



Independent Monitoring Board

HMP Northumberland

Annual Report

1st January to 31st December 2015

Section 1. Statutory Role of the Independent Monitoring Board

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

1. satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison, and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
2. inform promptly the Secretary of State or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate any concern it has.
3. report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

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

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Section 3. Description

3.1 Description of The Prison

- 3.1.1 Located on one of the largest sites in the prison estate, HMP Northumberland (The Prison) is a Male Adult Category C prison and is classified as a Working Prison. Prison capacity is measured by two figures, namely the Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) and the Operational Capacity (OC). The CNA figure is the maximum population without overcrowding. In 2015, the CNA for The Prison was 1,348. Its OC records the population that could be accommodated without risk of disruption through overcrowding. For The Prison in 2015 this was 1,348. The average unlock for December 2015 was 1337 (December 2014; 1332, December 2013; 1,336).
- 3.1.2 The Prison was formed on 31 October 2010 through the merger of HMP Acklington and HMP Castington. After amalgamating two separate sites in 2012, consolidation was completed in 2013, to create a single estate on a site of about 40 hectares; measuring about 1km across.
- 3.1.3 The population profile has not changed significantly over the last year.
- 3.1.4 At the end of 2015 there were 424 Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs) and 923 Mains Prisoners (Mains) (December 2014: 436 VPs, 881 Mains). In December 2015, there were 45 Category D prisoners (in December 2014; 41, December 2013: 86). In December 2015 there were 141 prisoners serving life sentences, or with an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP) (December 2014; 162, December 2013: 160). At the end of the year, The Prison was operating at more than 98% of capacity (end of 2014; more than 98%, end of 2013; more than 99%). 436 of prisoners are on a sentence of less than four years; 693 on a sentence of between four and ten years; and 62 on a sentence of ten years or over.
- 3.1.5 The Prison continues to hold a relatively small number of foreign nationals. In December 2015 there were 24 foreign nationals (December 2014; 25, December 2013: 24) and a high proportion with White British ethnicity; an average 94% through the year, the same as 2014. The oldest prisoner is aged 88; the proportion over the age of 60 is slightly below the national average at 3.5%. The average age is 37.
- 3.1.6 The proportion of prisoners on enhanced status has reduced a little during the year; to an average of 29% in 2015 (35% average in 2014, compared with 36% a year earlier).
- 3.1.7 The Independent Monitoring Board (The Board) at The Prison has commended the facilities for visitors in previous reports. New arrangements are in place to ease travel for visits. However, this is the most northerly and one of the most remote prisons in England. The location inevitably presents problems for visitors, particularly the elderly, infirm, and those with young families. Travel is particularly difficult for visitors from outside the local area. Although there has recently been a welcome reduction in the number of prisoners arriving from outside the area, and some improvement in the overall proportion of prisoners from the local area, almost half of the current population still originate from outside the North East of England. (see 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 5.5.9, 5.5.10 & 5.5.11)

3.1.8 The Prison has fifteen House Blocks, all currently containing only single cells. Five House Blocks hold VPs. The Gateway Unit is a dedicated recovery unit which aims to ensure that residents are able to overcome dependence on illicit and prescribed medication. The remainder of the House Blocks are categorized as normal locations. All cells have their own light switch, integral sanitation and a kettle.

3.2 Contractors and Agencies:

- Healthcare Commissioner: North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit (NEOHCU)
- Healthcare Provider:
 - Nursing and Administration: G4S
 - Physiotherapy and Podiatry: Subcontracted to G4S
 - G.P and Pharmacy: Spectrum
 - Mental Health - In Reach team: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)
 - Dental: Sub Contracted to Burgess and Hyde Dental Group
- Learning and Skills Development: Manchester College Now called Novus
- Police Liaison Officers: Northumbria Police
- Prisoner Escort Services: GEO/Amey
- Canteen Services: DHL
- Job Vacancies and Benefits: JobCentre Plus
- Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) Sodexo.

Table 3.1: Voluntary Agencies that provide support to The Prison

Third Sector Agencies	Provision
ADDACTION	Drug and alcohol agency. Counselling, assessment, referral, advice and through-care services relating to drugs By referral via CARATs
Age UK	Services and advice for older people in prison
Alcoholics Anonymous	Addiction support groups in prison
Angel Tree Project	Provides Christmas presents for prisoners' children. Available to Mains only for security reasons
Crisis	Progression coaches help prisoners to identify a goal(s) and steps to achievement
EASE/Pertemps	Advice and guidance on finding work/training after release.
Faith Action	Funding/policy advisory service for Third Sector
Job Centre Plus	Finding work and benefits
Make your Way	Sunderland based community outreach team
MIND Mentoring Project	Via Chaplaincy
NCC Sure Start	Working with supporting prisoners' families, including running food banks.

Third Sector Agencies	Provision
NEPACS – North East Prison After Care Society	Independent community based charity supporting prisoners and their families. Visitor Centre provider
NERAF – Northern Engagement into Recovery from Addiction	Predominantly drug and alcohol focussed and work closely with jobcentre volunteer scheme.
NORCARE and Fabrick Housing Group	Accommodation for prisoners on release who are socially excluded, vulnerable or disadvantaged
Oasis Aquilla Housing	Accommodation and support
Oswin Project	Support, training and employment. Access via Chaplaincy
Phoenix Futures	Drug and alcohol recovery charity. Assessment, therapeutic relationship between worker and client, negotiated recovery plans, working towards achieving abstinence - linked to Gateway Unit
R & B - Reform and Build	Support before and after release – Advice on benefits, opening a bank account, getting involved in community activities, hobbies and sports, substance misuse and interventions, and family mediation service
Royal British Legion	Advice and practical support during and post custody including food bank referrals.
Samaritans	Provides training for prisoners to become Listeners
Shannon Trust	Supports the Toe-by-Toe Literacy Scheme
SHELTER	Housing and advice service, debt advice, help with housing benefits etc... Two Shelter workers based at The Prison. Also run training for prisoners in money management, prioritising debts
SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families	Advice and practical support during and post custody
Sycamore Project	Reconciliation project via the Chaplaincy. Very popular but only 80 places a year.2015 full and prisoners on waiting list for 2016.
User Voice	Aims to deliver a powerful rehabilitation experience for offenders. Developed the Prison Council at The Prison
Veterans in Custody	Sign-posting to agencies as necessary
20,000 Voices	Choral Singing for Mains and VPs. 6 weekly sessions. Repertoire of both popular and traditional pieces.
Fine Cell Work	Materials/tuition in embroidery and tapestry work.

