



Independent Monitoring Board

HMP Northumberland

Annual Report

1st January to 31st December 2014

Section 1. Statutory Role of the Independent Monitoring Board

The Prison Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act of 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 the prison's records.

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Section 3. Description

3.1 Description of The Prison

- 3.1.1 Located on one of the largest sites in the prison estate, HMP Northumberland (The Prison) is a Male Adult Category C prison and is classified as a Working Prison. Its Operational Capacity is 1,348 prisoners and the Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 1,354. The average unlock for December 2014 was 1,332 (December 2013; 1,336).
- 3.1.2 The Prison was formed on October 31st 2010 through the merger of HMP Acklington and HMP Castington. After amalgamating two separate sites in 2012, consolidation was completed in 2013, to create a single estate on a site of about 40 hectares; measuring about 1km across.
- 3.1.3 The population profile has not changed significantly over the last year.
- 3.1.4 At the end of 2014 there were 436 Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs) and 881 Mains Prisoners (Mains) (December 2013: 483 VPs, 849 Mains). In December 2014, there were 41 Category D prisoners in (December 2013: 86), 23 Foreign Nationals (December 2013: 24), 162 prisoners serving life sentences, or with an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP) (December 2013: 160) At the end of the year, the establishment was operating at more than 98% of capacity (end of 2013; more than 99%). A third of prisoners are on a sentence of less than four years; half on a sentence of between four and ten years; and 16% on a sentence of more than ten years.
- 3.1.5 The Prison continues to hold a relatively small number of foreign nationals (average of 25 in 2014), and a high proportion with White / British ethnicity (average 94% through the year). The oldest prisoner is aged 87, the proportion over the age of 60 is slightly below the national average at 3.5%.
- 3.1.6 The proportion of prisoners on enhanced status has reduced a little during the year (31% in December 2014, compared to 36% a year earlier).
- 3.1.7 The Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Northumberland (The Board) has commended the facilities for visitors in previous reports. New arrangements are in place to ease travel for visits (see 5.5.11). However, this is the most northerly and one of the most remote prisons in England. The location inevitably presents problems for visitors, particularly the elderly, infirm, and those with young families. Travel is particularly difficult for visitors from outside the local area. Although there has recently been a welcome reduction in the number of prisoners arriving from outside the area, and some improvement in the overall proportion of prisoners from the local area, almost half of the current population still originate from outside Northumbria.
- 3.1.8 The Prison has fifteen House Blocks, all currently containing only single cells. Five House Blocks hold VPs. The Gateway Unit is a dedicated recovery unit which aims to ensure that residents are able to overcome dependence on illicit and prescribed medication. The remainder of the House Blocks are categorized as normal location. All cells have their own light switch, integral sanitation and a kettle.

3.2 Contractors and Agencies:

- Healthcare Commissioner: North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit (NEOHCU)
- Healthcare Provider: Care UK and McMillan Nursing Services
- Learning and Skills Development: Manchester College
- Police Liaison Officers: Northumbria Police
- Prisoner Escort Services: GEO/Amey
- Canteen Services: DHL
- Job Vacancies and Benefits: JobCentre Plus

Table 3.1A: Voluntary Agencies that provide support to The Prison

Third Sector Agencies	Provision
ADDACTION	Drug and alcohol agency. Counselling, assessment, referral, advice and through-care services relating to drugs By referral via CARATs
Age UK	Services and advice for older people in prison
Alcoholics Anonymous	Addiction support groups in prison
Angel Tree Project	Provides Christmas presents for prisoner's children. Available to Mains only for security reasons
Crisis	Progression coaches help prisoners to identify a goal(s) and steps to achievement
EASE/Pertemps	Advice and guidance on finding work/training after release.
Faith Action	Funding/policy advisory service for Third Sector
Job Centre Plus	Finding work and benefits
Make your Way	Sunderland based community outreach team
MIND Mentoring Project	Via Chaplaincy
NCC Sure Start	Working with supporting prisoners' families, including running food banks.
NEPACS – North East Prison After Care Society	Independent community based charity supporting prisoners and their families. Visitor Centre provider
NERAF – Northern Engagement into Recovery from Addiction	Predominantly drug and alcohol focussed and work closely with jobcentre volunteer scheme.
NORCARE and Fabrick Housing Group	Accommodation for prisoners on release who are socially excluded, vulnerable or disadvantaged
Oasis Aquilla Housing	Accommodation and support
Oswin Project	Support, training and employment. Access via Chaplaincy

Third Sector Agencies	Provision
Phoenix Futures	Drug and alcohol recovery charity. Assessment, therapeutic relationship between worker and client, negotiated recovery plans, working towards achieving abstinence - linked to Gateway Unit
R & B - Reform and Build	Support before and after release – Advice on benefits, opening a bank account, getting involved in community activities, hobbies and sports, substance misuse and interventions, and family mediation service
Royal British Legion	Advice and practical support during and post custody including food bank referrals.
Samaritans	Provides training for prisoners to become Listeners
Shannon Trust	Supports the Toe-by-Toe Literacy Scheme
SHELTER	Housing and advice service, debt advice, help with housing benefits etc... Two Shelter workers based at The Prison. Also run training for prisoners in in money management, prioritising debts
SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families	Advice and practical support during and post custody
Sycamore Project	Reconciliation project via the Chaplaincy. Very popular but only 80 places a year.2015 full and prisoners on waiting list for 2016.
User Voice	Aims to deliver a powerful rehabilitation experience for offenders. Developed the Prison Council at The Prison
Veterans in Custody	Sign-posting to agencies as necessary
20,000 Voices	Choral Singing for Mains and VPs. 6 weekly sessions. Repertoire of both popular and traditional pieces.

3.3 Changes during 2014

- 3.3.1 The Prison has been managed by Sodexo Justice Services (Sodexo) since December 2013, under The Prison Director and his Deputy. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is represented by the Controller and his team. The establishment spent the whole of 2014 coming to terms with, and bedding down, changes resulting from the privatisation process.
- 3.3.2 During 2014 the establishment reduced from two chapels and kitchens to one of each.
- 3.3.3 There has been investment in the laundry, and washing machines installed in all House Blocks; except House Block 9. (see 5.8.14)
- 3.3.4 Touch Screen Kiosks have been installed for the use of prisoners on all House Blocks. (see 5.8.4)
- 3.3.5 Changes to the induction process include induction briefings delivered by prisoners. (see 5.8.10)

- 3.3.6 The clothing policy has been changed, so that prisoners are now able to wear their own clothes in many situations (see 5.8.6)
- 3.3.7 Fingerprint ID for visitors came into operation in 2014 as did fingerprinting of prisoners attending visits.
- 3.3.8 A free flow system of prisoner movement, with a number of gates being locked open was introduced, thus requiring fewer staff escorts.
- 3.3.9 The use of drug sniffer dogs was phased out during the year; in favour of the Ion Scanner which gives a very accurate result.
- 3.3.10 User Voice was introduced in Dec 2014 to give greater voice to prisoners' views, generate ideas for improvement and resolve issues.
- 3.3.11 In Dec 2014 a new contract was awarded for provision of Offender Healthcare Services for North-East Prisons, and the transition process began.
- 3.3.12 At the time of writing The Prison has 394 staff. During 2014 there were almost 200 voluntary exits in three tranches between February and April. Since then, an additional 23 prison officers and 10 other staff have been recruited in various roles. The first group of new officers joined in June and completed their training in August, and a further group joined in September and completed their training in November. A bank of 15 experienced officers and 8 operational support staff are retained to cover contingency needs.
- 3.3.13 The Board views relations between Members and prison staff at all levels as being healthy. The Director or his representative attended all but one meetings of The Board in 2014, briefed Members on developments, and answered questions from Members.

