



HMP STANDFORD HILL

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

YEAR ENDING 30 APRIL 2015

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.

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Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

- 3.1 Stanford Hill is an open prison (Category D) occupying over 300 acres of farm land with a very large perimeter. It is immediately adjacent to HMP Elmley (Category B Local/Dispersal) and HMP Swaleside and, though no longer part of a cluster, a small number of services are shared by the prison.
- 3.2 There is accommodation for 464 male offenders categorised as suitable for open conditions by the source prison. Stanford Hill does not always agree with the sending establishment's categorisation and seeks to move on those it considers unsuitable. Each offender is housed in a single room with access to communal toilet and bathroom facilities.
- 3.3 There are two conventional cell blocks which spend very little time unencumbered with a scaffolding framework. A and B wing each have 192 spaces with three landings and four spurs on each. In addition there is a 'Quick Build Unit' (C wing), which leaks in times of heavy rain but provides space for 80 residents.
- 3.4 Each wing has its own Servery which allows prisoners to take meals to their own rooms. Food is prepared at HMP Swaleside and brought to the prison by road.
- 3.5 The Governor undertakes responsibility for the prison's main objective of preparing prisoners for Resettlement and Reducing Reoffending upon release.

Section 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.2 1 Despite a year of substantial financial cutbacks and the impact of reductions in personnel, it has been a positive year for HMP Stanford Hill. It is the opinion of the Board that the prison is safe, well managed and continues to offer a wide range of purposeful activities for all but its most infirm or elderly residents.

4.2 2 HMP Stanford Hill came to the attention of the national media when, (despite the severe reservations of prison staff), an apparently notorious offender was released on Temporary Licence. He failed to return and, whilst unlawfully at large, went on to pursue further criminal activity. Consequential changes to the regulations applying to ROTL and Resettlement Day Release (RDR) vastly increased the workload of the OMU and made many of the tasks facing Offender Supervisors and the Probation Service even more demanding.

4.2 3 One of our main concerns last year centred on the growth in the use of drugs within the prison. NPS (New Psychoactive Substances), particularly 'Spice', generated great concern. The prison successfully introduced a policy of 'zero tolerance' to the use of drugs, but this failed to deter a number of prisoners, some of whom displayed violent reactions to NPS, with some requiring emergency medical treatment as a result of the use of these 'legal highs'. It is fortunate that the closure/restrictions placed upon local shops selling 'Legal Highs' has resulted in their now having greatly reduced impact upon the prison.

4.2 4 The Board still remains concerned still, that reductions in staffing require that one residential wing remains unsupervised after 9.30pm

4.2 5 Almost one quarter of the prison's population is now comprised of 'Lifers' and ISP prisoners. This has stimulated a positive response from prison management with a 'dedicated' Governor in charge and special facilities being established to cater for long-term prisoners who often find it difficult to re-attune to the climate and demands of an 'open' prison.

4.2 6 Resettlement and reducing re-offending has been successfully operated throughout the year but, at the end of the year, became 'contracted out' as part of the 'Through the Gate' service. The Board will carefully monitor this agency in order to re-assure itself that the quality of the service offering assistance with accommodation, employment and access to charities promoting 'reducing reoffending' is not diminished.

4.3 PREVIOUS YEARS CONCERNS

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 4.3 | ISP and Lifers will be monitored by Probation Officers | (Ref. 5.3 1) |
| 4.3 | Reduced staffing militated against full operation of scheme | (Ref. 5.8 1) |
| 4.3 | Poor provision of vocational courses – some resolution | (Ref.6.3 1, 6.5 3) |
| 4.3 | Grounds - The grounds continue to be poorly maintained | (Ref: 7.1 1, 7.1 2) |
| 4.3 | Changes to ROTL and RDR requirements continue to generate concern | (Ref. 7.5 1, 7.5 2) |
| 4.3 | Food - Food is supplied by HMP Swaleside is good but leads to waste | (Ref. 7.8 1) |

Section 5

MAIN AREAS OF THE PRISON.