3.3 Changes during 2015

3.3.1 A new Director took up post on Monday the 19th January 2015

- 3.3.2 A free flow system of prisoner movement, with a number of gates being locked open was introduced, thus requiring fewer staff escorts. This was modified and improved during the reporting year.
- 3.3.3 User Voice was introduced in Dec 2014 with the inaugural meeting in January 2015 with the objective of listening to and giving greater voice to prisoners' views, generate ideas for improvement and resolve issues. Regular meetings have successfully been held throughout 2015.
- 3.3.4 In Dec 2014 a new contract was awarded for provision of Offender Healthcare Services for North-East Prisons, and the transition process continued through the rest of 2015.
- 3.3.5 At the time of writing The Prison has 387 whole time equivalent staff with 403 staff in post. There were three recruitment campaigns across 2014 and 2015 resulting in 37 new PCOs and 13 OSOs being recruited. There have also been 14 other grades recruited during the reporting year.
- 3.3.6 The Board views relations between Members and prison staff at all levels as being healthy. The Director or his representative attended all meetings of The Board in 2015, briefed Members on developments, and answered questions from Members.

Section 4. Executive Summary

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Following a year of rapid change in 2014 which caused considerable challenge for management, staff and prisoners, The Prison has settled down in the reporting year to ensure it provides a safe and decent environment. The Board commends the staff for their professional approach to the changes in both staffing levels and the regime. This report aims to identify areas of good progress and innovation and highlight areas where improvement needs to be made.
- 4.1.2 The Board is responsible for monitoring day to day life in The Prison, and ensuring proper standards of care and decency are maintained. Members of The Board made 622 (see 7.3.2) visits to The Prison during 2015, to monitor conditions, speak with prisoners and staff, and to help deal with issues of concern for the prisoners. In that context the questions that this report aims to answer are:
- Has The Prison met the standards and requirements placed on it?
 - What impact has that had on those in custody?
 - Were the range and adequacy of the programmes provided sufficient to prepare prisoners for release from prison?
- 4.1.3 Local interest in the development of The Prison has abated throughout the year. However this has continued periodically with some adverse publicity by the local media which has not always been justified. This continues to cause some concern for prisoners and their families and for staff to a lesser extent.
- 4.1.4 Throughout the year progress has continued to be made with the Safer Custody Agenda. As an indication of this a green rating was awarded for its Safer Custody audit in December 2015. This followed a Red/Amber rating in December 2014 (see 5.6.1) The Safer Custody staff have to be commended for this achievement.
- 4.1.5 Safety has continued to receive a high level of attention from both the management and The Board. The Board is pleased to acknowledge that specific actions have been taken to address the behaviour of the worst offenders and to reduce drug supply (see 5.6.3). However, there continues to be considerable work to be done in this area and The Board will monitor this closely throughout the coming year.
- 4.1.6 The occupancy of the Separation and Care Unit (SACU) fluctuated throughout the year which caused considerable pressure on staff when there was a number of difficult and disruptive prisoners there at the same time (see 5.7.2). The objective is to reduce the numbers in the unit and to manage some of the prisoners on the House Blocks. Two specialist photochromatic doors have been installed in two House Blocks to allow close observation of a prisoner without moving him to the SACU. There continues to be a problem moving prisoners back to the House Blocks who want to be transferred out and The Prison management is continually looking for ways to manage this problem.
- 4.1.7 The Board welcomes the significant increase in employment levels that has been achieved in 2015. This is an important part of The Prison's role, and contributes to rehabilitation, as well as the quality of life in The Prison. While this improvement has been led by the Commercial Development Team, it could only have been achieved with close coordination across The Prison. (see 5.4.6 and 5.4.7)

- 4.1.8 Good progress has been made on improving services for older prisoners, and some progress for prisoners with protected characteristics. (see 5.1.4)
- 4.1.9 In Healthcare, standards of care have been maintained overall and have improved in some areas, despite a challenging year. The Board would like to see more progress in preventive health initiatives in 2016. (see 5.3.9)
- 4.1.10 Most of the concerns raised by The Board in 2014 have either been resolved, or significant progress has been made. Progress in safety and employment is particularly welcome.

4.2 Issues in this report requiring a response

For the Minister

- 4.2.1 The difficulty of visiting The Prison and maintaining family ties was identified as an issue for Ministerial response in The Boards Annual Report for 2014; paragraph 4.2.2 of that report refers. A visit to The Prison remains difficult, even for families within the region, and visits by families from further away can be problematic. Even when a transfer to a more suitable location has been agreed, prisoners and their families can experience long delays waiting for transport to be organised. The Board urges the Minister to look again at whether there is a better way to facilitate transfers for prisoners who wish to maintain family ties.
- 4.2.2 The Minister is aware of national issues that also affect The Prison and which concern The Board, for example NPS, drugs, violence and self-harm, all of which require a National response. There are no other issues apart from 4.2.1 above, that are specific to The Prison that arose in 2015 which require a ministerial response.

For the Director

- 4.2.3 Pressures on the SACU were of concern to The Board through 2015 and it is anticipated that this area will continue to require close scrutiny for the foreseeable future. A number of organisational and regime changes were under way at the time of writing, but the effects of these were still unknown. Can the Director confirm that the senior management team will closely monitor developments in the SACU, and maintain a commitment to regular Segregation Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG) meetings, with appropriate attendance through 2016.
- 4.2.4 Recruitment of sufficient Mental Health staff has been challenging throughout 2015. Maintaining the quality of service has relied heavily on the dedication of front-line nursing staff. The Board is aware that efforts are being made to address the underlying recruitment issue, but the problem shows little sign of easing. Could the Director confirm that The Prison will explore other means of easing the pressure on mental health staff, until suitable candidates can be recruited to bring the complement up to strength.
- 4.2.5 The Board welcomes the significant progress that has been made in creating employment opportunities for prisoners in 2015 and the commitment to ensure that prisoners are learning skills that will be transferable to the workplace on release. Can the Director confirm that The Prison will be able to measure and report on progress with developing transferable workplace skills in 2016.

4.3 Issues raised in previous report

4.3.1 Ongoing

Maintaining family ties: The Board welcomes the progress that has been made in reducing the number of prisoners at The Prison who are located far from their home area. The Board continues to receive applications from prisoners related to the remote location. Although the number of these has reduced since The Board's last report, a visit to The Prison remains difficult. The Board hopes The Prison will explore other options to help prisoners located in The Prison to maintain links with distant families.

