



**HMP
ASHFIELD**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2014 – JUNE 2015

1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice 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 concerns 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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3. DESCRIPTION OF HMP ASHFIELD

2.1 HMP Ashfield is located in the village of Pucklechurch in South Gloucestershire, around 9 to 10 miles from each of Bristol and Bath.

2.2 The Prison's former status as a Young Offenders' Institution (YOI) terminated in June 2013 and the prison reopened in July 2013 as a specialist Category C adult male establishment for convicted prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences. The prison has a baseline Certificate of Normal Accommodation (CNA) of 408, and an Operational Capacity (Op. Cap.) of 400. Throughout the 12 months covered by this Annual report, there have typically been around 385-395 prisoners in the prison at any one time, so it has been running only very slightly short of full capacity.

2.3 It is a contracted-out prison operated by SERCO Home Affairs Ltd, with modern purpose-built accommodation under 20 years old.

2.4 Residential accommodation consists of 2 main house blocks, Avon and Severn, each with 4 wings, and Brunel, a smaller 16 cell unit. There are 252 single cells and 78 double cells (the latter are double-sized cells designed to accommodate two men, not single cells utilised for "doubling up") . All accommodation is of a high standard with integral sanitation and there are 8 shower cubicles on each of the main wings. 7 of the single cells are ground floor cells purpose-built for prisoners with disabilities and there are 2 gated cells for prisoners requiring constant observation.

2.5 There are 8 cells on Avon D wing designated for Care and Segregation purposes. Prisoners on Cellular Confinement and GOOD order are accommodated alongside prisoners on the same wing on normal regime. There is no separate Care and Separation Unit, as such.

2.6 BME prisoners typically make up around 17% and Foreign National prisoners approximately 4% of the population.

2.7 Former servicemen make up approximately 19% of the population.

2.8 Healthcare is commissioned by NHS England. There is a team of healthcare professionals which covers all areas from nursing (Bristol Community Health) and GP services to dentistry, podiatry, optometry and physiotherapy. Mental health services are provided by Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust (AWP).

2.9 The Offender Management Unit and Resettlement function are sub-contracted to Catch 22.

2.10 Intervention programmes and Psychology are sub-contracted to Turning Point.

2.11 Adult social care, in compliance with the Adult Social Care Act, is provided by South Gloucestershire Social Services.

2.12 Education, skills, learning and library services are all delivered by SERCO.

2.13 As a contracted-out prison, Ashfield has a Director. The current incumbent, Ray Duckworth, has been in post since March 2013.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 It is the Board's considered opinion that HMP Ashfield provides a safe, secure and decent environment for prisoners in its care.

4.2 The average age of prisoners at Ashfield is significantly higher than the prisoner population at large. This poses various challenges in terms of medical/social care and resettlement needs. This factor, however, and the fact that many are serving very long sentences, means that they are largely well-behaved and compliant. In addition, Ashfield staff have worked hard to create and maintain a supportive and non-judgmental organisational culture, underpinned by mutual respect and clear expectations of good behaviour. This results in a calm and non-threatening living and working environment for everyone. Bullying between prisoners is infrequent and, when identified, effectively managed, and relations between prisoners and officers are, in the main, positive and constructive. IMB Board members have regularly reported on the good atmosphere on wings and the controlled but informal interactions between officers and prisoners.

4.3 Initial concerns officers expressed about the re-role in 2013 have largely been allayed and staff morale has noticeably improved in the course of this reporting year. Staffing levels have been adequate (the Prison has not suffered the prolonged staffing shortages that have been common in HMPS prisons over the last 12 months.) Consequently, aside from a lockdown once a month for a half-day of staff training, a full regime has operated throughout the year.

4.4 Although a minority of prisoners find it difficult to adjust to the Prison's expectation that they should exert a fair degree of self-discipline and take responsibility for their personal behaviour and actions, the overwhelming majority of prisoners welcome the opportunities Ashfield affords and speak positively about their experience to the IMB. As a consequence, although there have been some niggles about the implementation of the IEP scheme (see 5.7.7 and 5.7.8 below), there has not been any concerted indiscipline nor, indeed, any serious incident that has required the Command Suite to be opened up in the course of the 2014-2015 reporting year. There have been comparably few instances of individual behaviour that have necessitated the use of GOOD or Cellular Confinement (see 5.7.2).

4.4 The quality of pastoral care is very good. The Chaplaincy, Safer Custody team and AWP mental health team are very diligent and provide a comprehensive support service. In comparison with other prisons, remarkably few prisoners need to be placed on an open ACCT and those who do receive effective monitoring and support. There has been no Death in Custody and only a handful of instances of serious self-harm, all of which have been effectively managed.

4.5 It is the Board's view that the Prison is making good progress in developing multi-partner relationships and that, between them, all providers are offering a good range of broadly appropriate educational, training and employment opportunities, treatment programmes and other meaningful activities that contribute to Purposeful Activity. Consequently, time out of cell is good.

4.6 The quality of catering and accommodation have remained consistently high (see 5.8.1 to 5.8.3 and 5.8.9).

4.7 The refurbishment of the Healthcare Suite has been largely completed (with the exception of suitable protection from the elements for prisoners queuing to collect medication ~ see 5.3.4 below) and health services, with the exception of dentistry, have bedded in well. The Board has had ongoing serious concerns, however, about the inadequacy of the dentistry service, and this has been a matter which the Prison has taken up with NHS England Commissioners (see 5.3.8).

4.8 An experiment to establish a non-smoking wing did not get off to a good start owing to a failure to provide promised smoking cessation support services (see 5.8.12). Whilst the problems were eventually resolved, it demonstrated the need, not merely for careful theoretical planning, but also for ensuring in advance the agreement of all relevant parties to supplying fully costed services and resources. Given that national policy is moving in favour of making prisons smoke-free, it is to be hoped that useful lessons have been learnt to avoid any repetition of the problem encountered.

4.9 Most equipment in the prison is in good working order. However, the Board has expressed concerns on a number of occasions during the reporting year about delays in replacing ageing equipment that is overdue for renewal (see 5.8.7).

4.10 Prisoner property, as reported in the 2013-2014 Annual Report, remains a significant issue, with continuing difficulties either created by the failure of contracted escort services to transport all prisoners' property, or of prisoners arriving with excessive amounts that they have been allowed to accumulate in other prisons which have not been stringent in enforcing volumetric control. (see 6.1.1 and 6.1.2)

4.11 After a period of relative stability, in the course of the last few months the level of "churn" has increased following the inclusion of sex offenders into the national programme for Resettlement prisons. Ashfield has been obliged to transfer to the designated specialist Resettlement prisons for sex offenders (e.g. HMP Channings Wood and HMP Oakwood) prisoners they had originally expected to release directly from Ashfield. A corollary of this has been pressure on the Prison from the PMU (Prisoner Management Unit) to fill vacant places quickly and to accept the arrival of increased numbers of prisoners who, for a variety of reasons, are clearly unsuited to the offending behaviour programmes (TSP and SOTP) delivered at Ashfield. Thus, the Prison's vision, as set out in 2013, to develop into a specialist treatment centre is being hampered at present by population pressures in the wider estate and a seemingly inadequate national system for identifying those prisoners who would most benefit from what it can offer. Prisoners ineligible for SOTP or TSP are being transferred to Ashfield whilst, elsewhere, there are prisoners eligible for these programmes who are waiting for prolonged periods with little realistic prospect of accessing them. This is a wholly unsatisfactory situation. (see 6.2.1 to 6.2.5)

4.12 Around 50% of prisoners at Ashfield are currently in denial about their offences. Whilst the Prison has reached a pivotal point in its development, it seems now to be marking time after a period of rapid progress. Board members would broadly concur with the view expressed to them by the Director on a number of occasions that prisoners are not being sufficiently challenged to address their offending behaviour and that life at Ashfield is relatively comfortable for them without their having to make a great deal of effort. The ability of the Prison to drive a dynamic programme of rehabilitation and resettlement is currently limited by the nature of the population, but the Prison has yet to articulate a new vision of what and where it wants to be 12 months from now. The challenge will be to renew the energy and impetus that were its hallmarks for the first 18 months or so after the re-role and evolve into a prison with a clear rationale within the broader national Reducing Reoffending agenda.

