



**HMP Springhill**  
**Annual Report**  
**January 2013 – December 2013**



## **Section 1**

### **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

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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 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.

**Section 2**  
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### **Section 3**

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

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- 3.1 HMP Springhill is an open establishment (Category D) and accommodates up to 339 adult men. Prisoners are those who can be trusted in open conditions, including those coming to the end of their long sentences and those serving shorter sentences.
- 3.2 Springhill was the first open prison in the country, and opened in 1953. The “Big House” was built as a family home in 1872 and used in wartime as a base for MI6 and then Special Operations Executive (SOE).
- 3.4 All prisoners not serving a short sentence are encouraged to join a resettlement scheme that allows them to carry out work for the local community and to seek work experience and full time work for the last months of their sentences.
- 3.5 The prison releases approximately 90 men daily into the community to carry out charity work, assist with other community-based projects and attend paid employment. About 10 prisoners are on Home Leave at any one time. There are around 200 movements in and out of the prison each day.
- 3.6 Prisoners are accommodated in 13 huts. In ten huts, prisoners are two per room, each hut with a communal lounge, kitchen, showers and separate toilets. There are three huts with 40 single rooms each – these are allocated according to a structured incentive system. Office accommodation and Springs restaurant (used by visitors and officers from Springhill and Grendon) are in the Big House.
- 3.7 HMP Springhill is jointly managed with HMP Grendon (located next door), and a single Independent Monitoring Board monitors both prisons.
- 3.8 Certain facilities (eg the dental suite in Grendon) and an increasing number of staff teams (eg OMU, Business Hub, Security) serve both prisons. However, Springhill and Grendon cater for different categories of prisoner and have very different regimes.
- 3.9 Healthcare services are provided by Care UK under contract with the local healthcare commissioning body (Health & Justice Commissioning NHS England, Thames Valley Area Team). Nurse clinics include Wellman, Diabetes, Asthma and Immunisations. There are visiting Podiatry and Physiotherapy services. Mental Health In Reach is provided by Oxford and Bucks Mental Health Trust. There are Dental (Haddenham Dental Centre) and Optician (Howcroft and Selby) services providing regular clinics.
- 3.10 A drug and alcohol intervention service contract is provided by Inclusion under contract with the healthcare commissioning body.
- 3.11 Education services are provided by Milton Keynes College.

## Section 4

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 4.1 The focus at Springhill is resettlement and employment, helping prisoners to take back responsibility for their lives and return to life outside. The prison population continues to evolve, with the proportion of Lifers and Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners (ISP) increasing, as well as the number of older prisoners, some with complex health and disability issues.
- 4.2 The introduction of Benchmarking had been expected across Grendon and Springhill prisons in 2013, but was postponed until 2014. This may result in further pressure on resources.
- 4.3 A number of significant events and changes occurred in 2013 that had a profound effect upon the prison – both staff and prisoners (see below 4.7)
- 4.4 Considering the impact of all of the issues and events, the Board has had some anxieties regarding the safety of the environment at Springhill. Nonetheless, prison staff continue to deliver a successful resettlement regime.
- 4.5 The Board would like to highlight the following areas of concern during 2013:
- **Prisoner accommodation** – this is provided in 13 huts, which continue to deteriorate overall, although the welcome shower refurbishment programme is continuing (subject to financial resources, the availability of prisoner labour and works staff who can supervise). Some hut accommodation and certain offices – including the Offender Management Unit (OMU) - are inaccessible to many prisoners with a disability, including wheelchair users (see 5.8).
  - **“Fair & Sustainable” as well as new working practices** and the re-profiling of staff to achieve efficiencies were introduced from April 2013 onward. While the new regimes were rolled out with effective communication and preparation, the Board was concerned about the effect on staff morale, especially in combination with the two assaults on staff that took place during the year. The Board is concerned about the integration of certain teams across Grendon and Springhill prisons, and we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the new teams and the impact of new working arrangements on the safety and well being of prisoners (see 5.6).
  - **Impact of changes to Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) procedures** – the immediate introduction of local, and then national changes to risk assessment procedures, created pressures on staff - particularly in the Offender Management Unit (OMU)- and resulted in Prisoners being refused ROTL against their expectations. The continuing changes in risk assessment and review, the ongoing introduction of new practices and the proposed changes to the Probation Service have created a great deal of anxiety among the prisoners as well as creating a demanding environment for OMU staff and operational managers who have worked diligently to try and meet the demands of the changing situation (see 5.5).
  - **Increase in men failing in open conditions** - during 2013, there was a significant increase in men being returned to closed conditions. These were returned either directly to other local establishments or an increasing number “lodged” next door at Grendon. This created significant stresses on the regime at Grendon. In addition, the IMB was concerned

