



Annual IMB Report

August 2014 – July 2015

HMP Bristol

Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

Section 1

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1.1) 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.
- (1.2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- (1.3) report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.**

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

Section 2

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Section 3

3. Description of the Prison

3.1 HMP Bristol has maintained its status as a Category B, public sector, local prison with a stable operational capacity of 614 adult males – approximately 50% on remand, 50% aged 30 – 49, 80% less than 6 months stay, 85% British. It is situated on a compact site in the densely populated area of Horfield within the city of Bristol.

3.2 The prison was built in the mid-Victorian period but B and C Wings were added in the 1960s and a block for Gatehouse, Administration and Visits was developed in the 1970s. A number of tired-looking portacabins are on site and the whole estate has an unmistakably historic appearance about it.

3.3 Primary healthcare is provided on the Wings in the first instance whereas the Brunel Unit manages prisoners with acute or severe mental health needs and those with exceptional disabilities. There is a First Night Centre, an induction facility, a Wing for newly admitted drug/alcohol dependent prisoners and a Wing for vulnerable prisoners.

3.4 The Governor is supported by a senior team with a range of experience from other prisons – both operational and support staff.

Section 4

4. Executive Summary

4.1 Overall Perspective

4.1.1 The Board welcomes the relatively open approach exercised by the prison's senior team that has enabled the IMB to carry out its responsibilities in a cooperative but still critical-friendly climate. Recent advances in the sharing of prison data/dates, new policies and action plans have been particularly well received by the Board.

4.1.2 The Board broadly supports the prison's 'direction of travel' towards being an establishment which treats prisoners with fairness and compassion while recognising the need for appropriate use of authority – a prison with intent to change “the old culture” by raising professional standards and centralising the importance of relationships based on mutual respect.

4.1.3 The Board is in broad agreement with the findings of the HM Inspectorate of Prisons who reported in October 2014 that 'Respect' and 'Purposeful Activity' had improved from being deemed “Inadequate” in May 2013; 'Safety' was judged by HMIP as still requiring improvement whilst 'Resettlement' was seen as deteriorating from “Good” in May 2013 to “Requires Improvement” in October 2014. The Board is mindful that it was an inspection with considerable notice, compared to the “unannounced” event in 2013, and that the prison is now working to an 85 point action plan (6 main recommendations, 67 others & 12 for housekeeping) published in February 2015. A more recent regional operational assessment has also identified a number of weaknesses. The Board, however, believes that real progress has been made in the prison over the last 2 years even though there remains considerable scope for further strategic improvement.

4.1.4 The capacity of the prison to achieve further improvements, when it is already facing significant daily operational challenges, is questionable. The prison continues to experience constant turbulence associated with a high “churn factor”(up to 50% on remand, 60% with a stay of less than 3 months) compounded by staff turnover and reduction in availability through “detached” and hospital-emergency escort duties, sickness (eg stress-related) absence and holiday leave etc. The Board is concerned that the regular 'red/amber' regime state across the prison suggests there is scarcely enough resource to manage “the basics” and therefore leaves little time to adopt and fulfil the 63 objectives outlined in the Establishment Delivery Plan 2015-16.

4.1.5 The House of Commons' Justice Committee (9th report of session 2014-15) concluded that “the fall in staffing levels stemming from redundancies and increased turnover....are bound to have reduced the consistency of relationships between officers and prisoners, and in turn affected safety.” The Board continues to have misgivings about the pendulum swing towards flexible deployment of personnel in the prison and recommends a rebalance that values the benefit of greater predictability and continuity but without the downside of isolated and fixed mind-sets.

4.2 Main Findings

4.2.1 The Board understands the case for economies in the public sector and the need for change in the way prison staff carry out their work. However, the Board also believes that the ‘blunt instrument’ of benchmarking has failed this particular prison and is continuing to do so. HMP Bristol, with its exceptionally high “churn” factor, urgently requires discretionary funding to increase the number of operational staff so that standards of fairness and decency do not deteriorate any further. Too often, weekly reports from members of the Board - based on observations and conversations with staff and prisoners - have asserted that the prison now has an atmosphere of being “unsafe if not dangerous”. Frequent failure to achieve even the lean benchmark staff: prisoner ratio due to staff sickness, emergencies and other unexpected demands is compromising still further the prison’s regime. At such times, it is little more than a “warehousing” institution with a negative knock-on effect for the wellbeing and resettlement of prisoners.