4.13 Although there have been significant changes in the personnel on the Senior Management team, and the appointment of an Acting Director whilst Ashfield's permanent Director was seconded to IRC Yarl's Wood for a few months, the Prison's ethos has been maintained and there has been continuity in management style and practice. The Board wishes to congratulate the Prison on continuing to take innovative and enterprising approaches to developing its range of services and facilities and, more widely, on maintaining its Level 4 status throughout this period.

4.14 The Board has had an open and constructive relationship with the Director(s) and the Senior Management Team as well as with officers and other staff (both SERCO and employed by other organisations) and would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their help and cooperation in enabling the Board to carry out its duties at a time when the Board has been operating with less than half its official complement.

Particular issues requiring a response

Questions for the Minister

1. Does the Minister agree that prisoners should be entitled to access to a dental service that is comparable with that in the community? If so, what assurance can he give that steps are being put in place to ensure that, in any re-commissioning of dentistry services, either for individual prisons or for regional clusters of prisons, sufficiently rigorous contractual terms and conditions will be in place to guarantee the delivery of a full and comprehensive service?
2. In the case of the provision of facilities and accommodation for the delivery of medical services, is the Minister able to clarify whether, in the contracted out estate, responsibility for funding these lies with the prison itself or with its NHS provider(s)?

Questions for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

1. With regard to prisoner property, what assurances can NOMS give that:
 - ~ it has concrete proposals to address the issue of inconsistent enforcement of volumetric control across the prison estate?
 - ~ it is taking action to ensure that prisoners' property is transferred with them in full by contracted escort services?
 2. Does NOMS agree that there should be a more systematic and efficient national methodology for identifying prisoners who can most benefit from Offending Behaviour Programmes such as TSP and SOTP to enable them to be prioritised for transfer to prisons offering such courses? If so, what plans are being proposed to ensure that PMU does not exert pressure both on overcrowded prisons to transfer out unsuitable prisoners and on Cat. C training and treatment prisons to accept them, when other more eligible prisoners are imprisoned elsewhere on long waiting lists?
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5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

5.1.1. Equality and Inclusion is looked after at HMP Ashfield by the Equality and Diversity Manager.

5.1.2 The Equality and Diversity Department is run efficiently and with enthusiasm. It is organised around nine 'characteristics' that have potential implications for equality and inclusion, such as age, disability, faith and sexuality. There are monthly review meetings and regular events for each characteristic. There is good prisoner representation for each characteristic at these meetings and events, and the events in particular encourage interactive participation. The department has its own room where events and meetings are held, and the room is well supplied with reading material and run by two orderlies.

5.1.3 Each prisoner has his equality and diversity needs assessed by questionnaire as part of his induction.

5.1.4 The department handles foreign nationals issues, such as entitlements, contact with family and deportation.

5.1.5 The department also deals with the social care needs of elderly prisoners and liaises with South Gloucestershire Council who provide care workers as required. Prisoners can refer themselves for a social care needs assessment, and referral is also undertaken by staff and on induction.

5.1.6 The department carries out data monitoring to highlight any disproportionate representation in areas such as adjudication and segregation, though numbers tend to be too small for statistical analysis based on system-wide ratings.

5.1.7 The Board is broadly satisfied with the way Equality and Inclusion is handled at HMP Ashfield.

5.2 EDUCATION , LEARNING AND SKILLS

5.2.1 The specialist nature of the prison and the educational background and age profile of prisoners pose particular challenges in designing a curriculum that meets a wider range of needs than might be the case elsewhere. A significant minority are of retirement age for whom qualifications for employment are no longer relevant, others arrive from business or professional backgrounds (often with qualifications above level 2) for whom the standard prison fare of Entry, Level 1 and Level 2 courses is patently unsuitable, whilst others demonstrate the low levels of literacy and numeracy and minimal vocational skills common across the prison estate.

5.2.2 Prisoners are fortunate at Ashfield to be taught in modern, well-equipped and reasonably spacious classrooms and this means that the Learning and Skills department provides a pleasant learning environment. Prisoners are almost invariably positive about their courses in discussion with IMB members and the Board has received Applications from only two prisoners in the course of the reporting year objecting to compulsory attendance at classes. No Applications have been received about access to courses or quality of teaching.

5.2.3 As SERCO is responsible for provision, delivered by its own employed staff rather than by an external contractor, it suffers fewer constraints than those HMPS prisons in receipt of SFA-funded OLASS provision. This enables it to be more flexible in terms of what can be offered and how it is delivered. An example of this is how the department copes with tutor absence. Fewer classes now run than when the prison was a YOI and the re-role in 2013 led to a net reduction in the number of teaching staff. This means that staffing levels are tight and there is no "bank" of qualified specialist tutors on whom to draw at times of

tutor absence. The IMB has raised concerns about the small numbers of tutors on duty on a handful of occasions when conducting Rota visits. The Board has received assurances, however, that, in the case of tutor absence, whereas in an OLASS prison this would require the cancellation of the class, the prison is able to continue to run the class by providing supervision by a Learning Support Assistant or by a non-specialist tutor while men concentrate on building up their portfolios. Whilst this is not ideal, it is undoubtedly preferable to the class being cancelled. Tutors are also supported in a number of cases by prisoner orderlies who already have formal vocational qualifications either acquired in custody or arising from their employment prior to imprisonment.

5.2.4 Learning and Skills provision in Ashfield has been developed around prisoners acquiring self-employment skills, and as a foundation, all prisoners without Level 1 Functional Skills are required to attend classes in Maths and English (and those really struggling with literacy can be given 1-1 help via the Shannon Trust "Toe by Toe" scheme). Prisoners can also undertake a Business Skills course teaching them the basics of book-keeping and business management. As an example of how being independent from OLASS provision creates further flexibility, prisoners are able to access a good range of "roll-on, roll-off" vocational courses leading to Level 1 qualifications (and, to a more limited extent, Level 2), regardless of whether or not they are in the last 6-12 months before release.

5.2.5. Given how long prisoners typically remain at Ashfield and their average prior attainment in comparison with that in local remand prisons, the Board would question, however, the extent to which prisoners are being genuinely stretched and challenged in the way that one would expect in a Cat. C "trainer" where conventionally courses are offered predominantly at Level 2. The Board's concern is whether this is a sufficiently ambitious programme on offer.