that movements to Grendon were done without a full protocol in place (see 5.3 & 5.7).

- **Presence of mobile phones and drugs** –in particular, Spice (or other “legal” highs) were even more prevalent in 2013 than in previous years. Anecdotal evidence from prisoners testifies to significant drug use. The Board is concerned that the lack of a cohesive strategy for control of drugs, combined with the loss of some drug testing facilities and the difficulty in ensuring residence patrols are deployed across the Camp in the wake of staffing profile changes and staff assuming new roles, has resulted in an increase in the severity of drug issues on the Camp (see 5.6 and 6.2).
- **Employment and education opportunities available on Camp** - There is little evidence that the changes in ROTL procedures impacted on the outcomes of the resettlement regime in 2013. However, the Board is concerned that more demands upon the staff in the OMU, combined with the anticipated stricter risk assessments and increased information gathering required for the approval of licences, will result in the granting of fewer licences during 2014. The Board will continue to monitor this situation as it could have a negative effect on resettlement, as well as on the stability of the Camp. With prisoners likely to be remaining on Camp for longer periods prior to being granted a licence, there is the potential that more employment and education opportunities on Camp will need to be provided. (see 5.5)

4.6 The Board would like to highlight the following areas of excellence during 2013:

- **Dedication and commitment of staff** – staff are professional and many are interested in introducing new initiatives to support prisoners, even when pressure is great – for example if colleagues are required to attend to other duties. One officer working at Springhill received the Butler Trust Award for their work.
- **Prison Council** –in its second full year, this is already well established. A newsletter was published during the year, and meetings are well-attended, with frank and constructive discussions. The Prison Council continues to be a useful and effective way for information to be disseminated from senior management to prisoners as well as from prisoners to senior management.

## **SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**

4.7 A number of significant events and changes occurred in 2013 that had a profound effect upon the prison – both staff and prisoners:

- In January 2013, the Operations Manager who carried out the role of Head of Springhill sustained a serious attack in the grounds of the prison. The attacker has not been identified and the Operations Manager has required a lengthy recuperation.
- In August, a prison officer on residential patrol was attacked in the grounds of the prison. Fortunately the officer has now been able to return to work. As with the attack on the Springhill Operations Manager, the assailant has not been caught.
- In August 2013, a prisoner on licence from Springhill committed a murder and subsequently it was discovered that another prisoner released from Springhill on licence had committed multiple armed robberies. Both men have been returned to

closed conditions. These events, and events at other open prisons, have resulted in lengthy reviews of licensing provisions both at Springhill and nationally. These incidents led to a national review of ROTL procedures that has profoundly affected the regime for residents of Springhill. These changes will continue into 2014.

- In late December 2013, there was a self-inflicted death in custody. The PPO report is expected in July 2014, and the inquest will take place in November 2014.
- The new working practices, which have been introduced as a result of the implementation of “Fair and Sustainable” (F&S) and the re-profiling to achieve cost efficiencies were rolled out from April onwards. This has required some staff to assume new and multiple roles.