5.1 SAFER CUSTODY

- 5.1 1 Safer Custody meetings chaired by the Governor Res. are held monthly and include representation from RAPT, Healthcare, Education, Diversity, Chaplaincy, Samaritans, Peer-workers and listeners. Wing representatives and Listeners supported the consensus view that prisoners generally felt safe. Bullying, where it did occur, was usually confined to the import and use of drugs, (particularly 'spice'), and where this was discovered, action was quickly taken.
- 5.1 2 Care and consideration for the health and well-being of the prisoners is good. On two occasions only was it felt necessary that ACCT documents be opened during the year. RDR has been granted so that offenders are able to access locally held A.A. meetings.

5.2 DIVERSITY and EQUALITY

- 5.2 1 The trends outlined a year ago continued, with an ongoing reduction in the number of Foreign National prisoners and the proportion of over offenders over 50 years of age increasing, along with a concomitant rise in the number of prisoners subject to a PEEPs (Personal Evacuation Plan) notice. It is a matter of some regret that there has, as yet, been no evidence of the use of the mobility scooters which were introduced into the prison over one year ago.
- 5.2 2 Steps have been taken to accommodate the needs of older prisoners, with discreet gym and swimming sessions for over-50s though the peer led social activities fell into decline.
- 5.2 3 Very few DIRF (Discriminatory reporting Forms) were received and of these it was clear that those involving race/and or religion, were submitted with malicious or untoward intent.

5.3 ISPs and LIFERS

- 5.3 1 A quarter of the prison population at HMP Standford Hill is a Lifer/ISP, by prisoner, a group with specialised needs. The Board felt, at one time, that these needs were not being met fully and prisoners' progress was being hampered, not helped, by politically driven changes to treatment. Lately it is felt that these prisoners are being engaged more fully, with regular open meetings and smaller meetings with the No.1 Governor, where a more structured discussion can take place. One of the changes is that these prisoners will be monitored by Probation Officers; in the boards' view a good decision, though adequate probation time must be found.

5.4 PROBATION

- 5.4.1 The Probation Department has grown in the last few months from one officer to a team. They deal with high risk offenders as efficiently as their enormous case load allows. It is unrealistic to expect any single officer to deal with all high risk offenders; although it appears that increased staffing may be in the pipeline it cannot happen too soon.

5.5 HEALTHCARE

- 5.5 1 Healthcare is now in the hands of S.E. Healthcare and continues to operate in a positive way for the benefit of the prisoners. Offenders are able to self-refer to a triage nurse who will advise and organise for an appointment with the G.P. on site.

5.5 2 Referrals for more specialist treatment or access to a Consultant as a day-care patient are usually dealt with by employing a SPL so offenders can access nearby hospitals/clinics. Changes to assessing criteria establishing level of risk and the need to ensure that up-to-date OASys is in place have created some difficulties.

5.6 STAFF

5.6 1 The Board continue to enjoy a good relationship with staff. Despite pressures resulting from consistent under-staffing, uniformed staff remain co-operative and helpful and have maintained their efforts to treat prisoners with a polite, yet authoritative, approach.

5.7 ADJUDICATIONS

5.7.1 During the reporting period adjudications have been observed by Board members and found to be have been conducted by the adjudicating officer in a fair and professional manner with respect being shown to the prisoner who is the subject of the adjudication. During the reporting period no appeals were made by prisoners against adjudication awards.

5.8 PERSONAL OFFICER SCHEME

5.8.1 The reduced number of uniformed staff militated against the successful operation of a Personal Officer scheme but towards the end of the year actions were undertaken to resurrect this system into the day to day operation of the prison. It remains to be seen how successful the scheme will be whilst most prisoners are most concerned with their need to enjoy a good relationship with the officer responsible for their Sentence Management and ROTL.

Section 6

PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

6.1 LAUNDRY

6.1.1 A team of prisoners deal efficiently with the laundry and there are few complaints.

6.2 RECYCLING

6.2.1 A small number of prisoners have been employed at this plant throughout the year. Time required for using washing facilities for employees at the end of each shift generated some concerns but these were quickly addressed.

6.3 MOTORMEX

6.3.1 This area would appear to be well run and a positive experience for prisoners. Usually nine prisoners at a time undergo the training and can gain NVQ Level II. This area of the prison is run by Manchester College.

