



HMP STANDFORD HILL

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

YEAR ENDING 30 APRIL 2013

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 1st May 2012 to 30th April 2013.

HMP Stanford Hill is an open D category establishment for low risk male offenders on the Isle of Sheppey in North Kent. The prison holds 464 prisoners and was opened in 1950.

We are happy to report that, despite changes brought about locally by the closure of HMP Canterbury and re-designation of the role of HMP Maidstone, the Senior Management Team of Stanford Hill has largely remained in place. Over the year there has been a noticeable change in the calibre of prisoners received by Stanford Hill; far more ISPP and Life sentence prisoners have become resident. Nevertheless the atmosphere of the prison remains calm and a respectful relationship between offenders and officers has been maintained and this might be seen to account for a rate of absconds throughout the year which regularly falls below 50% of the allocated target. The Board continue to feel that the prison is well run and is moving forward.

Reduced staffing levels have lessened the frequency of routine checks, nevertheless, intelligence reports have proved useful in enabling successful checks to be carried out.

CONTENTS

ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE	5	INCIDENTS RECEPTION THE GATE ACCOMMODATION FIRE SAFETY	11
DIVERSITY HEALTHCARE	6	PRISONERS EVENING SURGERY GYMNASIUM STAFF ADJUDICATIONS CARATS	12
EDUCATION FOREIGN NATIONALS SAFER CUSTODY	7	RESETTLEMENT INDUCTION	13
SECURITY LIFERS AND IPP PRISONERS PROBATION CHAPLAINCY OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT (OMU)	8	THE WORK OF THE IMB STATISTICS	14
PERSONAL OFFICER GROUNDS VISITS FOOD - CATERING COPPERMILL	9	STATISTICS	15
CLOTHING STORE LAUNDRY PRINT SHOP LIBRARY RECYCLING	10		

ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

FOOD

One year ago we commented upon our worries about the quality, quantity and delivery of food.

We continue to be seriously concerned that the Governor of one prison is responsible for the preparation and delivery of food to a nearby establishment which is controlled by a different Governor and management team.

DIVERSITY

Changes in leadership have not hindered the effectiveness of this Department which, in the Board's view, continues to be well run. Bi-monthly meetings are held and well attended, and complaints investigated and dealt with appropriately. One quarter of the prisoners are aged over 50 with almost half of these being 60 years or older.

HEALTHCARE

There have been a number of major changes in Healthcare at HMP Standford Hill in respect of the staff employed and the facilities offered to Prisoners. The healthcare service, as from February 2013, became the responsibility of South East Health Ltd. The Board consider that this change has met with some mixed reaction from staff previously employed. An expansion programme is in place to offer more clinics to Prisoners – such as an epileptic clinic, a Sexual Health Service and a Mental Health Clinic.

Healthcare have introduced an appointment service for Prisoners, this being seen as the fairest way to ensure that all prisoners receive an equal opportunity to seek treatment. (A 'Drop in Service' is not offered to enable Prisoners to see the Doctor, Dentist, Optician or Podiatrist). Should any Prisoner need to seek medical attention as the result of an emergency, this is addressed at once, with Healthcare staff being aware of the nature of the emergency and the need for any attention.

The staff in Healthcare continue to provide a good service to prisoners but the operation is still adjusting following senior staff changes and South East Health Ltd now undertaking responsibility for healthcare provision. Concern has been expressed regarding the lack of competitive tendering for provision of an optician's service.

EDUCATION

Education benefited from the appointment of a new Manager at the start of the year, whilst retaining the services of the Deputy, seven full-time and nine 'sessional' members of staff, with two representatives from Tribal. After some concerns about the delay, Manchester College continued as the contractor for OLASS 4.

The practice of testing all prisoners on induction has continued, with their educational needs taken into consideration by the Education Training and Labour Board before allocation of work. A change in the demographics of the intake has had little impact on their overall educational standard; 40% enter with English and Numeracy at, or below, AQA Levels 1 and 11. Thirty prisoners avail themselves of 'one-to-one' tuition, provided by two 'sessional' tutors in an attempt to address this problem. A further 60 offenders follow courses in Literacy (CGLI 1 and 11), Numeracy (OCR 1 & 11), ICT (ITQ and OCR 1 and 11) and Preparation for Work which provide the mainstay of the curriculum. The annual rate of attendance continues at 80%.

