



**H M PRISON LOWDHAM GRANGE**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**1ST FEBRUARY 2015 – 31ST JANUARY 2016**

**PUBLICATION DATE:**

## **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

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## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

HM Prison Lowdham Grange is a Category B male training prison opened in 1998 located in the village of Lowdham 12 miles outside Nottingham.

Serco operates the prison.

At the start of the reporting year 1/02/2015 the prison population was 919 and at the end of the reporting period 31/01/16 the prisoner population was 918. The average population for the year was 883.

The Certified Normal Accommodation is 900 with an Operational Capacity of 920.

On the 31/01/2016 the breakdown of the prisons held was:

Life sentenced prisoners	194
Indeterminate sentenced prisoners	83
Determinate sentenced prisoners	641

Education is provided by Serco with outside contractors providing IT Media based cover.

The prison runs the buffet bar in the visits area. There is also a children's play area.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The IMB is satisfied that HMP Lowdham Grange has been managed and operated well. The prison endeavours to treat all prisoners with respect and decency.

### **The Board draw attention to the following areas of good work:**

- 1 The Education Department. The Department is making a difference to some prisoners' lives and aspirations. See section 5.2 on page 6.
- 2 Healthcare provision has improved at Lowdham Grange but there is much more to do. See section 5.3 on page 7.

### **The Board draw attention to the following areas of concern:**

- 3 The Board is concerned about the lack of consistency in the way the prison has implemented the changes to the Reviewing and Authorisation of Continuing Segregation. See section 5.7 on page 10.
- 3 The Board is concerned about the amount of cash prisoners are able to send into the prison. See section 6.2 on page 11.
- 4 The Board is still concerned about Prisoners property lost during the transfer of a prisoner and the failure of transferring prisons to answer prisoner applications. See section 6.3 on page 12.
- 6 The Board is very concerned about the low staffing levels at the prison. See section 6.5 on page 13.

### **Questions for the Minister**

- 1 We question whether PSI 01/2012 that deals with the receiving and sending of prisoners' money into prison needs to be reconsidered. We appreciated that prisoners need to prepare for release and need to learn how to manage their finances but we feel that the process is being abused.
- 2 We raised the problem of prisoners' property going missing during transfer between prisons last year in our reports for 2015 and 2014 and despite what the Minister said in his reply the problem continues. The problem is exacerbated by the refusal of sending prisons to reply to prisoners' applications in a timely manner or at all.

## **REPORTS**

### **5.1 Equality and Inclusion**

Equalities and Inclusion continue to be a significant priority for the management team at Lowdham Grange.

The Equalities Officer leads this aspect of the prison's work with enthusiasm and she is well supported by senior colleagues. Applications to the Board concerning Equality and Inclusion continue to be low, only six were received in the reporting year and several proved to have little substance.

Specific action to support prisoners who fall outside of the average age for the prison has been taken during the year with the introduction of a 'mature prisoners' wing and the formation of a 'younger prisoners' consultation group to plan for their needs. It is encouraging to see that this protected group are featuring in plans.

Challenges remain for the Equalities team. These include:

- Providing appropriate provision for those with physical handicap but whose behaviour challenges reasonable norms of behaviour
- Safeguarding religious observance for Muslim prisoners in a climate where a minority appear to have used religious gatherings as an opportunity to demonstrate aggressive behaviour which may be linked to gang activity

### **5.2 Education Learning and Skills (ELS)**

IMB believes that Education Learning and Skills continues to be a strength at Lowdham Grange. This view was endorsed by HMIP during their inspection in June of 2015 when they judged ELS provision to be 'Good'

The Service is managed by a senior manager and two managers who provide strong and clear leadership and effective management.

A good range of courses is offered which range from Foundation Level to degree courses through the Open University.

HMIP noted that the 25+ courses offered represent an excellent range and variety of opportunities for prisoners. Achievement levels are generally good.

IMB has noted a number of particular examples of good practice including:

- The Sports Academy which offers courses up to level 3.
- A Pro Social Modelling course, that was written 'in house', is well structured and delivered by experienced staff that have the respect of the prisoners.
- Multi Media courses, the highlight of which is the 'Story time Dad's' course where prisoners can make story videos for their children.
- A 'white goods' repair course, which supports the work of the prison as well providing vocational experience for prisoners.
- Good monitoring of and support for teaching staff.
- The ELS Team make a wider contribution to life of the prison. For example they organised a visit from the Ann Frank Prisons Project to enhance the work of the Equalities and Diversity team.

