

# HMP BELMARSH



## INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

### ANNUAL REPORT 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

# **1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

- 1.1 The Prisons Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Home Secretary from members of the community in which the prison is situated.
- 1.2 The Board is specifically charged to:
  1. Satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release;
  2. Inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has;
  3. **Report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.**
- 1.3 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 records.

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### **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

- 3.1 Belmarsh opened in April 1991 at a cost of over £105m. It occupies some 60 acres on the old Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in South East London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall.
- 3.2 It is a local prison but combines those functions with those of a high security establishment. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and Magistrates' Courts in South East London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial.
- 3.3 The Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 781 and the Operational Capacity i.e. the maximum population it can safely and decently hold is currently 938.
- 3.4 In September 2013 HMP Belmarsh was reorganised to accept young offenders between the ages of 18 and 24.

### **4 IMB EQUALITY STATEMENT**

- 4.1 IMBs will not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race including colour nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in recruitment, in the treatment of members, and in the way they monitor the treatment of people in custody.

## **5 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 5.1 Since Simon Cartwright became governor of Belmarsh in September 2014, some significant changes have been noted. Facilities in Segregation have been upgraded, the Gate and entry for visitors and staff has been improved and levels of staff sickness reduced. The announced inspection of Belmarsh on 2-6 February 2015 endorsed the changes, highlighting that improvements, in all key areas, had been achieved, without any compromise to security. However there remain important areas of concern to the Board:

### **Violence**

- The main concern for the prison is the increased levels of violence resulting in serious assaults on both staff and prisoner on prisoner, with consequent concerns for safety. This is a very worrying trend common across other London prisons. The Board welcomes the changes being introduced to manage Violence Reduction and will monitor this with interest;

### **Deaths in Custody**

- For several years running the Board has raised concerns about the delays to inquests following deaths in custody. Despite introduction of changes there are still unacceptable delays in holding these inquests, sometimes as long as four years after a death;

### **Staff Levels**

- Following the changes in the previous year relating to New Ways of Working and Benchmarking, the Board continues to have concerns about whether the prison is adequately staffed, given the number of occasions when the regime has been affected. Not enough staff have been available to take prisoners to activities and staff are frequently diverted from dealing with property for prisoners coming into the prison. Staff are constantly being deployed to work in other areas across the prison, resulting in very low staff morale;

### **Decency**

- Decency is still a major concern for the Board and in particular housing prisoners in triple-occupancy cells. For reasons set out in the report, this is not considered decent or humane. However, it is recognised that the governor and the Deputy Director of Custody are currently reviewing the operational capacity with the aim of achieving reductions in triple cell usage.

- 5.2 The Board is supported by an efficient clerk and the Board is grateful to the prison for the continued provision of this service.

- 5.3 The Board currently has 17 members with two more awaiting their security clearance and is thus fully able to fulfil its duties effectively. The Chair would like to thank the Board and clerk for their efficiency and support.

- 5.4 The Chair acknowledges and applauds the efforts of all staff and governors who do a great deal of effective day to day work that is not mentioned in this report. The Chair is grateful for their cooperation and for the many good working relationships that enable the Board to carry out their duties.
- 5.5 The Board sets out below the principle issues to be addressed by the Minister, the National Offender Management Service and the prison.

#### **Points for the Minister**

- 5.6 The Board continues to be concerned about the time taken for security clearance, following the recruitment of staff and Board members and the impact this has in the prison. The Board urges measures to be put in place to speed up this process. (Ref 7.4).
- 5.7 The Board remains concerned about the delay in Coroners' Inquests. It is recognised that measures were brought in to attempt to speed this up, but these have not proved effective. The Board considers the delays are unacceptable. (Ref 9.3).
- 5.8 The Board considers the removal of public funding for most prison law cases unjust and would urge its reinstatement. (Ref 10.13, 12.21).
- 5.9 The Board requests that consideration be given to how funding is allocated under the terms of the Social Care Act, to ensure that there is not a disincentive for local authorities to accept prisoners coming into their area, due to the cost of the social care provision. (Ref 8.11).

#### **Points for the Prison Service**

- 5.10 The Board is concerned about the staffing levels in the prison resulting from the number of changes introduced in the reporting year following the New Ways of Working and Benchmarking. When there are not enough officers, prisoners access to a full regime is affected across the prison. (Ref 7.2, 7.11, 7.13, 8.3, 8.4, 10.2, 11.5, 12.4, 13.2).
- 5.11 The Board urges the Prison Service to clarify the rule concerning the ownership of electric wheelchairs. (Ref 8.8).
- 5.12 The Board urges the Prison Service to review the cost of pharmaceutical items on the Canteen list, given that these frequently exceed prices at which they can be bought in the community. The Board recommends that these items should not be included in the contract for canteen provisions. (Ref 8.9).
- 5.13 The Board is very concerned about the increased levels of violence occurring in the prison and urges the Prison Service to consider

ways of addressing these issues and the appropriate location of all young adults. (Ref 9.6, 9.7).