Section 4. Executive Summary

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Widespread change at The Prison during 2014 has presented a challenge to management, staff, and prisoners. In this report The Board commends staff for maintaining professional standards through the transition, highlights lessons from that transition, identifies some areas where there has been good progress or innovation, and others where improvements still need to be made. After four years of monitoring continuing change at The Prison, The Board now hopes for a period of stability in which the establishment can focus on its core purpose.
- 4.1.2 Operational responsibility for The Prison was transferred to Sodexo in December 2013. The transition process was swift. Most major changes were implemented by the end of June 2014. In the second half of the year The Prison community was settling into the new regime.
- 4.1.3 HM Inspectors carried out an unannounced inspection in September.
- 4.1.4 The Board is responsible for monitoring day-to-day life in The Prison, and ensuring that proper standards of care and decency are maintained. Members of The Board made almost 600 visits to The Prison during 2014, to monitor conditions, speak with prisoners and staff, and help deal with issues of concern to prisoners. In that context, the questions that this report aims to answer are:
- Were standards maintained during the transition period, and what lessons can be learned from the way that the transition was handled?
 - Are standards being maintained under the new regime, and in which areas do improvements need to be made?
- 4.1.5 Throughout the year there has been a high level of local interest in developments at The Prison. This has resulted in a considerable amount of local media coverage. Board members are independent representatives of the local community, with privileged access to The Prison. In The Board's experience, prisoners and staff have a good understanding of conditions in The Prison, but without the same daily involvement, members of the public have to rely on other sources of information. So it has been disappointing that during 2014 some media coverage has created a misleading impression of conditions at The Prison. This has caused some family members and friends of prisoners and staff to have concerns for the safety and welfare of those they care for.
- 4.1.6 The transition process in the first half of the year was swift and complex. In addition to pressures faced by other prisons, staff at The Prison were dealing simultaneously with a change of employer, a reduction in staff numbers, and new roles and responsibilities. Both staff and prisoners were adjusting to a variety of changes in the daily regime.
- 4.1.7 Some aspects of the transition did not go smoothly. The Board expressed concern at the time about the loss of experience in some areas of The Prison, such as the CASU (see 5.7.3). Shortage of escorts caused difficulties with hospital appointments (see 5.3.6) and limited prisoner access to facilities such as the library (see 5.2.7 and 5.2.8).

One prisoner was distressed after being unable to attend a funeral because the only available escorts were occupied with urgent healthcare appointments. For a time, The Board was also aware of a number of minor incidents of ill-discipline that were occurring as prisoners discovered various ways to take advantage of their increased freedom of movement.

- 4.1.8 At the time The Board found the management team was alert and responsive to issues as they were encountered, and in most cases any areas of concern were quickly addressed by adapting the regime and adjusting staffing profiles.
- 4.1.9 During the transition there were contingency plans in place to deal with unexpected peaks in demand for staff resources. However, these proved insufficient to handle all eventualities. Such issues took time to resolve. Contingency arrangements partly depended on redeploying Offender Management Unit (OMU) staff to cover for unexpected shortfalls in staff numbers, and this had an impact on the normal work of the unit (see 5.5.2). However, a more viable approach to staffing contingency was in place by the middle of the year. Additional staff have since been recruited and trained, and this has eased some pressures. The development of new skills and adjusting to new roles is an ongoing process, but progress is being made.
- 4.1.10 The Prison has a history of good staff/prisoner relationships. At the beginning of 2014, The Board was concerned that this record would be compromised by the pressures of transition, and a period of low staff morale as numbers reduced in the aftermath of a long period of uncertainty. In the event The Board found that staff continued to behave professionally. The Board receives regular reports from prisoners on their relationships with staff; either during informal conversation, or through the formal applications that prisoners make to The Board. While these reports are not always positive, they followed a similar pattern during 2014 to those The Board has received in previous years.
- 4.1.11 Some transition issues (such as the impact of losing experienced CASU staff, or shortages of escorts), might have been avoided if there had been either the time to take things more slowly, or an opportunity to complete more of the groundwork before the end of 2013. However, there were also a number of developments in The Prison that were long overdue, but could not progress until transition was complete. Because of dependencies on prisoner movement across a large site, these include the priority of increasing the number of opportunities for work. On balance, The Board welcomes the fact that the bulk of the transition had been completed by mid-2014, and that the establishment has been in a position since then to move forward on other priorities.
- 4.1.12 In September 2014 HMIP carried out an unannounced inspection. Their report was published in January 2015. Inspectors identified the priorities as: better safety outcomes; high quality work and training opportunities; and a clarification of role. Their report provides a detailed view of The Prison at the time, and recommendations on future priorities. The remit of The Board is different from that of the inspectorate, but The Board's overall impression is that the HMIP report provides a fair and accurate picture of The Prison at the time of their visit.
- 4.1.13 Throughout the year, but particularly with the benefit of a more stable environment in the latter part of the year, progress has been made in Equality and Inclusion (see 5.1.1), Access to Hospital Care (see 5.3.6), Literacy (see 5.2.9), Support for Older Prisoners (see 5.3.8), Healthcare programmes and Interventions (see 5.3.1), Family links (see 5.5.9), Reception and management of property (see 5.8.12 and 5.8.13),

Induction (see 5.8.10), Kiosks (see 5.8.4), Laundry (see 5.8.14), and Refurbishment (see 5.8.3).

- 4.1.14 There has also been a considerable effort in 2014 to increase opportunities for work. This resulted in a welcome increase in the number of hours worked. The groundwork that has already been completed should allow us to report an improvement in the number of prisoners employed in future (see 5.4.3).

4.2 Issues in this report requiring a response

For the minister

- 4.2.1 Indeterminate Sentences: The Board wrote to the minister in January 2014 regarding its concerns in this area, and received a response in February 2014. The Board welcomed the commitment made by NOMS to use best efforts to improve the progression of those serving Indeterminate Sentences, and the work that was under way at the time to improve provision and better meet the needs of prisoners. However, twelve months later, prisoners on Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPP/ISP) at The Prison still face practical difficulties in progressing towards release (see 6.1.3 and 6.1.4). Can the minister confirm that current efforts will be sufficient to address the issues that remain in this area?
- 4.2.2 The Board welcomes the recommendation from HMIP inspectors that prisoners should not be transferred to Northumberland if distance prevents them maintaining family ties. Recently The Board has seen a reduction in the number of prisoners arriving from outside the local area. However, when this issue was raised in our previous Annual Report, The Board was advised that pressures on the prison system made it inevitable that some prisoners would have to be located away from their home area. Is the Minister able to provide reassurance that the inspector's recommendation can be followed?
- 4.2.3 Capacity shortages across the prison system make it difficult, on occasions, to arrange appropriate transfers for prisoners. The Board has encountered a number of situations during 2014 when a prisoner has been held in the CASU longer than appropriate, because of delays in arranging a transfer to a prison better equipped to handle their behaviour. Other prisoners have felt it necessary to resort to highly disruptive behaviour in order to force a transfer (see 5.7.2). What action is being taken nationally to facilitate the transfer of a prisoner when another location would be more appropriate?