Despite increased emphasis on resettlement there remains limited availability for vocational qualifications. Carpentry (CGLI 1 and 11), BICS cleaning, courses for Optical technicians and ICT (CISCO) and Fork-Lift truck driving are provided on site. It is to be regretted that CSCS is no longer available, whereas the fall in the Foreign National intake has been mirrored in the discontinuation of ESOI tuition. Two Evening classes in ICT are well supported. Virtual Campus has just become available, though prisoners still rely on Tribal for job searching and find submission of 'on line' CVs and job applications more easily carried out during ROTL.

FOREIGN NATIONALS

The number of offenders originating from abroad declined markedly throughout the year, although a small increase in numbers developed in the first months of 2013. A visit from UKBA and further assistance alleviated some of the worries expressed by these prisoners but concerns still arise towards the end of sentence, especially because it is still common practice to remove prisoners to a secure establishment a few days before release is due.

SAFER CUSTODY

As part of Induction, any individual arriving at Standford Hill with a history of self harm or being subject to bullying is identified from personal records. This occurs on the day of arrival and the wing staff informed.

On the same evening, a wing officer is deputed to privately interview the prisoner and note the relevant details. The prisoner is highlighted in the wing office.

A monthly Safer Custody meeting is held to review any incidents that have taken place and action subsequently taken. In the case of proven bullying a transfer to closed conditions for the aggressor is often arranged.

Less formally peer group Listeners are available to the prison population.

Standford Hill is seeking to appoint a Band 3 post of Equalities Officer. It seems likely that the officer appointed will on occasion be involved in Safer Custody issues.

SECURITY

Inadequate staffing levels preclude routine checks and a further reduction in personnel ensures that this situation will continue; nevertheless intelligence reports have proved useful in enabling successful checks to be carried out.

LIFERS AND ISPP PRISONERS

The team dealing with Lifers is well run and deals with an ever increasing number of Lifers and ISPs very effectively. Relationships between Offender Managers, staff and prisoners is good; **it is to be regretted that the impact of 'Fair and Sustainable' will bring about a change in personnel here.**

PROBATION

There is great concern that, the present efficient and reliable Probation Officer, whose work also embraces HMP Swaleside is to be **replaced as his secondment comes to an end.**

CHAPLAINCY

The Chapel continues to play an important part in the life of the prison being used for all faiths to worship – the team provide good pastoral care. As it is the largest meeting place in the prison it is also used for full staff meetings and by the IMB once a month for evening surgeries.

The Muslim chaplain, who was shared with HMP Elmley, leads Friday prayers. Attendance at faith services has been steady and we also had two Christian groups who came in to lead services a couple of times during the year.

The Anglican who joined the Chaplaincy team last year as part-time cover was a great asset and was very popular with the prisoners. She has now left Standford Hill to work full-time at Swaleside. The Chaplain was hoping to get an agreed policy for the provision of religious festivals which will help to better manage prisoner expectations; these have been rather ad hoc with decisions being made 'on the hoof' rather than via an agreed policy covering all faiths.

An increasing number of prisoners have approached the Chaplain to support Special Purpose Licences for purposes that were outside the normal criteria.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT (OMU)

The OMU staff administrate and regulate all movement of offenders into and out of the prison and therefore play a key role in ensuring that reception and release (whether temporary, conditional or permanent) is carried out efficiently. Weekly 'clinics' are held to address prisoners' queries and anxieties and have been instrumental in markedly reducing the number of applications made to the Board.

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. (*Standford Hill IMB Annual Report, 2012*).

A reduction in staffing levels has not changed our view.

GROUNDS

Despite access to a large work force, the grounds at this prison remain, at best, unkempt. Over the last few years the Board have drawn attention to the neglected state of some areas of the grounds, with dead trees and shrubs left in situ for a prolonged period of time and, in some cases, years. This matter has been drawn to a head with a large poplar tree falling near a pathway, emphasising the unhealthy state of the trees which have been undermined by the many rabbits which infest the prison grounds.

VISITS

This area of the prison continues to operate well and is maintained as a light, open and comfortable area.

Uniformed staff create a pleasant atmosphere and continue to be sympathetic to prisoner/family meetings by allowing these meetings to take place in a relaxed manner. However, the visits area continues to be an area vulnerable to the exchange of drugs and other classified items between visitors and prisoners and uniformed staff continue to be vigilant, without being noticeably intrusive.

