



# **HMP STANDFORD HILL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**YEAR ENDING 30 APRIL 2012**

HMP STANDFORD HILL  
CHURCH ROAD  
EASTCHURCH  
SHEPPEY  
KENT ME12 4AA

## **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Home Secretary from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:-

- (1) Satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
- (2) Inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- (3) Report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

HMP Standford Hill is an open D category establishment for low risk male offenders on the Isle of Sheppey. Together with HMP Swaleside and HMP Elmley it forms the Sheppey cluster under a single management team.

The prison holds 464 prisoners and was opened in 1950.

In our last year's report we commented as strongly as we were able on the bizarre prison system of moving staff around. This year we are happy to say the Senior Management Team has remained generally in place.

The prison has benefitted from good stable and, in some cases, innovative management. The Board feel the prison is well run and moving forward. We were disappointed by the tone of HMP Inspectorate's report which we felt did not give the credit due or reflect what we were told at the time.

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## **ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE**

### **Food**

Our serious concern about the quality and quantity of the food arriving at Standford Hill and the process by which it is served is detailed in our report (page 11).

The Board feel that the system of management where a governor at one prison manages food at another prison, which is served in another prison, could do with some exceedingly close scrutiny.

### **Parole Board**

The Parole Board has somewhat improved over the last year but many prisoners arriving at Standford Hill are long past their tariff dates and have almost invariably been waiting many, many months to get here. Both inefficient and expensive.

### **Inquests**

The length of time between a death and an inquest is, at the very least, inefficient. The distress caused to family when an inquest happens five years after death is totally unacceptable.

From the IMB standpoint there may be no one left on the Board who was present at the time of death and this would be the same for others involved.

## **DIVERSITY**

Again, in the Board's view, Diversity is well run and monitored in the prison. Bi-monthly, usually well attended meetings are held. Complaints are investigated and dealt with appropriately. Disabilities assessed and assisted.

21% of the prisoners are over 50 – well above the national average 2.4% being over 65.

BME groups are held – attendance is improving with good publicity and advance notice.

An exit survey has just been started, which should eventually give much information.

The work of the peer support worker in Diversity is to be highly commended for innovative and thorough work.

## **HEALTHCARE**

The department continue to provide a good service to prisoners – the triage system helps sieve needs and is very helpful in utilising the doctor's not over-generous time. This system has vastly improved.

Dentistry would appear to the Board not to be of the highest quality.

## EDUCATION

Education retains its independence within the Sheppey cluster but is currently in a state of flux. The present provider, Manchester College, declined to tender for the contract commencing in summer 2012, and to date, no satisfactory tender has been accepted. The work-force remains nervously optimistic.

This year the Manager retired leaving oversight in the capable hands of the full-time Deputy. There are seven contracted lecturers, with nine 'sessional' staff, six 'ad hoc' supply staff, two representatives from Tribal and a full-time Administrator/ Co-ordinator. The practice of testing all prisoners on induction has been continued, with over 100 enrolled students producing an 80.73% attendance rate.

CGLI entry Level 1 and OCR Level 2 Literacy are provided for basic education courses, supported by AQA Entry Level I and OCR Levels I and II courses in Numeracy. Vocational courses in Carpentry (CGLI) and BICS Cleaning as well as ICT (ITQ and OCR I & II) are also available. OCR Preparation for Work is now a requirement for prisoners who have moved on to stage II 'Working Out' and CGLI Wider Key Skills II & III (Improving Learning, Working with others and Problem solving) is also made available alongside Business and ICT I and II. A marked decline in the number of Foreign Nationals arriving has been mirrored by a reduction in the number following an ESOL course. Computing technical skills tuition is provided on site by Cisco via Canterbury College of FE, and training as Optical technicians has recently become available in the prison. Sessional staff deliver 'One to One' tuition in Entry Level I and II Literacy and Numeracy as outreach, whilst an evening ICT course is over-subscribed, unlike an offer of basic Literacy which attracted no applicants).

Standford Hill's intake of prisoners continues to reflect the national trend; over 40% of new arrivals having English and Maths skills which are either non-existent or below those expected at National Curriculum KS III. (It remains difficult to understand how a prisoner, who may have completed the majority of his life sentence, arrives as a virtual illiterate at Stanford Hill!) Positive changes to prisoner induction are reflected by the operation of the Education, Training and Employment Board which takes into account a prisoner's educational achievements and needs when first allocating a place of work.