## **Section 5**

### **OBLIGATORY REPORTS**

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#### **5.1 Equality and Inclusion**

- There is a well-established team of equality mentors at Springhill who take responsibility for helping to organize a wide range of events and celebration days which were held across Springhill during the year, including a Romany Traveller week, Black History month events, the re-dedication of the Buddha Grove, and a day each month to celebrate and to focus on differing cultures and countries. The team staged a large event just after Christmas that included poetry, bible readings and live music, and a written display/presentation about how Christmas is observed around the world. Prisoners assist with devising and cooking special meals in the kitchens and other events including sports events and quizzes are included. The team also produces a regular newsletter highlighting diversity events and providing further information aimed at supporting diversity.
- Approximately 45 prisoners marked Ramadan in July/August 2013, with the kitchen staff ensuring that hot meals were available each day after sundown.
- The Chaplaincy team is inclusive and multi-faith and represents various Christian denominations together with Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths. There are two multi-faith rooms at Springhill, one of which is mostly used as a Muslim Mosque. The Team runs the Sycamore Tree Project to enable prisoners to understand the impact of their crime on victims, with a positive effect on attitudes and behaviors. The Team is responsive, and is well supported.
- Disability champions are assigned to prisoners coming to Springhill who may require assistance in following the regime due to their disability. While there is evidence that there has been an increase in the number of disabilities among the men arriving at Springhill, the results of a disability survey which was carried out in November are not yet available. The IMB will monitor the results of this survey when it does become available.

#### **5.2 Education, Learning and Skills**

- The on-site education programmes at Springhill are provided by tutors who are now employed by Milton Keynes College.
- Tutors support Prisoners working towards their Sentence Plan targets. The OLASS 4 contract relies on partnership with NOMS, including the Prison and Probation, with payment by results: 80% of the payment is due on achievement (pass). So the contract means education needs to be seen by prisoners and officers as a valuable activity in its own right, not something that can be left in order to do other work, or to work out in the gym, for example.
- The biggest challenges for tutors are lesson interruptions and prisoner engagement, and the team needs to continue to work with officers across Springhill to support applications to the Education Department, and to challenge commitment by questioning absences and avoidable interruptions. As an example of the scale of the challenge faced, in just one month (November 2013) a total of 154 hours were lost within Education due to lesson disruptions (not including full lesson absences). This has a significant impact on a class as men come and go, missing activities and

discussions. The main reason given was healthcare (56 hours lost), followed by OMU attendance (26 hours lost).

- Course take-up has increased, in particular enrolment in vocational courses. Overall, 90% of places available have been filled, with 80% average attendance (figures are for academic year 2012/13). A wider range of courses is now on offer than previously, including kitchen and café skills, industrial cleaning and horticulture. Vocational skills courses are funded by prisoners, their families or by charities (for example, a 1 year, NVQ Level 2 Plumbing course costs £1080).
- Oxford Brookes University has a small fund for degree courses for prisoners from Springhill. The money covers transport, course fees and a meals allowance.
- Education tutors work on employer engagement, which in some cases offer employment opportunities on release. In 2013 COSTA Coffee trained barista trainers at Springhill: Prisoners can then work in the Springs Training Restaurant on camp. COSTA also made a presentation to Prisoners about what it is like to work for the company and what they look for in potential employees.