6.4 PRINT SHOP

6.4.1 Another good year at the Print Shop. They have maintained a good amount of work consistently throughout the year, assisting keen offenders with their Koestler award. Several of the gifted originators have now left, one going back to his publishing business, equipped with many new skills.

6.4.2 They have managed to obtain funding for a new printer this year and their new Cannon Varioprint 110 black and white was installed in February. There are also upgrades and other new kit throughout.. They are able to offer excellent training and work that is produced to ISO9001 standards and hope soon to be offering Level 11 qualifications.

6.5 EDUCATION

6.5.1 During the year 2014-2015 there were two events that had a significant effect on Education at Stanford Hill. Firstly, a new Manager arrived in August 2014, and secondly the (temporary) closure of the Category 4 prison at Blantyre House caused a substantial influx of prisoners who were already working outside and therefore not part of the population who would be considered as potentially available as candidates for education. This occurred during the first quarter of 2015 and meant the efficiency percentage of the education department dropped, when it had been trending upwards before.

6.5.2 In addition to this, a snapshot of the induction population between August 2014 and January 2015 showed that 23.3% were only entry level in English, and 27.7% in mathematics. There is an active effort to encourage people to raise their attainment to level 2.

6.5.3 The curriculum provision of most courses is now at level 2 and there is more variety, with emphasis on courses which increase potential employability of those taking part. These courses include Hospitality, Barista, Food and Safety Hygiene, Motor Mechanics and Valeting, Forklift Driving (restored after being discontinued last year), Photoshop and Web Design, Art and Craft, Leadership and Customer Service and Personal Finance.

6.6 THE OLD MILL

Canterbury College provides course in Multi Trades within the Old Mill and this engages with up to 11 prisoners. The aim of the course is to train in both the theory and practical skills required by construction trades

6.7 THE CAFE

Located in what was once the Horticultural area, the Cafe is run by Sheppey Matters, with a very enthusiastic trainer from Manchester College. Seven prisoners are employed who go on to complete a hospitality NVQ Level 1. Students can also undertake the Barista coffee course which covers all elements of coffee beans from the Equator to the cup. Working hours are 8.30 am to 15.30, with operatives staying until 17.00pm for cleaning and clearing away.

6.8 OIL WORKS

One thousand litres of waste vegetable oil is collected each month from nearby restaurants and recycled into almost the same amount of 'bio – fuel'; any dirty waste goes into fertiliser. Five prisoners are employed and the management is on the payroll of Sheppey Matters. Working hours are from 8.30am to 4.30pm. The future of this enterprise is uncertain as funding has not yet been confirmed.

Section 7

OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON

7.1 GROUNDS.

7.1 1 The Board have had concerns about the Garden Department for some time. The flowers are pretty but the grounds are not kept in a particularly tidy state. Rabbits cannot be the excuse for everything. Our main concern is the lack of any form of qualification undertaken by the prisoners.

7.1 2 We understood that there would be changes last June, but at least a whole year has been wasted. Prisoners have mentioned repeatedly to the Board about the lack of qualifications and meaningful work, e.g. using the 'poly tunnels' on site for vegetable and plant growing. It is very much hoped that next year will bring constructive progress.

7.2 RECEPTION

7.2.1 Reception is a well run, clean environment which deals with almost 50% of the prison population at the beginning and end of each working day. A small group of officers specialise in this area and though quite short staffed, manage to pull together to create an efficient and generally civilised department

7.3 ACCOMMODATION

7.3 1 Throughout the winter months two of the Residential wings were surrounded by scaffolding as repairs to the roof were undertaken. The Board was frequently concerned with the cleanliness and degree of littering around the residential wings but, when raised as an issue the situation was quickly resolved.

7.3 2 Many prisoners whose work schedule precludes access to prison meals rely upon self-catering. Commercial microwave ovens and toasters were introduced into the residential areas to replace equipment which, probably because of misuse, regularly broke down. Despite the best efforts of the officers, self-policing and cleaning of this equipment by prisoners remains ineffective.

