



**HMP
ASHFIELD**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016

1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison 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 concerns 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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3. DESCRIPTION OF HMP ASHFIELD

3.1 HMP Ashfield is located in the village of Pucklechurch in South Gloucestershire, around 9 to 10 miles from each of Bristol and Bath.

3.2 The Prison's former status as a Young Offenders' Institution (YOI) terminated in June 2013 and the prison reopened in July 2013 as a specialist Category C adult male establishment exclusively for convicted prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences. The prison has a baseline Certificate of Normal Accommodation (CNA) of 408, and an Operational Capacity (Op. Cap.) of 400. Throughout the 12 months covered by this Annual Report, the prison has been operating with a monthly average of between 394 and 398 prisoners in residence.

3.3 It is a contracted-out prison operated by SERCO Home Affairs Ltd, with modern purpose-built accommodation under 20 years old.

3.4 Residential accommodation consists of 2 main house blocks, Avon and Severn, each with 4 wings accommodating between 40 and 60 men, and Brunel which is a smaller 16 cell unit which has been developed into a first night and Induction centre. There are 252 single cells and 78 double cells (the latter are double-sized cells designed to accommodate two men, not single cells utilised for "doubling up") . All accommodation is of a high standard with integral sanitation and there are 8 shower cubicles on each of the main wings. 7 of the single cells are ground floor cells purpose-built for prisoners with disabilities and there are 2 gated cells for prisoners requiring constant observation.

3.5 There are 8 cells on Avon D wing designated for Care and Segregation purposes. Prisoners on Cellular Confinement and GOOD are accommodated alongside prisoners on the same wing on normal regime. There is no separate Care and Separation Unit, as such.

3.6 BME prisoners typically make up around 20% and Foreign National prisoners approximately 4% of the population.

3.7 Former servicemen make up approximately 15% of the population.

3.8 Healthcare was re-commissioned by NHS England in April 2016 and the contract was awarded to "Inspire Better Health", a collaboration between Bristol Community Health (nursing services), Hanham Healthcare (GP services) and Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust ~ AWP ~ (mental health services and substance misuse services.) Lloyds Pharmacy provided medicines and were responsible for dispensing them until April 2016 when IBH took over the latter function. Until March 2016 dental services were provided by Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, but from April 2016 "Time for Teeth" have operated the contract for dentistry. In addition, prisoners can access podiatry, optometry and physiotherapy clinics and occupational therapy assessments.

3.9 The Offender Management Unit is sub-contracted to Catch 22.

3.10 Intervention programmes are sub-contracted to Turning Point.

3.11 Adult social care, in compliance with the Adult Social Care Act, is provided by South Gloucestershire Social Services.

3.12 Education, vocational training, gym and library services are all delivered by SERCO.

3.13 As a contracted-out prison, Ashfield has a Director and a NOMS Controller. A new Controller (Eryl Drew) took up post in September 2015. The Directorship over the course of the last 12 months has been fluid. Ray Duckworth (in post at the time of the 2014-15 Annual report) was in post in July, September and October 2015. He was substituted

temporarily in August at the time of the HMP Inspection by an Acting Director drafted in from HMP Thameside and then, after finally leaving in October 2015, was then temporarily replaced by one of Ashfield's Assistant Directors (Gary Willding). A permanent Director is due to take up post in August 2016.

3.14 The prison was subject to a full HMIP Inspection in August 2015 and an MQPL (Measuring the Quality of Prison Life) survey in February 2016.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 This has been a year in which the prison has been under particular scrutiny but has come out well against almost all external tests and measures. It is the Board's considered opinion that both the Minister and the general public can derive considerable reassurance from these, and from the IMB Board's own independent observations based on its ongoing monitoring throughout this period. The Board can report that this is a well-run prison which houses prisoners safely and securely but also with dignity, humanity and respect.