- Relationships between prisoners and staff are generally good. Prisoners report that the quality and availability of education at Lowdham is better than that elsewhere.

### **5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health**

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust provides Primary and Mental Healthcare, Dentistry, an Integrated Drug Treatment System and Substance Misuse Programmes following a transfer from Serco Health on 1st October 2014.

This reporting year has seen a period of transition as the new contractor developed new staffing structures and improved working practices.

Healthcare is now lead by a well-qualified and experienced professional who is supported by 3 clinical matrons. This group have introduced a range of improved services including:

- 5 sessions of GP surgeries per week
- Nurse prescribing support for both GP and substance misuse teams
- More consistent staffing and provision of clinics

This has been achieved, at least in part, by improved recruitment, most notably by a successful ‘recruitment open day’. Currently only one vacancy exists within the service, which is a significant improvement on previous years.

Challenges still remain including:

- An unsuitable building for clinical provision. This has been reported in previous years and the poor ventilation, lack of light and consequent unpleasant environment continue to impact negatively on prisoners and staff.
- Non-attendance rates have increased and currently stand at over 10%. This is frustrating for staff and increases waiting times

Further improvements in services are anticipated in the near future. These include:

- Triage facilities on wings with a named nurse allocated to each wing
- Relocation of the Health Care Admin team to more appropriate accommodation which will release further clinical spaces for additional clinics

In order to track the impact of changes to Health Care provision the Board carried out a prisoner satisfaction survey in July 2015. The results are noted below:

Returns from all prisoners:	50%
Satisfaction with Confidentiality:	76%
Satisfaction with waiting times:	33%
Overall satisfaction:	49%

When these views are compared with statistics provided by the new provider for recent months waiting times appear as follows:

Average GP waiting times:	2-3 weeks
Average Dental waiting time:	3-4 weeks
Nurse waiting time:	1-2 weeks

These waiting times are in line with those experienced by the general public in this area and are therefore acceptable.

The Board is pleased to report on the above improvements to the service achieved during the year and planned for 2016. It is anticipated that these will result in an effective, robust and valued service for the prisoner population. The Board will continue to monitor health care provision carefully in order to be assured that this is achieved.

#### **5.4 Purposeful activity**

Purposeful activity in prisons consists of 27 activities that include education, work opportunities, tackling substance misuse, maintaining family ties, offender behaviour programmes and other resettlement activities.

During the reporting year each prisoner spent an average of 26.29 hours engaged in purposeful activity. This is against a target of 28 hours per week.

All prisoners at HMP Lowdham Grange are expected to participate in either work through Business Enterprises, residential work within the establishment or education.

A prisoner's first week at Lowdham Grange is his induction week. His employment needs or suitability for work and/or his educational requirements are assessed. Prisoners are informed of all activities and vacancies they can apply for. They may then apply for any of the positions within the prison (subject to security checks)

They are then placed on the appropriate waiting list.

Every work placement is dealt with in date order to ensure that it is fair.

At the end of the reporting period there were 125 unemployed prisoners, 9 long-term sick and 1 retired prisoner at Lowdham Grange. Nevertheless all prisoners were able to engage either in education or sessions in the gymnasium.

## **5.5 Resettlement**

The Offender Management Unit arranges accommodation, employment, education or training facilities for prisoners in the area in which they will be released.

The prisoner's Offender Supervisor works with the Offender Manager in that area, to provide the best possible support for a released prisoner.

There are no specific release courses provided at Lowdham Grange as numbers released are low due to the NOMS initiative of ensuring that prisoners are held in their right category prison. Most prisoners who are released have been promoted to Cat C and have moved on to a Cat C prison.

During the reporting period there were 17 prisoners released (this number is down from 58 in the previous year). 15 prisoners were found accommodation.

13 education, training or employment, 2 were medically unfit for work.

2 were deported.

## **5.6 Safer Custody**

During the reporting year an experienced Safer Custody Team continued to work hard to safeguard the welfare of prisoners. This is in the context of increasing levels of antisocial and, at times, violent behaviour between prisoners.

Prisoners subject to ACCTs appear well supported.

There are regular interdisciplinary team meetings within the prison which encourages an integrated approach to the support of individual prisoners.

While noting an increase in incidents of disruptive and sometimes violent behaviour the Board's observations and conversations with prisoners gave little cause for particular concern about prisoner safety. For example during the reporting year only 13 Applications to the Board out of a total of 277 referred to concerns about bullying or general safety. It was therefore something of a surprise when HMIP reported that nearly half the prisoners surveyed, during their inspection, in July 2015 reported that they felt unsafe. This inspection finding was also contrary to the findings of an internal survey done by the Safer Custody Team and reported to the Board.