- 5.14 The Board is concerned about the delays in investigations for prisoners, held in Segregation for reasons of Good Order and Discipline ("GOOD"), caused by the security department or police. Similarly, the Board observes that there are delays in the approval of Pin telephone numbers for Category A prisoners and for approval of their visitors, by the police and other agencies. Although it is recognised that new procedures have been introduced for police referrals and that good relationships exist between the police and the prison, the Board still urges the Prison Service to use their influence to speed up these processes. (Ref 10.9, 11.8).
- 5.15 The Board questions the basis for deciding why certain prisoners are housed in the High Secure Unit (HSU) as opposed to normal location when this does not appear an appropriate use of these facilities. (Ref 11.3).
- 5.16 The Board is concerned about basic decency and privacy for prisoners by the continued use of triple-occupancy cells and would urge a reduction in their usage. (Ref 12.1).
- 5.17 The Board urges the Prison Service to give consideration to the centrally-managed contract for the provision of food and whether this provides the best value for money. (Ref 12.10).
- 5.18 The Board urges the Prison Service to locate Foreign National (FN) detainees in Immigration Removal Centres and considers their continued detention in prison to be unacceptable. (Ref 12.18).

#### **Points for HMP Belmarsh Management**

- 5.19 The Board is disappointed about the limited educational provision for prisoners located in areas such as Segregation, HSU and the Healthcare Centre (HCC) and urges the prison to work with Education to improve this provision. (Ref 7.8, 10.3, 11.6).
- 5.20 The library, whilst being a valuable and much-used resource would benefit from re-decoration to make it an even more appealing place to visit/work. (Ref 7.9).
- 5.21 The Board urges the prison to develop activities for older prisoners. (Ref 7.10).
- 5.22 The Board urges the prison to use the workshop facilities more effectively, by providing more meaningful opportunities for prisoners in gaining life skills to equip them for life after release. (Ref 7.14).
- 5.23 The Board would like to see opportunities for Category C prisoners working in the upkeep of the gardens. (Ref 7.19).

- 5.24 The Board has concerns about the excessive use of agency staff in the HCC with the resulting high cost and lack of continuity and would urge the prison to address this issue. (Ref 8.6).
- 5.25 The Board urges the prison to improve the processes for the transfer of prisoners' property when prisoners are moved within the prison and also when transferred to other establishments. The prisoners often face unacceptable delays and it appears that there is often inadequate provision of staff for this task. (Ref 10.10, 13.2, 13.3).
- 5.26 The Board would like to see low risk prisoners on normal location offered the opportunity to maintain fruit and vegetable planters, as is done currently in the HSU. (Ref 11.4).
- 5.27 The Board requests that the systematic cleaning programme for toilets and communal wash areas, developed during the year, be made a part of the prison routine. (Ref 12.2).
- 5.28 The Board requests the prison to consider whether there is a better way to provide breakfast to prisoners, other than the issue of packs with the evening meal. (Ref 12.13).
- 5.29 The Board requests that consideration be given to the provision of NVQ training in the kitchen. (Ref 12.13).
- 5.30 The Board requests that consideration be given to the provision of funding for the Detainee Advisory Service for the assistance of FN prisoners. (Ref 12.21).
- 5.31 The Board urges the provision of an area in Reception where confidential discussions can be held for prisoners when they initially arrive in Belmarsh. (Ref 13.1).
- 5.32 Whilst it is recognised that new systems are in place for visits booking, this has been very problematical during the year and the Board urges the prison to ensure appropriate processes are in place for an efficient delivery of this service. (Ref 13.4).
- 5.33 The Board continues to have concerns about the allocation of Pin numbers and urges the prison to improve the current system. (Ref 13.5).

## **6 DIVERSITY REPORT**

- 6.1 Diversity continues to be well managed in Belmarsh and issues are progressed in a satisfactory manner.
- 6.2 The Board considers that prisoner representation at the Diversity meetings is poor and would like to see more prisoner representation from all areas in the prison. However now that regular Prisoner Council meetings are held, some of the specific Diversity issues are covered under this umbrella.
- 6.3 It is understood that SMT members have responsibility for individual equalities streams and promote activities and initiatives within these streams.

## **7 REDUCING REOFFENDING/ LEARNING AND SKILLS**

- 7.1 It has been challenging for the Reducing Reoffending Team to manage the amount of change required this reporting year. At this stage it is not possible to assess the impact or value of these changes to prisoners.
- 7.2 In addition, staffing issues have again significantly affected all areas throughout the prison. This has inevitably impacted on the ability to consistently provide and sustain the planned levels of useful and productive activity for prisoners during the year and severely hampered steps toward the rehabilitation of prisoners.