5.2.6 Under the terms of the contract, Ashfield is more than meeting the requirement that 591 work skills awards and 90 Skills awards are achieved over 12 months (CU039). Between April 2014 and March 2015, a total of 1322 accreditations were achieved (551 ~ including 90 Functional Skills ~ within the Education Department and 771 in the vocational training areas). Figures provided by the Prison to the Board are not sufficiently detailed, however, to identify at which Levels these accreditations have been achieved or to what extent they represent genuine progression in comparison with prior attainment. Similarly the level of actual completion rates in relation to the number of students on each course cannot be ascertained. Consequently, it is impossible to form a judgment as to whether these represent a good overall accreditation rate or not. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for Board members to attend any Quality Improvement Group meetings (which are scheduled every two months) in the course of the reporting year. Consequently whereas overall Purposeful Activity hours generated are provided for the Controller on a monthly basis for contract management purposes, the Board has not been able to ascertain the extent to which rigorous and comprehensive data is being collected, scrutinised and analysed for the purposes of Quality Assurance and continuous improvement in managing learning and skills, and whether or not the curriculum is informed by a detailed annual Student Needs Analysis. This needs to be an area of focus for the Board in 2015-16.

5.2.7 The Library is SERCO-owned and run and this has provided less flexibility than a Local Authority contract would have done for replacing and refreshing stock from other libraries and until recently there was no provision for inter-library loans. The IMB welcomes the fact that a constructive development this reporting year has been the establishment of an arrangement with South Gloucestershire Library Services for prisoners to be able to access the inter-library loan service. For those studying at a higher level, this is particularly important.

5.2.8 The Gym is providing a good range of activities, some (e.g. bowls) specifically targeted at older prisoners. The Gym, Fitness Room and Astro turf are all well used and

attendance levels are good. Aside from a standard timetable of various ball games, weight-lifting, fitness, circuit training and so forth, the Board applauds the fact that the Gym staff also offer a mixture of special events and competitions and a Christmas programme. They also offer a Remedial Programme to support those for whom exercises have been recommended by their GP or physiotherapist and have also developed a 12-week Life Change Programme providing exercise and advice on diet and nutrition for those seeking to lose weight.

5.3 HEALTHCARE & MENTAL HEALTH

HEALTHCARE

5.3.1 The higher age profile and lifestyle history of the population at HMP Ashfield in comparison with most prisons make particular demands on services, and Healthcare provision of all kinds has to be tailored accordingly.

5.3.2 At the end of the 2013-1204 IMB reporting period, the Healthcare facility was still in the throes of undergoing a major refurbishment programme which had taken a number of months as it had involved extensive building work and had necessitated the complete closure of the Centre itself and the transfer of various functions to temporary accommodation in Avon, Severn and Brunel houseblocks. Throughout this period, staff had managed, in difficult circumstances, to maintain key services with the exception of dentistry.

5.3.3 The new Healthcare Centre finally opened in July 2014 and the IMB is pleased to report that, over all, it is a significant improvement on its predecessor with the creation of better office space, waiting and reception areas and additional treatment, interview and group therapy rooms. This has meant, however, that there is now no in-patient facility. Accommodation is light and welcoming as well as being functional, and staff have reported to Board members that they feel that it is a safer working environment than formerly with the installation of CCTV cameras and a secure entry system. In comparison with 2013-14, staff morale has lifted and they have raised far fewer concerns with the IMB than had previously been the case. The Pharmacy has been reorganised and racking for the storage of individual prisoner medication packs has assisted in dispensing arrangements. The dental suite underwent a complete refit.

5.3.4 The Centre is functioning well, and initial teething troubles associated with the design have largely been ironed out in the course of the year with one notable exception. In the 2013-14 Annual Report, the Board reported on the lack of suitable protection against the elements for prisoners waiting outside for the dispensing of medication. Regrettably it is obliged to report that this remains an ongoing concern. IMB members have repeatedly been approached by prisoners, especially those who are older or more frail, who are understandably unhappy about having to queue outside for medication to be dispensed with only a high and wholly inadequate shelter over the dispensing hatch itself. Whilst this is merely an inconvenience in dry or temperate conditions, in the Autumn, Winter and early Spring in cold, wind and snow, queuing in this exposed area is entirely unacceptable. There appear to have been innumerable delays in resolving this problem, despite repeated assurances that it was being addressed. These would appear to have revolved around any security features and, specifically, a disagreement over whether SERCO or the NHS is responsible for funding it. The Board would hope that this matter can be resolved before the onset of severe weather.

5.3.5 A full range of medical services is provided, from initial screening of new prisoners on Reception (followed by a more in-depth screening within 72 hours with the offer of immunisation for communicable diseases and blood born viruses) to a daily triage session carried out by nursing staff, GPs' surgeries, visits by physiotherapists, optician, podiatrist

and so forth. Healthcare also provides on-site chronic disease management which encompasses diabetes, respiratory and cardiovascular disease and also offers a "Well Man" sexual health clinic for screening and any necessary subsequent treatment.

5.3.6 In the last Annual Report, the IMB commented on the fact that prisoners requiring specialist equipment were experiencing delays in receiving it because of uncertainty as to where the responsibility lay for funding it. The Board can report that this matter has been successfully resolved with the NHS funding any equipment prescribed as medically necessary.

5.3.7 Another constructive development in the last 12 months has been the introduction of a formal system for prisoners to make suggestions, compliments or complaints to Healthcare staff. This was long overdue. Prior to that, all prisoners could do was to complain either to the Prison itself using Comp1 forms (32 between July and November 2014) or to the IMB, neither of whom were in a position to address complaints of a medical nature. The new system came into operation in December 2014 with "Listening to You" forms easily available on all wings and collected daily by Bristol Community Health staff. The aim is to reply to straightforward concerns within 7 working days and more complicated issues relayed to head office for a more detailed response within 21 days. In the 6 months between December 2014 and the end of June 2015 the Centre received a total of 51 complaints and 25 compliments and suggestions (and the number of Comp 1 forms sent to Correspondence & Complaints dropped to just 9). Access to the Centre was clearly not an issue as there were only 4 complaints about this, and only 4 related to the provision of medication. There were no complaints about equipment or cancellations of appointments. Aside from a miscellaneous "other", the two principal categories related to clinical care and the attitude and behaviour of staff. It is important to note in this context, however, that prisoners themselves can be volatile and abusive, and staff operating in a custodial environment can encounter similar behavioural problems from patients as in a busy A&E department.

5.3.8 Throughout this period, the IMB received only 11 complaints about Healthcare (in comparison with 22 in 2013-14), 4 of which were to do with the inadequacy of the dental care service, and Board members also received various verbal complaints about this. Staff in Healthcare also had to field countless verbal complaints from men whose dental appointments were cancelled (often with very little notice), and about long waiting lists and the inability to obtain emergency appointments when in considerable pain. The absence of any dental service at all whilst the centre was undergoing refurbishment was a significant cause of the long waiting lists but, despite changing dental surgery times and frequency, little progress has been made in eroding these and waiting lists have remained persistently and unacceptably long to the frustration of all concerned. The Board understands that a re-commissioning process is now underway for the dentistry service. It is to be hoped that any new contract awarded can meet demand more effectively.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE MISUSE

5.3.9 AWP (Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust) is contracted by NHS England to provide a comprehensive mental health, learning disability and substance misuse service for prisoners which is comparable to that available in the community. The Board has received no complaints, verbal or written, about its services in the course of the 2014-2015 reporting year and is of the view that it is providing an effective and, in some cases, innovative service.