### **5.3 Healthcare**

- Healthcare at Springhill is provided by Care UK under contract with the local healthcare commissioning body (Health & Justice Commissioning NHS England, Thames Valley Area Team).
- The Springhill Healthcare Suite was extended in April, with the addition of a new treatment room. Unfortunately, this was not completed until September, when it was finally useable: IT connections were problematic. This caused logistical difficulties to Care UK staff trying to provide healthcare to prisoners.
- A further IT issue which impacted on the well being of prisoners was the lack of access to SystemOne in Reception. As a result, there was no systematic process to inform the Healthcare Team of new arrivals at Springhill: the Board drew attention to this on several occasions, and there is now a workaround solution. Unless there is an urgent issue in Reception, prisoners are seen by Healthcare staff the day after arrival on camp, when they can have a full-length appointment, including a medication review.
- The Board has been concerned throughout the year about prisoners being transferred at short notice out of open conditions. There is no Segregation Unit at Springhill or Grendon, and so they are almost always transferred to G Wing at HMP Grendon (where they are known as “Lodgers”) until a more permanent arrangement can be put in place. However, until December 2013, there was no medical protocol or other system to ensure that prisoners’ mental and physical health was checked on transfer, and that any prescribed medication was available to the prisoner in Grendon.
- The Springhill Healthcare Team was also not being informed when prisoners had left Springhill to transfer to Grendon. This was addressed late in the year, and newly introduced protocols (December 2013) appear to be working.
- In certain cases, Prisoners coming to Springhill have missed hospital appointments booked with a healthcare facility near their sending establishment before their transfer. Apparently, the appointment(s) are not always declared by the sending

establishment. So, for example, if there is no officer available to accompany them to an appointment, or they are not eligible for ROTL early on in their time at Springhill, the appointment(s) are missed. This has a potential impact on patient care and the well being of prisoners. Although sporadic, according to Care UK this has been a persistent issue.

- The Board welcomes the newly introduced Wednesday evening GP clinic for Prisoners at work during the day, as well as the joint facilitation with DARTS (Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Team) to provide clinical input on sleep, hygiene, healthy lifestyle and blood borne virus (BBV) clinics.
- One of the Care UK administrators was shortlisted for an Unsung Hero award during 2013 for “going the extra mile” with Prisoners.

#### **5.4 Purposeful Activities**

- There is a well-defined pathway to employment at Springhill, with Prisoners starting work on Camp, progressing to community and voluntary work on camp and then outside, and finally the goal of working in paid employment outside camp. This is, of course, subject to continuous risk management processes and approach by officers and OMU.
- Employment placements were safeguarded by officers whilst the national review of ROTL took place in late summer, following on from the changes to risk management and assessment in July and August. The Board is aware, however, that the necessary risk assessment of outside employment has been hampered by the lack of staff availability.
- Purposeful activities are also covered under Education, Learning & Skills (see 5.2).

#### **5.5 Resettlement**

- Preparation for successful resettlement and rehabilitation is at the heart of the work a prisoner does whilst he is at Springhill, and it is key in reducing reoffending rates. 71% of Prisoners leaving Springhill have employment, and 96% have housing arranged.
- As set out above under Purposeful Activities (5.4), there is a clear pathway to employment at Springhill, which includes voluntary and paid work in the community, subject to rigorous risk management procedures.
- There have been national changes to ROTL during 2013, in response to some ROTL failures involving serious offending by the Prisoners concerned. A national review of ROTL was reported in December 2013, and arrangements to strengthen the ROTL system are expected to be updated in autumn 2014.
- During late summer, autumn and winter 2013, officers worked together across Springhill to explain the changes to Prisoners, and to emphasise that the changes were impacting equally in all open prisons. The governor and acting governor held regular information sessions in the dining hall and the Prison Council played a key role in getting this message across.
- There is little evidence that the changes in ROTL procedures significantly diminished the results of the resettlement regime in 2013. However, the Board is concerned that

pressures on staffing and workloads in the OMU, combined with the expected implementation of stricter risk assessments and increased information gathering required for the approval of licences, will result in the granting of fewer licences during 2014. The Board will continue to monitor this situation as it could have a negative impact on resettlement results as well as on the stability of the Camp. With the potential that prisoners are likely to be remaining on camp for longer periods prior to being granted a licence, there will need to be significant gains made in employment and education opportunities on Camp in an already straightened financial environment.