4.3.2 Resolved

- **IPP Prisoners:** In The Board's last two Annual Reports, concerns have been raised that some prisoners on indeterminate sentences faced insurmountable difficulties in progressing towards their release. In his response to the 2014 annual report, the minister indicated that he understood The Board's concern, and saw this as an ongoing issue. The Board welcomes the progress that has since been made, as a result of improved availability of courses, and greater flexibility in how prisoners are able to progress. The Board will continue to monitor the progress of this group of prisoners, but the specific difficulties that originally caused concern have not been raised with The Board during 2015, so this is no longer regarded as a continuing issue that The Board needs to highlight
- **Healthcare performance data:** The Board now receives Healthcare performance data on a regular basis. The Board's thanks go to the Director and NHS Commissioners for their assistance in resolving this issue, which The Board now regards as closed.
- **Transfers out of SACU:** In 2014 The Board raised concerns about the difficulties in arranging transfers out of SACU to a more appropriate location. Such problems have not been encountered to the same extent in 2015, and The Board no longer regards this as an issue that needs to be highlighted.
- **Self-harm:** Incidence of self-harm remains a concern, but during 2015 The Board has been impressed with the response of both The Prison and Healthcare to individual incidents, and notes that The Prison is not experiencing as rapid a rise in the frequency of self-harm incidents as reported from elsewhere in The Prison system. The concerns around levels of self-harm are widely recognized, and The Board no longer views this as an issue that needs to be specially highlighted by The Board.
- **Mix of VP and mains prisoners:** the mix of prisoners on certain House Blocks was a concern to some prisoners and to The Board in 2014. Over the last twelve months The Board has seen significant progress in both the mix, and the way the mix is managed on these House Blocks. During 2015 The Board received no substantiated reports of bullying, or fears of bullying in those locations, and this is no longer regarded as a concern.
- **Substance misuse:** The Board was concerned that Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) rates were deteriorating at the end of 2014, and they have fluctuated widely during 2015. However, The Board realizes that recent developments in the choice of substance that is misused mean that MDT is recognized to be a poor measure of how well the issues are being tackled. The Board notes the considerable effort that is under way in The Prison to deal with substance misuse, and acknowledge that progress is being made. The impact of substance misuse on prisoner health and safety, on the families of prisoners, and on staff are a concern to The Board, but these are also well understood by The Prison, and by many prisoners. There is no need for The Board to highlight them again here.

Section 5. Areas reported on

5.1 Equality and Inclusion

- 5.1.1 There has been a concentrated effort throughout the year to improve services for older prisoners, and good progress has been made. There has been some progress for prisoners with other protected characteristics.
- 5.1.2 **Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs):** Allegations of discrimination can be reported via a DIRF or through The Prison complaint system, where a tick box has been added to the Comp1 form to indicate discrimination. Such complaints go directly to the Safer Custody Office where they are transcribed onto a DIRF form to be investigated. There were 42 DIRFS submitted in 2015. Only three investigation findings showed that the complaint was related to any of the legally protected characteristics; two prisoners admitted to making racist comments toward a staff member and one prisoner admitted to using racist language.
- 5.1.3 **Disabled Prisoners:** The main progress has been in the area of mobility. Assessments to ensure there are sufficient ramps for wheelchair use as well as showering and toileting facilities for both disabled prisoners and older prisoners were carried out in 2015. The Board has seen an improvement in the availability for both. Some House Blocks do not have disabled facilities and this is taken into consideration when allocating a prisoner to a wing on arrival at The Prison.
- 5.1.4 **Older Prisoners:** In December 2015 there were 116 prisoners over the age of 55 years and 46 over the age of 65 years. Age UK (North Tyneside branch) and Northumbria University are now working in partnership with The Prison to provide day services for older prisoners. Age UK has helped to set up a community style day centre for older prisoners. This is run once a week by two members of staff from Age UK, with a student from Northumbria University supporting. The day consists of a range of activities in the morning in a designated area of The Prison followed by group work back on the House Block in the afternoon. Activities include talks on different subjects e.g. Pensions, Insurance, Diabetes awareness etc followed by quizzes, games etc. The funding comes from a voluntary trust at present and permanent funding is being sought to ensure the future of this service. Two of the prisoners representatives at the meeting have been asked to review how older prisoners manage to deal with change, especially at short notice relating to regimes etc and the best avenue to give notice of changes to this population. A new initiative to promote a community centre within House Blocks is in the early stages of planning and progress will be monitored by The Board throughout 2016.
- 5.1.5 **Gender re-assignment:** Special arrangements are in place to ensure privacy for any trans-gender prisoners living on a male House Block, with quarterly meetings with the SPCO and regular meetings with a Gender Psychologist to discuss their situation and to ensure there are no issues
- 5.1.6 **Ethnicity and Foreign Nationals:** The prison continues to hold relatively few prisoners from ethnic minorities (5% to 6% of The Prison population). Similarly the number of foreign nationals is relatively low (1.1% of The Prison population). It is rare for The Board to receive an application from a prisoner that relates directly to race or nationality. It is more common to receive an application that alleges racial discrimination

as a factor in a decision about other matters. On following up these cases, The Board found none that gave cause for concern about the way the issue had been handled by The Prison.

- 5.1.7 **Chaplaincy:** Last year The Board reported some reduction in staffing, and there have been problems around recruitment during 2015. Despite this, the Chaplains have been able to maintain a good service as a result of the dedication of the full time chaplain and the Imam. A new Roman Catholic chaplain was appointed at the end of 2015, and a new Anglican Chaplain is in post, so at the time of reporting the staff number is up to the full complement.
- 5.1.8 **Travellers:** It is difficult to ascertain the numbers of travellers as some of them do not want to declare their status but The Board believes the numbers are relatively small, and has not encountered any issues.
- 5.1.9 **Veterans:** At the time of reporting there are approximately 50 veterans across The Prison. Meetings for veterans have been sporadic throughout the year. Two officers have responsibility for overseeing this group of prisoners and there is a volunteer working for the Northern Learning Trust who has indicated an interest in working with the veterans in the coming year. The IMB will monitor progress of this initiative in 2016
- 5.1.10 **Social Care:** The new Care Act came into effect in April 2015, and has been implemented during 2015. There is a staff nurse in Health care who deals with the Social Care Assessments and a Support Worker is to be employed in The Prison who will co-ordinate all aspects of social care including Prisoner Buddies and care plans. The number of referrals is relatively low

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

- 5.2.1 **Manchester College** continues to be the deliverer of education to the prisoners. During 2015 (in September), the organisation launched its new justice-sector focussed organisation called Novus, a not-for-profit large scale social enterprise dedicated to delivering education, training and employability programmes in more than 100 sites within prisons, approved premises and the community. It has had its contract extended from August 2015 to August 2016.
- 5.2.2 **Staffing:** As well as the two permanent lead staff members they have a permanent team of seven who line manage all staff and work on a rota system to provide extra support day to day. This group has been developed to manage the provision to match The Prison population. The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) Manager is a member of The Prison Senior Management Team, which strengthens the partnership between the two and enables better planning. There has been a marginal decrease in staffing (3.6%), but no courses have been cut.
- 5.2.3 **Timetable:** It is the long core day which brought about the reduction in teaching days from 5 to 4; i.e. Monday to Thursday inclusive, because trainers need to be available when prisoners are. However, prisoners are available on Fridays to use the gym and the library. There is an awareness that they need to be able to access other provision as well. The Board will monitor this during the 2016.
- 5.2.4 **New Areas:** Increasing outreach learning is a priority. The aim is to have Maths and English and Employability available in every workshop and this has been witnessed in one workshop, although this is not quantifiable yet. It will be extended to other

workshops this year. It is also developing into an exit programme as part of STEPS, with guest speakers from outside organisations such as CRC and Through the Gate, to support prisoners in seeking to continue their employment. The staff refer to the "carousel model of learning" where the tutors follow the prisoners to classes or work.