4.2 The prison has been running at or very near full capacity throughout this period, yet it has managed to run a full regime throughout the year, avoiding the problems experienced in other establishments coping with low staffing levels. There have been few staff vacancies and those that have occurred have been filled relatively quickly with the exception of that of the Director. Despite staffing restructuring at middle management level, personnel changes at the most senior level (including the Director and Controller), the introduction of new shift patterns for officers and of new NHS contracts leading to changes in Healthcare staffing structures and personnel, Ashfield has proved very resilient and the Board continues to be impressed by the overall standards of dedication and professionalism shown by both SERCO and contracted staff at all levels. It is a caring and compassionate environment in which staff are non-judgmental and treat prisoners as human beings regardless of the nature of their offences. Any criticisms and concerns that the Board expresses in this Annual Report, therefore, have to be set within this wider perspective and overall context.

4.3 This is a prison with a calm and positive atmosphere in which prisoners generally report feeling safe. In comparison with national norms, prisoners at Ashfield exhibit a high degree of good behaviour, self-discipline and compliance with the regime. Incidents of physical violence are rare, illicit trading of prescribed medication and goods appears to be at a low level and drugs generally are not a problem (there has only been one reported incident of NPS being smuggled into the prison over the 12 months). In early 2016 the prison briefly had a problem with illegal alcohol ("hooch") and with prisoners circulating inappropriate DVDs, but both were dealt with swiftly and effectively. Most behavioural issues can be addressed by early intervention before they escalate to a level at which Adjudications are necessary. As a result, the prison's use of Cellular Confinement (CC) and Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) remains relatively infrequent and, although there are 8 cells on one of the wings reserved for CC or GOOD, they are substantially underutilised for this purpose and the prison has no need for a dedicated Care and Separation Unit (CSU). There has not been any concerted indiscipline nor, indeed, any serious incident that has required the Command Suite to be opened up in the course of the 2015-2016 reporting year.

4.4 The prison's principal means of maintaining good order and compliance is through the IEP (Incentives and Earned Privileges) system. Whilst most prisoners report to IMB, HMIP and MQPL that the system is run fairly, around a quarter to a third do not and complain that IEP warnings (that can ultimately trigger a downgrading of IEP status) are issued on an inconsistent basis, with some officers more ready than others to issue them for minor offences. The accusation they make is that this results in some prisoners being treated more harshly than others. It is a perception that has persisted over the last couple of years and the Board believes that it merits further investigation by the prison's Senior Management.

4.5 Self-harm is infrequent and well-managed through the ACCT and PIPS processes, and with the support of the Mental Health team. There are rarely more than a handful of ACCTs open at any one time and there have been no self-inflicted deaths in custody.

4.6 Equality and Diversity/Inclusion are well managed, though some BME and Foreign National prisoners intimated to HMIP that they felt their needs were less well catered for

and that they were disproportionately penalised by the disciplinary system and recategorisation process. There was some statistical information to support their claims, but much of the evidence was rather circumstantial. The Board received only 4 Applications in the course of the entire year alleging any sort of racial discrimination and the Adjudication statistics do not suggest any deliberate or unintentional bias or discrimination. Post-Inspection, the prison has actively sought to engage BME prisoners in dialogue in the course of the year to try to resolve any issues they have. Elderly, frail and disabled prisoners are well catered for, as are the LGBT community. Chaplaincy, Kitchen and other departments work hard to ensure that prisoners with any of the "protected characteristics" are treated fairly and diversity celebrated.

4.7 A broadly satisfactory service is provided by the Offender Management Unit. Offender Supervisors each have a caseload of around 60 prisoners. Most paperwork is completed on time for parole boards, recategorisation meetings and so forth and they meet prisoners at regular intervals to review their Sentence Plans. Their work is sometimes frustrated by poor or slow responses to requests for information from external agencies. Prisoners express mixed views about the quality of service they receive. Only a very small number are released directly from Ashfield, as most now transfer to the specialist resettlement prisons for their last 3 months of their sentence or to Cat. D open conditions.

4.8 In the 2015 Annual Report, the Board expressed concern that Ashfield was being hampered in fulfilling its role as a specialist treatment centre for sex offenders as it was having to accept transfers in that were not suited to the courses it provided. The Board is pleased to report that the situation has much improved over the last 12 months. Long serving prisoners unsuited to the courses have been transferred elsewhere and this has enabled the prison to generate places for others, more suitable, to transfer in. Courses are now being populated months in advance, though without generating unacceptably long waiting lists, and Turning Point is about to extend its range by offering the Extended SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Programme) to supplement its current TSP (Thinking Skills Programme) and standard SOTP course.