The prison is taking steps to increase the range and standard of vocational education and training; NVQ in Fork Lift Truck Handling is offered, though many applicants are turned away because they lack the necessary Level II basic skills. Replacing CSCS accreditation with the BSC Health and Safety Award was not positively received and difficulties still arise because 'Virtual Campus' has yet to arrive on site. Completing and submitting CVs on line, continued progression in OU and higher level FE courses are the consequence of restricted internet access and result from the prison's dichotomous objectives in furthering resettlement and reduced re-offending whilst minimising the risk to security on site.

## **FOREIGN NATIONALS**

Continuing the trend established in 2010, the total number of Foreign National prisoners declined throughout the year, reaching a low point of 14 non-UK prisoners in the prison population. At the last count, 21 such prisoners, comprised of 19 different nationalities, could be identified.

Visits by UKBA , though infrequent, have been beneficial and ready access to the 'Foreign Nationals' office, peer-workers and officers , has resulted in very few continuing issues being raised in Focus Group meetings.

## **SAFER CUSTODY**

Any report of bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

There are seven Listeners in the prison – not enough when home leaves are taken into account – who provide a good service being highly visible and well publicised.

## **SECURITY**

The staffing levels at Standford Hill are inadequate for routine security checks though information-led checks have appeared successful.

## **LIFERS AND IPP PRISONERS**

The expected increase in Life Sentence and IPP prisoners has not materialised and at the year end stands at 53.

New arrivals continue to have often been waiting many months and have therefore a relatively short time before their Parole Board hearing.

This delay puts unacceptable pressure on reporting staff as the prisoners have little time to prove themselves and establish release plans.

Our team of experienced lifer supervising officers has fortunately continued stable, but their morale has been sinking badly due to the threatened changes to take place under "Fair and Sustainable".

Induction boards are presently very disappointing and attendance of staff at these boards at an all time low.

The post of "Lifer Governor" has now vanished and there appears to be no chain of command.

## **PROBATION**

A few years ago, Standford Hill could boast of a Senior and two full time Probation Officers. This has now been reduced to one officer and he is regularly seconded to HMP Swaleside.

It is therefore impossible that he can do the job as he would wish to do it.

## **CHAPLAINCY**

The Chaplaincy – multi faith support – is co-ordinated by a full time Free Church Chaplain.

In addition to the co-ordinating Chaplain, the Multi Faith Team is made up of:

- 1 Catholic – who provides 15 hours support over four days each week;
- 1 Imam – who, since the appointment of the Co-ordinating Chaplain, provides support for two days each week;
- 1 Ecumenical (currently Church of England) provides one day per week through the sessional arrangement;
- 1 Church of England – who provide three days.

In addition, regular weekly sessions are provided by Hindu, Sikh and Jehovah Witness representatives. Buddhist and Jewish sessions are made available as and when required.

The Multi Faith Team provides services, regular prayer times and discussion groups. Efforts are made to provide for the Gypsy and Traveller group in the prison. The Imam runs the Tarbyah study course, a three month course for Muslims on their faith which seeks to teach the faith and presents Muslims beliefs which reflect a moderate understanding of the faith. The team acts as a very important central point for the receipt and action of prisoner welfare issues and this element takes up considerable resource.

Four prisoners attended an overnight course – Free on the Inside. Two prisoners attended the Alpha course at a local church weekly.

Muslims have been encouraged to spend a day with their families for the Festival of Eid as have the Sikhs for Diwali.

The team ensures that each wing is visited every day, and is clearly visible in the prison, easily available and very approachable. All issues, regardless of faith, can and are dealt with by any member of the Faith Team.

## **OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT (OMU)**

OMU is a key department in the management of prisoners. OMU input is required in the movement of all offenders in and out of the prison whether through initial reception, release, the provision of all types of temporary release licences or early release on tag (Home Detention Curfew). In a Category D resettlement establishment these activities represent a very high workload. It is paramount that such activity is scheduled efficiently to ensure there is minimal aggravation and cause given for resentment. In the case of release on HDC to enable release as soon as practically possible to free up spaces for incoming prisoners. In the current environment, OMU works to seek to achieve its targets.

The reduction in applications to the Board is much due to the efficiency of this department.

## **PERSONAL OFFICER SCHEME**

It is unrealistic to expect a personal officer scheme to work fully in this prison with the current staffing levels and therefore, in the Board's view, it does not exist.

## **GROUNDS**

The spring bedding borders looked beautiful but the rabbits remain an ever increasing problem – until the rabbit situation is dealt with improving the general standard of the grounds and playing field is a non-starter.

## **VISITS**

This area continues to operate well and is light, open and comfortable, well maintained and with good facilities. The uniformed staff are sympathetic to the atmosphere of the area, e.g. prisoners and family meeting etc and allow such meetings to be conducted in a flexible way. The visits area is, of course, an area vulnerable to the exchange of drugs etc between prisoners and visitors and uniformed staff are vigilant to this.