### **Education**

- 7.3 A4E did not have their contract renewed and uncertainty about who the education provider would be hung over the department during the year making it difficult to sustain curriculum developments and improvements in teaching and learning. Manchester College was eventually contracted to replace A4E, but it is too early to comment on the change and any resulting improvement.
- 7.4 The department has continued to operate with teaching vacancies; this has inevitably affected educational provision. The speed of security clearance for newly appointed staff continues to be a major issue in getting staff into post.
- 7.5 Attendance at classes continued to fluctuate during the year, sometimes as low as 60%. The Board is concerned that this was in part due to the quality of the curriculum and the teaching on offer during the year. Manchester College is working to make the curriculum more relevant and to improve teaching standards and there is evidence that this is starting to have a positive impact. However, at this stage it is too early to comment on whether

improvements will be sustained. Quality of teaching and learning is difficult for the Board to monitor, but consistent attendance and improved achievement should provide evidence and will continue to be an area for close monitoring during the coming year. However, the Board is pleased to report at the end of the year there has been a steady increase in attendance towards the 80% target.

- 7.6 Virtual Campus has finally been installed. However, until there is a major funding initiative to update and enhance the necessary systems, it will continue to be of very limited use as it is only able to accommodate a small number of selected prisoners.
- 7.7 The Learning and Skills Manager has focused on developing opportunities for higher-level learners. There are now 83 prisoners engaged in courses including 15 OU students and 68 GCSE/A Level students. However, CDs required for some courses cannot be used as the Education Department computers need upgrading.
- 7.8 The Board is disappointed about the limited educational provision for prisoners located in special areas of the prison, the Segregation, HSU and the HCC and urges the prison to work with Education to improve this provision.
- 7.9 The library is a valuable resource which has been made more accessible to prisoners who are now able to book weekly visits. Over 1,000 library visits were recorded during April, up from 600 during the winter months. Mentors continue to be trained by the Shannon Trust and "Turning Pages" (previously Toe to Toe) is operational. The room would benefit from re-decoration to make it a more appealing place to visit/work.
- 7.10 No progress has been made over the reporting year towards developing activities for older prisoners.

### **Workshops and Resettlement**

- 7.11 During the past year the workshops have been going through a transitional period following the gradual replacement of officer instructors by civilian instructors. Attendance at workshops has been variable, owing to staff shortages, redeployment, too many activity places and prison lockdowns. Prior to April, daily attendance averaged 68% based on the industries' commissioned target of 80%. Since May the prison has agreed a lower local target figure (112 prisoners per day as opposed to 159) based on available resources, and is now operating at over 80% of that figure.
- 7.12 The single portion tea packet, CD and DVD recycling and Lighting Maintenance workshops have seen an improvement in attendance. The British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) and Yards Maintenance workshops have restarted. The Recycling workshop is on hold pending investment and reorganisation to take into account recycling at source.

- 7.13 The Board regrets that staff shortages have been responsible for the closure of Storybook Dads and one of the teabag workshops. The punnet workshop was chosen for closure owing to staffing problems and also the pattern of work provision had been inconsistent, since the punnets were a seasonal product.
- 7.14 The Board regrets that workshops are still not offering any qualifications, except for certificated modules in different cleaning techniques offered by BICS.
- 7.15 The Board is pleased that the very successful Vulnerable Prisoner (VP) workshop recycling toner cartridges in its partnership with the Green Office Co-op has won the 2015 Elton Trophy for the best performing prison workshop.
- 7.16 Currently 35% of prisoners attend gym sessions.
- 7.17 The Chapel continues to provide its planned programme and at the time of writing there is only one vacant post.
- 7.18 The Board is disappointed that Fine Cell Work, a successful charity which teaches prisoners tapestry skills and which is active in high security and local prisons, will not now be coming to Belmarsh.
- 7.19 The Board is disappointed that, since our last report, no progress has been made relating to the employment of Category C prisoners in the upkeep of the gardens.
- 7.20 Through the Gate functions have for the most part been absorbed by a London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), which started work at Belmarsh in April 2015. It will run on a pay-by-results basis, delivering and co-ordinating resettlement services for prisoners in the last 12 weeks of a custodial sentence in relation to e.g. employment and training, housing, finance and debt. The CRC has taken over the work previously done by Working Links, the Discharge Board and the Interventions Officers, and has contracted with St Mungo's to deal with housing for prisoners on release. The CRC will also work alongside Pathways to Recovery, which addresses drug and alcohol misuse and trains peer mentors who can earn an NVQ qualification for use in the community.
- 7.21 It is too early to make an assessment of the CRC's effectiveness in preparing prisoners for release--it has just begun to implement its program and it will need clear communication and leadership to ensure that prisoners receive their entitlement. Currently there is evidence of a conflict of interest, with various services competing for prisoner time. The Board will continue to monitor this closely.
- 7.22 Job Centre Plus and the National Careers Service continue to operate within the prison, but the Board understands that they are still subject to computer problems which hamper delivery of their services.