- 5.2.5 **Units of learning delivered and achieved:** NVQ 2 is no longer done in the kitchen because of the closure of the Mess, but the training has switched to a training kitchen. The PMO is very successful with enthusiastic staff. There are waiting lists and the course is to be extended to other places. They have also been developing individual support to prisoners with disabilities: for example a hearing-impaired man and one with visual impairment. Extra funds are available for this and they have increased their draw down from 25% to 90% of the designated sum. But many staff do this automatically; for example by copying material on extra-large sheets. They are now being encouraged to quantify this provision.
- 5.2.6 **Starts, retention and achievement:** Year on year comparisons are difficult as the measurements have changed and the year runs from 1 August to 31 July. The full year figures for the year ended September 2015 are: Starts 6980, success rate 82%, retention rate 95%, which is better than those in last year's report. A National Independent User Survey is conducted twice a year. The October 2015 results show almost all the scores in the high 80%*s* or 90%*s*. For example, 96% agreed that the teaching was good, with the same figure for enjoying the course and making progress.
- 5.2.7 **Business development:** The ground work was undertaken during 2015 for a number of new partnerships with industry and business. These should see start up in 2016 and The Board will monitor this.
- 5.2.8 **The two library sites:** The Library is run by the Northumberland County Council Library Service, for whom the library works. Although the Librarian has responsibility for Literacy Schemes, Education has a significant investment. Staff are encouraged to include library sessions in their courses. The Turning Pages reading scheme, which is targeted at adults, is not used as intensively as it could be. There are now 22 mentors for VPs, and 18 for Mains, including 5 on Gateway, all trained by the Shannon Trust. Recruiting on Mains is very difficult, but they were approached by DART with the suggestion that they have joint mentors. Five of the 18 Mains mentors are joint mentors. The Board believes this to be a good innovation and will be monitoring take up. Last year the library invested in plenty of new reading material, which has adult story lines in the Easy Readers.

5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health

Healthcare

- 5.3.1 The Healthcare team has had a challenging year in 2015, with the provision of Healthcare services changing from Care UK to G4S, but The Board is satisfied that standards of care have been maintained overall and have improved in some areas
- 5.3.2 To maintain standards of care through such a challenging year is a tribute to the commitment of Healthcare staff.
- 5.3.3 Prisoners should not experience excessive waits to attend health appointments. Difficulties in recruiting experienced Healthcare staff caused some increase in waiting times for doctors and dentist following introduction of the new contract, but waiting times have since improved. Changes to the core day and improved working

arrangements have contributed to an improvement in attendance at Healthcare appointments inside The Prison. Releasing escorts for external appointments has sometimes presented both The Prison and Healthcare with scheduling difficulties, but the overall impact on patient care has not been a cause of concern to The Board.

- 5.3.4 Recruitment difficulties did not only impact waiting times. Locum arrangements also resulted in some lack of continuity, and lack of familiarity with the protocols in a prison environment. This had an impact on both the patient experience and the wider operation of The Prison. Regrettably, one side-effect of the recruitment difficulties is that it has not yet been possible to implement the planned pharmacy-led clinics and medicine use reviews for prisoners.
- 5.3.5 In The Board's 2014 report it was noted that Healthcare was rarely represented at Rule 45 reviews. This continued until mid 2015, but towards the end of the year The Board was able to welcome more consistent Healthcare attendance at Rule 45 reviews.
- 5.3.6 The last HMIP inspection (September 2014) had reservations about the Healthcare complaints process, and recommended more effort to raise awareness, and the recommendation has been implemented. Prisoners occasionally raise issues about handling of Healthcare complaints with The Board, but receive relatively few Healthcare-related applications to The Board were received, and the number has dropped from around 3 per month in 2014 to around 2 per month in 2015.
- 5.3.7 The HMIP inspection in September 2014 recommended that all The Prison staff should receive an annual update on the use of defibrillators as part of mandatory training requirements. This training is under way, and has been completed for the most critical groups, including night staff. The number of staff trained in first aid has also risen.
- 5.3.8 There are complex dependencies between the different partners involved in Healthcare delivery, so clear communication is vital for governance of the partnership, and for proper scrutiny. In The Board's 2014 report concerns were raised about the difficulties experienced in obtaining regular information on the quality of service experienced by prisoners in 2014. This was finally resolved in October 2015, with the help of the NHS Commissioners, and the support of the Director.
- 5.3.9 An increase in the number of closed visits, banned visitors, drugs and hooch finds all point to a tightening of control over the supply of drugs and alcohol through 2015. MDT rates have varied through the year, but with increased use of NPS these are not as reliable an indicator of the overall level of substance misuse as they used to be. The widespread impact of new psychoactive substances on prisoner health, safety and security, Healthcare and other staff is a continuing concern. So alongside some continuing recruitment difficulties, and the need to continue bedding-in process changes such as new self-referral systems, and e-pharmacy, it is clear that some of the pressures that Healthcare experienced in 2015 will continue into 2016. However, overall The Board's observation is that the environment has become more settled since the change of contract. The Board hopes that this will continue, relieve some of the pressure on staff and management, and allow progress in 2016 on health promotion, Methadone reduction, smoking cessation, and other preventive health initiatives.

Mental Health.

- 5.3.10 During the year, The Board received a number of complaints from prisoners about difficulties in accessing Mental Health services. Despite recruitment causing difficulties for the service, existing Mental Health staff made considerable efforts to maintain the

level of service. At the end of the year, a self referral system was also introduced. In practice, The Board found no evidence of access problems in any of the cases that were brought to its attention

Substance Misuse.

- 5.3.11 There has been a number of initiatives to address rising levels of New Psychoactive Substance (NPS) use. These include efforts to raise awareness of the effects of NPS and to develop support groups. The effects of NPS are unpredictable, and the welfare of prisoners affected depends on good collaboration between the different professionals involved. So The Board welcomes local and national initiatives to improve awareness and communication between different medical and non-medical professionals dealing with the effects of NPS - both inside and outside The Prison.
- 5.3.12 Almost all dispensing of Methadone now takes place on one House Block, which has eased the process for clinical staff involved. However, less than half of prisoners on Methadone are currently on a reduction programme, and an aspiration across The Prison significantly to increase the proportion is welcomed.
- 5.3.13 Significant developments in drug and alcohol recovery during the year include reconfiguration of the programme to provide a three month option for prisoners who are approaching their release date; strengthening of family and community support for those on the programmes; developing support groups both inside and outside The Prison; and a more structured approach to the work of mentors including accreditation in collaboration with Manchester College. Several former mentors have obtained employment on release; in one case as a paid mentor.
- 5.3.14 Work was under way on Smoking Cessation in advance of introduction of Smoke-Free Prison

5.4 Purposeful Activity (including Work)

- 5.4.1 The Prison is a Working Prison and as such, Sodexo has, in 2015, invested heavily in attempting to increase the range and amount of work in The Prison and in ways of encouraging prisoners to engage in taking up prison employment.
- 5.4.2 To this end a new post of Head of Commercial Development has been created to work alongside the Head of Regimes and it is his remit to bring in work from the commercial sector. The Head of Regimes then manages the introduction.
- 5.4.3 Work in The Prison includes: Textiles, Engineering, Contract Services, Laundry, Horticulture, Waste Management, as well as training in bricklaying, joinery and house painting.
- 5.4.4 New initiatives are coming in steadily and include work from Sodexo Supply Chain Partners, such as Office Depot Box File manufacturing, DAMS Furniture Protectors, Pick and Pack and PFI Sign Solutions.
- 5.4.5 Non Supply Chain Partners include Prison Brew Packs, Diversey machinery refurbishment, GAP TV recycling, Recycling DVDs and CDs.
- 5.4.6 Working Hours target has risen from 50,000hrs per month at the beginning of the contract to 98,000 by November 2015.

