



HMP Downview Annual Report

January - December 2014

Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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.

Section 2

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

Downview was a closed prison for adult women until 28th October 2013. Its Operational Capacity had been 355 in single cell accommodation. As at 31 December 2014 it remained unoccupied with no firm date set for reopening as an adult male prison. The current plan is for the prison to be rerolled to accommodate a mix of Category C and Category D adult male prisoners.

Most of the accommodation is Victorian, built in 1872. The prison used to be the nurses' accommodation for Banstead Hospital.

During 2014 considerable structural work has been undertaken to the fabric of the prison to prepare it for its new role as an adult male prison.

Section 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Downview closed as a prison for adult women on 28th October 2013. The re-role from female to male prisoners was announced on 4th September 2013. Following that announcement we understood that from January 2014 Downview was to be designated as a closed prison for Category C and Category D adult men.
2. Early in 2014 it became apparent that the reopening date was unlikely to be before June 2014 and the date has subsequently been delayed three more times. The reasons given for delays were the unexpectedly high numbers of officers accepting the VEDS terms and the nationwide difficulty in recruiting and training sufficient prison officers. The majority of prison officers attached to Downview have been relocated on detached duties to other prisons largely in the London area to help overcome localised staff shortages.
3. By the end of 2014 we understood the recruitment programme had not yet met its targets and as a result it was unlikely that Downview would be reopened as an adult male prison before April 2015. However there remains uncertainty as to when this will actually happen.
4. Considerable structural work has been done to accommodate male prisoners. This has included fitting privacy locks on all cell doors, installing new cell furniture, upgrading the electrics in C Wing, fitting new windows in D Wing, building a workshop, laying new astroturf on the sports pitch and improving IT facilities.
5. In March 2014 NOMS published a policy paper "Our New Way". The staff benchmarking requirement announced in this paper was successfully completed in respect of Downview in anticipation of its reopening.

Section 3

WORK OF THE BOARD

The Board started the year with 10 members and, as a result of 2 resignations and a transfer to another Board, has finished with 7 members. The designated membership of the board is 14 but no steps will be taken to recruit new members until the future of Downview has been clarified.