## **8 HEALTHCARE CENTRE(HCC)**

- 8.1 Healthcare operates a complex in-patient facility comprising two wards with twelve beds in total and eighteen in-patient single cells. The provider for healthcare services changed from Care UK to Oxleas Trust on 1st April 2015, three months before the end of the Board's reporting year.
- 8.2 Oxleas Trust is providing healthcare across all three prison sites – Belmarsh, Thameside and Isis. Prison Partnership Meetings are held six-monthly with representation from all three sites, NHS England and Oxleas Trust. The first such meeting, after implementation of the new contract, has been held. There have inevitably been some problems on transfer of contract, but the HCC in Belmarsh coped with the transitions well and with no impairment of service to patients. Staff in the HCC have been unsettled by the changeover of provider, and in the Board's opinion, there should have been earlier communications to manage staff expectations. The quality of Transfer Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) information was poor and could have been addressed by a longer lead in time. The majority of the HCC staff transferred to the new provider. The new model for the HCC is well resourced for staffing levels and the prison is focussing on delivering this.
- 8.3 One significant concern for the Board is the high volume of mental health in-patients. Many of these are awaiting transfer to more appropriate accommodation in secure or medium-secure establishments. The additional care required for these prisoners has an effect on the regime for all in-patients.
- 8.4 There are often a high number of multi-unlocks and prisoners under a Duty of Care (DOC) regime in the HCC. Whilst this is sustained by drafting in uniformed staff from other areas to unlock patients for treatment and regime, the Board has concerns that this can impact on the regime of all in-patients and inevitably impact on other prison areas.
- 8.5 A small percentage of the HCC staff are also members of the Prison Officers' Association and it is imperative that the correct information about health resources is transparent and available to both the HCC staff and the POA so that there is no misinformation.
- 8.6 In the light of recent concerns regarding excessive national health costs in the community caused by use of agency staff, it is imperative that the prison continues to manage the HCC staff prudently to avoid overspending. There is a projected plan to form a "bank" of available HCC staff with lower rates than those of agencies. If, in the last resort, agencies have to be used, rates should be closely monitored.
- 8.7 Numbers of prisoners who fail to attend outpatient appointments has slightly improved on last year but, the Board considers, are still far

too high. It is hoped that the prisoner meetings with the HCC may help with this issue.

- 8.8 Prisoners requiring wheelchairs generally take these with them on transfer. It is questionable if this rule applies to electric wheelchairs and it is unclear which body funds these. The Board advocates resolution of this so that electric wheelchairs can stay with the patient through the prison estate.
- 8.9 Over the counter pharmaceutical goods are comparable in price to outside the prison, however, any goods that have been agreed with the Canteen Provider cannot contractually be provided through pharmacy. The price of pharmaceutical goods provided through canteen far exceeds the pharmaceutical prices and this is unfair on prisoners who have low earning capacity. The Board recommends that pharmaceutical goods should not be included in the contract for canteen provisions.
- 8.10 The telemed system has not been upgraded as was anticipated in last year's report; this is a high priority for Oxleas.
- 8.11 The Social Care Act came into force on 1 April 2015, with the provision of care for prisoners with social care needs to be provided by local authorities. This is working well in Belmarsh, with care provided by Greenwich council in conjunction with Oxleas. One area of concern to the Board is that when a prisoner transfers, there have been occasions when the receiving local authority has refused to accept him on the basis of the potential cost for provision of care.
- 8.12 HCC applications to the Board for the reporting year number 107, the second highest area for prisoners' complaints. It is hoped that the new initiatives, some of which are listed below, together with more communication with prisoners, will help to lower these in the next reporting year.
- 8.13 The Board is satisfied that the prison operates within the parameters of the PSO. A health promotion committee is held bi-monthly and other meetings are held quarterly in conjunction with the Health Promotion Action Committee. The Board commends the initiatives for health promotion, some of which are itemised below:
- a prisoner well-being day was held which was well supported by prisoners and more days are planned;
  - there is an integrated drug treatment service for which mandatory training has been completed by 90% of staff in the HCC;
  - sickness levels for healthcare staff have been lower this year than last;
  - terminally ill patients (two in the reporting year) have been cared for in prison until the end of life, with hospice staff support;
  - Oxleas Trust has given assistance in coping with the rise in the elderly prison population and their attendant medical needs;

- a patient forum has been started with healthcare representatives from the prison population;
- pharmaceutical goods that are available over the counter to the public can be bought from the Pharmacy by prisoners;
- in-possession medication has been extended to include all houseblocks this year;
- First Night Centre (FNC) HCC staff are also trained for detox services;
- equipment (such as the x-ray machine) is being reviewed by Oxleas with a view to its being provided across all three sites;
- the Dentist Surgery has been updated and has a dedicated x-ray machine;
- bowel cancer and pulmonary screening are available;
- hospital transfers to Secure Units are now much improved and are within 3-4 weeks;
- the Oxleas model for mental health is more sustainable and the Deputy of the Trust is the Clinical Lead for in-patient mental health;
- work is in process for accreditation by the Royal College of Psychiatry for both officers and nurses. This will set a standard as to how in-patient mental health is managed.