FOOD – CATERING

The quality, quantity and type of food provided continue to be an extreme source of discontent and complaint. Lack of variation in the menu, mix-ups with special diets, lack of attention to the meats provided for Muslim and Jewish prisoners, poor variety and reduced quantities of vegan and vegetarian menus, filled rolls with no filling, meat pies with no meat, have all generated aggravation and complaint. The Board has visited the poorly staffed supplying kitchen and met with the catering manager but has yet to observe any continued and marked improvement despite the best efforts of the Governors and staff of the receiving prison and is very concerned that reduced funding will exacerbate an already unsatisfactory situation.

On many occasions the Board have voiced very serious concerns and expected an improvement in the provision and quality of food; no such improvement has been forthcoming.

COPPERMILL

Processing and recycling of cotton rags has provided continuous hard but rewarding work for a fair number of offenders. There have been occasions when non-delivery of the raw materials caused a halt to work; this situation appears to be occurring more frequently, leading to concerns that this work will cease.

CLOTHING STORE

Clothing Exchange Stores continue to function effectively; at no time throughout the year was there a report of a shortage of materiel with consistent, though low, demand.

LAUNDRY

This provides useful employment for a small number of prisoners who display a good attitude to work. Problems were encountered throughout the first half of the year owing to breakdowns and spin-driers consistently failing. Purchase of a more robust machine and greater attention to maintenance ensured that few, or no, complaints were received during the last six months of the year.

PRINT SHOP

Work is sourced and costed from '131 Solutions' in London. The coloured digital work is mainly official forms for the Government and the Courts, but smaller work is also covered, for example business cards etc.

The work force is 16 – 17 each day with two instructors. The prisoners appear to be dedicated and take an obvious pride in their work.

LIBRARY

The library is open from 9.30 am to 11.15 pm to allow access for all prisoners. Mondays and Wednesdays appear to be the most popular days, an average of 100 – 150 prisoners attending each day.

Two peer workers are available during these times with the addition of part time KCC librarians who also cover Elmley and Swaleside.

Prisoners have the opportunity to request copies of books that Standford Hill do not have.

The environment is pleasant, quiet, all that you would expect from a library.

RECYCLING

A small number of prisoners have been employed at this plant throughout the year with occasional intervals where non-delivery of materials brought about a break in employment. Lack of adequate washing facilities for employees generated some concerns but these were addressed towards the end of the year.

INCIDENTS/DEATH IN CUSTODY

It is unfortunate that there have been two deaths in custody this year, both from natural causes. One gentleman had been suffering from poor health for some time and was due to be transferred to a nursing home; regrettably he died before this could be actioned. The IMB was notified promptly of the death and ensured that it and the funeral, which was attended by two members, was dealt with appropriately and sensitively.

Of greater concern was an unexpected death which occurred in May. In this case the uniformed staff's response was inadequate, with no immediate administration of first aid or attempted resuscitation accompanied by an undue delay in sending for an ambulance and external medical support. An internal review was carried out, disciplinary procedure invoked and considerable effort made to ensure that defibrillators were readily available and first aid trained staff always on hand. The Ombudsman's report was much less than flattering.

RECEPTION

Access for prisoners may sometimes be problematic when a large number are scheduled to leave for work and release on licence but the staff are courteous and efficient and cope well. A new storage system has helped in manipulating retrieval and security of possessions whilst loss of property in transit has shown a pleasing reducing over the year. Provision of a 'shuttle bus' to enable prisoners to access public transport has been a welcome step in ensuring that prisoners leave and return within the schedule dictated by their licence.

THE GATE

Regular staff are welcoming and courteous and offset the somewhat 'run-down' impression given by the building and its chewing-gum contaminated surroundings.

ACCOMMODATION

The Board have been, during the reporting period, concerned with the cleanliness and general condition of the toilets and showers on A and B wings which fluctuates vastly. Toilets and showers are not, in general, cleaned at weekends thus compounding the problem. This matter has been drawn to the attention of the Governor on more than one occasion with the view to the matter being addressed and there does appear to be an improvement with cleaning to be carried out using a pool of cleaners, especially at weekends. Shower curtains have been replaced with shower doors thus going some way to improving standards. C Wing is, in general, clean tidy.

FIRE SAFETY

This has improved with the installation of the final exit doors on A and B wings, although there is still a need for these doors to be operated from the wing office in an emergency; a system that could have been installed when the doors were replaced. There are now direction signs displayed as appropriate indicating assembly areas in the event of a need to evacuate the building.

PRISONERS EVENING SURGERY

Regular monthly evening surgeries continue to be useful for prisoners who are out of the prison for most of the day and who wish to speak to a Board member on any issue. Some prisoners who visit the 'drop-in' surgery do so to speak about family/social matters but this helps to build confidence in the IMB should the prisoners need to approach the IMB about other issues.

