change for the better. However, the segregation information was then crammed in a smaller office where information was less accessible because of insufficient storage.

75. R45 and Adjudication Boards were conducted effectively with all appropriate personnel present.

76. Prisoners on constant watch were kept safely. Their privacy was further ensured by the use of 2 new cells which no longer were visible to passing prisoners and general staff.

### Negatives

77. During the reporting period the Segregation senior officers and most of the regular officers were either promoted or assigned to duties throughout the prison. This left the oversight of this area to a Custodial Manager who had other responsibilities; day to day care was given by “visiting” staff who, understandably, lacked expertise in the Segregation Unit.

78. The IMB was informed even less frequently of arrivals in the unit than in the previous reporting year. However, towards the end of the year this began to improve.

79. Profiled staffing levels and the high number of prisoners held there at one time led to segregated prisoners not always getting daily exercise; also IMB members occasionally had to speak to prisoners through the door.

### 5.8 Residential Services (Includes Food, Catering, Kitchens)

#### Positives

80. The work of the HMP Stafford kitchen was ably managed by the catering team in the long term absence of the catering manager.

81. The budget per day, for meals and snacks, was £1.96 per prisoner. The catering team provided good quality food to over 700 prisoners each day.

82. The kitchen received a 5 star award for food hygiene.

83. Monthly meetings were held by the catering team with prisoner representatives.

84. It was pleasing to note that one of the catering team was pursuing a management course.

#### Negatives

85. Food comment books have shown that there were very few written complaints about the quality of the food. Where points were raised action was seen to follow. There were generalised verbal comments, from prisoners to IMB Board members, indicating that they felt that lunchtime snacks were not always adequate. However, it is our understanding that the prison provided what the PSI stipulated.

86. Concern was expressed by prisoners that bread was not shared out fairly across the wings.

87. An area of concern was the high level of inoperative equipment and the time taken to rectify this situation has led to difficulties for catering staff. The lack of speed to rectify faults, in most instances, were due to manufacturing delays or being unable to order items more than one at a time.

## SECTION 6

### Wing Issues

88. Wings were usually well kept, clean and tidy. Complaints were received during the winter months regarding the lack of adequate heating on C wing in certain cells which was not rectified.

89. The Board continued to receive frequent complaints about the quantity and quality of kit. Some prisoners wore their own clothes but were reluctant to entrust them to the prison laundry because of the harshness of its cleaning programmes; additionally, because of cost cutting, all washing machines had been removed from the wings (with the exception of G Wing for enhanced prisoners). However, during the reporting period this situation began to improve.

90. IMB application forms continued to be unavailable on Main Hall and occasionally unavailable for vulnerable prisoners. Information about the IMB was also unavailable on most wings.

91. There was some loss of association time because of staff shortages. The Board continued to be concerned that many prisoners spent a great length of time locked in cells after work/education.

92. The Personal Officer Scheme continued to be ineffective. Prisoners found it difficult to find a wing officer in whom to confide, largely because of staff shortages and changes to regime. As a result of inadequate use of the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme, too many prisoners were on enhanced and too few on the basic regime. This did not give a true reflection of prisoners' behaviour on the wing and failed to motivate them to do better.

93. A rolling programme of improvement to showers began but there were still too many of poor standard. The Board was especially concerned about the general condition of the building given the approaching re-role for elderly and disabled prisoners.

## SECTION 7

### THE WORK OF THE IMB AT HMP STAFFORD

94. The Board appreciated the co-operation freely given by management and staff during the course of its work. Each week Board members attended the prison to monitor Rule 45 reviews and to observe meetings. They responded to prisoner applications on a weekly basis; adjudications were monitored and rota visits were undertaken fortnightly.

95. The Board held a monthly meeting, which the Governing Governor or Deputy attended, in order to brief members on prison matters and to discuss issues arising from monitoring. The Chair and Vice Chair always met with the Governing Governor or Deputy before each Board Meeting. The Board greatly appreciated their open and supportive attitude.

96. The IMB Administrator (or a substitute) was always present at Board meetings and this support was appreciated.

97. One Board member attended the IMB Annual Conference in March 2014.

98. Both Chair and Vice Chair attended the quarterly Area IMB meetings and also Senior Management Team meetings.

99. An extra IMB applications box was built and installed by Estate Services on one of the wings. Photo boards of IMB members were put on the wings.

100. Once again the Board changed offices in the interests of some members' welfare. The management were helpful in expediting this.

101. The authorised strength of the Board was sixteen, however the actual membership reduced to five only by the end of the year. A recruiting campaign led to the appointment of seven promising new members at that time. For the vast majority of this time the Board struggled - but succeeded - to cover its duties.

Sally Osborne-Town  
Chair

1 September 2014

*This report was approved by the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Stafford on 1 September 2014.*

## ANNEX A - STATISTICS

Board 2013/14	
Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	07
Number of members leaving within reporting period	06
Number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	09
Total number of visits to the establishment	440
Number of applications dealt with	151
Number of confidential requests/complaints processed	23
Number of segregation reviews held	95
Number of segregation reviews attended	47

Applications							
Subject		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
A	Accommodation	3	0	5	4	0	5
B	Adjudications	6	1	0	5	1	3
C	Diversity related	2	1	0	3	0	1
D	Education/employment/training	10	5	7	11	9	9
E	Family/visits	26	5	3	19	3	16
F	Food/kitchen related	2	2	1	1	1	4
G	Health related	20	1	6	22	17	22
H	Property	55	3	10	18	15	32
I	Sentence related	27	4	20	29	9	23
J	Staff/prisoner related	8	4	1	19	17	3
K	Transfers	36	8	9	13	22	30
L	Miscellaneous	42	9	26	27	24	3
	Total number of applications	237	43	88	171	107	151