4.2.2 The Board acknowledges the high levels of care, compassion and risk daily exercised by the vast majority of prison officers. HMP Bristol, in line with most other public sector services, has to do “more with less” and therefore relies more than ever on local, “can do” leadership capacity rather than regional/national administration to deliver the day-to-day function. Monitoring throughout the year has led the Board to conclude that the short and long term interests of prisoners would be enhanced by developing the leadership potential of those in middle management positions leading to improved staff motivation and morale, stronger front-line resilience and a more consistent prisoner-centred system. These supervisory staff already have a high workload and must play a central role in meeting the large number of “Requires Improvement” demands from HMIP in addition to the many other objectives as set out in the Establishment Delivery Plan.

4.2.3 The Board is concerned by the widespread use of drugs in the prison and not least, the ascendancy of ‘new psychoactive substances’ (NPS often known as “spice”) with its unpredictable effects on users – often leading to extreme acts of defiance/violence, confrontations with staff and tensions between prisoners around “debt”. With the added pressure of an imminent smoking ban in all prisons, the Board urges high profile priority on a “zero tolerance” approach to drugs based on wide-ranging preventative measures and serious sanctions for offenders – clearly no simple task but one that would emphasise the rule of law in prison, reduce the pressure on staff dealing with drug related emergencies and address the addictive habits of many prisoners.

4.3 Particular issues requiring a response from the Minister

4.3.1 The Board considers that more funding is urgently required for:

increased numbers of operational staff to meet the demands of this particular local prison (section 4.2.1);

innovative leadership development opportunities for managers dealing with significant change (section 4.2.2);

extensive preventative measures to strengthen a “zero tolerance policy” towards drugs (section 4.2.3).

4.4 Particular issues requiring a response from the Prison Service

The following issues are outlined in Section 5 of this report, with some noted in previous IMB reports but yet to be fully addressed by the prison service:

4.4.1 Erosion of staff-prisoner relationships and of contact/continuity between officers and prisoners (section 4.2).

4.4.2 Failure to establish EDaT on a more proactive, high profile platform to ensure fairness across all groups in the prison (section 5.1).

4.4.3 Shortcomings in the quality of educational provision and in the number of prisoners taking up courses/visiting the library (section 5.2).

4.4.4 Concern about the safety of nursing staff on Wings and prisoner access to mental health group-work/talking-therapy sessions (section 5.3).

4.4.5 Insufficient work opportunities and a payment system that does not sufficiently reward performance (section 5.4).

4.4.6 Failure, on past occasions, to complete some resettlement plans on time and to implement systems for delivering high levels of prisoner attendance at the range of purposeful activities (section 5.5).

4.4.7 A need for more cohesive systems of monitoring and responding to violence to ensure the safety of all prisoners, especially those at risk of intimidation/self harm etc (section 5.6).

4.4.8 Inadequate resourcing, at certain times, of the Segregation Wing (fabric & staff) and a need to enrich the regime for its residents (section 5.7).

4.4.9 Poor condition of many parts of the internal environment and frequent littering of the external areas which undermines the prison's expectation of decency-for-all and discourages any sense of pride (section 5.8).

4.4.10 Widespread use of drugs/NPS in prison which underlines the need for diverse, preventative measures and meaningful, unequivocal sanctions (section 6.3).

5. Mandatory Areas for IMB Reporting

5.1 Equality and Inclusion

5.1.1 The Board remains vigilant over the question of equality shown to all prisoners whatever their “protected characteristics”. It has recorded no substantive issue of discrimination over the last year but there have been 36 Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs) processed by staff. The Board, however, regrets the lack of more direct access to details of Equality work, DIRF outcomes, relevant statistics and monitoring routines.

5.1.2 The Board is concerned that the Equality & Diversity Action Team have not met since November 2014, the post of Equalities Officer has been vacant for some time and there has not been one prisoner forum on Equality between August 2014 and July 2015. There has been very little quality assurance of staff responses to the 36 DIRF submissions to ensure a fair and consistent outcome. The allocation of low priority to Equality structures can potentially lead to minimal awareness of the issues among staff and a degree of complacency setting into working practice. The Board therefore recommends speedy restoration of Equality structures, not as a token gesture but as a genuine sign of adopting the spirit of the Equality Act.