For the director

- 4.2.4 The Board notes the recommendation from HMIP that prisoners should not be transferred to Northumberland if distance prevents them maintaining family ties; and welcome the recent reduction in the number of prisoners arriving from outside the area. The Board has also welcomed local initiatives to alleviate transport difficulties faced by visitors and commended the visitor services available at The Prison. The Board remains concerned that prisoners from outside the area face difficulties in maintaining family ties (see 3.1.7 and 5.5.11). Can more be done in 2015 to improve family contact for those prisoners?
- 4.2.5 The Board is required to monitor Healthcare services in the same way as other prison services. In the past The Board had access to quantitative data that allowed members to monitor aspects of the health care service delivered to prisoners. In 2014 The Board

has been unable to obtain similar evidence on a regular basis. Without appropriate data Members of The Board are unable to satisfy themselves that the Healthcare and Mental Health needs of prisoners are met. Will the Director support The Board in its efforts to obtain regular access to appropriate Healthcare data? (see 5.3.1)

- 4.2.6 The Board understands that the number of self-harm incidents at The Prison is relatively low, but also noted an increase in both the number of prisoners who self-harm and the frequency of self-harm during 2014 (see 5.6.5). What steps are planned in 2015 to address the rising levels of self-harm?
- 4.2.7 The mix on House Block 12 of VPs and Mains with difficulties has been a concern to The Board for some time, and has continued to be the source of several prisoner applications to the IMB in 2014 (see 5.8.9). What steps are planned in 2015 to address both the fear of bullying, and the risk of bullying that arise from this mix?
- 4.2.8 The Board has welcomed the improvement in MDT rates that was achieved early in 2014, but indicators suggest that it is proving difficult to maintain this improvement. What steps will be taken in 2015 to tackle substance and alcohol abuse? (see 5.3.17)

4.3 Issues raised in previous report

Ongoing

- Practical difficulties faced by Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners in satisfying the conditions for release (raised again: see 4.2.1)
- Impact on prisoners and their families when they are placed in the most northerly prison in England (raised again: see 4.2.2)
- OASys assessments: Many prisoners still arrive without an adequate OASys assessment. This issue was raised in The Board's previous Annual Report, acknowledged by NOMS in their response to the previous report, and identified as an issue by HMIP inspectors in September 2014. It is too early to assess the effect of interim measures, so at present The Board has nothing to add, other than to regret that this issue is still unresolved.
- Access to NHS numbers: The Board welcomed progress in 2013 in assisting prisoners to access their NHS numbers, and anecdotally The Board understands that further progress has been made in 2014, but The Board has been unable to obtain the data that it would need to determine whether it should consider this issue resolved. Because of the impact on screening for bowel cancer etc. this remains a concern (data issue raised at 4.2.5).
- Attendance at ACCT case reviews: The Board welcomes efforts to improve attendance by relevant parties at ACCT case reviews, and recognizes the progress that has been made, particularly in recent levels of participation by Mental Health Staff (see 5.6.6). However, The Board notes that Healthcare is often unable to be represented at these reviews.

Resolved

- Lengthy delays in arranging inquests – there has been no change in the number of outstanding inquests, but The Board believes that New Coroner Rules and Regulations have helped to eliminate the excessive delays The Board reported previously.

- Time lost in the movement of prisoners: the progress that was made in 2014 is welcome. A number of priorities for 2015 rely on further improvements in prisoner movement, and these are ongoing.
- Improvements in dental provision: The procurement process increased provision, further measures are already planned, and The Board will monitor progress.
- Improvement in work opportunities: A number of encouraging initiatives are under way, and The Board will monitor progress during 2015
- Late arrivals in reception: resolved by changes to reception process (see 5.8.12)
- Variations in the breakfast menu: the differences between CASU and other menus that gave The Board concern last year are now resolved.
- Receipt of benefits: JobCentre Plus staff are unable to prepare the local office when a prisoner is released at short notice, after a Parole Board hearing, or when their address is unknown until shortly before release. However, prisoners in these situations are provided with details of welfare provision available from the Local Authority, and the possibility of short term benefit advance.
- Schedule of improvements to facilities: Concerns over the age and quality of some facilities (most notably the CASU and older House Blocks) are well known. Refurbishment of décor and equipment is ongoing throughout the establishment, and The Board is kept sufficiently well informed of ongoing work and plans.
- Reporting of movements into the CASU, and scheduling of adjudications and reviews: these were of concern in 2013, and early 2014. Both have since improved, and the cooperation of CASU staff is appreciated by Board members. Neither is giving undue concern at present, and The Board anticipates that The Prison will maintain efforts to report movements into CASU, and achieve consistent scheduling of adjudications and reviews.
- Issues with laundry equipment: are now resolved, and The Board has welcomed the introduction of laundry facilities on each wing for use by prisoners.
- Adjudication delays: issue with interrogation of mobile phones is now considered to have been resolved.

Section 5. Areas reported on

5.1 Equality and Inclusion

- 5.1.1 Following changes in 2013 it took some time for Equality and Inclusion to become re-established, but after a period of uncertainty this appears to be working well. In September the HMIP inspection reported that Equality work was fragmented. Since November 2014, however, regular monthly meetings have re-commenced, and so far the information coming out of these meetings is good. The Board continues to monitor this area, and hopes the good work will continue.
- 5.1.2 **Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs):** Following HM Inspector of Prisons recommendation that DIRFs should be available for completion by prisoners, The Prison has added a “tick box” to the Complaint forms to indicate if prisoner complaint relates to discrimination issues. This form is then forwarded to the Diversity Office for scrutiny and investigation. This new practice will be robustly monitored by Diversity staff and Board members.
- 5.1.3 **Disabled Prisoners:** There has been a further initiative within The Prison in order to implement the requirements of the new Social Care Act which will come into being in April 2015. This is to ensure that prisoners with disabilities have access to the same services as people living within the community. Meetings have commenced between Healthcare and Social Care, and The Prison is to identify how this agenda will be implemented within The Prison. There is prisoner involvement at these meetings. A prisoner Disability and Assessment Care Plan has been produced and this will be formed from Reception, Induction and Health Care assessments. Prisoners are encouraged to identify any disabilities they may have, however, some prisoners do not want to admit or recognise that they have a disability.
- 5.1.4 **Older Prisoners:** There are currently 80 prisoners over the age of 60. Funding has been identified to introduce a day care facility within the prison estate. This is in the very early stage of development and will be monitored by The Board. A survey was carried out during the year to identify issues relating to accommodation holding older prisoners. As a result, changes have been made to showers and cells. A business plan is being produced and submitted to cost other changes required relating to toileting and showering facilities, e.g. provision of grab rails, shower seats, non-slip surfaces and in some cases, grab rails in cells.
- 5.1.5 **Sexual Orientation:** As of December 2014 there are 12 Homosexual prisoners, 1 Bi-sexual, 1 Other, 1 Refuse to Disclose, with 249 No Data Entered – this out of a prison population of 1334. The Transgender Re-assignment prisoner is accepted well by other prisoners.
- 5.1.6 **Ethnicity and Foreign Nationals:** The national prison ethnic minority population routinely represents approximately 26% and The Prison continues to have a lower proportion at 6%. There are 30 Foreign Nationals within The Prison currently, (compared to 24 in 2013), and these consist of a number of differing cultures. This figure is also low in comparison with national figures.
- 5.1.7 **Chaplaincy:** Prisoners who are Christian, Muslim or Buddhist can attend weekly acts of worship. Sikhs, Jehovah Witnesses and Quakers attend on a fortnightly basis with

volunteer input. Pagans have the services of a volunteer once a month and Hindu and Mormon input is on an ad hoc basis (See 5.6.10).