5.3.10 Around 60 prisoners are being treated as patients by AWP at any one time. The average age and length of sentence of many prisoners means that AWP staff are finding some have not had their mental health issues addressed prior to arrival at Ashfield and this

is their first chance to seek help and/or be officially diagnosed. Patients may be picked up from initial health screening on arrival, or from referrals from the GP service, Safer Custody, Catch 22 OMU case managers, solicitors, wing officers and the IMB itself, but prisoners can also self-refer in order to be given the opportunity of an individual interview and assessment.

5.3.11 The Well Being Team, operating seven days a week, led by a manager and staffed by four qualified mental health nurses, is there to provide support not just for those with identified and diagnosed mental health problems but also for those finding it difficult to cope emotionally with daily life in prison. Prisoners may present with mood disorders, anxiety disorders, borderline personality disorders or other emotional issues that makes it difficult for them to function on a day to day basis. Consequently treatment involves much more than the prescription of appropriate medication.

5.3.12 It is the Board's view that the Team, which has close working links with Safer Custody and with psychiatric services, has been very imaginative and innovative in developing a holistic approach that includes 1-1 support, discussion groups and therapeutic activities that improve patients' quality of life and enable them to function more effectively. The group programme consists of psychosocial groups which utilise a cognitive behaviour therapy approach to address issues such as mood disorders, anxiety, self esteem and emotional regulation. The aim of the occupational therapy groups is to develop self-confidence and key social and communication skills as well as essential Life Skills for those who may be released in the near future. Groups are available for model-making, needlework, cross-stitch and cookery, and a welcome development in the course of 2014-15 has been the creation of a dedicated outside "Good for You" area where prisoners can engage in gardening and "pet therapy" in the form of rabbit-keeping, chicken-keeping and looking after aviary birds (with advice and support from Severn Counties Foreign and British Bird Society). Prisoners that have engaged with IMB Board members on their visits to this area have clearly appreciated the support they have received from the AWP team.

5.3.13 AWP is also responsible for providing support for prisoners with a prior history of substance misuse. In practice, this is a relatively minor part of its brief as almost all prisoners are clean of drugs by the time they arrive at Ashfield as they have undergone detoxification treatment and CARATS support in their previous establishment(s) and not a single prisoner admitted in the course of the 2014-2015 reporting year was on a methadone script. The Prison's MDT testing confirms that drug use in Ashfield is very low indeed, with few positive results. The small number of positive tests that have been confirmed have usually resulted from prisoners' prescribed medication. The Board is delighted to report that, unlike many prisons in the mainstream prison estate, "legal highs" (New Psychoactive Substances) have not been smuggled in to HMP Ashfield in any quantity and, thus, are not currently posing a problem.

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

5.4.1 The Employment Development Manager and the Skills Development Manager work in close partnership to ensure that men are placed on courses or allocated suitable employment (in the case of medium and high risk prisoners by means of a weekly Labour Allocation Board). As a consequence, the Board is pleased to report that it has received no Applications this year from prisoners complaining about waiting lists for employment or of failing to be employed in one of their three chosen areas. All those medically able and willing to work can be accommodated and this ensures that prisoners enjoy ample "time out of cell" and an average of over 24 hours a week of Purposeful Activity. The Prison is to be congratulated on the range of work opportunities available and on the degree of initiative and enterprise it has shown in providing "real work" opportunities for prisoners. Pay rates are regularly reviewed and appropriate adjustments made.

5.4.2 Whilst many of the work placements offered in conjunction with Education are effectively in training workshops leading to qualifications, there are also opportunities for men to engage in paid Purposeful Activity providing essential services around the Prison or in generating income for it without the obligation to undertake further training. For those who may be of retirement age with no need of further qualifications, this can be a useful way of providing physical and/or mental activity and valuable social interaction as well as ensuring they receive more generous pay than would otherwise be the case. Packaging of small hardware items in the expanding Light Industries workshops or preparing prison breakfast packs, for example, lead to no qualifications but offer repetitive and manageable production-line work, especially useful for older prisoners or for those with restricted mobility.

5.4.3 The Design and Print facility provides employment for a skilled group of men producing printed items for prisoners to purchase and also generates business by taking in external orders. Similarly the Carpentry workshop has made a variety of items to enhance facilities around the Prison and also accepts external orders for garden furniture and small wooden buildings. In Food Technology, a keen team of prisoners operate, under the supervision of their SERCO tutor, what is effectively another mini-enterprise accepting orders for cakes and other bakery products from prisoners, officers and from various departments (e.g. the Chaplaincy) and provide cakes and other sundries for the Visits Hall "Snack Box". Other prisoners are employed as wing cleaners, in the Laundry or in Waste Management. Those who have completed relevant training can work with minimal supervision on the Painting & Decorating and Industrial Cleaning teams or be employed in specialist orderly roles in the Library, Education, PALS, Safer Custody, Chapel and training workshops etc.

5.4.4 The Horticulture department, in particular, is to be commended for how dramatically it has transformed the grounds of the Prison which are now both very attractive and very productive, and prisoners interviewed by the IMB are invariably enthusiastic about their work. The department's scope has recently expanded to include animal care with the creation of good quality accommodation for a small flock of ducks and for a growing population of domestic rabbits.

5.4.5 In short this is an aspect of the prison which is working very well indeed.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT AND OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

5.5.1 Responsibility for the Offender Management Unit and for the Resettlement function is sub-contracted to Catch 22. Under the terms of the contract and embedded in the Prison's Reducing Reoffending Strategy, Ashfield is required to ensure that 95% of prisoners comply with the terms of their release on temporary licence (CU02), that 80% of Indeterminate Sentence prisoners' dossiers are submitted to the Parole Board within 8 weeks of the review commencement date (CU043) and that 85% of prisoners will have settled accommodation to go to on release (CU013). Catch 22 is also responsible for delivering the Induction programme for newly transferred prisoners.

A Resettlement and Reducing Reoffending Needs Survey designed to inform a full Needs Analysis was begun in Spring 2015, but it was halted as it emerged that modifications to the methodology were required to ensure the generation of sufficiently robust data. This was, nevertheless, a creditable initiative and the Board has been informed that in 2015-16 the intention is to follow it up by an analysis of OASys data as it is believed that this will be more reliable.

It is perhaps fortunate that the Prison has released a relatively low number of prisoners in the course of the reporting period (a total of only 115 between July 2014 and June 2015) as the Resettlement function is still relatively undeveloped and in its infancy and is not high

profile within the prison. Towards the end of the reporting year Catch 22 has acquired the Resettlement contract for a number of other south west prisons and it is to be hoped that this will assist in developing services further. This is another area on which the Board will need to focus its monitoring in the 2015-16 reporting year in order to evaluate how effectively and systematically prisoner needs are being met in terms of each of the Seven Pathways to Reducing Reoffending and constructive links are being established with other contracted "through the gate" services in those areas of the country to which prisoners will be released.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

5.6.1 In 2015 the two officers who are principally responsible for the Safer Custody Scheme at HMP Ashfield received Commendations from the Butler Trust for the high quality of service delivered by this department in the prison and the innovative approach it takes to finding alternative solutions to issues. A recent initiative, for example, has been to design a leaflet for new prisoners providing practical advice and information about residential accommodation and prisoner support services in the absence of anything of this nature being produced and issued by Catch 22 who are responsible for prisoner Induction. The department collaborates closely with the AWP mental health team to provide a coordinated service and is supported by an effective team of coordinators and orderlies who are encouraged to use their own initiative and provide activities for prisoners identified as particularly needy. They are based in a former classroom in the Education Department.