5.1.3 The Equality Duty, under the Equality Act 2010, amounts to advancing equality of opportunity and removing disadvantages based on protected characteristics. The recent internal appointment of an Imam as ‘managing chaplain’ to the senior team is an indication of serious commitment to multi-faith thinking and reinforced by highly visible representatives from a wide spectrum of beliefs engaging with prisoners and arranging services/prayers etc. The management of special diets including vegetarian and halal food/Ramadan are well established. Special consideration is professionally given to prisoners with a disability or who are temporarily ill. The policy on transgender prisoners is discretely followed and there are increasing attempts to address low literacy levels/special educational needs. The Board, therefore, believes there is evidence of an inclusive culture of mutual respect between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not but repeats its advocacy (last 3 annual reports) for a higher profile system promoting equality across all prisoners.

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

5.2.1 It is expected that all new prisoners at HMP Bristol attend an induction session jointly run by Weston College and the National Careers Service followed by an assessment of current levels in literacy & numeracy and an interview about work aspirations on release. An education plan is then drawn up that directs the prisoner through relevant courses towards agreed vocational areas. The Board acknowledges recent effort to streamline this process but regrets that a prisoner’s education plan is not currently incorporated into his sentence plan.

5.2.2 All prisoners are encouraged to aspire to a minimum of level 2 (GCSE A*-C) in English and Maths as a gateway towards all other learning in prison and beyond. Approximately 85% of prisoners fall below this level. The range of vocational courses is inadequate at HMP Bristol, not least due to an on-going lack of facilities and unimaginative use of space but there remains some good practice especially in Catering, Horticulture and PE. Marketing of ‘the education offer’ has recently improved through more explicit reference at Induction in the First Night Centre, “Pop-up” shops/ prospectuses/posters on Wings and themed months in the Library. The Board endorses OfSTED’s “support and challenge” priorities around the fundamental importance of improving the prison’s quality of leadership and teaching to maximise impact on prisoner achievement.

5.2.3 Take-up of courses first depends on the motivation of prisoners to select from the options available and then hinges on security clearance by the Allocations team - an issue still being addressed. Delays of more than a fortnight can cause frustration and loss of interest leading to at least a wavering commitment by the

prisoner or, in worst case, complete “drop out”. By July 2015, there were 38 prisoners allocated to full time education against a capacity of 50 places and 71 prisoners allocated to part time courses against a capacity of 134. Pay for attending courses has recently been increased but there continues to be reluctance from some prisoners to engage. Once allocated to education, acceptable reasons for non-attendance include court attendance, visits (legal and domestic), external trips and transfers, adjudications, genuine illness, parole board hearings or when the class is cancelled. From May to July 2015, attendance against allocation averaged 74% but dropped to 67% in July. Unacceptable absence from class is meant to result in an IEP warning/sanction but the response is more often implemented by Learning & Skills staff instead of officers on the Wing as intended. The Board urges Wing staff to promote education more explicitly on a day-to-day basis with prisoners and to implement sanctions as appropriate.

5.2.4 The Board commends the improved teamwork/provision/delivery between Weston College/National Careers Service/HMP Bristol and is assured by the OfSTED monitoring reports published in January and May 2015 following the ‘Requires Improvement’ judgement in the OfSTED inspection of late September 2014. The Board encourages strategic attention to the OfSTED recommendations so that standards of educational provision are professionally raised and the resettlement prospects of prisoners are better enhanced.

5.2.5 The Board regrets any loss of access to the library for prisoners, normally explained by lack of staff availability for escort duties to and from the Wings. In June and July, there was approximately a total of 50 prisoners attending the library most days but there were at least 6 occasions when it was zero and several more when it was below par. There remains a need to afford some priority on this facility and perhaps to develop creative ways of providing regular access to works of fiction and non-fiction.

5.3 Healthcare & Mental Health

5.3.1 Incoming prisoners undergo initial screening in the health care room in the First Night Centre. A booklet on health services in prison is given and referrals are made for mental health assessment, substance misuse services, GP appointments etc. The Board acknowledges this systematic incorporation of healthcare into Induction.

5.3.2 Access to a hospital appointment is still being compromised by last-minute inability to provide sufficient escorts leading to rescheduling and a longer wait for consultation than may be desirable. Access to dental and optician services appears to be more variable, especially the latter. Attendance at hospital clinics have marginally declined to 45% of appointments for a variety of reasons including “no show” and inability to resource an escort. The Board encourages more consideration to the health needs of prisoners where they appear absolutely genuine even though it understands there are competing priorities for declining staff resources.