Since July 2015 a careful analysis of behavioural 'hot spots' of time and place was conducted by the Safer Custody Team. This led to the strategic deployment of senior managers around the prison at key times in an effort to reduce the opportunity for threatening behaviour.

In spite of this effort incidents of aggression between prisoners and towards staff appear to be increasing and the Board note with some concern that the dedicated Safer Custody Team of officers is being disbanded and their responsibilities delegated to custody officers and managers.

The Board also has some concern that the management of the prison seem to be hampered by reluctance on the part of Nottinghamshire Police to prosecute incidents of violent behaviour by prisoners on fellow prisoners and staff.

During the year Self Harms saw a significant increase from the previous year but, as the figures below show, this was still an improvement on 2013-14:

Incidents of Self Harm:

01/02/2013 – 31/01/2014: 432 Self Harms

01/02/2014 – 31/01/2015: 225 Self Harms

01/02/2015 – 31/01/2016: 339 Self Harms

There have been two ‘Deaths in Custody’ during the period that are both subject to a Coroner’s Inquest.

(In April 2016 the 1st Inquest returned a verdict of “Death by Natural Causes.”)

### **5.7 Reintegration Unit (Segregation)**

This unit consists of 25 cells, office, kitchen, showers and 3 separate exercise yards. The conditions, facilities, staffing and management of the unit continue to be of a very high standard in the most challenging part of the prison.

The unit has been full to capacity for most part of the reporting year.

The Board monitors at least 98% of the Segregation Review Boards (SRB) The SRBs are held on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. The paperwork is up to date and readily accessible.

During the reporting year there have been a high number of difficult prisoners who have been on 3 officer unlock in some cases deployed in full PPE. This has had a substantial impact on the workload of the Unit. Notwithstanding this the care and support from staff to prisoners is to be commended.

The Board speaks to each prisoner in the unit weekly. The Board are advised of prisoners being taken into the Unit, the use of Special Accommodation and the use of Mechanical Restraints.

Changes to the Reviewing and Authorisation of Continuing Segregation were introduced on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

The prison was slow to adapt to the changes and the emphasis that the purpose of the SRB was to hear prisoners’ representations as to why they should not be continually segregated and then to make the decision whether to authorise continued segregation.

Forms OTO29 (The form that allows a prisoner to make written representations) are not issued to prisoners in a systematic manner prior to the SRB.

On the first 72 hour SRB the Chair of the SRB sometimes does not know the full reasons for the initial segregations other than what is written on initial Authority to Segregate Form. This is particularly apparent when the reason for segregation is security based.

However the Board is satisfied that at the 42 day and 84 day time limits the additional authority from the DDC or Deputy is obtained.

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

The prisoners are held in five house-blocks on 2 levels.

House-blocks 1 and 2 are standard cross design of four wings with communal showers on each level.

The other 3 house-blocks each consisting of two wings have en-suite shower facilities. All cells have telephones.

Accommodation at the prison consists mainly of single occupancy cells, with some double cells.

The prison accommodation is of a high standard.

All of the exercise yards and the wings have a variety of exercise equipment installed for the use of prisoners. Gym facilities are also available.

The prison grounds are well maintained, modern, clean and tidy. There is no graffiti.

Despite high numbers of cleaners on the wings the Board has been concerned, at times, about the lack of cleanliness on the wings. This includes the fridges and microwaves.

## **6 ADDITIONAL REPORTS**

### **6.1 Drugs/Substance Abuse**

The prison has done a lot of work reducing the opportunity for prisoners to manufacture illicit alcohol.

The Mandatory Drug Testing figures continued to show that drugs are available in the prison. These drugs cause prisoners to behave irrationally and to be extremely violent.

The prison makes great efforts to prevent these drugs entering the prison.

The Security Department regularly carry out cell searches, which have been successful.

### **6.2 Prisoners' Cash**

PSI 01/2012 paragraph 2.12 states *“Money can be sent in to prisoners from friends/relatives in any form of legal tender (i.e. cash, cheque or postal order).”*

PSI 01/2012 paragraph 2.17 states *“Prisoners must be able to send money out to family, friends or approved suppliers”*

The Board is concerned about the number of prisoners receiving in and sending out large sums of money supposedly from and to relatives or friends.