4.9 The standard of accommodation, with the notable exception of wing showers which are in urgent need of refurbishment, remains very good indeed. Buildings are well maintained, residential blocks light and spacious and levels of cleanliness and decorative order are impressively high. There have continued to be delays in replacing ageing equipment in various parts of the prison but the Board is satisfied that no serious health and safety issues are being created by this. It is pleased to report that, since the last Annual Report, prisoners no longer have to queue up outside for medication as dispensing facilities have been reopened indoors on the houseblocks, and the Bistro has been completely refurbished along with wing serveries. There is a conspicuous absence of litter and graffiti and the grounds are well maintained.

4.10 The quality of catering has remained very high indeed and prisoner satisfaction levels reflect this.

4.11 The prison continues to apply strict volumetric controls to the amount of prisoner property allowed. Other prisons are not always so rigorous and prisoners continue to arrive either with excess property or are upset that their property has not been transported with them because of limited storage capacity on the escort vans. The Board is pleased to report, however, that the problem seems to be diminishing. More of an issue has been that of prisoners' own clothing on site and what they see as rather opaque rules governing it which the Board believes need to be clarified and a formal Clothing Policy published on each wing to avoid any ambiguity. There have also been ongoing issues to do with laundry arrangements for prisoners' personal clothing.

4.12 Time out of cell is good and the prison has sufficient work, education, training and offending behaviour course places to provide for all prisoners who require them. Unemployment is therefore almost unknown. Around 40% of the prison's population are over 50, and 18% over 60, but many prisoners choose to work well beyond the official retirement age. The OFSTED team in August 2015 expressed the same criticisms as the IMB Board did two months earlier in its 2015 Annual Report about the inappropriate and insufficiently challenging education curriculum and the quality of teaching and management, but the prison has since conducted a comprehensive review of both education and vocational training and changes have been made. Data collection and analysis are now possible for quality assurance purposes as attendances have been maximised through modifying the computerised activities booking system and through the replacement of the "freeflow" system with a system of fixed movement times. Problems identified with the suitability of Library stock are now being addressed. The new systems are still bedding in so it is too early for the Board to judge how far these will generate substantial improvements. Nevertheless the Board commends the prison on its positive response to OFSTED's recommendations embedded in the HMIP Report.

4.13 The overall quality of prisoner healthcare remains high, but the Board continued to be dismayed for much of the year about the inadequacy of the dental service and a stubbornly long waiting list for treatment. It had hoped that the new dental contract that began in April 2016 would resolve these problems but there were yet further delays through a combination of staffing shortages and broken down equipment. The new service only finally got off the ground at the very end of this reporting year.

4.14 The Board has continued to operate throughout this reporting year on only half of its official complement and this has meant that members' voluntary workload has been high. It is appreciated that SERCO and contracted staff have all recognised this and have been most helpful in providing information promptly, being generous with their time and generally supporting members when carrying out their monitoring duties. The Board can report that it has been allowed completely unrestricted access to prisoners at all times and to all departments and it is confident in its judgments based upon its interactions with both prisoners and staff.

Particular issues requiring a response

Questions for the Minister

Does the Minister have any plans for conducting a national review of the number of prisoners (inc. ISPs and IPPs) at HMP Ashfield and elsewhere who are "over tariff" with the aim of identifying why this is the case and addressing any concerns that may emerge from such a review?

Questions for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

1. Given the range of PSIs covering most features of prisoners' lives and treatment, the Board is curious to know why there is no detailed national policy on prisoner clothing *entitlements*, as PSI 30/2013 merely sets out IEP clothing *privileges* at different levels. Prison Rule 23 of 1999 is equally vague. Does NOMS have any intention of rectifying this gap by producing a PSI on this issue, setting out what prisoners can legitimately expect a prison to provide and what prisoners are expected to provide for themselves?