5.3.3 Medication and most of the healthcare is administered on the Wings and on a priority, daily routine basis. The organisation of C Wing, around detox and substance misuse protocols, is well established. There is a sense of realism from nursing staff about recidivists and the challenge of helping prisoners to confront their various addictions. Visible partnership between Bristol Community Health nursing staff and prison officers needs to become higher priority when there are medication rounds taking place on the Wings. The Board finds it unsatisfactory that nurses report how they can feel unsafe on their rounds and that without an officer present when dispensing medication it can be diverted to other prisoners. The Board also regrets the decline of opportunities for prisoners to take part in ‘talking therapies’ sessions as part of their anti-addiction programme.

5.3.4 Mental health services are mainly provided on the Wings but the Brunel Unit (14 beds) is also operational - primarily for the care of prisoners with more severe mental health issues and with an emphasis on short term intervention, day care and reintegration. A compassionate approach to mental health is regularly shown and procedures for ‘constant watch’ are conscientiously followed in the Brunel Unit. The Board acknowledges that collaboration between prison and Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership has vastly

improved over the last few years but regrets the decline of activity groups and one-to-one sessions within the Brunel Unit – often explained by a lack of staff to escort/oversee prisoners.

5.3.5 The Brunel Unit, as a location for 'lodgers' and the more extreme clinical cases (pre hospital), has also continued. Deaths in custody from natural causes have occurred in the prison and have been sensitively managed by staff. The Board considers that policy for ensuring the highest standards of decency/dignity may need review so that it is systematically offered to all prisoners needing end-of-life care, whatever their location.

5.4 Purposeful activity (includes work)

5.4.1 Most of the work opportunities are part of the prison's day-to-day routines eg cleaning, kitchen, clothing exchange store, recycling, painting, and orderlies in several areas. Prisoners are also allocated to workshops for textiles, PICTA (Information Technology), re-cycling, contract services and waste management. Prisoners now have the option to do both work and education part time with some literacy and numeracy tuition taking place in workshops - thereby reaching out to those prisoners who have a lingering resistance to entering the education block.

5.4.2 By July 2015, there were 472 prisoners taking up part time work or education opportunities and 147 unemployed - of whom there were 76 who had not undergone sufficient induction to qualify for purposeful activity. The attendance rate of prisoners at work has risen over the year to an average of 80% of those enlisted but has declined in daily total from approximately 140 to 110 during June and July. The Board endorses recent initiatives by the interim Activities Manager and supports all staff in the task of promoting a purposeful activity culture throughout the prison - a task that is hampered by lack of suitable buildings and opportunities on a constrained site but still with some potential to expand provision. The issue of prisoner performance rather than just attendance deserves greater attention to ensure fairness in pay and better preparation for resettlement into the workplace on release. The relevance of OfSTED thinking to the improvement of existing workshop activities and instructor skills also remains a vital strategic priority.

5.4.3 The Board echoes the Justice Committee's observation that "...most prisons do not have the facilities for workshops on a scale that would enable the majority of prisoners to do work which will equip them for employment on release. If support for offenders in moving from custody into the community is to work to best effect, staffing shortages and clearing the backlog of risk assessments must be resolved urgently." The Board considers there are further adjustments to the prison's routine and infrastructure that could result in more being made of a less-than-ideal environment.

5.5 Resettlement

5.5.1 Improvements have been recently observed in resettlement such as the use of a new needs-analysis in preparing sentence plans and the Gatehouse presentation to all staff entitled 'A whole prison approach to supporting prisoners in making positive changes in their lives'. Catch 22, a community rehabilitation company (CRC), was appointed on 1 May to provide (a) resettlement plan for all prisoners within 10 days of arrival (b) resettlement course providing support with all 7 of the OASys pathways (c) access arrangements on release for resettlement services. The Board will monitor the impact of this new plan but does not underestimate the weight of practical difficulties facing staff, prisoners and external contractors.

5.5.2 For example, whereas in the first quarter of 2015 90% of the 'start of custody (Part 1)' Basic Screenings were being completed by Offender Supervisors from the Offender Management Unit (OMU) within the required 72 hours of arrival, in the second quarter this fell below target to 70% and has continued to decline. Part 2 of the Basic Screening, carried out now by Catch 22, is however being completed within the target period of 5 working days from arrival. The Board is optimistic that a resettlement plan for all prisoners will now be more systematically delivered through recently improved systems for completing both Parts 1 and 2 of the initial screening process.