8.14 The Board would like to thank the Head of Healthcare and her staff for their assistance throughout the year and in the preparation of this report.

## **9 SAFER CUSTODY AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION**

- 9.1 There was an increase in incidents of self-harm (almost 10% more) compared to the last reporting year. Although it was often a few prisoners repeatedly self-harming, the last year saw a number of changes which could have contributed to this: the continued usage of triple-occupancy cells; changes to the core day; fewer staff; deteriorating staff morale affecting officer-on-prisoner interactions. It is hoped that the latter has subsequently improved, following the introduction of prisoner and staff meetings.
- 9.2 There were four Deaths In Custody (DIC) this year, compared to two in the previous reporting year, although preliminary investigations suggest three of these were due to natural causes. There may be implications for prison healthcare services in these cases.
- 9.3 During the year, four DIC inquests took place. The length of time from death to inquest ranged from one year nine months to four years. This was an unacceptable length of time for families and prison staff to wait for closure. By the end of the year, there were three outstanding, but scheduled, inquests from previous years. Additionally, the four recent DICs were in the hands of the PPO.

- 9.4 The Safer Custody team reported that the number of Assessment, Care in Custody, Teamwork (ACCT)s opened remained stable. This team worked hard to ensure all staff had training on opening an ACCT and that all senior officers responsible for ACCT reviews undertook Case Management Training. Separate training was held for ACCT assessors.
- 9.5 Listeners, supported by Safer Custody and Samaritans, continued to provide an essential service to prisoners in distress. The Samaritans team trained two new groups during the year, with the introduction of an intensive course format of eight whole day sessions across four weeks.
- 9.6 The level of violence in the reporting year compared to the previous year increased considerably with some very serious assaults on staff, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and fights. Although this is not a problem unique to Belmarsh and is occurring in other London prisons, it is a very worrying trend and one that needs to be managed carefully. It would appear that the influx of young adults was a factor in this.
- 9.7 Although just outside the reporting year, the Board felt it was important to note a particularly worrying 'spike' in July 2015 of assaults against officers and between prisoners.

## **10 SEGREGATION UNIT**

- 10.1 The Segregation Unit underwent a major refurbishment in autumn 2014, which has led to a significant improvement in the physical environment. In particular, the toilets and showers are now in a decent and proper condition and the exercise yard has additional gym equipment. It is unfortunate that the funding was not available to section the latter off in order to enable two prisoners to exercise at the same time and relieve pressure on staff.
- 10.2 Population numbers have varied between five and fourteen during the reporting year. The regime has often come under strain, despite the best efforts of officers, owing to high numbers of multi-unlock prisoners and the redeployment of staff, particularly to the HCC (to manage the multi-unlock prisoners there). On some limited occasions, this has led to Segregation prisoners not being offered regular showers, phone calls and exercise (particularly on weekends).
- 10.3 Purposeful activity remains very limited, as one might expect, although a few prisoners have had some opportunities depending on their risk level and management plan.
- 10.4 Special accommodation has been used sparingly on only one occasion during the reporting year. The Board is aware of only one

prisoner on an open ACCT being located in the unit in appropriate exceptional circumstances.

- 10.5 Most prisoners are held in the unit for short periods of one or two weeks, but there have been a few individuals who have been detained for longer than three or in some cases six months. Some of these are Close Supervision Centre (CSC) or Managing Challenging Behaviour Strategy (MCBS) prisoners who are exceptionally demanding by their very nature, but this makes it even more important that they are progressed expeditiously.
- 10.6 A small but significant number of prisoners have been located on the unit for their own protection, sometimes for extended periods. Once it is established that the individual faces a credible threat or risk of conflict, governors do their best to move them to an alternative houseblock or prison as quickly as possible, but this is not always the case.
- 10.7 Overall, the Board has observed a very professional and pro-active attitude to managing the prisoners in the unit and working with them so that they can make progress. The Forensic Psychology Team continues to be very positively engaged with all occupants.
- 10.8 In the latter part of the reporting year, Segregation Review Boards have occasionally taken place in the absence of a representative either from the HCC or the Mental Health In-Reach Team, even though this is mandatory in the relevant PSO. This can mean that the reviewing governor is not properly informed about a prisoner's progress, leading to delayed decisions concerning his future management. It also precludes the individual concerned from having the opportunity to raise any health issues that they may have and this can add to their frustration.
- 10.9 Prisoners are often held in the Segregation Unit for reasons of Good Order and Discipline (GOOD) whilst investigations are conducted by the security department or the police. The Board notes that governors are often hampered in their decision making and management planning by a lack of information about progress in these investigations in advance of review boards. It is understood that a new process is now in place for police referrals and that the police and prison have a good working relationship and improvements are hoped for in this area.
- 10.10 Although senior staff have made significant efforts to improve the situation, prisoners are still encountering delays with the transfer of their property from the houseblocks, often following DST (Dedicated Search Team) cell searches. Similar problems continue to occur when prisoners are transferred (sometimes at short notice) from other establishments without their property, and it frequently takes several weeks for the situation to be resolved.