2. Does NOMS have any mechanism, above individual prison level, for oversight of prisoners identified as "serial complainants", to review whether or not there is any legitimacy to their complaints or whether they are merely disputatious?

5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

5.1.1. It is the Board's view that Equality and Diversity are effectively managed at HMP Ashfield on a part-time basis by the Equality and Audit Manager in association with other departments. They are given high priority by the prison and, when issues are identified, it responds actively to address them. A good example of this is how the prison has addressed concerns raised by BME prisoners.

5.1.2. Both the HMIP report and the MQPL survey indicated that BME prisoners were less satisfied than their White counterparts about how they were treated in general and about Adjudication and recategorisation in particular (only 2 prisoners of the 44 recategorised for Cat. D open conditions in the 6 months prior to the Inspection had been BME). The prison's Correspondence and Complaints Department revealed a similar pattern: 170 of the 739 Comp1/1a/Confidential Access complaints received over the course of the year had been submitted by non-White prisoners, or 23.1% of the total, slightly higher than the percentage of BME prisoners at Ashfield. What is noteworthy, however, is the steady reduction in the percentage of such complaints over the year in question, declining from 26.6% from BME prisoners in the first six months of this reporting period to 18.7% in the second six months (with May and June 2016 only accounting for 10 - 12% of complaints). This may be attributable in no small part to the fact that, subsequent to the HMIP inspection, the prison has gone to substantial lengths to provide additional forums in which BME prisoners can voice their concerns and has then sought to respond to them. This matter, however, of disparity between BME and White prisoners needs to be understood in the wider context of exceptionally high overall satisfaction levels expressed by prisoners at Ashfield in the MQPL survey, resulting in the prison being rated second out of the 44 prisons around the country in the same Category (Cat. C).

5.1.3 In the course of 2015-16 the IMB received only four Applications relating to aspects of Diversity and Equality, two of which were from an East European foreign national prisoner concerned about his likely deportation, one from a prisoner alleging that racial discrimination might have played a part in his being rejected for Cat D status and one from a prisoner complaining about delays in being approved for child contact (subsequently demonstrated to be the fault of his local authority social service department and not that of the prison's Public Protection Unit). One serial complainant made a number of accusations against the Equality and Audit Manager, claiming victimisation on grounds of his nationality, none of which, on further investigation by the Board, had any substance to them.

5.1.4 With specific regard to the claim by BME prisoners that they were disproportionately adjudicated, figures produced for the SMARG (Senior Management Adjudications Review Group) do not support this. At the time of drafting this IMB Annual Report, the figures for April-June 2016 were yet to be collated by the prison for the quarterly SMARG meeting, but those for the previous twelve months (i.e. from April 2015 to March 2016) were available. In two months (August and October 2015, the former coinciding with the HMIP Inspection) the number of BME prisoners adjudicated was unquestionably disproportionately high relative to their overall representation in Ashfield's population as a whole, and in four other months they were fractionally on the high side, but in three months a disproportionately low number of BME prisoners were adjudicated and in three months no BME prisoners at all were adjudicated. As a consequence, the evidence does not suggest that this is a matter about which the Board should be unduly concerned but it would be wise to adopt a watching brief.

5.1.5 With regard to Foreign National prisoners, the Board was also alerted by prisoners to the fact that the prison was relying heavily on interpretation services being provided for them by other prisoners on an unpaid basis and that there was very limited utilisation of the Big Word facility. This was problematical if, for any reason, a prisoner on whom another was reliant for interpretation and translation services was risk assessed by the prison as

unsuitable. In addition the Board has noted that key notices, including those about services for Foreign Nationals on the Diversity noticeboard on each wing, are exclusively in English.

5.1.6 A sample of DIRFS examined by the Board indicated that they are investigated thoroughly and impartially. In total between July 2015 and June 2016 just 30 were submitted to the Equality and Audit manager (a low number for a prison of this size.)