5.5.3 Prisoners discharged from HMP Bristol often have multiple resettlement needs and the prison continues to have a key role in preparing them for release. The Board is aware, for example, of the lengthy process involved in opening a bank account or of the demand from non-MAPPA prisoners for a course addressing domestic violence where lack of funding has previously been a barrier to intervention. There are other initiatives such as the appointment of peer mentors (ex-offenders) to provide a “gate pick-up” service for prisoners with a high level of need and the part time family engagement worker with a 55 prisoner caseload in liaison with Social Services/Troubled Families Initiative. There is also the intention to re-introduce Health Champions led by the CRC as a means of adapting lifestyle/gaining qualifications. All of these initiatives require increased levels of training, resource and accountability. The Board therefore remains sceptical about the realism of delivering such a package of resettlement services in the light of current difficulties.

5.5.4 The recent designation of HMP Bristol as a resettlement prison, with half of its population expecting to return to the local area, brings into sharper focus the aim of Reducing Reoffending underpinning the resettlement pathways. One such pathway - employability - is addressed at workshops where attendance rose to 94% in February but had reduced to 74% in May and 60% by July for a variety of reasons eg refusal to attend, preference for an alternative such as exercise or cancellation by the prison (loss of contract, staffing etc). The Board is concerned by a lack of sanctions (IEP) being consistently applied to prisoners for their ill-explained non-attendance but commends the constructive relationship forming between OMU and Catch 22 although it remains mindful of an on-going shortfall in the prison’s delivery of some personal resettlement plans.

5.6 Safer Custody

5.6.1 The Board continues to have significant concern about the safety of prisoners and staff. Prisoner-to-prisoner threats and assaults averaged 20 and 15 per month respectively between August 2014 and July 2015. The equivalent figures for prisoner-to-staff threats and assaults are recorded as an average of 25 and 3 per month. These numbers may underestimate the problem since there has, until recently, been a lack of confidence in the data recording procedures. Recent changes in recording violent incidents between prisoners show a doubling to an average of 2 per day from early June to late July 2015 – a sign that a more automatic recording routine may now be taking root and that data is becoming more credible.

5.6.2 The Board has seen that much of the aggression seen in prison is exacerbated by drug consumption and trading. The increased availability of new psychoactive substances (NPS ie “spice”) in prison has led to some episodes of protracted rage whilst intimidation of those in drug related debt has become more frequent. The Board is aware of the recent NOMS priority being given to supply and harm reduction and the prison’s written warning to prisoners about the effect of such substances. However, the Board sees a clear need for increased vigilance in order to intercept “over the wall” projectiles, packages in the Visits Hall and any other means of getting drugs into prison.

5.6.3. The use of ‘Assessment, Care in Custody and Assessment’ (ACCT) documents has increased (approximately 600 per year, 4-5% of the prison population at any one time) and they are routinely updated by staff with quality control checks made by custodial managers and the monthly Safer Custody meeting. The number of acts of self-harm has considerably increased over the period from August 2014 to July 2015 compared to the equivalent period 2013-14; 398 reported incidents were reported leading to an increase in ‘constant supervision’ duties and sadly, three self inflicted deaths. The prison responds in a compassionate and professional manner in such extreme circumstances and the Brunel Unit’s focus on mental health assessment/monitoring represents a key pre-emptive measure against self-inflicted injuries. The Board concludes that, although there is care and concern routinely exercised by the overwhelming majority of staff towards prisoners showing signs of disturbed behaviour or changes in attitude/appearance/demeanour, there are still major lessons to be learned from recent reports by coroners and the Ombudsman.

5.6.4 The Board regrets that the prison has seemed to allow the place of listeners to decline over the last year. It welcomes the more recent recruitment of prisoner volunteers and their Samaritans' training as new listeners whereby they can usefully respond to prisoners facing a personal crisis, articulating 'prisoner voice' at meetings as well as maintaining daily dialogue with staff over a variety of prison issues.