7.4 SECURITY

7.4 1 The monthly bulletin issued by the Governing Governor has continued to highlight the main areas of concern for the security and safety of the prison. The importation of alcohol, drugs and mobile phones remains the greatest threat to the management of a secure and untroubled environment whilst continued reductions in staffing ensure that oversight and control can only be maintained by the goodwill and co-operation of uniformed officers.

74.2 Random checks and searches have been less effective than intelligence led operations but, with half of the offender population spending time out of the prison each day, security is always difficult to maintain. A change in policy by KCC led to a major decline in the number of retail outlets selling 'legal highs' (New Psychoactive Substances or NPS) and this has had a marked effect on the trade and distribution of drugs within the prison.

7.4 4 The use of CC TV within the wings has been extended and the small number of external cameras has been effective. Less easily scrutinised areas have been identified and appropriate action taken, however where co-operation between establishments has been essential some weaknesses remain, in particular the transfer of food trolleys between kitchens has been exploited by offenders and a practical solution has yet to be established. Trials of 'phone blockers' have yielded very limited success.

7.4 4 Monthly Security meeting are held and well attended. The latest Security Audit was Green?

7.5 OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT (OMU)

7.5 1 The OMU staff play a pivotal role in the smooth running of the prison being responsible for the regulation and administration of the movement of offenders into and out of the prison. Increased emphasis on the importance of OASys (Offender Assessment System) procedures, coupled with greater regulation of RDR (Resettlement Day Release) and ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) has generated an increased workload for Probation, the responsible Governor, uniformed staff and OSGs involved in administering a complex and time consuming system. An increase in staffing has 'held the fort' but the impact of lengthy and carefully considered Risk Assessment has been responsible for many RCFs (Request Complaint Forms) and applications to the IMB.

7.5 2 Quickly introduced ministerial demands and policies have led to a great deal of stress. Offenders often fail to grasp immediately the impact of these decisions and react accordingly, whilst already overstretched staff find that they have little time to inform and simplify newly introduced procedures to prisoners, many of whom have limited vocabulary and literacy skills.

7.6 RAPT

7.6.1 Despite concerns expressed by RAPt regarding lack of interest and approach by prisoners last year, RAPt has proved to be a successful agent in handling the problems and difficulties encountered by prisoners who have had high levels of involvement with drugs and alcohol.

7.6.2 On site drug testing is carried out in a professional manner by uniformed staff. No particular pattern for test failure was established, so it has been difficult to predict drug intake by prisoners and therefore discover how the drugs have been obtained.

7.8 FOOD

7.8.1 The quality of the food delivered from HMP Swaleside continues to be satisfactory with a varied menu although there is still, on occasion, considerable waste this being due to oversupply. Breakfast cereals, tea bags and drink- whitener which are prepared and left in boxes at the server on each residential wing for the prisoners to collect each day do not appear to be popular. However, sugar contained in small bags, which is left in the same area for prisoner collection, is taken by the handful. Sugar can, of course, be applied to other uses other than to sweeten drinks etc. but uniformed staff state that they do not have sufficient time to monitor the situation, so this collection of sugar goes unchecked.

7.9 WORKING OUT SCHEME

7.9.1 Officers, assisted by peer workers, continued to build on the successes demonstrated last year. By the end of May 2015, over 150 Offenders had secured a risk assessment which permitted their daily release under licence in order to engage in CVSE, Community Work, Stage 1 Training or Further Education. A further 50 prisoners with appropriate risk assessed levels, who had successfully completed stage 1 community work, left the prison each day to undertake paid work in approved employment. This sometimes involved travel to work over some considerable distance. Those administering the WOS proved more than capable when required to accommodate a large influx of relocated prisoners who had already commenced Stage II work whilst based at HMP Blantyre House.

7.10 RESETTLEMENT

7.10.1 The Resettlement Department at Stanford Hill has undergone several changes in the first quarter of 2015. A recent major change saw the resettlement services privatised by Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) May 2015. This has caused a major downsize that has left many prison orderlies to look for work elsewhere.

Resettlement is one of the key release services in the life of a prisoner as it aids restorative means of getting back into society.