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

- 5.2.1 **The OFSTED Inspection** of education provision took place in The Prison at the same time as the HMP Inspection in September 2014. Their report was published in January 2015. It described the overall quality of education and vocational training as good, as were outcomes, but described the range as limited.
- 5.2.2 **Manchester College** continues to be the deliverer of education to the prisoners. It has had its contract extended from August 2015 to August 2016. The temporary appointments of the Head and her Deputy have been made permanent as from April 2014. Both these actions will add stability and consistency to the provision.
- 5.2.3 **The weekly time table** for delivery has changed from 5 days per week to 4 days per week. However the same number of learning hours are being offered, making the teaching days (Monday to Thursday inclusive) longer. The college staff all still have the same contracts that they had prior to the change. Despite coping with a different time table, the delivery is the same as before and, working in partnership with Sodexo, is supporting any new skills sectors that are being introduced. Due to outreach work, more prisoners are able to benefit from the OLASS (Offenders' Learning and Skills Service) contract at The Prison.
- 5.2.4 **City and Guilds** validating authority acknowledge that the quality of provision offered by Manchester College is of a high standard which is to be applauded and validates the use of many of the C&G qualifications followed.
- 5.2.5 **New qualifications** now include Performing Manufacturing Operations in Tailoring at Level 2 and Horticulture. Additionally Level 2 in Catering are being followed by workers in the mess and kitchen as work based learning provision, added to this Mentoring is taught throughout the whole prison. 'Multiskills' are now delivered to Level 2 from Level 1 as learning support to learners who need an area of development as inclusive learning. Functional Skills validated by NCFE examining authority is also provided as outreach support.
- 5.2.6 **Units of learning delivered and achieved** during the 2 academic year totalled 6451, maintained a retention rate of 90% and delivered a success rate of 80%. Prisoners express their satisfaction with all elements and areas of their involvement with the Education provision and are glad that they can achieve education qualifications.
- 5.2.7 **Support for Education provision** and extending the literacy availability of the prisoners is provided by Northumberland County council Library Service. It is adequately resourced both in terms of its staff and materials, but inspectors rated access as restricted.
- 5.2.8 **Staffing includes:** 1 full time and 4 part time staff across the two site centres. The opening hours are set for the week (Acklington site – Mon. to Fri. 9.00 – 5.00, Thurs evening and Saturday 9.00 -12.00. Castlington site Mon. – Thur. 1.00 – 5.00 Friday 9.00 – 12.00. Gateway Mon. – Wed. evenings.) At the beginning of the year there were some concerns that because of changes in the daily regimes prisoners were not able to benefit from the library provision. This returned to normal mid year.

- 5.2.9 **Other changes for the better include:** the Toe by Toe scheme promoted by the Shannon Trust, where prisoners mentor others who have below level 1 reading ability to kick start them into learning. Currently there are 35 mentors across The Prison and this is expected to increase.
- 5.2.10 **The two library sites** have on average 720 prisoner visits each with Castington issuing an approx. 2 books and Acklington 1.5 books per prisoner. A new computer system is being fitted to allow the resources of both sites to be more easily accessed.
- 5.2.11 **Physical Education:** The department is staffed by eight officers who have a variety of qualifications in coaching, first aid, and health related fitness, with four officers being qualified in the use of defibrillators. This is a reduction of almost 50% plus a Senior Officer from previous years when in an external inspection from OFSTED rated the department as a 'Centre of Excellence' in 2013. The reduction in staff has impacted significantly on the programme currently offered and prisoners are no longer able to gain NVQs in Sports Recreation and Leisure, F.A. Coaching Awards, or any other of the other external qualifications previously available. The emphasis is now on leisure and recreational activities, but the department remains an extremely popular and successful area of the prison.

5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health

Healthcare

- 5.3.1 **Healthcare Outcomes:** The inspection in September 2014 rated Health services as good overall, with reservations about the clarity of the complaints process. As in 2013, The Board is broadly satisfied that the Healthcare and Mental Health responsibilities at The Prison are met. However, in 2013 The Board had access to full quantitative evidence (as available in the NHS) that confirmed its perceptions. Despite repeated requests in 2014, and formal agreement by the provider to provide similar data in 2014 The Board is disappointed that it has not been forthcoming. This also raises the more important question of whether the provider, commissioner, and prison are satisfied that they have the information needed to ensure that the quality of service provided is acceptable. (see 4.2.5)
- 5.3.2 **Complaints:** There has been no significant increase in complaints about healthcare. However the lack of access to healthcare data means that The Board cannot properly assess progress on former problems.
- 5.3.3 **Assessment and Vaccinations:** The Board welcomes great efforts by the healthcare team to improve the prompt assessment of prisoners transferred in and their vaccination opportunities.
- 5.3.4 **Access to Healthcare records:** The Board welcomes extension of a new computer system, such that doctors outside the hospital can access prisoners' health records; improving care, especially out of hours.
- 5.3.5 **Dental Services:** The Board is monitoring the difficulties encountered in ensuring that prisoners get to their dental assessment or treatment promptly and anticipates improvement in 2015.
- 5.3.6 **Transfers for Hospital Care:** The Board is monitoring some difficulties encountered in ensuring that prisoners get to their outside hospital appointments; whether urgent or

routine and welcomes the various initiatives that The Prison has undertaken to improve the situation.

- 5.3.7 **Bowel Cancer Screening:** The Board welcomes new measures introduced to offer screening to those eligible since 20 October 2014 and awaits data to verify any improvement.
- 5.3.8 **Older Prisoners:** Although they have been scaled down from the original concept, The Board welcomes plans for an Older Persons drop in centre in 2015.
- 5.3.9 **Out of hospital resuscitation:** The Board would like to document the successful outcome of out of hospital CPR on one of its members working in The Prison. This rare event only proved possible through input from prisoners, officers trained in excellent bystander CPR and CPR continued by healthcare staff. Refer to 6.2 for an example of exemplary care which directly benefitted a member of The Board.
- 5.3.10 **Privacy:** The Board welcomes various initiatives to improve the prisoners' privacy in the healthcare area in 2015.
- 5.3.11 **Healthcare at Rule 45 reviews:** The Board notes that healthcare is rarely represented at Rule 45 reviews, because staff are busy elsewhere. As prisoners have normally been visited by healthcare at other times during the same day, this generally makes little practical difference, but is not good practice.
- 5.3.12 **The Future:** The provision of Healthcare services will change from Care UK to G4S in 2015. The Board will monitor how The Prison responds to the Social Care Act in 2015.

Mental Health

- 5.3.13 **Coding:** The Board welcomes the news that the MHT has accepted READ codes for Mental Health Diagnoses across the North East cluster of prisons, though understands that not all Mental Health patients receive a formal diagnosis if they are assessed at primary care level by the Mental Health nurses.
- 5.3.14 **Transfers Out:** The time to transfer to other MH units is not presently available to The Board, but it understands that difficulties do arise when prisoners have to go to specialised units or a distant unit.
- 5.3.15 **Transfers In:** The Board has heard of concerns in the Mental Health Team about over rapid transfers in of prisoners with complex Mental Health needs without proper transfer arrangements and will continue to monitor this.

Substance Misuse; DART.

- 5.3.16 **New Systems Approach:** The Board praises the high quality of the work, the outstanding ideas and the energy in the improved approach in the North East cluster of prisons. A prisoner journey has been adopted, with drug free wings, improved arrangements for dispensing of methadone and MDT working.
- 5.3.17 **Random Mandatory Drugs Testing:** MDT rates averaged 13% in 2014, compared to an average of 20% in 2013. The Board welcomes this improvement, but notes that having improved significantly earlier in the year, levels have since begun to increase.
- 5.3.18 **Programmes and Interventions:** The Board notes plans to improve the number of courses available in The Prison and will monitor this during 2015.