- 5.4.7 Average daily working hours were 3,200 in December 2014 rising to 3,900 in December 2015.
- 5.4.8 Total Unemployment fell from 300 to 200 in the reporting period. In December 2015/January 2016, there were 150 Mains and 25 VPs unemployed.
- 5.4.9 The Prison is making efforts to create new work opportunities, whilst at the same time trying to maximise the uptake of existing available work places.
- 5.4.10 Whilst The Board congratulates The Prison on the progress it made during the year in getting work into The Prison, it is also aware that one of the aims of any prison is to prepare prisoners for life outside. To that end Purposeful work should if at all possible, be readily transferable to the market place outside.

5.5 Resettlement & Reducing Reoffending

- 5.5.1 Since February 2015 the Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) has worked with most prisoners from The Prison. Higher risk prisoners are dealt with by the Probation Service and the Multi Agency Public Protection Agency (MAPPA).
- 5.5.2 Accommodation for low and medium risk prisoners is organised by Shelter, which has done a good job in getting people into settled accommodation on release. Settled accommodation on discharge averaged 93% over the reporting year. As well as housing prisoners, it oversees mortgage repayments and benefits and speaks to landlords about tenancy agreements in order to keep properties available for the prisoners. Shelter begins a dialogue with the prisoners some 4 to 6 weeks prior to release to discuss housing options and then liaise with Councils if this is necessary. This aspect of resettlement will transfer to the Northumbria CRC in 2016, and The Board will be monitoring any effects during 2016.
- 5.5.3 Employment on release averaged 15% in 2015. This is administered by the National Careers Service (NCS) for the more able prisoners and by the Advanced Personnel Management Company (APM) (formerly PERTEMPS) for those with drug and mental health issues. NCS is present at inductions for Mains and VPs four days a week. It outlines its work and gets prisoners to fill in the necessary paperwork to go on file. It then decides whether the NCS or APM will be more suitable for the individual's needs. It has been suggested to The Board that more could be done to encourage local construction companies to look at the quality of work done by prisoners and to facilitate transition into employment on release. The Board intends to explore this further in 2016.
- 5.5.4 Training and Education on discharge averaged 30% over the year. Handouts are made available to all prisoners such as Employer Fact Sheets and "Unlock" an independent charity for people with convictions that helps prisoners on release to find work.
- 5.5.5 OMU Staff liaise with prisoners and the various partner agencies from 12 weeks prior to release until the prisoners' release dates. This process seemed to work well in 2015, and work is currently under way to refine it in 2016.
- 5.5.6 The Board has noted the efforts during 2015 in the OMU to reduce the number of delayed Home Detention Curfew (HDC) assessments. The Board would like to see better preparation for HDC assessment in situations where prisoners transfer into The Prison shortly before they become entitled for consideration. However, The Board

applauds the significant improvement during 2015 in the proportion of HDC assessments that were ready by the planned date.

- 5.5.7 The Prison is the lead resettlement prison for the north east of England. The Board is told that The Prison has been able to accommodate all of those designated for resettlement in the north east. The OMU was able to relocate the target proportion of those designated for resettlement elsewhere, but faced some difficulties, and were not able to relocate all. Resettlement issues that have been raised with The Board by prisoners, have mainly been related to disagreements about the resettlement area.
- 5.5.8 Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). The number of occasions that prisoners were released on ROTL from January to June 2015 was an average of 48 per month. In July 2015 there were 6 occasions and there have been none since then. This compares with an average of 27 in 2014. There were no prisoners released on supervised visits during the reporting period. The Board will continue to monitor the situation during 2016.
- 5.5.9 Visits have worked well in 2015. The same visits hall is used for both Mains and VPs, and this has caused concerns in the past, but in 2015, both groups have left each other alone, and The Board has heard no reports of problems. Special visits continue: including Father and Child visits, and Family visits.
- 5.5.10 The passing of packages in visits is one of the factors that contribute to substance misuse, and the associated risks to prisoner and staff safety and welfare. The number of banned visitors increased in 2015 to 88. This is a result of increased efforts to detect transfers of packages. The impact of banned visits and closed visits on prisoners and their families is regularly brought to the attention of The Board, but The Board is satisfied that the system is operated properly.
- 5.5.11 Visitor services are provided by NEPACS, who have had a more stable year following the changes which took place in 2014. The main change has been regarding a new Visits Manager within The Prison, with whom NEPACS has developed a strong and positive relationship.

5.6 Safer Custody

- 5.6.1 The Board has seen significant progress on safer custody during the year, as a result of sustained effort by the Safer Custody Team, and across The Prison. As an indication of the progress that has been made, in the December 2014 Safer Custody Audit, The Prison received a red/ amber rating, but December 2015 it received a green rating.
- 5.6.2 After concerns were expressed by inspectors regarding the lack of regular Safer Custody Meetings, these were re-instated in 2014, and these multi-disciplinary meetings have continued throughout 2015
- 5.6.3 Throughout the year, safety continued to receive a high level of attention from both The Prison and The Board. Specific actions are being taken to address the behaviour of the worst offenders, and to reduce drug supply. In such a large estate, organising efficient and safe movement within The Prison is a continuing challenge, but further progress has been made in 2015. During 2015 there have been a number of changes to the way the population is distributed across The Prison, in order to improve movements. There have been only minor issues in the way these changes have been implemented and the results have been positive. The Board expressed concerns in 2014 over the population

mix on one House Block, but that particular issue was addressed in 2015, and is no longer of concern to The Board.