- 7.10.2 Senior Probation Officer Nick Doyle from Kent Probation, Maidstone, along with SEETEC worked in partnership to develop a functional process such as accommodation, vocational trainings, paid work towards an effective end of sentences.

7.11 CES

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

7.12 CHAPLAINCY

- 7.12 1 The chaplaincy has another good year engaging with prisoners and staff at Standford Hill despite still being short of an Anglican chaplain.
- 7.12 2 There were a number of team changes this year: Beatrice one of the sessional CofE chaplains who was covering some of the Anglican hours, left in the autumn to become a full-time chaplain at HMP Rochester. There is a new Hindu chaplain and a new Jewish chaplain who have both fitted in well. The Buddhist chaplain wishes to retire and has reduced his attendance accordingly but is finding it difficult to source a replacement.
- 7.12 3 The chaplaincy continues to see all new receptions and attend establishment meetings as required but the major work centres around compassionate issues, offering phone calls, confirming details of dying and deceased relatives and talking through personal issues with prisoners.
- 7.12 4 The Chaplain has expressed concerned that, now the resettlement service has been contracted out, prisoners will not receive as good a service as they have had when it was done by the establishment; Though sure that the level of service will be monitored he is less assured of what will be done if the service is seen to be less than satisfactory. Payment by results will affect the CRC's profits but will not help prisoners who are receiving a less than effective service and may undermine all of the good resettlement work done by Standford Hill.

7.13 LIBRARY

- 7.13 1 A project to reschedule and renovate accommodation originally intended for officers' residence when the prison first opened, generated a need to re-locate the library. A complicated task, this move took some months to complete, but resulted in only a few days when library facilities were unavailable. Reliance upon the support of KCC meant that provision of ICT facilities took some time to implement but some compensation may have been gained as books and library resources were transferred to Standford Hill from Blantyre House when it closed.
- 7.13 2 Whilst having a little less space than the previous library, the building now employed benefits from a light, quiet and comfortable atmosphere, whose only drawback is that toilet facilities require a short walk to the gym. The library is open from 9.30 to 11.15 am and allows access for all prisoners. Two peer workers are available throughout the hours of opening and they are supported by part-time KCC librarians who also work in HMP Swaleside and HMP Elmley.

Section 8

THE WORK OF THE IMB

- 8.1 1 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.
- 8.1 2 Each weekday, 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.

8.2 INDUCTION

- 8.2 1 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 explains 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 would have had face-to-face information about the IMB.
- 8.2 2 During the past year, the control of the Induction process has been greatly improved and attendance at these briefings is significantly better than before

8.3 EVENING SURGERY

The IMB conduct an Evening Surgery once a month held in the prison in an adjoining room to the prison chapel for the benefit of those prisoners not in the prison during the core day but who would wish to speak to a member of the Board face to face. The number of prisoners who attend the 'drop in' surgery varies from month to month but it proves to be popular, allowing personal contact with a Board member who would otherwise be unavailable. The Board are grateful for the co-operation of the Chaplaincy in allowing the surgery to be held within an available chapel room.

8.4 STATISTICS

8.4 1 BOARD STATISTICS

Recommended complement of Board Members	10
Number of Members at start of reporting period	8
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	382
Total number of applications received	166
Total number of segregation reviews held	N/app
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/app

8.4 2 The following table contains the statistics of applications to the Board:

Code	Subject	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
A	Accommodation	5	5	5	5	3	1
B	Adjudications	11	12	21	11	2	3
C	Diversity Related	2	6	1	2	3	3
D	Education/Employment	16	21	19	19	9	4
E	Family Visits	19	9	31	16	5	4
F	Food	8	4	33	11	6	6
G	Heath Related	8	21	26	15	11	15
H1	Property/Money S. Hill	17	11	8	10	9	19
H2	Property/Money Other	49	27	16	15	9	25
I	HDC/Parole	165	84	19	9	14	22
J	Staff/Prisoner Related	4	14	9	7	4	6
K	Transfers	20	17	8	0	2	3
L	ROTL/Town Visits	19	50	33	26	66	55
Total		343	282	229	146	143	166