5.6.2 Prisoners with a previous history of self-harm or suicide are effectively identified on arrival. In comparison with many other prisons, levels of self-harm are very low and relatively few prisoners need to be placed on an open ACCT at any one time. This makes monitoring more manageable and enables staff to provide high levels of individual care. ACCT documentation is generally thorough. Prisoners who find it difficult to cope in prison for whatever reason but who are not deemed to be sufficiently at risk to require an ACCT plan are offered the chance to go on a structured PIP (Personal Improvement Plan) which many find supportive. The "Here to Hear" scheme with prisoner orderlies providing a 24/7 listening service for those in crisis continues to be effective and supplements free in-cell telephone access to Samaritans.

5.6.3 Safer Custody meetings have resumed on a monthly basis to review provision and develop policy and are well attended by members of the SMT, Residential Managers, Healthcare and AWP.

5.7 SEGREGATION, CARE AND SEPARATION

5.7.1 HMP Ashfield provides a safe, secure and decent environment for prisoners in its care.

5.7.2 Staff/prisoner relations are generally very good and, although a minority of prisoners find it difficult to adjust to the greater freedom of movement they enjoy and to the Prison's expectations that they are trusted to exert a high degree of self-discipline and take personal responsibility for their actions, the overwhelming majority of prisoners respond positively to the regime. An atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy ensures that prisoners are generally well-behaved and compliant. As a consequence, in 2014-15 there has not been any concerted indiscipline or indeed, any serious disciplinary incident that has required the Command Suite to be opened up. Similarly, there have been very few prisoners whose behaviour has necessitated the use of GOOD or CC (Cellular Confinement.)

5.7.3 There are 8 cells designated on Avon Wing D for segregation, care and separation purposes, i.e. for prisoners on CC or GOOD. Men assigned to these cells receive all their statutory entitlements and generally comment to IMB members that they are being treated well on a day-to-day basis. Staff assigned to this wing manage the situation effectively,

confirmed by the fact that only one Comp 1 was received by Correspondence & Complaints about segregation. The decision by the Prison's SMT not to have a separate designated CSU but to place men on CC or GOOD on what is otherwise a "normal location" was a courageous one (as a small minority of staff would still prefer there to be a separate "seg".) The SMT, to its credit, has resisted any pressures to review this decision.

5.7.4 Men in these cells periodically complain to the IMB about the reasons given for why they are thus confined, arguing sometimes either that that the prison has been unduly hasty in placing them on GOOD for what they perceive to be minor misdemeanours or on Cellular Confinement after what they allege are technical errors in Adjudication processes. In almost all cases there seemed no evidence to support these allegations, as it was clear upon investigation that the Prison had good grounds for thus confining them, but the IMB found a handful of instances when men were placed on GOOD for alleged transgressions which were later unproven as there was insufficient or inconclusive evidence to be able to lay any charge. Nevertheless, over all, the Prison is to be commended on how few times it used either of these sanctions in 2014 -2015. Typically at any one time there might be only one or two men on GOOD or Cellular Confinement, and some weeks none at all, though just very occasionally it might rise to around 5. This is a very low number in comparison with other prisons of a similar size. In addition, those placed on GOOD were often offered a more relaxed regime after a few days on a more informal basis after a further risk assessment.

5.7.5 In short, Adjudication statistics presented at the quarterly SMARG meetings confirm that Cellular Confinement is used very sparingly and, indeed, there are very few Adjudications leading to any sanctions of any kind. The number of Adjudications is steadily declining: the quarterly statistics presented to the SMARG in May 2015, for example, showed just 43 Adjudications had taken place over the 3 month period of February to April (reinforcing the downward trend over the previous three quarters for which 98, 79 and 47 had been reported). In less than a third of cases had Cellular Confinement been awarded as part of the penalty for the misdemeanour for which the prisoner had been charged. Over the period April 2014 to March 2015, the number of Adjudications in relation to the prison population was (with the exception of October 2014) never more than 0.08%. and, typically nearer 0.4% to 0.6%.

5.7.6 Unfortunately the IMB has been unable to attend as many Adjudications or GOOD reviews as it would have wished to do as, despite a number of requests for prior notice of when these are scheduled, all too often either no notice has been provided or it has been insufficiently timely. When members have been able to attend GOOD reviews and Adjudications, however, sometimes at the specific request of prisoners, they have largely been conducted fairly and properly and any mitigating circumstances have been taken fully into consideration, though there have been a handful of instances when the initial charges laid have been changed as result of identifying technical errors. A recent visit by an external Independent Adjudicator led to praise, however, for the overall quality of supporting paperwork supplied by the Prison.

5.7.7 One explanation provided for the remarkably low number of Adjudications has been that the Prison's strategy is to influence poor behaviour at an early stage through robust use of the IEP warning system to prevent it deteriorating to a point at which it might trigger an Adjudication. Whilst the Board is of the view that this proactive approach is laudable, it feels obliged to point out that, of the 18 Applications received by the IMB under Category D (education/training/employment/IEP), the majority of those were complaints by prisoners about what they perceived to be an inconsistent approach amongst staff in issuing IEP warnings, with some staff being viewed as more swift to issue warnings than others. The Board has been led to understand that the Correspondence & Complaints Department has also received some Comp 1 submissions about the same issue. Board members also occasionally received verbal complaints from prisoners feeling aggrieved for this reason or

arguing they had received sanctions for an offence that had not led to punishment of another prisoner who had been involved in the same or a similar misdemeanour. In some cases a final warning (and almost invariably an Adjudication) had also triggered an IEP review and lowering of IEP status resulting in concomitant penalties such as loss of employment and what some prisoners claimed was a potential jeopardy of parole chances. In the course of this reporting year Correspondence & Complaints received 53 Comp 1 forms about various aspects of the IEP system.

5.7.8 Examination by Board members of wing IEP warning files, however, has suggested that there have almost invariably been good grounds for the issuing of IEP warnings and that individual prisoners' misconduct has usually been more serious than they, themselves, have been willing to admit. Nevertheless, prisoner perceptions, even if in most cases unfounded, can impact adversely on staff/prisoner relationships. Whilst the latter are generally very good in the prison and staff work commendably hard at cultivating a positive, informal, amiable and constructive atmosphere with good prisoner/staff interactions on the wings, this utilisation of the IEP warning process as a tool to influence behaviour needs careful management to prevent any opportunities for a small minority of prisoners to harbour a sense of injustice or to argue that some officers use it much more hastily or robustly than others. Whilst it is undoubtedly contributing to keeping Adjudications at very low levels and minimising the need to place prisoners on GOOD or CC, it must be seen to be applied fairly and consistently.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

FOOD

5.8.1 As in 2013-2014, the Board continues to be impressed by the quality and variety of food provided by the kitchens, the hygienic conditions in which it is prepared and by how well managed this Department is.