- 10.11 The Board has observed a number of prisoner adjudications and these have been conducted fairly and professionally. There was a spike in adjudications concerning young adults involving assaults, threats and cell damage in the earlier part of the reporting year. This evened out a little, but is again on the increase at the time of writing.
- 10.12 There has been a major effort to reduce avoidable delays and adjournments and the management of adjudication paperwork has improved. However, despite clear guidance there continues to be unfortunate hold ups when reporting officers do not act promptly in submitting their statements or attending adjudications when required. Inroads have been made into addressing the use of force paperwork backlog, but it remained significant at the end of the reporting year.
- 10.13 As noted in our previous report, the Board is dismayed at the removal of public funding for most prison law issues, except where the independent adjudicator attends or in the most serious cases. In recognition of the fact that most prisoners will be unable to obtain substantive legal assistance, governors have sensibly sought to expedite adjudication hearings by permitting short telephone calls to solicitors and avoiding 14 day adjournments where appropriate.
- 10.14 It is encouraging that following some issues last year, new guidance has been issued concerning the filming of planned interventions and subsequent debriefs. It is understood that duty governors now review the video footage during use of force meetings. The Board also notes that a new agreement has been reached with the Borough Commander regarding police referrals following serious assaults and weapons finds.
- 10.15 At the time of writing the MCBS is undergoing a welcome review by the Segregation Governor in line with the new Violence Reduction Strategy. It is hoped that integration with the Complex Case Management Team will lead to a more joined up multidisciplinary approach to working with the most difficult prisoners.

## **11 HIGH SECURITY / SPECIAL SECURE UNIT**

- 11.1 The population of the High Security Unit has fluctuated during the reporting year from a low of seven to a high of eighteen, managed on two spurs. It houses a number of high risk category A prisoners and retains spare capacity to accommodate contingencies.
- 11.2 The use of the HSU Segregation Unit to house certain prisoners for a long period was brought to an end at the start of the reporting year and since that time it has only been in occupation very sporadically.
- 11.3 The Board sometimes encountered difficulty in understanding why certain category A prisoners are housed in the HSU rather than on

normal location (as they are within the rest of the high security estate). As this is a decision which is usually made centrally, it is rarely possible for us to examine the detailed reasons for individual decisions.

- 11.4 The Board has been encouraged by the use of a secure enclosed exercise yard to house fruit and vegetable planters. This has provided welcome purposeful activity for the few prisoners who enjoy limited time in the fresh air maintaining them. The Board would welcome the introduction of similar arrangements for low risk category B and C prisoners on normal location.
- 11.5 The occupants of the HSU continue to be locked up for long periods of time. This is presumably as a result of staff shortages to manage the regime, although they do regularly have access to showers, exercise and telephone calls with less disruption than those on normal location.
- 11.6 As mentioned in previous reports, purposeful activity on the HSU remains extremely restricted despite this being identified as an area for development over the past few years. Library provision has improved but education outreach is limited to one half day a week and prisoners do not have access to the workshops. The chaplaincy are, as ever, very practically engaged on the unit, running their own classes.
- 11.7 Because of the high staff – prisoner ratio, interaction with prisoners is generally good and issues tend to be resolved efficiently. This means that the Board receives relatively few applications.
- 11.8 The Board continues to observe significant delays in the approval of PIN telephone numbers for category A prisoners and the vetting of visitors through the Approved Visitors Scheme which can make life even more isolated for the prisoners. To a large extent the latter is the responsibility of the police and other agencies but it is no less frustrating for those involved. The prison has shown some flexibility by, for example, permitting closed visits for those encountering delays in the process.
- 11.9 At the time of writing the future use of the HSU remains under review by the Deputy Director of Custody. It seems likely that some form of alternative arrangement will be made that may well interact with the Segregation Unit, possibly CSC and MCBS prisoners. The Board understands that various options are being explored and awaits the outcome with interest.