5.4 Purposeful Activity (including Work)

- 5.4.1 **The Prison is a Working Prison**, so the aim is to have all prisoners who are not of retirement age or unfit, engaged in purposeful activity. All work, courses and education are classed as purposeful activity and controlled by the Central Hub Activities Control Office. One of the priorities identified by the HMIP inspection in September was that there should be sufficient activity places to ensure all prisoners are purposefully engaged during the core day.
- 5.4.2 **Insufficient Work for Prisoners:** There are insufficient opportunities for those who wish to work. In December 2014 there were 292 prisoners unemployed and no vacancies. (in December 2013: 244 prisoners were unemployed and 14 vacancies).
- 5.4.3 **Expectations of increased employment opportunities** were raised on transition to the private sector. In The Board's last report it was anticipated that it would not be straightforward to meet these expectations during a period of significant organisation change. In practice there has been little change in the number of prisoners with work, but for those employed there has been a welcome 30% increase in the number of hours worked. During 2014 the number unemployed reduced from a high of 362 in May to 292 in December. The proportion of prisoners that are capable of employment, but not in work has reduced slightly, and currently stands at 22%. Importantly, a considerable amount of groundwork has also been completed in 2014 which should increase opportunities for work in the year ahead. The Board hopes to be in a position to report more significant progress in 2015.

5.5 Resettlement & Reducing Reoffending

- 5.5.1 The HMIP report made a number of recommendations in this area, emphasising the need properly to resource the work of the OMU, and for effective integration with the work of other departments.
- 5.5.2 In the early part of the year The Board raised concerns over levels of caseload in the OMU. At the time, staffing levels had reduced, and the OMU was providing support on a contingency basis to cover for temporary staffing shortfalls elsewhere in the establishment. Partly as a result of this The Board was receiving an increased number of prisoner applications related to sentence management and transfers. These pressures eased with improved contingency arrangements for staffing and a more settled environment.
- 5.5.3 **Targets:** The Resettlement and Reducing Re-offending team exceeded its targets for the year to November 2014 for settled accommodation on discharge; target: 87%, achieved 91.48% and education and training on discharge; target: 27%, achieved 38%. The employment on discharge target was 14% and a figure of 19.48% was achieved showing an improvement over the 7.69% figure for March.
- 5.5.4 **Statutory/third sector organisations:** A Directory of Third Sector Agencies with contact details is due to be put on the kiosk system (see 5.8.4 below) in 2015 so that the information is easily accessible by prisoners (see table 3.1A above).
- 5.5.5 **Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL):** There are several opportunities for prisoners to work outside The Prison in the grounds, car park and cleaning the Visits Centre. The Prison Rating Scheme target was exceeded.

- 5.5.6 **Restorative Justice:** The Sycamore Tree has been running for three years at The Prison. It is a Faith Based project, run using outside volunteers under the leadership of the Chaplaincy. It endeavours to allow prisoners to recognise the hurt they have caused to both victims and their love ones. They attend a six week programme, completing worksheets that are assessed, before finishing the course that ends in symbolic acts of atonement. There is a waiting list to attend Sycamore Tree.
- 5.5.7 **Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team:** A new pathway for recovery was implemented in 2014, starting at Reception, followed by engagement on House Block 3, then Gateway for treatment recovery followed by abstinence on House Block 7.
- 5.5.8 **Legal Highs:** The Board recognizes the difficulties in checking prisoners for legal highs, and accepts that the availability of SPICE and other similar legal highs is one of the factors resulting in indiscipline and assaults on Officers and fellow prisoners. The DART team has produced a leaflet explaining the dangers and effects of these drugs, which was distributed to all prisoners.
- 5.5.9 **Family Links:** There have been many changes in 2014 to the Visits Centre run by NEPACS and to The Prison visits booking system. These have been welcomed by the prisoners who can now book visits themselves on the kiosk system (see 5.8.4) and then inform the visitor who used to have to phone for a visit only to find the line engaged.
- 5.5.10 **Visitors** now pass through the security system more efficiently since bio-metrics are used for both visitors and prisoners. The sniffer dogs were replaced early in the year by an Ion Scanner which detects drugs accurately.
- 5.5.11 The Prison is difficult to reach without a car. Bus journeys from Teesside to The Prison can take five hours. NEPACS has initiated a community bus, to take families direct to and from Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, Durham and Middlesbrough. Information on how to travel to Northumberland is now available in HMP Holme House and HMP Durham. However, around one-third of the prisoners come from the North West region causing great difficulties for families to visit them because of the distance and transport links. The Prison does not have video link for virtual visits that are available in some other UK prisons. Only 60% of prisoners get visits. Taking children out of school for visits is unsatisfactory as they miss schooling and the mothers get fined, but in an effort to improve this, more weekend visits have been arranged.

5.6 Safer Custody

- 5.6.1 The inspectors discerned some deterioration in safety outcomes, and identified better outcomes in this area as one of the priorities for the future. Trends in prison discipline and trends in self-harm have been of particular concern to The Board.
- 5.6.2 The number of times a prisoner is charged with an offence against prison discipline has been increasing steadily over the last two years. In 2014 the average number of adjudications per month was around 50% higher than it was in 2013, and the number of incidents involving damage to prison property each month around three times higher than in 2013, despite prisoners having to meet the cost of damage. The trend in the number of assaults was in line with national figures.
- 5.6.3 The Board welcomes the reduction in levels of substance abuse. The proportion of prisoners failing random drug tests has almost halved in comparison to 2013.

- 5.6.4 The number of times that Use of Force has been required was 30% lower in 2014 than in 2013, but figures on Use of Force did show a slight upward variation during the middle part of the year. The Prison is aware of this trend and it is being monitored both by it and The Board.
- 5.6.5 The Board understands that the number of Self-Harm Incidents at The Prison is relatively low, compared to that in similar prisons. However, it is notable that the number of Incidents of Self-Harm during 2014 was 50% higher than in 2013. This is partly the result of increased numbers of prisoners who Self-Harm, and partly results from increased frequency.
- 5.6.6 **ACCT:** ACCT documentation is currently being audited to establish accuracy. Prison senior managers are aware that this may possibly highlight further staff training needs in the completion of the documents. ACCTs opened throughout 2014 also indicate a slightly upward trend. Normally in 2014 there were around a dozen in place, compared to around half a dozen in 2013. This is not a major concern at this stage. There are currently 28 ACCT assessors and 4 ACCT tutors. A slight cause for concern, similar to that identified in the 2013 Annual Report, is that Healthcare does not appear to attend reviews routinely and The Board views this as an ongoing concern. (See 5.3.11 and 5.7.9)
- 5.6.7 **Listener Scheme:** The Listener Scheme continues effectively, although numbers of Listeners have reduced from 34 in 2013 to 21 for 2014. There are now two co-location sites on House Blocks 2 and 11 where prisoners can spend private time with the Listeners. The Scheme is managed internally by a Senior Prison Custody Officer, who works with the locally based Samaritan organization which is responsible for appointing and training the Listeners. The Listeners have been asked if they will keep a log of their activities and send it to the Diversity Office for collation of statistics.
- 5.6.8 **Safer Custody Meetings:** There has been a reduction in the number of Safer Custody Meetings through the year but these have now re-commenced on a monthly basis. However, a new significant development towards safer custody of prisoners has been the introduction to The Prison of User Voice. This will give a greater voice to prisoners' views.
- 5.6.9 **Deaths in Custody:** During 2014 there have been five Deaths in Custody, of which four were due to natural causes and one self-inflicted. There were no significant issues regarding Safer Custody procedures within The Prison. There are currently three Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) and seven others recently appointed; waiting to be trained. Previously the FLOs only worked with families and prisoners following a death in custody.–Now this role has improved by working with terminally ill prisoners, with the writing of wills, marriage of a prisoner in palliative care and resolving any financial issues and concerns. There have been no concerns reported by the Coroner.
- 5.6.10 **Chaplaincy:** The Chaplaincy is now fully established on the Castington site and the estate consists of a Chapel, Multi-faith Room and three offices. Prisoners can also use a room on House Block 12, as the Chaplaincy is a long way from the VP estate causing logistical difficulties for disabled and elderly prisoners. A mini-bus can be booked in advance for attendances at services and/or group work. Chaplaincy staffing was reduced during the year as part of the overall staffing review. The lead Chaplain is to put together a business case for extra staffing in 2015. (See 5.1.7)