5.8.2 Analysis of the comments that prisoners submitted via the ATM machines on the wings (a total of 755 between July 2014 and June 2015) suggests that there are very high levels of satisfaction and appreciation. The record includes a large number of compliments and thanks for particularly appetising food, and prisoners often remark to IMB members that the food is significantly better at Ashfield than in their previous prisons. There is a good healthy choice on the menu for each day, meal options ensure that prisoners can receive their 5 helpings of fruit and vegetables, and considerable trouble is taken to cater for those requiring special diets on either medical or religious grounds, including those who are vegan, vegetarian or lactose intolerant. Particular care is taken to comply with all dietary requirements during Ramadan. Separate tools are used for Halal dishes in the Kitchen and on wing serveries. In the latter part of 2014, kitchen staff analysed all the ingredients they use to check for possible food allergens and these are now displayed on the menus from which prisoners make their selections in advance. Portions are good, and food inspected and/or tasted by IMB members has been consistently appetising. Men receive a daily breakfast pack and have the facility to make toast, toasted sandwiches and hot drinks on the wings. Weekday lunches consist of soup, a range of salads and filled baguettes, fruit and yoghurt and there is a full cooked evening meal. Slightly different arrangements operate at weekends. The ATM comments, almost invariably polite, respectful and even apologetic, suggested that there were few recurring problems other than periodic problems with the menu choice computer programme on the ATM machines, occasional disappointment with the quality of the salads and occasional lapses in the supply of soya milk and soya yoghurts for those who needed them. Complaints of this nature, however, were significantly outnumbered by compliments.

5.8.3 The main Kitchen provides training and valuable work experience for the prisoners employed (a mixture of full and part-time totalling around 25) and some have the opportunity to study for formal NVQ catering qualifications. Recruitment of suitable workers

for the Kitchen has proved problematical, however, at varying times throughout this reporting year, with a handful of prisoners not showing the level of commitment, honesty and reliability necessary to provide such a vital service, and others missing shifts because of conflicting appointments which take priority. The matter was raised on a number of occasions with the IMB. To its credit, the Prison's SMT has recognised the problem and is seeking means to address it.

5.8.4 In addition, a number of prisoners work in the (separately-managed) staff Bistro which operates weekdays to cater for employed and contracted staff across the prison. This provides further opportunities for prisoners to cook a wider range of dishes and to obtain catering qualifications. The manager and prisoners are to be commended for the high quality of what they produce in a facility in which ageing or broken equipment has had to be endured for some time (see 5.8.7 below).

BUILDINGS & EQUIPMENT

5.8.5 The Prison is fortunate in occupying modern purpose-built facilities and the buildings are generally very well maintained by the in-house Works department on a rolling programme of checks and repairs which take up the major part of their time, though they also contributed in 2014-15 to new projects such as improvements to the Gatelodge and the kitting out of a kitchenette and servery in Visits so that a food service (the "Snack Box") could be provided for prisoners and their visitors at weekends.

5.8.6 There have been few problems raised with or identified by the IMB in 2014-15 concerning the fabric of the prison, other than the inadequate air conditioning in hot weather in some of the top floor workshops in Education, the ongoing problems with some of the wing showers (see 5.8.9 below), the absence of a hotplate in the servery in Brunel (the latter speedily resolved), and the inadequacy of the shelter for prisoners queuing outdoors for the dispensing of medication from the Pharmacy (see 5.3.4 above). In all other respects the fabric is in excellent condition both internally and externally and provides pleasant living and working conditions. Prisoners frequently comment to the IMB on the quality of their environment compared with their experience in prisons from which they have transferred.

5.8.7 As the Board reported in 2013-14, however, there have continued to be a variety of issues raised by both prisoners and staff concerning the repair or replacement of equipment and machinery either near to or at the end of its working life, including the buffing machines used for industrial cleaning, the ageing trolleys used for transporting hot and cold food from the main Kitchen to the wing serveries and the broken equipment in the Bistro which, despite being identified on the Asset Register as in need of replacement (and funding apparently having been earmarked for its refurbishment), is still awaiting the commencement of any work at the end of this reporting period. Kitchen freezers, however, which were malfunctioning were repaired satisfactorily and reasonably promptly.

5.8.8 Concerns which the IMB had expressed prior to 2013-14 about poor waste management have been addressed, and the IMB is pleased to report that this is now an area of the Prison which is very well run by its own dedicated manager and is providing employment for a small team of prisoners.

ACCOMMODATION

5.8.9 Prior to re-role, all accommodation units underwent refurbishment and over the past two years the overall standards of decoration, furnishings, wing equipment and facilities have remained exceptionally high by prison standards. Cells are well-equipped with (rented)TVs, personal safes and in-cell telephones. Prisoners take a real pride in their surroundings (a good example being the enthusiasm and sheer ingenuity exhibited in

competing to produce Christmas decorations to adorn the wings) and standards of cleanliness are very high. Wing food serveries are invariably tidy and spotlessly clean, linoleum floors are gleaming and there is a conspicuous absence of litter and of graffiti. A combination of standard wing cleaners and the more highly trained Industrial Cleaning team ensure that day to day domestics are reinforced by periodic deep cleaning. A trained prisoner Painting and Decorating party is constantly employed to repaint walls, railings, doors and so forth to a high standard and it is all immaculate. There is an ongoing issue with showers being out of order, however, with typically two or three in Avon and Severn unusable for one reason or another. The Board remains mystified as to why this cannot be resolved as it has been the case for a number of years and has been regularly reported on. The Board is aware, however, that in-cell plumbing problems have increased for the Works department with the arrival of a growing number of elderly prisoners.

5.8.10 The issue of cell-sharing remains problematical. For a variety of reasons, some religious, some to do with smoking/non-smoking, some purely for personality reasons, a minority of prisoners are extremely reluctant to cell-share, and refusal to do so is one of the most common reasons for prisoners ending up on Cellular Confinement following an Adjudication. Ironically some prisoners actively welcome a period of Cellular Confinement as at least they are thereby guaranteed a cell of their own and prefer that to the alternative of sharing a double cell. There is no easy solution to this and the Prison is within its rights in insisting that prisoners share double cells when it is running at or near full operational capacity. It is also entitled to require prisoners to move wings to free up space for new arrivals or following Security intelligence or to protect prisoners from actual or potential bullying. 5 of the 6 Applications received by the Board in 2014-15 about accommodation concerned obligatory wing moves or cell-sharing and the Correspondence & Complaints Department similarly received a series of complaints about these. No complaints were received by the IMB about the general standard of accommodation on offer.

5.8.11 The PIAC (Prisoner Information and Advice Council) system operated by the Prison, through which prisoner wing representatives can raise matters to do with accommodation and facilities at a monthly meeting with members of the SMT and residential managers, seems an effective mechanism for generating improvements and arriving at negotiated compromises and resolves the majority of issues that might otherwise arise. PIAC meetings randomly attended by Board members have been constructive and amicable.