## **5.6 Safer Custody**

- With the introduction of F&S and the many resultant staff changes, there has been an impact on the Safer Custody meetings. These are now held bi-monthly, so in some instances events that could be eight weeks old are reported and discussed. The Safer Custody Manager is also new to the role and to Springhill.
- These reductions and staff changes have increased the difficulty in maintaining Safer Custody. There has recently been a worrying increase in prisoners being returned to closed conditions either by way of Grendon (as “Lodgers” – see 5.3) or directly to other prisons. For example, 84 prisoners were returned to closed conditions between May and October 2013 against a total of 34 in the same period for 2012. There was a continuing high number through to the end of the calendar year. The IMB receives a monthly figure for men returned to closed conditions and monitors which type of sentence they are on. During this period there does not seem to be a bias for determinate or indeterminate sentenced men – of the total of 84, 34 men were lifers or serving indeterminate sentences and 50 were serving determinate sentences. Of the 84, 38 were “lodged” in Grendon.
- With the staff changes settling down and the efforts of the Safer Custody Manager, together with the strategy, systems and procedures employed by Security, Springhill remained a relatively safe environment during 2013.
- There were 6 Absconds and 11 Failure to Returns (FtR) during 2013.
- There have been a significant number of drug and phone finds (although SIM card finds are rare) throughout the year. There has been a consistent number of Security Information Reports (SIR) indicating drugs and phones, although the number of SIR’s overall has declined (see also 6.2).
- While it is accepted that the prison is run at minimum staffing levels which reflect the need for efficiencies dictated by the re-profiling, the Board is concerned that it is more vulnerable to unpredictable events such as incidents, the need for unscheduled escorts, and the demands that arise from the larger, needier ISP/Lifer population. Staff have been expected to take on new roles and responsibilities which have not always been clearly communicated – this has had an impact on Reception, residence patrols and drug testing in particular.

## **5.7 Segregation, Care and Separation**

- No ACCTs (Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork) were opened during 2013 in Springhill, and there were also no bullying documents opened.
- Because there is no Segregation Unit at Springhill, prisoners who need to be removed

from open conditions at short notice are often moved to Grendon. Once there, as there is no Segregation Unit either, prisoners are accommodated on G Wing (where they are known as “Lodgers” – see 5.3).

- Throughout 2013, the Board raised concerns about the lack of a protocol to cover such transfers, in particular the healthcare aspects (see 5.3).

## **5.8 Residential Services**

- Catering:

During the year, catering has encountered a number of recurrent challenges, including equipment faults and failures, staff shortages, delivery errors and budget pressures. These were managed, and based on conversations with Prisoners, a good standard of service delivery was maintained.

National contracts sometimes appear to slow up repairs to equipment (e.g. the plate wash), with time passing between the first visit to assess the problem, and the second visit to carry out the repair.

- Accommodation:

The Huts at Springhill are clean but shabby, with areas of exposed rotten wood, poorly fitting doors and windows and cracked and peeling flooring. Although there is a general shower refurbishment programme, undertaken by prisoner labour overseen by staff, the overall fabric remains in poor condition and continues to require serious attention.

Wheelchair users are well looked after by Disability Champions, although certain areas of the Prison remain inaccessible, including the Offender Management Unit on the first floor of the Big House.

- Induction programme:

This plays an important role in a Prisoner’s introduction to life in Open Conditions, and his subsequent work towards resettlement. Prisoners are introduced to all aspects of life on camp, including education and employment opportunities, ROTL when appropriate, and employment and housing support on release.

- Gym:

This continued to provide a reasonable offering despite staff shortages due to resignations and illness during part of the year. However, the Board is concerned that Prisoners using the Gym are required to declare if they are on prescription medication, rather than Gym staff liaising with Healthcare.

- Library:

The Board noted improvements in the Library provision. A new Librarian has introduced improved opening hours and a more diverse offering, including reading groups and readings events.