The Board are grateful to the Chaplaincy for allowing the use of the Chapel in which to hold the surgery, thus providing a relaxed and quiet atmosphere.

GYMNASIUM

At present there are five staff but overstaffing has been identified and two prisoner officers have been interviewed as part of the 'Fair and Sustainable' and are awaiting their transfers.

Life Style Courses are being held to assist with life style choices: for example to stop smoking or with weight problems and to then gradually introduce them to the options that a healthy gym offers.

The Pool Life Guard Level 2 course continues to be popular which also includes a First Aid Course.

During the weekends outside football and cricket are offered, there is also a 1.25 miles cycle track around the prison.

STAFF

The Board enjoy a good relationship with staff and uniformed staff continue to be helpful with IMB members and with prisoners. A period of stability has been maintained with senior staff (Governor) members remaining in position and this has enabled a sound working relationship to be established with the Board and staff in general.

ADJUDICATIONS

Adjudications are attended on a regular basis.

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

RAPT (CARATS)

At Standford Hill a team of two officers work as a Substance Misuse Team. They address all newly arrived prisoners transferred in, outlining the support and help they are able to offer. They currently have a clientele of 75-80. These are able to attend three day courses offering group work, partially aimed at refreshing skills. Clients also attend one-to-one interviews. At these they are, where necessary, made aware of drug intervention programmes in the community. Rehab opportunities are arranged for clients when released. Currently a member of Adfam Family Support is assisting the team, as required, to liaise with the families of clients. Overall, the one-to-one interview appears to be the most successful aspect of the strategy.

RESETTLEMENT

Prisoners are interviewed prior to release by resettlement staff and peer workers to give them assistance with accommodation, employment and medical facilities. They also introduce them to agencies and charities all aimed at reducing the risk of re-offending on release.

The First issue of 'Resettlement Magazine' publication was introduced on October 2012. It gave some interesting information regarding Personal Track Safety (PTS) course with was run by Cleshar, who are one of Kent's leading training and employment providers. They provide prisoners with an opportunity to leave prison and apply for full-time employment in the railway industry. Once training has been successfully completed prisoners will be registered with Network Rail for an NCAA Card.

In the second issue was an article by the Jobcentre plus+ who gave advice on how to:

- Search and apply for jobs to suit applicants.
- Create a CV or upload an existing CV.
- Receive email alerts when new jobs that match individuals CV and skills are posted.

The issues are focused on the serving prisoners at Standford Hill highlighting what is being done in terms of rehabilitation and resettlement back into the community.

INDUCTION

Each Thursday of the week a member of the IMB attends the prison to take part in the Induction Programme for new prisoners to Standford Hill. The member informs them of the role of the IMB and how to make contact should a prisoner wish to talk to a member of the Board.

In many cases, this is the first time prisoners have had face-to-face information about the IMB.

THE WORK OF THE IMB

The Board meets once a month to discuss the previous month's report from the Governor and members individual reports, notes and observations. There is an opportunity to raise issues with the Governor which requires response or action.

Each day a board member will visit the prison and observe areas of interest and other areas identified for particular attention. The member makes a written report of the inspection which is available in a diary kept securely in the IMB office.

Inductions are held once a week when a member of the board gives a talk to new prisoners about the work of the Board and how to make contact should they wish to speak to a member. They are advised that any application will result in an investigation the result of which will be re-laid back to them.

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	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
A	Accommodation	7	12	5	5	5	5
B	Adjudications	12	22	11	12	21	11
C	Diversity related	7	2	2	6	1	2
D	Education/employment/training	28	23	16	21	19	22
E	Family/visits ROTL/home leave/town visits	6 34	5	5 14	9	31	5
F	Food	13	6	8	4	33	10
G	Health related	17	29	8	21	26	15
H1	Property/money Standford Hill	23	19	17	11	8	15
H2	Property/money other prisons	134	138	49	27	16	
	Total	157	157	66	38	24	90
I	Sentence related excluding HDC and parole	47	151	49	9	4	3
	HDC	114	256	116	67	15	
	parole	9			8	-	
	Total	170	407	165	84	19	
J	Staff/prisoner related	8	5	4	14	9	7
K	Transfers	4	11	20	17	8	-
L	Miscellaneous total of which Risk Assessment or Board Drugs	85 16 8	75	19	50	33	23
M	HDC						4
N	Rotl/Town Visits						11
	Total number of applications	541	783	343	311	229	143