5.7 Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision

5.7.1 The Segregation Wing has 12 cells for holding prisoners for 'their own protection', for cellular confinement, for being so disruptive that 'control & restraint' was deemed necessary leading to a 'Good Order & Discipline' sanction or for some other serious reason. There were 312 incidents between August 2014 and July 2015 leading to a prisoner being detained in Segregation. It is staffed by a specialist team and manages a variety of prisoners including the most violent, the highest profile, the most complex and others whose behaviour cannot be managed on the Wings. The Board approves of the efforts to reduce the amount of time prisoners spend on the unit and return them to normal location and compliments staff on their sensitivity, patience and forbearance in the face of almost daily verbal abuse and threatening behaviour from one or more of the residents. The Board, however, highlights HMIP's recommendations (2014) to improve the quality of experience in Segregation by enabling more access to work, education and the library. Achieving such improvements is likely to prove problematical when taking into account adverse risk assessments and low availability of staff to provide individual escort duties.

5.7.2. There were 994 adjudications (hearings about alleged offences carried out by prisoners whilst in prison) that had to be organised between August 2014 and July 2015, compared to 926 in the previous year. The Board observes a sample of these proceedings and considers they are conducted in a fair and balanced manner; the Independent Adjudicator (a district judge) dealt with 184 of the most serious cases between August 2014 and July 2015 compared to 202 during the previous 12 months. Referrals to the Police are rare but the Board has some concern over the trigger-criteria used given the fact that prisoner v prisoner and prisoner v staff assaults have been reported during the last year.

5.7.3 Two cells in the Segregation Unit that have been out of commission for a number of months putting constraint on the prison's capacity to receive and retain prisoners. Other cells have been seriously vandalised on occasions and it has taken a number of weeks for repairs to be completed. Cells in which 'dirty protests' have taken place (17 between August 2014 and July 2015 compared to 5 in the previous year) have also been problematic due to a slow response to the need for thorough cleaning – during and after the protest. The Board regrets the delay in repairs and standards of maintenance in Segregation cells – inevitably compromising decency in what is predictably an environment with a high attrition rate caused by agitated and disturbed prisoners.

5.8 Residential Services (includes accommodation, food, catering and kitchens)

5.8.1 Whilst the standard of Wing cleaning is variable but just about adequate overall, it is not helped by the poor condition of some facilities such as missing/cracked floor and wall tiles, leaking/broken toilets etc – a pattern outlined in previous IMB reports. There may have been fewer sightings of cockroaches in serveries and cells this year but there remains evidence of their survival in the prison. Elements of some of the serveries need at least some cosmetic attention and the changing/toilet facilities in the kitchen warrant priority consideration especially as it constitutes a risk to food hygiene. Wing inspections, as the means of monitoring the condition of cells and communal facilities, have not been regularly completed resulting in inconsistency on and between landings/Wings. The Board therefore welcomes the unequivocal checklist for cell inspections and cell inventory as laid out in Annex A & B of the recently published Decency Policy although compliant, prison-wide implementation is unlikely to be straightforward.

5.8.2 The Board understands there the adverse effect of a high rate of attrition on the environment of a local prison, where approximately half the population are on remand and therefore more likely to lack ownership and pride in their surroundings; there does however seem to be an on-going lack of urgency to make the most of a Victorian legacy. Whilst litter dropped from cells onto the ground outside Wings may have marginally improved, the cleaning regime still appears too variable resulting in a poor first impression of authority (eg use of IEPs) and an attraction for vermin. The Board welcomes the inclusion of Decency as one of 5 strategic priorities currently being adopted but concludes that sufficient attention has yet to be given to improving decency across the prison's environment.

5.8.3 The issue of insufficient kit and irregular kit exchange has been a particular feature this year. Recent substantial expenditure on new kit is helping the situation but there remain difficulties with the external laundry contractor, hoarding and deliberate damage to clothes/sheets/towels etc. The Board sees the protracted period of kit problems as a threat to standards of personal hygiene/decency and is hopeful that systematic, long term solutions have now been found.

5.8.4 The Board makes weekly visits to the kitchen where it observes productive and orderly teamwork between staff and prisoners. Qualifications in Health & Safety and Food Hygiene are encouraged and systems (eg knife security, dietary requirements) are well established. Prisoner satisfaction with menu range and rotation remains high and complaints tend to be more about quantity than quality of food served – now being addressed by deployment of an officer to supervise the integrity of portion control and guarantee greater fairness. The Board views catering as a genuine strength in the prison where a “can do” attitude seems prevalent in the face of equipment failure, food budget pressure, staff changes and occasional prisoner defiance.