## **12 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

### **Residence**

- 12.1 The prison has an operational maximum capacity of 938. The Board has concerns about cell sharing, and in particular about triple-occupancy. As noted in last year's report the Board feels that the over-crowded cells do not comply with PSI C.11 for the following key reasons:
- space for only one prisoner to eat meals at a table;
  - use of sinks for purposes other than of personal hygiene, such as washing dishes;
  - use of sanitary facilities, especially during mealtimes;
  - different standards of hygiene and cleaning amongst prisoners;
  - conflicts between prisoners over choice of television programmes;
  - breakdown in effective communication between prisoners due to language differences;
  - lack of adequate storage space for personal and confidential effects;
  - issues of personal conflict regarding religious beliefs and practices.
- 12.2 The Board appreciates the introduction of a systematic cleaning programme for toilets and communal wash areas and the improvements gained and would request that this programme becomes part of the normal prison routine.
- 12.3 The development of the prisoner forum meetings into a prison council, which has proved to be a positive aspect of the life of the prison, is welcomed by the Board.
- 12.4 The Board continues to have concerns about staffing levels impacting on the provision of a full regime for prisoners and on the ability of staff to manage prisoner attendance at planned activities such as education, library, workshops, gym and medical appointments.
- 12.5 The Board welcomes the reduction in staff sickness and absences, which has been addressed by a robust and fair approach from senior management.

### **Vulnerable Prisoners**

- 12.6 Vulnerable Prisoners are accommodated on a secure spur on houseblock 4 and the Board is appreciative of the efforts that have been made during the year to keep the overflow of these prisoners to selected cells on an adjoining spur. The use of the VP workshop on the houseblock continues to be a valuable facility for these prisoners.

## **Veterans in Custody**

- 12.7 Belmarsh has a number of service persons in custody, although the actual figure is difficult to ascertain, due to the population of the prison. Some of those on remand or under sentence may wish to remain anonymous or choose not to register. Those who register and signal previous service are well managed by the Veterans in Custody Support Officer (ViCSO). The prison has a nominated ViCSO who manages and liaises with service charities on an individual's behalf. The ViCSO is principally engaged with the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Families Association (SSAFA) with an outreach worker visiting the prison. There is also the Reserve Forces Employment Association (RFEA), for onward referral outside the prison.
- 12.8 Engagement with service personnel commences in Reception and is conducted in a discreet fashion. This continues into the First Night Centre (FNC) where further information is available, putting the responsibility directly on the individual prisoner. The Board wonders if this approach is robust enough. Given the pan-governmental interest and provision of funding in this area, it may be considered that a service person either on remand or under sentence should have their details passed to the receiving jail or holding centre. The MOJ have produced a very useful brochure, and early engagement with Veterans is appropriate. There is clear evidence that if early engagement is made between service charities and an individual, re-offending decreases in proportion.
- 12.9 This important area is well managed and the ViCSO within Belmarsh is engaged at the earliest opportunity. A system of early warning to a receiving prison would be beneficial and would certainly reach out to more veterans, many of whom will be shocked by prison life.

## **Kitchen**

- 12.10 The food budget has increased by nearly three percent. The Board is concerned about the limitations the central purchase contract creates, preventing the kitchen manager from being able to get best value for money.
- 12.11 During Ramadan, the kitchen produced an average of 230 special meals, kept hot in special containers. Special thanks are due to all kitchen staff for their hard work in producing these and other religious festival meals.
- 12.12 There were only six applications concerning food to the Board, but additionally the Board still receives verbal complaints from prisoners regarding portion size and quality.

- 12.13 Breakfast packs are still being issued with the evening meal, but this reduces the incentive for prisoners to get out of bed in the mornings to attend daily activities.
- 12.14 Staffing levels remain at three chefs and up to fifteen prisoners per shift. There is still no NVQ training in place in the kitchen other than basic hygiene training and the Board would welcome its introduction.

### **London Pathways Progression Unit**

- 12.15 The LPPU is in its third year and was established to provide support for prisoners with personality disorders, specifically selected from the prison community. It has almost reached full capacity. The unit is well established in the prison and is staffed by a dedicated and professional team of officers, psychiatrists and psychologists who work in a collaborative manner with the prisoners. All prisoners join the unit from Belmarsh and other prisons on a voluntary basis as they come towards the conclusion of their sentence. The work of the unit is focused on the individual needs of the prisoners to enable them to make a positive return to society. Whilst endeavouring to meet the needs of the prisoners, not all wish to remain and some have left the unit by mutual agreement. Success in resettlement is varied but news that some have made a successful transition is welcomed by the Board.
- 12.16 The Board sees the unit as a valuable resource in the important process of assisting prisoners to make a successful return to life outside prison. The Board will continue to monitor progress.

### **Offender Management Unit**

- 12.17 In last year's report the Board expressed concern at the number of incomplete OASYs reports that the OMU had outstanding. This backlog had implications for prisoners' progression. The Board is pleased to report that this backlog has now been cleared and therefore all OASYs documentation is being completed in a timely fashion as the need arises.