5.7 Segregation, Care and Separation, Close Supervision

- 5.7.1 **Care and Separation Unit (CASU):** For the whole of the year under review, The Prison has operated with only one CASU containing 18 cells. Having fewer cells has meant that there has been a greater focus on returning prisoners to House Blocks. Board members have visited the CASU at least once a week during 2014 and there have been no major concerns regarding capacity, although the CASU has on a very few occasions been full. The Board has questioned the Management on the existence of a contingency plan in the event that CASU places are unavailable. There has been an acceptable response and The Board will monitor the situation in the coming year. In the first half of 2014, CASU staffing appeared stretched with some staff being temporarily allocated and unfamiliar with the detailed workings of the CASU. The situation had improved by the end of the year.
- 5.7.2 **Inappropriate use of the CASU:** One of the most common reasons for prisoners being moved to the CASU and causing it to be full, is their desire to be moved out to a different prison; usually nearer to home. They create disturbances which they know will result in moves to the CASU, and when moved they threaten to continue their disturbances until they are moved. This is not an easy situation for The Prison to manage, as the authorities cannot be seen to give in. The Board will continue to monitor this.
- 5.7.3 **Staffing:** Soon after the takeover by Sodexo and the resulting staff reductions, The Board became aware of a few instances where staff on the CASU appeared stretched. For example where Healthcare/Chaplaincy/Board Members found it difficult to see prisoners because staff did not appear to have time to organize unlocks. This was revealed to be an organizational issue and was soon rectified.
- 5.7.4 **Adjudications:** During 2014, these were held both in the CASU and on the wings. The reasons given for this were; lack of spare holding cells in the CASU, and difficulty in obtaining staff to escort prisoners from House Block to Adjudication room and back again and prisoners refusing to return to the wings after adjudications. In principle, The Board accepts the reasons for this approach. However, the rooms in which the adjudications are held on House Blocks lack privacy, and some prisoner information that is normally readily available in a dedicated adjudication room was not always present in these rooms. Board Members travelling between wings with staff could also be perceived as compromising The Board's independence. Without appropriate accommodation on the wings, there are challenges in achieving good practice with this approach.
- 5.7.5 **Segregation, Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG)** The Board has monitored a number of SMARG meetings and one Adjudication Review meeting, at which the issue of adjudication location was also raised.
- 5.7.6 **Adjudications:** During 2014, there was an average of around 220 adjudications per month, compared to an average of 260 per month in 2013. A third of adjudications had to be adjourned (39% in 2013). Of the remainder 44% were proven, 24% referred to the judge, and 12% to the police. 21% were dismissed. These proportions were similar in 2013. A new reason emerged for adjournments due to prisoners being made to pay for damage, which took some time to be assessed by the works team.
- 5.7.7 **The Board** continued to attend a sample of around 10% of adjudications and found them to be consistently, fairly and correctly conducted.

- 5.7.8 **Informing the Board** within 24 hours of prisoners moving to the CASU remained inconsistent during 2014, despite improvements in contact arrangements. Causes include changes to staffing patterns and organization. The Board has seen some recent improvements and will continue monitoring this in 2015.
- 5.7.9 **Rule 45 Reviews:** In 2014 scheduling of the reviews at a fixed time on a fixed day improved and Board members were able to attend more easily. Around 10% of reviews were observed by Board members, and all were conducted in the appropriate professional manner, although, at times, it was difficult for Healthcare to ensure representation (see 5.3.11 and 5.6.6).
- 5.7.10 **Serious Incidents:** Throughout 2014 five serious incidents were attended by The Board. All were dealt with according to protocol, handled professionally, and with care for the welfare of the prisoners involved. The hot and cold debriefs were also attended by The Board, outcomes discussed and lessons learned.

5.8 Residential Services

- 5.8.1 **Residences:** The Prison has 14 House Blocks plus the Gateway Unit, spread over a large area. Numbers 1 to 10 (with the exception of Block 6) house Mains, whilst House Blocks 10 to 14 house largely VPs. House Block 6 holds Category D prisoners. The capacity of The Prison is 1348 Housed in single cells, and population numbers have been close to that all year.
- 5.8.2 **The Gateway Unit:** This is a single storey modern building which currently houses 40 prisoners overcoming dependence on alcohol, illicit or prescribed drugs. They undergo intensive courses usually of twelve or sixteen week duration. The atmosphere is designed to be relaxed and welcoming with comfortable chairs, numerous leisure facilities, and a wealth of impressive notice boards and information. The work done is of a high standard.
- 5.8.3 **Condition of the House Blocks:** All units are clean and tidy, with largely older buildings but some new have been built on the Acklington site in the last few years. All buildings appear to be in a satisfactory condition and there have been no major building or refurbishment issues over 2014. House block 7 has recently undergone re-cladding on many of the walls on the upper landing and the unit has been repainted. Further traces of Asbestos have been identified around The Prison and this will be dealt with during 2015 by temporary short term doubling up to vacate affected cells for repair.
- 5.8.4 **Kiosks:** Touch screen Kiosks were installed at The Prison in all House Blocks in July. These now enable prisoners to perform a number of tasks including ordering meals, arranging visits and receiving notices from management. Their use releases staff for other duties. They have proved very successful and generally popular with staff and prisoners. Despite a few teething problems and complaints about lack of privacy around the screens in some House Blocks; they have generally been welcomed.
- 5.8.5 **Gymnasiums:** The prison has a modern gymnasium on each of the two parts of the site, with a third much smaller facility (Gym 2) on the Acklington site. Gyms 1 and 3 each have large sports halls and adjoining rooms with a variety of fitness equipment and machines that are extensively used. The maintenance contract however has been a problem this year and a number of machines are currently out of use.