Section 6

6. Discretionary Areas selected for IMB Reporting

6.1 Phone PINs

6.1.1 Prisoners are able to request registration of up to 20 personal contact phone numbers. Although the admin support staff successfully process many requests within 24 hours, delays can be much longer for a host of reasons and thereby cause frustration and conflict. For prisoners subject to public protection measures, the process can naturally take a matter of weeks but the turnaround target of 5 days is now normally met, whatever the offence. The Board therefore acknowledges recent priority being placed on more systematic staffing to ensure that prisoner phone contact with family/friends is made quickly available – reducing stress in the prisoner and avoiding confrontation on the Wings.

6.2 Personal Property

6.2.1 The national position of the entitlement, storage and transfer of personal property has been at crisis point with maverick decisions being made by hostels, individual prisons and officers, transport contractors and the Police. The moment of transfer for a prisoner can be a particularly vulnerable time regarding his property – clearing his cell, reclaiming property from the store, getting it accepted onto the transport and then seeing it processed into the new prison with added difficulties when moving to an establishment of a different category. The Board fully supports the new national recommendations that there should be acceptance of responsibility when processes have not been followed, an effective response to complaints and a reiteration of the instructions about entitlement according to prison category and prisoner status.

6.3 Illegal Drugs and NPS (New Psychoactive Substances)

6.3.1 Drugs continue to be a serious concern with prisoners regularly taking illegal drugs/NPS and often becoming disruptive/difficult to manage. Prisoners frequently get themselves into debt resulting in them becoming subject to bullying/intimidation. The long-term effect on prisoners' health and resettlement prospects is also of considerable concern.

6.3.2 HMP Bristol has a trained dog to detect certain blends of NPS. It is not illegal to take NPS although it remains illegal to bring these items into prison (or deliver them). Recently, the police have had some success with catching those who project substances over the prison wall – resulting, for example, in a three year custodial sentence for one external offender and two more recent cases of approved visitors being found in possession of substances. Mandatory drug testing takes place monthly, on a very limited scale. The proportion of positive results has remained stubbornly high and responses to these results have sometimes been too slow.

6.3.3 There are two teams who work together to reduce the reliance of prisoners on illegal substances. The clinical team, provided by Bristol Community Health, works with the prison's GPs to prescribe "detox" medication with the aim of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, addiction to drugs. The psychosocial team, employed by Avon & Wiltshire Partnership, delivers a programme of group-work and one-to-one dialogue with the aim of helping prisoners avoid drug, alcohol and illegal substance addiction. The Board has learned that members of the psychosocial team find their work at HMP Bristol extremely challenging because of its local remand status, prevalence of short sentence prisoners and high turnover of prisoners. Referral, through the

reception screening process, tends to be the main channel for making contact with users (approximately 65% of prisoners) and the current working caseload is about 300 (around half of the prison population).

6.3.4 The Board believes that much of the clinical team's work is efficient in the short term but ultimately ineffective given the nature of recidivist, addictive tendencies. Sessions with the psychosocial team are therefore all the more critical but they can be too readily compromised through a lack of available officers to carry out escort/supervision duties.

6.3.5 The Board supports the more authoritarian approach being recently taken towards illegal substances and NPS through reducing an offender's status to 'Basic' on the IEP (Incentives & Earned Privileges) scheme but it is too early to gauge the success of this initiative. The Board, however, regrets that some prisoners are not being charged within 72 hours of a positive test result - reportedly because of poor administrative procedures and pressures on the daily routine for staff caused by a lack of human resources.

Section 7

7.0 The work of the IMB

7.1 IMB Profile

Recommended Complement of Board Members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving within reporting period	4
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	295
Total number of segregation reviews held	114 prisoners
Total number of segregation reviews attended	10
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	January 2015

7.2 Applications from Prisoners

Code	Subject	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
A	Accommodation	11	14	16
B	Adjudications	10	4	6
C	Equality & Diversity (inc. religion)	8	12	10
D	Education/employment/training inc. IEP	20	12	11
E1	Family/visits inc. mail & phone	38	48	51
E2	Finance/pay	Not recorded	13	16
F	Food/kitchen related	20	14	8
G	Health related	80	66	41
H1	Property (within current establishment)	57	56	33
H2	Property(during transfer/in another establishment)	32	54	49
H3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	27	16	14
I	Sentence related(inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	33	44	26
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc. bullying	25	35	24
K	Transfers	2	30	23
L	Miscellaneous	55	46	47
	Total number of IMB applications	477	464	375