## **Section 6**

### **OTHER ESSENTIAL REPORTS**

#### **6.1. Reception, Induction and early days at Springhill**

- Reception at Springhill registers some 30 new prisoners each month on average. Men are accommodated in double rooms in the Induction Hut for the first week, and are not allowed off camp for at least the first 12 weeks as they get used to living in open conditions.
- The first week or two are spent with the Induction Orderly, finding their way around facilities and being interviewed about education and employment opportunities.
- There is a clearly defined pathway into paid employment over several months or more. Several organisations – statutory and voluntary – assess a prisoner’s resettlement needs early on in his time at Springhill, so that accommodation, and if possible employment, are assured when he leaves.
- The IMB is part of the Induction process, and Board Members try to visit the Induction Hut each week to meet new arrivals. This whole process is an important part of each prisoner’s resettlement.

#### **6.2 Drug Strategy**

- It is unfortunate that the expected re-organisation of Springhill’s drug strategy and drug strategy document did not take commence consistently until late in 2013. The drug strategy document was not updated until early 2014.
- The Board is concerned about anecdotal evidence from prisoners (both those newly arrived as well as longer term inmates) about the increasing availability of drugs including legal highs (Spice). This is supported by the high number of SIR’s concerning drugs.
- Budgeting constraints and staffing pressures in the wake of Fair and Sustainable and the staff re-profile have meant that staff has struggled to meet targets set for MDT’s and the reporting of results of MDT’s has been, on occasion, interrupted. There is no compact testing carried out. Random alcohol tests for ROTL returnees, especially over the Christmas/New Year holiday period, proved effective albeit there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence of on-camp drinking as well as significant finds of empty alcohol bottles.
- The provision of drug and alcohol support programs has been more widely available since the commencement of the contract with Inclusion in April. Inclusion also supports T hut which offers “drug and alcohol free” accommodation to those men who feel they need extra support. There have been regular instances during the year of men in T hut who were found to have broken their compact to refrain from drug taking.

## **Section 7**

### **THE WORK OF THE BOARD**

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**7.1** Members of the Board attended meetings and events throughout the year across the following subjects:

- Springhill Operations
- Healthcare
- Security
- Catering
- Drug Strategy
- Diversity
- Induction of new staff
- Social events
- Carol Services
- Visits
- Training
- Safer Custody
- Resettlement
- Prison Council

**7.2** Prisons visited/ IMB visits hosted: none in 2013

**7.3** External training/conferences

Members of the Board have attended the following external training courses:

- C & R training
- Personal Protection training
- T-CAT training

The 2013 IMB Conference was attended by 1 member

**7.4** Internal training

Members of the Board have attended training mornings in 2013 when talks from various departments in the prisons were given. The Board is grateful for the time and effort given by those members of the prison staff that gave these informative talks.

**7.5** Appointments – no new members joined in 2013

## 7.6 Board Statistics - 2013

BOARD STATISTICS - GRENDON & SPRINGHILL 2013	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	4
Total number of board meetings during reporting period	12
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	10

## 7.7 Applications

There were a total of 41 IMB Applications from 29 Prisoners in 2013. Although this is an increase from 2012 when we received 26 IMB Applications from 22 Prisoners, the number remains low. The increase in applications relating to ROTL and Home Leave occurred in the last quarter of 2013, due mainly to the introduction of tighter risk management and assessment procedures. Some of the reasons for the low number of IMB applications are:

- the very active and effective Listener service operating in the Prison,
- Operational Managers seek to operate an “open door” policy which allows the men the opportunity to air their concerns,
- the fact that many prisoners are near to completing their sentence and do not wish to draw attention to themselves, and
- the Prison Council has helped to maintain good relationships between Management, Staff and Prisoners and to contribute overall to the safer custody of the prison.

APPLICATIONS BY SUBJECT	2012	2013
Accommodation	1	2
Health related	7	2
Property/money	3	3
Sentence related		11
Transfers		4
Education		0
Confidential	1	1
Discipline/Racial	10 <sup>^</sup>	6
Adjudication	1	2
Visits		2
Bullying	1	4
Miscellaneous	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>41</b>

<sup>^</sup>Including late returns from town visits and possession of mobile phones

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Springhill Board and our IMB Clerk for their hard work and support over the last twelve months.

Margaret Cripps

IMB Chair, Grendon and Springhill

April 2014