- 5.6.4 Measures of violence, disruptive behaviour, drug use and self-harm continue to fluctuate, and safety will remain an important area of focus in 2016, but the trends are in the right direction. The progress that was made in 2015 is encouraging, and should not be under-estimated.
- 5.6.5 **Self-Harm:** The number of incidents of self-harm at The Prison increased by around 20% in comparison to 2014. The frequency peaked in October, then reduced towards the end of the year. The Board has been impressed with the caring way that individual incidents of self-harm are handled: both by The Prison and by Healthcare. The Board understands that the increase in the number of self-harm incidents nationally is even higher than experienced at The Prison. Many of the incidents The Board sees are the result of repeated self-harm by a small number of individuals. The Board would welcome more work to prevent repeated self-harm.
- 5.6.6 The Board has welcomed the introduction of two close-observation cells on House Blocks so that prisoners solely at risk of self-harm can be better handled within normal accommodation. There is still a need on occasions to hold prisoners at risk in the SACU: either for their own protection, or for the security of The Prison, but The Board acknowledges that in these cases the risks are well-recognised and closely scrutinised.
- 5.6.7 **ACCT:** Comparison with national figures and The Board's own monitoring, indicate that The Prison is normally quick to respond when there is a need to open an ACCT. In order to improve quality of ACCT completion, additional staff training has been provided and there has been continuous auditing and scrutiny at each monthly Safer Custody meeting. There are currently 24 ACCT assessors and 3 ACCT trainers, with efforts under way to increase the number of trainers. Reviews of ACCTs do not present any difficulties. All reviews are undertaken in a professional, transparent and caring manner.
- 5.6.8 **Listener Scheme:** There are currently 26 listeners across The Prison, but there is a shortage of listeners on the mains House Blocks due to problems when recruiting earlier in 2015. This is being addressed. There are 2 co-location sites across The Prison where listeners can spend time alone with prisoners. There are always two listeners with a prisoner and prisoners with high risk Cell Share Risk Assessment (CSRA) score cannot spend time alone in a co-location with listeners
- 5.6.9 **Deaths in Custody:** During 2015 there have been 4 deaths in custody within The Prison, of which one was self inflicted, and three were due to natural causes. There was one further Death in Custody following release. There have been 2 inquests during the year and at the time of writing there are 9 outstanding. Four of these were planned for December but have been deferred. In the past The Board has welcomed progress in avoiding lengthy delays in holding inquests, but note that the number outstanding has not reduced (seven outstanding in Dec 2012, five outstanding in 2013, nine outstanding in December 2015).

5.7 Segregation, Care and Separation, Close Supervision

- 5.7.1 **Separation and Care Unit (SACU):** The building is generally in a satisfactory condition, although the shower area is poor. The SACU holds a maximum of 18 prisoners. Cell fire alarms were fitted in September 2015 during a two week closure for

update, with prisoners transferring temporarily to the closed Acklington site SACU. Board members have visited the SACU at least twice a week during 2015.

- 5.7.2 **Occupation of the SACU:** Numbers have fluctuated but were at, or near maximum in the early part of the year. This was at times a difficult period for staff. There have also been two cells on two normal House Blocks fitted with photochromatic doors which enable staff to monitor prisoners in an alternative way and sometimes avoids the need for admission into the SACU. The latter part of 2015 saw an average of 10 to 12 prisoners per week being accommodated in the SACU, with target figure capped at 14, giving an all-round more flexible approach to managing challenging prisoner behaviour.
- 5.7.3 **Staffing:** For a variety of reasons which The Board understands, the staff on SACU has been subject to a series of changes. Almost without exception, prisoners speak well of staff and how they are treated in the course of their time spent on the SACU. Staffing on the SACU during the reporting period was 3 full-time staff in the morning, 2 in the afternoons and 2 in the evenings. There was also a Senior Officer overseeing the working of the unit. An innovation during 2015 on the SACU is the introduction of TVs for prisoners. The criteria for having TVs are currently under review. This procedure will require further monitoring to see if it is an appropriate way of effective management of prisoners in the SACU.
- 5.7.4 **Adjudications:** During 2014, all Adjudications were held in the SACU. This, however, presented a range of problems. Many prisoners would resist being returned to their cells when these were completed. Also, staff had to be allocated to escort duties. During 2015, adjudications started to be undertaken on the various House Blocks with usually an experienced SACU officer accompanying the Duty Manager. This has resolved the problem of prisoners not wishing to return to their House Blocks and the need to allocate escorting officers. During 2015, there was a total of 4,535 Adjudications; an average of around 378 adjudications per month, compared with an average of 220 per month in 2014 and 260 per month in 2013. The Board attended about 5% of adjudications
- 5.7.5 **Segregation, Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG):** These meetings were initially held quarterly in the year under review. The decision was then made to then hold these meetings on a monthly basis to cover changing circumstances. These have not always been well attended and some improvement is necessary. The Prison is aware of the issue and The Board will continue to monitor the situation.
- 5.7.6 **Security:** Security meetings are held at monthly intervals and are well attended by the Director, Head of Security, and a number of senior staff from the various disciplines. A member of The Board has attended the majority of meetings. Presentations include; violence and drugs, assaults, monthly intelligence reports, self-harm, use of force and MDT figures. Use of force was used in The Prison on 197 occasions between January and November in 2015
- 5.7.7 **Rule 45 Reviews:** The scheduling of Reviews during 2015 was a little haphazard in the first half of the year, with only intermittent attendance by Healthcare. However, from November 2015, these were re-scheduled to a specific time and day, with a clear commitment from Healthcare that it will attend. A total of 785 Rule 45 reviews were held during the reporting year. The Board attended an average of about 12 a month; approximately 20%. During the second half of the year, The Board increased its attendance of continuation (14 day) reviews. There was an average of about 20 of these a month. The Board attended 75% of them.

- 5.7.8 **The new Care Act:** This now means that a prisoner having a review has an Individual Care Plan which considers a range of behaviours and issues. A new Care and Reintegration plan has been developed as a form of contract to which the prisoner has to sign up. The prisoner must agree to an acceptable level of behaviour and if these are met, then privileges will be considered. The prisoner receives a copy of this plan.
- 5.7.9 **Serious Incidents:** There were a number of serious incidents in the year that required the Command Suite to be opened. At least one member of The Board was in attendance at all incidents, and also at the hot and cold debriefs that followed. Reports of The Board indicate that every situation was handled calmly, professionally and thoroughly.
- 5.7.10 **General Comments:** Demonstrated levels of violence have gone up but are more easily managed if numbers in the SACU are at, or near, to the target occupation number of 14. Self-harm incidents in the SACU have increased and this is a concern to The Board and needs careful future monitoring. There was a total of 46 prisoners on ACCTs in the SACU between June and December in 2015. No prisoner has been resident for more than 3 months. Daily visits were proposed by Healthcare (from November 2015).