## **FOOD – CATERING**

The food has become a considerable concern to the Board.

The food is produced in HMP Elmley and line managed from HMP Swaleside – this makes getting answers to our question difficult. In the Board's view there is a lack of concern about the standard or quantity of the food reaching this prison.

The food is prepared in HMP Elmley – transferred in heated trolleys to this prison, placed in heated containers and eventually served at least an hour later. There is no temperature control once the food is placed in the van. The food probes have been out of action for some time. The Board find it questionable as to whether the staff on the serveries are adequately supervised. On occasion the servery shutters are closed before all the remaining food can be offered as seconds; we do not know what happens to the remaining food though are aware of great wastage.

There are numerous occasions when prisoners with special dietary requirements have not received the correct food – particularly soya milk – this could be potentially dangerous. Incoming prisoners are not always given the menu choice form leaving them with 'no menu food' even if dairy-free.

Board members regularly sample the food and find it discouraging that when less than palatable food is served no remedial action is taken by Catering staff.

## **COPPERMILL**

This year the Coppermill has been running really well; always lots of workers and there has only been a few days where work has run out until the next delivery.

## **CLOTHING STORE**

This has been well looked after this year; not many times when they are short of stock. Sometimes the larger sizes have to be waited for, but it is only a matter of days.

## **LAUNDRY**

This year it has had a refurbishment. New dryers and all washing machines are in good order and working, so all well at last.

There is also a new floor.

## **PRINT SHOP**

The Print Shop has been busy this year with outside contracts and now has a new machine, so that will make a big difference.

## **LIBRARY**

The Library is well stocked. A good helpful team of peer support workers always willing to help. Generally a very pleasant atmosphere.

## **RECYCLING**

Working well - good employer. Sadly closed just before Christmas.

## **INCIDENTS**

There have been 2 deaths in custody this year, both dealt with most humanely and professionally. In one case the Wing and Healthcare quite rightly received much praise; the investigation continues.

## **RECEPTION**

A very busy area at the beginning and end of the day, dealing with over 100 people a day (Working Out, hospital, newcomers etc). Still not a very pleasant area in which to work though the storage area has been improved. The staff deal appropriately and effectively with all comers ably assisted by peer workers.

## **THE GATE**

Generally, and with the usual staff, people are treated efficiently and courteously; on occasion some staff have appeared to the Board to be not very smart or efficient.

The area still appears extremely dingy and unattractive.

## **FIRE SAFETY**

Smoke alarms have at last been installed on A and B Wings and it is hoped that the final exit doors will soon be replaced as the Board understand that money has now been made available to fund this much needed and long overdue update in connection with fire safety.

## **PRISONERS EVENING SURGERY**

A drop-in evening surgery continues to be held once a month to enable prisoners who are not within the prison during the core part of the day and who have concerns to be able to speak with a Board member face-to-face. This facility has proved useful with an attendance to up to five prisoners on occasions and also enables prisoners the opportunity to have a "chat" with Board members on a number of unrelated personal topics and thereby building a good area of mutual contact between Board members/prisoners. The Board are very grateful to the Chaplaincy of HMP Standford Hill for allowing them the use of their facilities in which to hold the surgery for private consultation with prisoners.

## **GYMNASIUM**

The Gym is very popular with prisoners and available during the day and particularly available in the early morning and evening outside the working day. The gym is well equipped and clean.

Outside activities are somewhat curtailed by rabbits but this problem will hopefully be dealt with shortly.

## **STAFF**

In general, staff are polite and proactive.

The ratio of staff to prisoners is very small. In this prison prisoners are expected to make their own arrangements and some find the adjustment from closed conditions difficult. Some staff still refer to prisoners by their surname; they find it a culture difficult to change.

## **ADJUDICATIONS**

Adjudications are attended on a regular basis.

The Independent Adjudicator attends regularly and all matters appear to be dealt with fairly.

## **CARATS**

Carats continue to provide a very useful service to prisoners who, voluntarily wish to be guided away from any drink/drugs problem that they may have.

Carats staff of three advise, should any prisoner so wish, on harm minimisation and creating self-awareness of any drink/drug problem a prisoner may have. A drop-in service for prisoners is operated and Carats staff may see up to 50 prisoners per week who voluntarily attend for advice. Some prisoners, who undergo VDT/MDT and fail, are referred to Carats for further advice, should they so wish. Regular group therapy sessions are held which are attended, voluntarily, by those prisoners who wish to help themselves overcome any drink/drug problem they may have.