PSI 01/2012 paragraph 2.3 states *“Where it is deemed that funds may be from an illegitimate source or used for an illegitimate purpose they must be withheld from the prisoner pending investigation”*

The Board considers that this puts an undue burden on the Prison to carry out checks to satisfy its self that the money is from a legitimate source or for a legitimate purpose. Nottinghamshire Police have shown no interest in referrals sent to it.

Further PSI 01/2012 paragraph 2.6 states that Enhanced Prisoners are only allowed to transfer a maximum of  $10 \times \text{£}25.50 = \text{£}255.00$  per week from their Private Cash Account to their Spending Account for the purchase of items.

The Board therefore questions the wisdom of the PSI to allow unlimited transfers of funds into and out of prison when the amount that can be spent by the prisoner is much less.

### **6.3 Prisoners' Property**

We repeat what was said in our last report.

“The issue of property is still a major concern to the Board. When a prisoner is transferred from another establishment they are often separated from their property.

The specification for Property on Geo Amy vans is inadequate and needs to be addressed on the renewal of the PECS contract. The problems occur particularly when the sending prison is slow or even unresponsive to the receiving prison over lost property issues, thus causing unnecessary frustration and anxiety for the prisoner. This is a fundamental problem that requires serious attention.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 the prison had over 94 prisoner property applications to other prisons that were over 1 month old and still outstanding.

### **6.4 Serious Incidents**

Board members attended seven serious incidents that required the Command Suite to be opened during the year. This is a significant increase on the levels of recent years.

Incidents included:

- 3 Hostage incidents
- 2 Incidents at height
- 1 Occurrence of violent disorder
- 2 Incident involving a suspicious package received suspected to be an explosive device.

All of these incidents were managed efficiently, calmly and humanely. The prison has well developed procedures for handling such matters and Board members are impressed by the professionalism shown by all staff involved.

All incidents were successfully resolved without the intervention of teams from outside agencies with the exception of a suspect package. This incident was attended by Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, The East Midlands Ambulance Service, Nottinghamshire Police and The Army Bomb Disposal Squad.

The package proved not to be an explosive device but the multiagency approach was observed to be excellently coordinated and secured a safe conclusion to the matter.

Board members were impressed by the efficient way prison staff managed the incident and the outstanding support provided by the agencies involved.

### **6.5 Staffing Levels**

Throughout the year the monthly staffing levels of Prison Custody Officers has been on average 22.66 below establishment. This has caused additional pressures those members of staff on duty.

The Board is concerned that there are not enough staff on duty, especially at weekends and bank holidays, to maintain control of a difficult population.

The Prison has continually recruited during the reporting period and has made every effort to manage staff absences. A new core day is to be introduced that should result in more staff being deployed on the wings at busy times of the day.

### **6.6 I.E.P Regime**

The I.E.P. regime has been in existence for a number of years.

The Board disagrees with the comments of HMIP following its inspection in June 2015. “The I.E.P. scheme was applied rigidly and in a counterproductive manner that arguably undermined wellbeing and discouraged incentive towards commitment and positive behaviour”

The Board considers that the Prison applies the scheme as set out in the Prison Service Instruction.

The Board agrees that this can appear unfair to a well behaved prisoner who cannot achieve Enhanced Status because the opportunities “To go above and beyond” do not exist on his particular wing, however this is Government Policy not Prison Policy.

## **Section 7**

### **7.1 The Work of the Independent Monitoring Board**

<b><u>BOARD STATISTICS</u></b>	
Recommended Complement of The Board	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of members leaving within reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	548
Total number of days segregation reviews held	152
Total number of segregation reviews attended	148
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	21/01/2015

## 7.2 IMB Applications

Code	Subject	Year 2012-13	Year 2013-14	Year 2014-15	Year 2015-16
A	Accommodation	1	2	4	3
B	Adjudications	4	12	9	9
C	Equality & Diversity (including religion)	7	4	11	6
D	Education/Employment/Training including IEP	12	20	18	18
E 1	Family/Visits including mail & phone	16	12	10	5
E 2	Finance/Pay	0	14	6	7
F	Food/Kitchen Related	6	0	1	10
G	Health Related	39	30	29	22
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	71	70	74	42
H 2	Property (during transfer in / Or other establishment)	In total	In total	48	47
H 3	Canteen, Facilities, Catalogue Shopping,	0	2	2	2
I	Sentence related (including, parole, release dates, re-cat, rotl.	16	2	17	15
J	Staff/Prisoner concerns including bullying	7	13	14	18
K	Transfers	8	2	6	2
L	Miscellaneous	6	70	52	35
	Total Number of IMB Applications	280	253	314	241

	Total: number of IMB Confidential Access Applications	20	17	25	36
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