5.8 Residential Services

- 5.8.1 **Residences:** The prison has 14 House Blocks plus the Gateway Unit, spread over a 40 hectare site. The capacity of The Prison is 1348 Housed in single cells, and population numbers have been maintained at approximately 99% throughout 2015. The House Blocks vary in size from 40 to 240 cells. Nine of the House Blocks house Mains and the other five hold the VPs.
- 5.8.2 **Condition of the House Blocks:** All buildings appear to be in a largely satisfactory condition, although a few of the older House Blocks are showing their age. Two House Blocks have recently undergone re-cladding on many of the walls on the upper landing and the units have been repainted. Significant remedial works relating to fire safety, that have been outstanding for several years, were undertaken in 2015.
- 5.8.3 **Functions within the House Blocks:** The majority of older prisoners reside in one of the House Blocks on the VP estate which allows them additional association time when the other prisoners are at work. There continues to be a number of Mains in the VP House Blocks but that number reduced during the reporting year and it is planned that this will reduce further in 2016. One smaller House Block has a mix of Cat C and Cat D prisoners. These men must have a record of good behaviour and a low CSRA rating before they can come to this House Block. One of the main conditions for living here is that the prisoner is working or actively seeking employment. The prisoners are not locked up and are free to move around the House Block and the area within its perimeter fence. There is a very good atmosphere in this House Block. One House Block is drug free. One House Block has two wings for prisoners on methadone treatment, which makes it more efficient for the Health Care staff to carry out drug rounds.
- 5.8.4 **The Gateway Unit:** This is a single storey modern building which currently houses 40 prisoners overcoming dependence on alcohol, illicit or prescribed drugs. They undergo intensive courses, usually of twelve or sixteen week's duration. The atmosphere is designed to be relaxed and welcoming, with comfortable chairs, numerous leisure

facilities, and a wealth of impressive notice boards and information. The work done is of a high standard.

- 5.8.5 **Kiosks:** The touch screen Kiosks installed in 2014 are now used by all prisoners and are working well. These enable prisoners to perform a number of tasks including ordering meals, arranging visits, ordering canteen, receiving notices from management and applying for job vacancies. Their use releases staff for other duties.
- 5.8.6 **Clothing:** Prisoners are able to wear their own clothes, as long as this is not of the same style/colour as staff uniforms. This is welcomed by prisoners and goes hand in hand with prisoners being able to wash their own clothes on the House Blocks. Prison clothing is still worn at work and for visits.
- 5.8.7 **Induction:** Induction is carried out on two House Blocks; one for Mains and one for VPs offering induction courses to the new prisoners. Changes to the induction process were of concern to The Board in 2014 but the process had significantly improved by the end of the reporting year. The involvement of a select group of trained prisoners to help deliver the programme has proved very successful.
- 5.8.8 **Prisoner Information desks (PIDs):** PIDs have now been set up in all the House Blocks. These are run by prisoners and are proving to be a valuable service to the prisoners. A range of information is provided. The PIDs workers are continuing to gather more information and the majority of them have information on the work of the IMB which they can pass onto the prisoners. They tell the prisoners on their wing when they will be available each day.
- 5.8.9 **Kitchens:** Significant investment has been made during the year on large equipment in the Kitchen. The result has been less breakdowns and an improved service. The Board continues to receive Applications about food but these have reduced. There is now a Food Forum, as part of the User Voice process, which involves prisoners' reps in regular discussion with catering managers. It appears that in the most part, food is being transported all over The Prison at the correct temperature.
- 5.8.10 **Gyms:** The gyms are well used by prisoners with all being able to access sessions, though priority for extra sessions is now being given to those in work or education. By the end of the year, old equipment was being replaced by new equipment via a lease agreement with a provider. This development is welcomed by prisoners.
- 5.8.11 **User Voice:** Monthly meetings of prison council reps and Senior Management are now held, with the Director often chairing these meetings. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity for discussion of potential or actual developments in provision or regime as well as an opportunity for prisoners' reps to raise matters of concern with management. The meetings are valued by prisoners and management.
- 5.8.12 **Property:** This still remains an issue at times, but is less of an issue as prisoners can have more of their own property in their cells. Prisoners are only allowed to buy items from approved sources. A dedicated staff team manages the unit efficiently and effectively. The previous prisoner who managed the property stores and incoming parcels has left The Prison but has been replaced by an equally responsible and efficient prisoner. A significant number of property Applications received relate to property not transferred from other prisons along with the prisoner. The quality of response to these issues is variable.

5.8.13 **Laundry:** The Prison laundry has been somewhat underused for part of the year. Now, however, all House Blocks have washing machines for personal clothing. There is now a contract with a sister prison for bed linen, towels and prison clothing which provides more employment opportunities.

Section 6. Other areas of Concern and Examples of Excellence

6.1 Areas of concern

Substance misuse

- 6.1.1 Despite intense security efforts and additional support offered to prisoners, the level of substance misuse in The Prison remains an area of serious concern to The Board, as it is to management, staff, and many prisoners. Substance misuse has damaging effects, both direct and indirect. These are on prisoner health and welfare, staff safety, the allocation of healthcare and other resources, as well as on the families of prisoners. The Board is satisfied that the issues are well understood throughout The Prison. There has been progress in 2015. The Board anticipates further progress in 2016 and acknowledges that this is a complex problem. It would be naïve to expect a quick solution and it remains The Board's most serious area of concern.

6.2 Examples of Excellence

- 6.2.1 The prison in partnership with Age UK and Northumbria University have to be commended for the development of Day Care facility for older prisoners within The Prison. This initiative is proving to be very successful and is well attended.

Section 7. Independent Monitoring Board

7.1 Independent Monitoring Board: Statistics

Table 7.1: Board Statistics

Board Statistics	2015
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	5
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to The Prison	622
Number of Rule 45, 14 Day Reviews attended	About 20%
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	9 March 2015

7.2 Independent Monitoring Board: Applications Analysis

Table 7.2a: Application Analysis 2015

Code	Category	2013	2014	2015
A	Accommodation	5	6	4
B	Adjudications	13	2	3
C	Equality & Diversity (inc. Religion)	3	1	1
D	Education/Employment/Training (inc. IEPs)	31	28	33
E1	Family/Visits (inc. Mail/Phone)	59	53	36
E2	Finance/Pay	4	15	25
F	Food/Kitchen related	7	11	7
G	Health Related	35	33	31
H1	Property (in The Prison)	44	45	28
H2	Property (other establishment)	41	41	61
H3	Canteen facilities, catalogue shopping Argos	7	10	6
I	Sentence Related	69	88	41
J	Staff/Prisoner concerns	68	66	61
K	Transfers	59	58	41
L	Miscellaneous	43	29	19
	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	488	496	400
	Monthly Average	41	41	33