- 5.8.6 **Clothing:** Prisoners are now able to wear their own clothes, as long as this is not of the same style / colour as staff uniforms. This has been welcomed and goes hand in hand with prisoners being able to wash their own clothes on the House Blocks. In so doing it gives greater personal responsibility. Prison clothing is still worn at work and for visits. Since July prisoners cannot receive any clothing that is not purchased by the prisoner from an approved source. This seems to have been accepted by the prisoners with very few Applications being received about the policy. Once they settled in, the changes to clothing policy have helped reduce the amount of time required for handling prisoner property issues.
- 5.8.7 **House Block 7:** House Block 7 houses largely Mains and during the year was designated as a 'drug free' wing. However this was not totally successful and its future is under review.
- 5.8.8 **House Block 9:** This was the focus of a number of concerns in previous reports, including problems with fire alarm sensors and the CCTV system. These have been largely resolved and the unit seems to be much more settled, with significantly fewer applications from this House Block received by The Board.
- 5.8.9 **House Blocks 12 & 13:** These hold predominantly VPs, but also include Mains who are considered vulnerable on their own wing; for example through bullying. However once these Mains settled, some become problems in themselves, and The Board has received several complaints from VPs claiming intimidation and bullying, and there have been examples of physical violence.
- 5.8.10 **Induction:** House-blocks 3 and 11 are the induction wings of the two respective sites and offer induction courses to Mains and VPs. Earlier in the year, changes to the induction process were of concern to The Board, but the process has significantly improved for Mains since September. The involvement of a select group of trained prisoners to help deliver the programme has proved very successful. VP induction tends to be more individual, given the smaller number of VP admissions, though The Prison is now looking at how the Mains experience can be transferred to the VP House Blocks.
- 5.8.11 **Kitchens:** Originally there were two kitchens with one on the Castington site and one on the Acklington site, but the former closed in early 2014 and The Prison now operates one large fairly modern unit, employing 5 staff and approximately 50 prisoners. Amalgamation of two such large operations caused initial problems, many of which have been resolved. Although some appliances are still a little unreliable, the merger has generally been very successful. By the end of 2014 The Board was receiving very few adverse reports about the quality of the food, but distributing it over such a large site and keeping it hot can be difficult and continues to present challenges.
- 5.8.12 **Reception:** This is a very busy unit that has undergone a number of changes during the past year. The Board feels that the service and the system has improved significantly over the past few months. In particular the distribution of activities between dedicated reception staff, and the House Blocks, along with introduction by prisoners on the use of kiosks has alleviated the issues with late arrivals that were identified in 2013.
- 5.8.13 **Property** still remains an issue at times, but since 1 July, visitors have not been allowed to bring in property or clothing for prisoners. This makes the system easier to manage with less likelihood of unauthorised articles arriving. Prisoners are only allowed to buy items from approved sources. A select, dedicated staff team manages the unit efficiently and effectively.

5.8.14 **Laundry:** This was highlighted as an area of concern in previous Board Annual Reports, but changes and progress have been achieved with considerable investment being made in new machinery. Washing machines have also been installed in most of the House Blocks and although there have been teething problems these will be monitored. The idea has however, proved to be successful and has given prisoners more personal responsibility. As there is now less work for the laundry unit The Prison is to undertake work from other prisons.

Section 6. Other areas of Concern and Examples of Excellence

6.1 Areas of concern

Complaints process

- 6.1.1 The number of formal prisoner complaints rose in the first half of the year. Prisoners began to express considerable frustration with the complaints process, there was an increase in the number of complaints that were not answered within the designated time period, and there were increased numbers of applications made to The Board with the apparent intent of by-passing The Prison complaints system. Sometimes this was done on the advice of staff.
- 6.1.2 The Prison has taken a number of actions to reduce the complaints backlog, and to address the volume of issues reaching the formal complaints process. These initiatives only began to take effect towards the end of the year. Since October the backlog has largely been eliminated, and the volume of complaints has reduced. The proportion of responses that fall outside the standard response time is improving, but there is scope for further progress on this, and on reducing the number of issues that reach the formal complaints process rather than being dealt with more easily and more promptly, on the wings.

Indeterminate sentence prisoners

- 6.1.3 In 2013 The Board was concerned over difficulties faced by prisoners on indeterminate sentences for public protection. In January 2014 The Board wrote to the Secretary of State regarding the lack of availability of suitable programmes for IPP prisoners at The Prison, and the challenges this posed prisoners in progressing towards release. The response from NOMS (11 Feb 2014) stressed that NOMS was using its best efforts to improve the progression of those serving IPP sentences, and that work was under way to revisit the suite of accredited programmes to improve provision and better meet the needs of prisoners.
- 6.1.4 The Board welcomes this commitment, but the issue remains a concern. The number of IPP/ISP prisoners at The Prison did not change significantly during 2014, and such prisoners continue to complain to The Board about difficulties in progressing towards release. In September many ISPs were also expressing frustration to HMIP inspectors about their inability to progress.

6.2 Examples of Excellence

Resuscitation of Board Member

- 6.2.1 On 21st October one of The Board members collapsed while he was making a visit to The Prison. He was a considerable distance from the nearest House Block, and was discovered by two prisoners who were driving Operational Transport buggies. They immediately called for help, and, as they had received First Aid training in The Prison, were able to establish that The Board member had a pulse and was breathing. They put him in the recovery position and covered him. Prison and healthcare staff arrived shortly afterwards, found CPR was needed, and started it, and called an ambulance.

The Board member was taken to hospital, and later had a major heart operation. He is now returning to Board duties. The Family Liaison Team provided support for his family.

- 6.2.2 The Board has been told that successful resuscitation in these circumstances is rare, and depends on the efforts of a number of different people, but particularly on the immediate actions of those who are first on the scene. The Board feels that the way that prisoners, prison staff, healthcare, and the Family Liaison Team handled matters during the incident itself, and over the following days, was exemplary, and something of which the whole prison community can be proud.

Section 7. Independent Monitoring Board

7.1 Independent Monitoring Board: Statistics

Table 7.1A Board Statistics

Board Statistics	2014
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	2
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	593
Number of Rule 45, 14 Day Reviews attended	c.10%
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	10 March 2014

7.2 Independent Monitoring Board: Applications Analysis

Table 7.2A : Application Analysis 2014

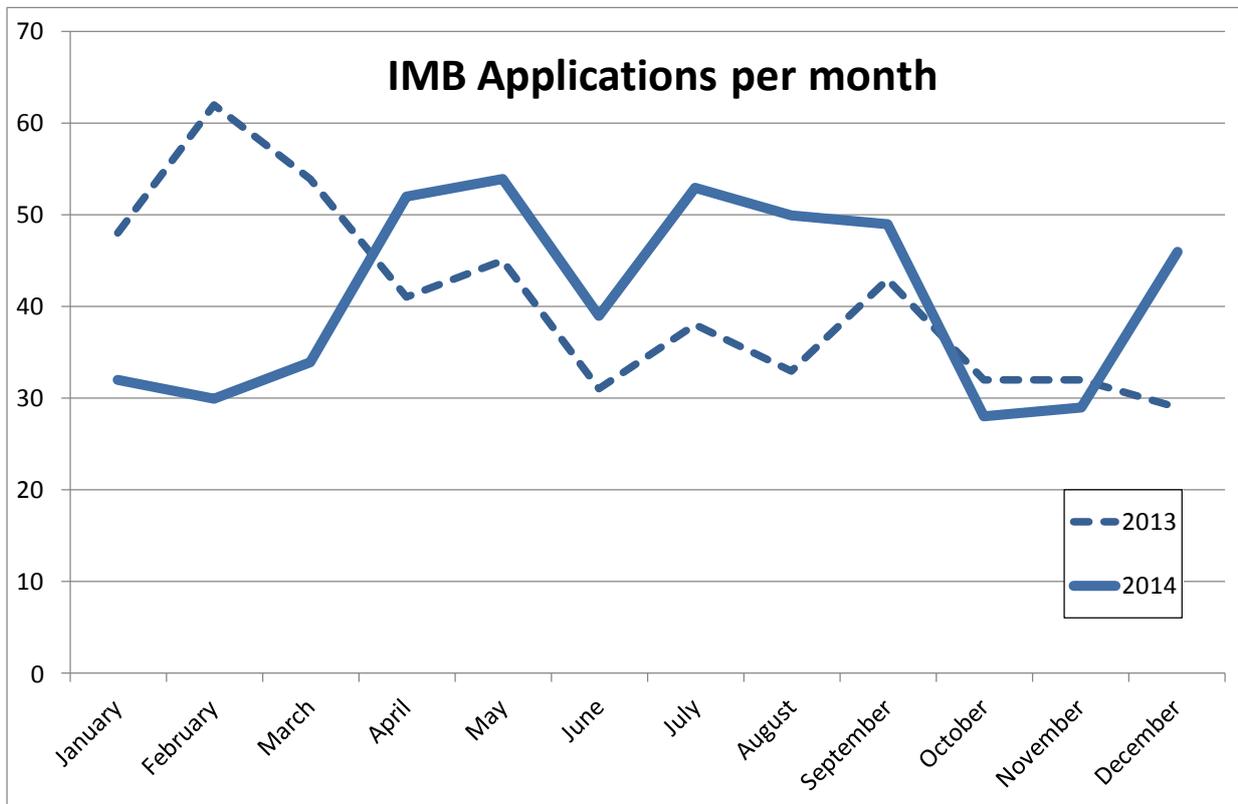
Code	Category	2012	2013	2014
A	Accommodation	17	5	6
B	Adjudications	7	13	2
C	Equality & Diversity (inc. Religion)	10	3	1
D	Education/Employment/Training (inc. IEPs)	30	31	28
E1	Family/Visits (inc. Mail/Phone)	53	59	53
E2	Finance/Pay	14	4	15
F	Food/Kitchen related	6	7	11
G	Health Related	42	35	33
H1	Property (in The Prison)	37	44	55
H2	Property (other establishment)	10	41	41
H3	Canteen facilities, catalogue shopping Argos	12	7	10
I	Sentence Related	29	69	88
J	Staff/Prisoner concerns	67	68	66
K	Transfers	68	59	58
L	Miscellaneous	17	43	29
	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	419	488	496
	Monthly Average	35	41	41