5.8.12 In Autumn 2014 one wing on Avon was designated as a Non-Smoking Wing. Prisoners who applied to be transferred onto it were a mixture of existing non-smokers who wished to live in a smoke-free environment and prisoners who indicated that they seriously wished to quit smoking. Whilst the Prison must be commended for its initiative, in practice there were a number of teething troubles, not least because prisoners were promised in advance that there would be a range of support services in place on which they could draw to assist in smoking cessation which then, for a variety of reasons, did not materialise for a protracted period. Prisoners complained verbally (and by written Application) to the IMB about the lack of this support and of the consequent difficulties they faced in resisting their nicotine cravings, especially when a number also remarked that non-smoking prisoners on the wing were unsympathetic to their withdrawal problems. Consequently some prisoners asked to be returned to other wings. Belatedly a range of support services were put in place and the Wing now seems to be functioning well, but it was a salutary reminder of the complexity of this problem and of the need to ensure, if a positive atmosphere is to be maintained for purposes of dynamic security, that all necessary services are in place before expanding such a venture as this. If non-smoking accommodation in custody is to become the norm, as seems the direction in which national policy is moving, the resource implications of this must be fully costed and guaranteed.

6.1 PROPERTY

6.1.1 Last year the Board reported that over 25% of all Applications were concerned with property. That figure has now reduced slightly to 21%. Nevertheless, this was still the issue over which more complaints were received than any other, and Correspondence & Complaints also received 99 Comp 1 forms related to Property (the second highest number of Comp 1 forms in any category.)

6.1.2 For prisoners who are convicted of sexual offences, the problem is particularly acute as many have lost contact with families and friends owing to the nature of their offences, and personal property thus assumes much greater personal emotional importance. Those serving longer sentences have also had the time and resources to accumulate a growing amount of property, and the lack of consistency in applying volumetric control across the secure estate, combined with modifications to facilities lists after national changes to the IEP scheme in November 2013, have continued to cause a number of related problems. Either prisoners have continued to arrive at HMP Ashfield with excessive amounts of personal property and have felt aggrieved that much has had to go into storage or be disposed of by various official means, or, alternatively, some of their property has remained for weeks, or even months, at their previous prison as the contracted escort has refused to carry what it regards as property in excess of that stipulated in the escort contracts. It has been the experience of the Board, and also of HMP Ashfield itself, that some of the transferring prisons have been less than helpful in trying to resolve these problems. Additionally, in a handful of cases, prisoners have alleged that property has simply gone missing during transfer as property lists have been inaccurate. A supplementary issue has been that items previously permissible and purchased by prisoners at considerable expense are, as a result of national policy, no longer allowable and are confiscated without financial compensation. Some entertainment systems, for example, risk being technologically obsolete by the time the prisoner will eventually be released and able to regain possession of them.

6.1.3 A handful of cases were reported to the IMB of items being damaged or going astray in the Laundry at HMP Ashfield but these must be set in the broader context of the sheer volume of laundry being processed and, at the end of the reporting year, a new system has been implemented for both Laundry staff and prisoners to sign itemised lists in order to minimise the likelihood of problems happening in future.

6.1.4 The Board received no Applications at all (and Correspondence & Complaints received only 2) about the Canteen ("prison shop") service and products or about the extensive monthly mail order service provided and delivered by staff in Finance and in Prisoner Property. This is testimony to the hard work and efficiency of the departments themselves in delivering these services and of PALS in keeping prisoners informed of the progress of their orders.

6.2 PROGRAMMES

6.2.1 When Ashfield re-rolled from a YOI to an adult male Category C training prison in 2013, the Prison's vision was to be able to develop into a specialist treatment centre for sex offenders. In the 2013-14 reporting year, Turning Point was sub-contracted to provide targeted offending behaviour programmes as part of the overall Reducing Reoffending Strategy and, in the course of the 2014-15 reporting year, has been responsible for delivering SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Programme) and the TSP (Thinking Skills Programme). In addition, Turning Point has provided psychological risk assessment reports for the Parole Board.

6.2.2 The Prison's published Reducing Reoffending Strategy and contractual obligations require them to deliver 50 starts and 42 completions per annum for the Thinking Skills Programme and 36 starts and 15 completions for the Sex Offender Treatment Programme.

6.2.3 The Board is pleased that, in the course of this last year, Turning Point has steadily developed the number of groups that it can run and that it aims to expand further in 2015-16 as a consequence of recruiting and training additional staff. It is heartening that the Board has received no Applications from men disappointed at being unable to access TSP and SOTP courses in a timely manner, nor have there been any Applications identifying concerns with either the content or the delivery of the courses.

6.2.4 There have, however, been a couple of issues brought to the Board's attention which would appear, potentially, to be related. One is from a handful of men who have felt unreasonably pressurised into signing up for an SOTP course who are either maintaining their innocence or claim the course does not form part of their Sentence Plan and who are then warned that refusal to comply will result in a reduction in their IEP status. The other is that waiting lists for men who are eligible and ready are very short or non-existent because it is actually proving more difficult than originally anticipated in identifying men suitable, eligible and willing to undertake the course. Typically, over a third of Ashfield's prisoners at any one time are unsuitable for the SOTP programme as they are low risk, and others are ineligible as they have already completed it prior to arrival. Given the Prison's original intention to develop as a treatment centre and that it has housed a total population averaging around 385-395 for most of this reporting period, it seems bizarre that it can only just about fill the available SOTP places. Turning Point is anticipating significant problems in the future in identifying suitable TSP candidates in particular, not least because there appear to be some difficulties in securing the agreement of Offender Managers to have this added to Sentence Plans.

6.2.5 The problem has been exacerbated since the Spring of 2015 by the inclusion of sex offenders in the national strategy to create Resettlement prisons. Prisoners that HMP Ashfield originally expected to be releasing from Ashfield are now being transferred to the newly designated specialist Resettlement prisons for sex offenders (e.g. HMP Channings Wood and HMP Oakwood) in order to complete their sentences. Ashfield has then been under pressure from the NOMS Population Management Unit (PMU) to fill any vacant spaces promptly. This has resulted in increasing numbers of prisoners being identified by other prisons for transfer to Ashfield who, for a variety of reasons, are ineligible for SOTP. This may be because it does not form part of their Sentence Plan, or they are in denial of their offences, they are unsuitable (i.e. deemed to pose too low a risk of reoffending on RM 2000 assessment) or not yet psychologically ready to embark on SOTP courses or too far away from their scheduled release date. Not only is this undermining the ethos of the prison, but it is an inefficient use of resources given the number of prisoners nationally elsewhere in the system who express frustration as they are obliged to wait for prolonged periods of time to secure places on these courses. The mismatch between these and those actually transferred to Ashfield would appear to be growing. It is not a problem which HMP Ashfield can address in isolation, but it needs to be investigated by NOMS. It is a matter of concern which the IMB will be monitoring closely in 2015-16.

7.1 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	3
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	4
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	33
Total number of visits to the prison	257
Total number of applications received	125
Total number of Confidential Access applications included in the above	6
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	Aug. 2014

7.1.1 Recruitment within the constraints of the national IMB recruitment process has proved exceptionally difficult. A campaign in early 2015 generated only three applicants of whom only one was deemed suitable (and the appointee subsequently resigned on health grounds less than two months after taking up duties.) A member recently appointed in 2014 resigned on similar grounds and the other two resignations were of longer-standing members, including the 2014 Chairman. The current Board, at only half strength, is made up almost exclusively of members who are of retirement age and the burden of maintaining a high level of service and of professionalism has made increasing demands on their time and resources to the point at which the Board is at serious risk of losing further members.