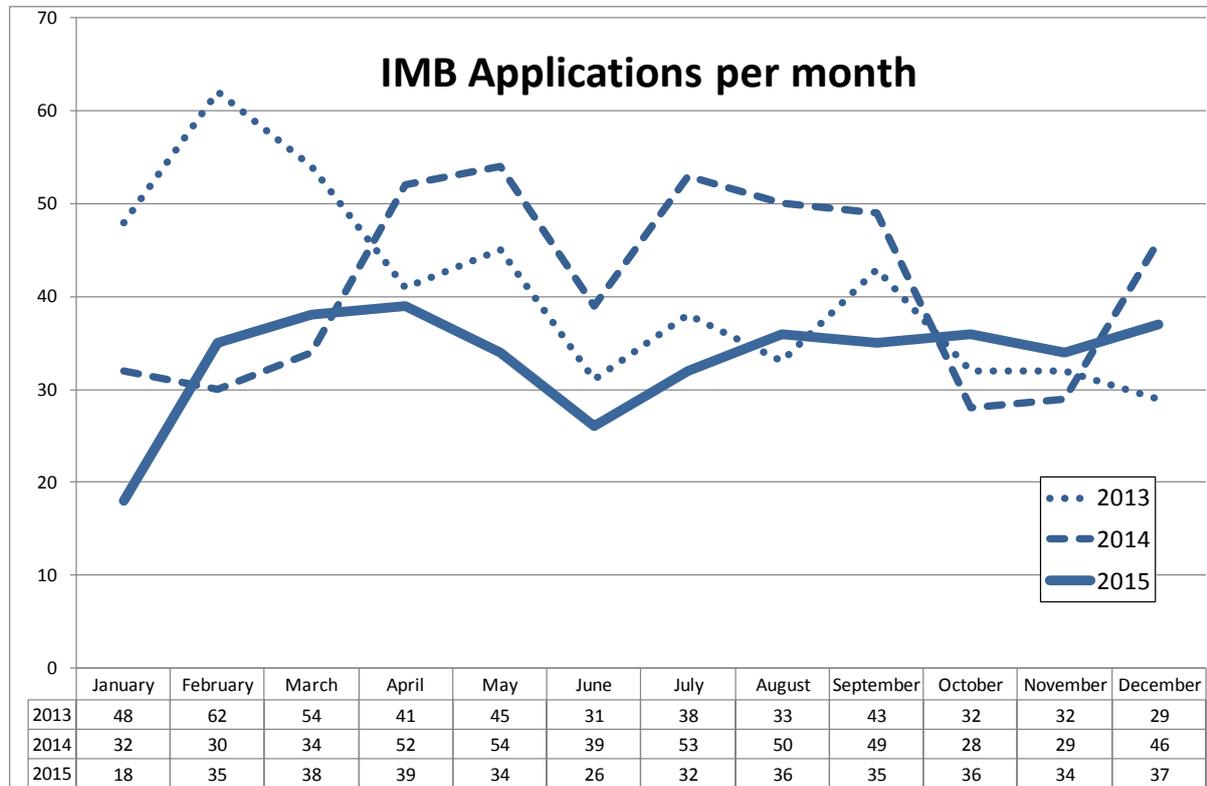
7.2.1 In 2015, The Board received a total of 400 applications compared with 496 applications in 2014 and 488 in 2013. During 2015, there were 25 applications marked for chair confidential access, compared with 42 in 2014.

7.2.2 Applications were submitted by 270 different prisoners (266 in 2014), and there were 70 prisoners who submitted more than one application (91 in 2014). In 2015 there were fewer examples of the IMB application process being abused by persistent complainers. In 2015 the eight prisoners who submitted five or more applications during the year accounted for 18% of the total. In 2014, the thirteen prisoners who submitted five or more applications during the year accounted for 25% of the total.

7.2.3 Applications were submitted from across The Prison. A slightly higher proportion of applications came from vulnerable prisoners, but this was mainly the result of activity by

a small number of prisoners who raised a large number of applications. Applications were analysed for any unusual patterns of activity, but no concerns were identified.

Table 7.2b: Number of applications per month



7.2.4 Application Numbers: The number of Applications submitted to The Board in 2015 fell by 20% to 400, compared to 495 in 2014.

7.2.5 Common Categories: The most common categories were Staff/Prisoner Concerns which fell in volume only slightly, and Property (other establishments) which increased in volume by 50%.

7.2.6 Reductions: There were significant reductions in the number of applications related to Sentence, and the number related to local property issues, both of which reduced by around 50%. This reflects process improvement within the OMU, and the effective work of property orderlies, both of which are acknowledged elsewhere in this report.

7.3 The work of the Independent Monitoring Board

7.3.1 The Board recruited five new members during 2015. One of these resigned very soon after commencing induction. Three members left for personal reasons and one member died. The Board has 13 members at the time of reporting out of an allocation of 20. A recruitment campaign was commenced in November and will be completed early in 2016. The Board is committed to equality in its recruitment procedures.

- 7.3.2 **Rota and Other Visits:** Members of The Board visit The Prison every week in order to carry out their duties. Members recorded 622 visits in 2015. Three separate rotas were in operation, as well as a weekly panel dealing with applications. In addition to monitoring different aspects of The Prison, and covering the member's Areas of Special Responsibility each rota has specific responsibilities:
- Rota 1 covered meetings of the Prisoner Consultative Council, takes phone calls to the IMB for that week, and co-ordinates The Board's response to serious incidents
 - Rota 2 covers attendance at R45 and other reviews of prisoners
 - Rota 3 visits the SACU, and covers attendance at adjudications
- 7.3.3 All visits are reported and issues of immediate concern are raised with appropriate departments. **Rota reports** are seen by the Director and discussed in his or the Deputy Director's presence at Board meetings.
- 7.3.4 **Applications** are dealt with by a weekly Applications Panel consisting of two Board members. The two-hour patrol state over the lunch period makes it difficult to speak to staff or prisoners during that time. On occasions, re-visits have been necessary in order to deal with the volume and complexity of applications. All prisoner applications to The Board are acknowledged on receipt and the prisoner is kept informed if there is to be any delay in response.
- 7.3.5 **Areas of special responsibility** mirror the areas of the Annual Report where possible. Each member also maintains contact with an allocated House Block through the year.
- 7.3.6 **Prison meetings:** Board members observe meetings of The Prison throughout the year, prioritising attendance where resources allow, to attend the various Prisoner Consultative Committees, SMARG, Security, Adjudication, Standardisation, Safer Custody, Equality and Inclusion, Health and Safety meetings. Members also attend, purely as observers, selected meetings of The Prison which relate to their particular Area of Special Responsibility.
- 7.3.7 **Board Meetings** are held monthly and are well-attended. The Director or his delegate attended all meetings in 2015 and gave a report on progress. Thirty minutes before each meeting is devoted to Development Time when invited speakers provide information on a variety of subjects.
- 7.3.8 **Area and National Meetings:** The Chair and/or the Vice-Chair attend the quarterly Area Chairs meeting facilitated by the National Council representative. In 2015, one member of The Board attended the IMB National Conference.
- 7.3.9 The Board has a Service level Agreement with The Prison under which Clerking and secretarial services were provided throughout the year.
- 7.3.10 **The IMB Secretariat** has provided support throughout the year.
- 7.3.11 In addition to regular rota duties, and weekly application panel, The Board continued to scrutinise and adapt its rota and application procedures in response to changes in The Prison. The Board will continue to seek ways to raise the profile of The Board, and ensure that it is perceived by prisoners as being accessible.

7.3.12 It is my responsibility as Chair to sign this report, but it has been produced as a collaborative effort by the whole Board. The extent of change at The Prison made 2015 a challenging year for The Board, and I would like to thank all members, past and present, for their commitment and support throughout the year.

Isobel Wilson

IMB Chair, HMP Northumberland

March, 2016