Upon release, prisoners, are provided with much self help information and are directed to relevant outside agencies for further help. Unfortunately, there is no follow up statistic – the drug Spice is a serious problem in the prison and as yet there is no test for this drug.

On a very positive note RAPT paid for thirteen graduates to attend the Annual Graduate Reunion in London.

## RESETTLEMENT

It has been said that *'Standford Hill was not a resettlement prison but an open prison with a resettlement department'*. This could be true; at a meeting with the department responsible for the Working Out Scheme, Tribal, Information, Assurance and Guidance and Job Deals across the Cluster in August 2012 it was explained that they were currently completing a WOS review to complete an action plan of sharing information with other departments in the prison with a possibility of a new name, as there was confusion what the name implies to the prisoners and staff. It was thought there was a need to raise the profile of the purpose of the department.

As at August 2012 the following figures were advised:

- 160 (+28%) on the books with 98 working out – 18 being paid and 80 voluntary.

In comparison to 2009 when the figure showed:

- 114 on the books with 100 working out – 25 paid and 75 voluntary.

Since that meeting there have been numerous changes within the department: peer workers complete the initial interviews for employment, staff uniforms have been reinstated and the lead member has moved to Blantyre House/East Sutton Park as Head of Offending.

At present there are between 30% - 50% of prisoners entering Standford Hill with below Level 1 Literacy and Numeracy Skills (they may not be able to read or write short messages) it is very difficult to obtain employment for this group which is a priority that must be addressed before they are considered for release.

To date, figures show a 3.9% increase in working out as follows:

2011	Paid Workers	Stage 1	2012	Paid workers	Stage 1
Jan	25	50	Jan	21	74
Feb	21	65	Feb	23	86
March	19	65	March	23	86
April	19	72	April	19	86
May	15	65	May	17	93
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>317</b>		<b>103</b>	<b>425</b>

The department has most recently obtained an agreement with Demelza House, a local children's hospice, to employ two prisoners. They will be either driving to collect donated bags of clothing or to work in the warehouse. This has been a huge boost for the department who advise there is a possibility of further employment within their charity shops; they currently have 70 within Kent and Sussex.

## INDUCTION

The IMB attend induction on a weekly basis to outline the purpose of the Board and the ways in which it can be accessed.

## **THE WORK OF THE IMB**

A Board member visits the prison almost every day. An evening surgery is held on occasion to 'catch' those who wish to see the Board but are out at work during the day. Church services are attended and a Christmas Day visit is made.

The Board consists of eight members.

Inductions are held every week and a member attends. IMB boxes are emptied virtually daily and queries dealt with. Members are seen around the prison and available for discussions.

We would consider that we have a good working relationship with the Governor and Senior Management.

The Chairman has quarterly meetings with the Chief Executive of the Group.

We are most efficiently supported by our IMB clerk who has been with us for over two wonderful years.

The number of visits has gone up since last year and applications down. We feel the explanation for this is two new members being trained which involves more than one person in at a time; also the fact that members readily available in the prison can assist before an application becomes formal. We do not feel members are ever in the prison unnecessarily.

## STATISTICS

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended complement of Board Members	10
Number of Members at start of reporting period	9
Number of Members at end of reporting period	8
Number of new Members joining within the reporting period	1
Number of Members leaving within the reporting period.	1
Total number of visits to the prison	426
Total number of applications received	229
Total number of segregation reviews held	N/app
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/app

The following table contains the statistics of applications to the Board

Code	Subject	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
<b>A</b>	Accommodation	3	7	12	5	5	5
<b>B</b>	Adjudications	16	12	22	11	12	21
<b>C</b>	Diversity related	5	7	2	2	6	1
<b>D</b>	Education/employment/training	3	28	23	16	21	19
<b>E</b>	Family/visits ROTL/home leave/town visits	14	6 34	5	5 14	9	31
<b>F</b>	Food	5	13	6	8	4	33
<b>G</b>	Health related	16	17	29	8	21	26
<b>H1</b>	Property/money Stanford Hill		23	19	17	11	8
<b>H2</b>	Property/money other prisons Total	90	134 157	138 157	49 66	27 38	16 24
<b>I</b>	Sentence related excluding HDC and parole HDC parole Total	274	47 114 9 170	151 256 407	49 116 165	9 67 8 84	4 15 - 19
<b>J</b>	Staff/prisoner related	12	8	5	4	14	9
<b>K</b>	Transfers	12	4	11	20	17	8
<b>L</b>	Miscellaneous total of which Risk Assessment or Board Drugs	52	85 16 8	75	19	50	33
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	502	541	783	343	311	229