7.1.2 In order to manage this situation the Board has regrettably been obliged to pare down the range of duties it has customarily undertaken in order to focus on the essentials of Rota visits, monitoring the welfare of those on GOOD or Cellular Confinement and processing prisoner Applications. In comparison with what members have sought to do so in normal circumstances, in practice their availability to attend occasional meetings of a wider variety of prison committees and working parties such as Safer Custody, the Quality Improvement Group, DEAT, SMARG or Reducing Reoffending has been, by necessity, more limited than previously. Whenever possible, however, a Board member has attended the fortnightly Interdepartmental Risk Management Meeting in order to keep up to date with

new arrivals and the potential risks they pose to staff and volunteers, their likelihood of self-harm and the constraints their SOPO places on communications, contacts, IT access and in-possession property.

Visitors

7.1.3 Chris Davies (Deputy Head of the IMB Secretariat) visited and was given a tour of the prison by the 2014 Chairman who highlighted the particular challenges faced both in managing this particular prison population and in monitoring their welfare.

Local, regional and national training

7.1.4 The work of the Board Development Officer has ensured that members have continued to avail themselves of training opportunities within the Prison as they have arisen. These have included training on so-called "legal highs" (New Psychoactive Substances) and presentations on the Prison's Serious Incident Policy and operation of the Command Suite, the role of Mental Health services, PALS, and the work and training opportunities for prisoners provided by the "Bistro" and by Industrial Cleaning.

7.1.5 The 2014 and 2015 Chairs have attended the SW Regional Chairs' Meetings and the 2015 Chair attended the IMB "New Chairs" course at the end of 2014 and the 2015 National Conference. Members also had the opportunity in November 2014 to visit HMP Exeter and share ideas and good practice with Board members there, and two members also visited HMP Bristol in Spring 2015. The current Chair is a member of the IMB Learning and Skills Support Group and, in that capacity, drafted national guidance for all IMB boards on the delivery of education and training in prisons (including OLASS) and suggestions as to how these might be effectively monitored and reported on.

7.1.6 The Board continues to be very grateful to HMP Ashfield employed and contracted staff who have contributed to IMB training, whether by delivering "bite-sized" training sessions prior to Board meetings or by making time to explain their role to individual Board members.

Prison staff induction

7.1.7 The Chair was invited to contribute to a new officers' training course in Spring 2015 by giving a presentation on the role of the IMB.

7.2 APPLICATIONS STATISTICS

Code	Subject	Year 2014-2015	Year 2013-2014
A	Accommodation	4	11
B	Adjudications	7	4
C	Diversity related	6	3

D	Education/training/employment/IEP	18	33
E	Family/visits/resettlement/phone	4	6
F	Food/kitchen related	0	1
G	Health related	11	22
H	Property/canteen	25	49
I	Sentence related	9	11
J	Staff/prisoner related	12	17
K	Transfers	1	2
L	Miscellaneous	12	30
	Confidential Applications	6	
	Total number of applications	125	189

7.2.1 It is heartening that the Board is able to report a significant decrease (of the order of 33%) in the number of Applications received in the 12-month reporting period in comparison with the equivalent reporting period in the year immediately following the re-role of HMP Ashfield from its former status as a YOI. A number of factors have contributed to this but it is undoubtedly the result, in no small part, of the fact that now, 12-24 months on, the population has become more settled, new regimes and working practices have bedded in and a *modus vivendi* has been established between staff and prisoners in an atmosphere of mutual respect and of a shared understanding of the positive and constructive organisational culture that has gradually evolved. A handful of complaints received by the Board were of a serious and complex nature, and suggest that a small minority of prisoners feel aggrieved that either the nature of their index offences or their persistence in maintaining their innocence impact negatively upon their IEP status or generate restrictions on their property allowed in possession, external contacts and communications. Nevertheless, the majority of Applications received by the Board were about relatively minor issues which could be resolved fairly quickly. Where that was not possible, prisoners were signposted to other avenues, including the PPO.

7.2.2 Approximately 11% of Applications were complaints, not about conditions at HMP Ashfield, but about issues outside the control of the Prison, such as matters that had been unresolved at other prisons prior to prisoners' transfer, the inadequacy of communications or provision of services from outside agencies such as Probation officers, County Council Social Services departments or Police, or failure by contracted escort services to deliver prisoners' property on transfer. 9% were complaints about NHS-contracted healthcare providers, again matters outside HMP Ashfield's direct control as these are delivered under NHS England contracts and not under sub-contracts from SERCO. In short, only fractionally over 80% of the Applications received by the Board were complaints about matters for which HMP Ashfield itself or its own sub-contracted providers were responsible.

7.2.3 The Board is of the belief that three other factors have also contributed to a situation in which it has typically, in the last 6 months, received an average of just 2 Applications a week and, occasionally, none at all. Whereas, immediately after the re-role, prisoners were inclined to attempt to use the IMB to bypass the official Prison complaints process, that has now all but stopped. A further factor has been the introduction, from January 2015, of a separate dedicated complaints procedure for all Healthcare issues. Additionally, a very constructive development has been the creation of PALS (the Prisoner Advice Line Service), a very effective freefone service staffed by prisoners themselves who act as a first point of contact and information for prisoners with queries or concerns. This has resolved many more issues at an early stage before they have escalated to a Comp1 submission or an Application to the IMB. Over this reporting period (July 2014 - June 2015) PALS received 295 enquiries, approximately 65% of which they were able to resolve without referral to other prison services or departments and with an overall resolution rate of 97%. PALS conducted a survey in April 2015 and 69% of the population at Ashfield completed the questionnaire. The results indicated that 85% were aware of the existence of PALS, 37% of respondents had used them and, of those, 92% indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received. The work of PALS would undoubtedly be assisted further if they were permitted read-only electronic access to PSIs rather than being wholly reliant on printed versions.

7.2.4 This more flexible range of routes prisoners can now take to try to seek redress of their grievances is to be applauded. In 2014-15 the Correspondence & Complaints Department has recorded a reduction in the number of Comp1 and Comp1A forms received. It is the Board's view that this is largely attributable to the fact that the majority of prisoners express satisfaction with their treatment and conditions at HMP Ashfield and are also using PALS to raise any general queries. However, despite the hard work of the staff in the Correspondence & Complaints Department, and the laudable personalised service they provide by discussing issues directly with complainants, Applications to the IMB Board and conversations with individual prisoners would suggest a varying degree of prisoner confidence in the quality and relevance of the answers they receive to Comp 1 forms. The IMB has observed that the quality of replies by staff below senior manager level to Comp 1 forms is uneven, ranging from the cursory to the very comprehensive. The quality control system in the Department does result in some initial replies being rejected and staff asked to send an improved version, but there are still a number of poor responses getting through which IMB members have been shown.

7.2.5 It is significant, however, that very few prisoners take up the opportunity to appeal to the PPO, the reason usually being given that it is far too protracted a process to be worth the effort.

Caroline Thompson (Chair, IMB Ashfield) on behalf of the IMB Board, HMP Ashfield

8. GLOSSARY OF ESTABLISHMENT-RELATED ABBREVIATIONS

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork
AWP	Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust
CC	Cellular Confinement
CSU	Care and Separation Unit
DEAT	Diversity Equality Action Team
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service

IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OLASS	Offenders' Learning and Skills Service
PALS	Prisoner Advice Line Service
PMU	Prisoner Management Unit
PNOMIS	(Prisons) National Offender Management Information System
PPO	Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SMARG	Senior Management Adjudications Review Group
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOPO	Sex Offences Prevention Order
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
TSP	Thinking Skills Programme
YOI	Young Offender Institution