### **Foreign Nationals**

- 12.18 The FN population has stood in excess of 200 throughout the year. At the time of writing, the following are the largest nationalities: Nigerians 17, Polish 16, Somalians 15, Romanians 14 and Irish 11. There are 42 detainees in Belmarsh compared with 21 at the same time in 2014. The Board considers it unacceptable that these detainees are kept in prison and urges that they should be relocated to IRCs.
- 12.19 This reporting period has seen change in the manner in which Belmarsh deals with Foreign National Prisoners (FNPs). The very

centralised and coordinated system, with one point of contact in the FN coordinator, has been replaced by a system currently managed by the Equality Division.

- 12.20 It is pleasing to note that Foreign National Orderlies (FNO) are deployed across Belmarsh and are active in assisting those FNPs with needs. They receive only minimal training and do not fully contribute. The Board noted with concern the period of time Belmarsh has taken to get work underway in this field, there being a gap of some five months before plans were in place. The essential synergy between Immigration Enforcement and Belmarsh was lost. However, the Board is pleased with the manner in which the functional head has drawn together the constituent parts and has put in place cogent plans for the manner in which FNPs are managed. This has seen greater cooperation with Immigration Enforcement and the restarting of the important FN surgeries. Surgeries are well publicised, prisoners know who to turn to for advice and staff are alert to the Belmarsh plan. The Board will continue to monitor to ensure these surgeries occur regularly.
- 12.21 It is to be regretted that the funding for the Detainee Advisory Service (DAS) was withdrawn from Belmarsh, as is the loss of legal aid to FNPs.

### **13**     **RECEPTION**

- 13.1 The Board continues to have concerns about the lack of privacy afforded prisoners on arrival when they are asked sensitive questions such as views on racism, state of mental health and history of self-harm.
- 13.2 Reception is a busy area and the pressure to process prisoners and move them to the FNC means that property often does not arrive at the same time and is stored in Reception. Officers are expected to deal with property allocation at the weekend but pressures on resources mean that they may be redeployed to run the regime and the property remains unallocated.
- 13.3 Applications to the Board regarding property far exceed all others, especially property lost in transit from other establishments. It is almost impossible to trace lost property and to reunite prisoners with their property lost in this way. This single issue causes frustration for all concerned.
- 13.4 Changes in booking visits have led to delays for visitors. All visits now need to be booked by phone or email. The new system initially led to considerable problems and the Board will continue to monitor this area.

- 13.5 New prisoners have had to wait too long for their numbers to be added to Pins due to staffing issues.
- 13.6 Prisoners are held in an airless, windowless room whilst waiting for access to the Visits Hall.

## **14 BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

- 14.1 During the year the Board invited a number of guest speakers to explain and discuss their roles in the Prison enabling members to gain a clearer understanding of prison processes.
- 14.2 The Board made a visit to HMP Whitemoor.
- 14.3 During the year, two members have left the Board and three new members have been appointed. A further recruitment campaign has been carried out resulting in three new members being appointed who will join the Board when they receive their CTC clearance.
- 14.4 The Board currently has 17 members with four members dual-boarding.
- 14.5 Members have made night visits to continue the monitoring programme developed at previous training days.
- 14.6 The Board holds a training day each year, which gives the opportunity to develop skills and plan for special activities in the following year.

## 15 BOARD STATISTICS

15.1 The highest numbers of applications are again for Property and Healthcare issues and also there were a considerable number of applications concerning complaints about staff. The statistics for the year are as follows:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Total for 2014-15</b>	<b>Total for 2012-14</b>
Accommodation	17	18
Assault	10	
Attendance to Activities	19	
Bullying of Prisoners	9	4
Bullying of Staff	0	2
Canteen	16	11
Category Status	21	17
Complaints about Staff	65	67
Drugs and DST	0	5
E List	4	7
Food	6	5
Foreign Nationals	15	14
Healthcare	105	103
Housing Issues	3	2
IEP/Discipline	12	14
Legal Matters	13	12
Licence Recall	3	5
Mail	10	26
OMU	52	
Others	47	77
Personal Finance	31	18
Property	114	92
Racial Discrimination	9	1
Regime & Adjudications	13	12
Resettlement	0	11
Safer Custody	11	
Sentence Planning		11
Telephone/Pins	35	25
Transfers	53	37
Visits	19	16
<b>Totals for the Years</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>613</b>

## **16**      **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody Teamwork (formerly F2052SH)
BICS	British Institute of Cleaning Science
CSC	Close Supervision Centre
CSRA	Cell Sharing Risk Assessment
CTC	Counter Terrorism Clearance
DAS	Detainee Advisory Service
FNC	First Night Centre
FN	Foreign National
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
HCC	Healthcare Centre
HDC	Home Detention Curfew
HSU	High Security Unit
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IMR	Inmate Medical Records
IP	In Possession
LPPU	London Pathways Progression Unit
NOMS	National Offender Management System
NWW	New Ways of Working
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SMT	Senior Management Team
SSAFA	Soldiers, Seamen, Airmen Families Association
SSU	Special Security Unit
VP	Vulnerable Prisoner
VPU	Vulnerable Prisoner Unit