7.2.1 In 2014, The Board received a total of 496 applications compared with 488 applications in 2013. During 2014, there were 42 applications marked for chair confidential access, compared with 20 in 2013.

7.2.2 Applications were submitted by 266 different prisoners, and there were 90 prisoners who submitted more than one application. The thirteen prisoners who submitted five or more applications during the year accounted for 25% of the total.

7.2.3 Applications were submitted from across The Prison. A slightly higher proportion of applications came from vulnerable prisoners, but this was mainly the result of activity by a small number of prisoners who raised a large number of applications. Applications were analysed for any unusual patterns of activity, but no concerns were identified.

Table 7.2B Number of applications per month



7.2.4 **Application Trends:** While the annual total of applications remained much the same as in 2013, the pattern through the year was different. The Board saw an increase during the transition period in the first half of the year, which then subsided during the more stable period towards the end of the year.

7.2.5 **Transition** issues were reflected in periods of increased activity for certain categories of application. These include an increased number of applications related to sentence management when the OMU was under pressure; an increase in applications related to finance associated with teething problems on the new kiosks; an increase in the number of applications related to food when The Prison first moved to a single kitchen.

7.2.6 The most common **Categories of Application** were property, sentence related, staff/prisoner relations, transfers and family/visits. The Board continues to see a large number of property issues which would have been better resolved before reaching either the formal prison complaints process or The Board. Shortfalls in information flow around HDC and re-categorisation accounted for a number of sentence-related applications. On some wings there is a mix of VPs and Mains who have difficulty coping, and the recurring theme in the category of staff/prisoner relations related to difficulties in managing that mix. However, the category also includes a wide variety of different complaints. The more serious concerns raised in this area have always been taken seriously and handled correctly by The Prison.

7.2.7 **Bypassing The Prison complaints system:** during 2014 The Board saw an increase in the number of prisoners who raise a Board application in an attempt to bypass The Prison complaints system, and The Board is aware that this is sometimes done on the

advice of staff. The Board recognises that in mid-2014 there was considerable frustration among prisoners with the operation of the formal complaints process, but The Board knows that attempts to bypass the normal process cause delays, and continues its efforts to encourage proper use of the process.

7.3 The work of the Independent Monitoring Board

7.3.1 **The Board** recruited no members during 2014, although recruitment was actively pursued. One member left for health reasons, and another under tenure rules. The Board had 13 members at the end of 2014 out of an allocation of 20. A recruitment campaign was begun at the end of the year, and will be continued in 2015. The Board is committed to equality in its recruitment procedures.

7.3.2 **Rota and Other Visits:** Members of The Board visit The Prison every week in order to carry out their duties. Members recorded 593 visits in 2014. Three separate rotas were in operation, as well as a weekly panel dealing with applications. In addition to monitoring different aspects of The Prison, and covering the member's Areas of Special Responsibility each rota has specific responsibilities:

- Rota 1 covered meetings of the Prisoner Consultative Council, takes phone calls to the IMB for that week, and co-ordinates The Board's response to serious incidents
- Rota 2 covers attendance at R45 and other reviews of prisoners
- Rota 3 visits the CASU, and covers attendance at adjudications

7.3.3 All visits are reported and issues of immediate concern are raised with appropriate departments. **Rota reports** are seen by the Director and discussed in his or the Deputy Director's presence at Board meetings.

7.3.4 **Applications** are dealt with by a weekly Applications Panel consisting of two Board members. The two-hour patrol state over the lunch period makes it difficult to speak to staff or prisoners during that time. On occasions, re-visits have been necessary in order to deal with the volume and complexity of applications. All prisoner applications to The Board are acknowledged on receipt and the prisoner is kept informed if there is to be any delay in response.

7.3.5 **Areas of special responsibility** mirror the areas of the Annual Report where possible. Each member also maintains contact with an allocated House Block through the year.

7.3.6 **Establishment meetings:** Board members observe establishment meetings throughout the year, prioritising attendance where resources allow, to attend the various Prisoner Consultative Committees, SMARG, Security, Adjudication, Standardisation, Safer Custody, Equality and Inclusion, Health and Safety meetings. Members also attend, purely as observers, selected establishment meetings which relate to their particular Area of Special Responsibility.

7.3.7 **Board Meetings** are held monthly and are well-attended. The Director or his delegate attended all but one meeting in 2014 and gave a report on progress. Thirty minutes before each meeting is devoted to Development Time when invited speakers provide information on a variety of subjects.

- 7.3.8 **Area and National Meetings:** The Chair and/or the Vice-Chair attend the quarterly Area Chairs meeting facilitated by the National Council representative. In 2014, two members of The Board attended the IMB National Conference.
- 7.3.9 The previous Board **Clerk** retired during 2014. The Board would like to take this opportunity to recognise the support that she provided over many years, and welcome its new Clerk to this crucial role.
- 7.3.10 **The IMB Secretariat** has provided support throughout the year.
- 7.3.11 In addition to regular rota duties, and weekly application panel, The Board continued to scrutinise and adapt its rota and application procedures in response to changes in the establishment. Members undertook a number of new initiatives to raise the profile, and improve understanding of the work of The Board. These included new posters and leaflets on all House Blocks, and participation in an event to raise prisoner awareness of third-party support. Nevertheless, the prisoner survey carried out by HMIP in September 2014 showed that only 22% of prisoners felt that it was easy to see a Board member. It is disappointing that this figure is unchanged since 2012, and compares with 29% in similar prisons. Since then The Board has updated its profile on the electronic kiosks, and in the induction material. The Board will continue to seek ways to raise the profile of The Board, and ensure that it is perceived by prisoners as being accessible.
- 7.3.12 It is my responsibility as Chair to sign this report, but it has been produced as a collaborative effort by the whole Board. The extent of change at The Prison in 2014 made this a challenging year for The Board, and I would like to thank all members, past and present, for their commitment and support throughout the year.



Peter Reed
IMB Chair, HMP Northumberland
March, 2015