5.1.7 Because of the historic nature of many of the crimes committed by prisoners at Ashfield, there is a much higher percentage of prisoners aged 50+ than the norm in prisons, a number of whom are frail or disabled. At any one time, typically around 40% of prisoners are registered as having some sort of disability. The specially adapted ground floor cells on two wings are equipped with walk-in showers and with hospital beds, and prisoners are provided with devices to enable them to call for emergency help at night-time without leaving their beds. There is also a specially adapted shower on each wing, equipped with handrail, though the step up to it is unhelpful. The Board has observed, however, that there is no specially adapted accommodation on Brunel, so any new prisoner who is wheelchair bound would currently be unable to benefit from the first night and induction facility provided to all other prisoners on arrival and would have to be located on normal location. The Equality and Audit Manager has continued to work closely with South Gloucestershire Council who provide care workers as required in accordance with the requirements of the Adult Social Care Act. Carers come in twice daily to provide for those prisoners with the highest assessed level of need. Prisoners can refer themselves for a social care needs assessment, and referral is also undertaken by staff and on induction. A Disability Forum meets monthly to discuss relevant topics. The Board is satisfied that the arrangements in place are working well.

5.1.8 A positive development in the course of the year was the replacement of informal care arrangements made by individual prisoners by a system of properly risk-assessed "buddies". These are located on most wings and can provide support on their own or another wing, moving wheelchair bound prisoners around the site, collecting food for them, helping them to keep their cells clean and tidy and so forth, though they do not provide intimate personal care. The scheme was initially met with some consternation and prisoners complained verbally to the Board, but it has now bedded down well. In addition, in association with the Alzheimer's Society, the prison has also encouraged some prisoners to become "dementia friends".

5.1.9 Sexual orientation and transgender issues are treated sympathetically by the prison and a "Real Voices" monthly drop-in session is provided and offers peer support and sexual health information. LGBT events are run at various points in the year. The Board notes, however, that the prison has yet to draft a formal transgender policy as it is waiting for the PSI to be updated. It is possible, nevertheless, for transgender prisoners to purchase special items discreetly from the prison shop (i.e. "canteen") and from catalogues, including cosmetics and toiletries if they so wish.

5.1.10 Monthly forums continue for each "protected characteristic". There is good prisoner representation at these meetings, some of which are designed to identify prisoner concerns and others are of a more social nature. Discussions are minuted where appropriate and the prison endeavours to address any emerging issues. The Equality and Diversity department continues to have its own room in the Education Department where events and meetings are held, and the room is well supplied with reading material and run by two orderlies. The Chapel runs a weekly social group for those in their 60s who might otherwise be at risk of feeling more isolated. The prison as a whole seeks to celebrate diversity by putting on special events for Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Eid and so forth, including special menus provided by the Catering department.

5.1.11 The Chaplaincy team has been understaffed for much of the year though a replacement full-time Chaplain was appointed in summer 2015 and staffing levels have recently increased. It has, nevertheless, managed to provide faith-based chaplains for 9 out of the 11 recognised religions and the Board has received no complaints at all about the level of pastoral care or the quality of religious provision or access to it. At the end of 2015 the Chaplaincy achieved an Assurance and Compliance audit score in excess of 95%.

5.1.12 Over all, the Board believes that Equality and Diversity is well managed and suitably prioritised.

5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

5.2.1 The Education Department is jointly run by the Skills Development Manager and the Employment Development Manager, given that there is some overlap of responsibility for vocational courses some of which take place within the Education Department's physical premises. The Department provides a safe and calm environment. It is modern, light and comfortable and, with the exception of ageing computers and a Food Technology Room with unsuitable cookers for its current purpose as a commercial Bakery, generally well equipped. Ventilation and temperature control in the vocational rooms on the top floor are inadequate, however, and conditions are quite cramped, especially in the carpentry workshop. In the last year to eighteen months, a number of the classrooms formerly used for the young offenders have been adapted into bases for orderlies delivering Induction, Resettlement and Equality and Diversity advice and support.

5.2.2 Men are generally very positive about Education. The MQPL survey threw up a higher number of positive comments about work, vocational training and education than in any other category, and very few negative comments indeed. Prisoners submitted a total of 90 Comp1/1a forms to the Complaints Department, representing only 12.2% of all complaints received. For nine months there were very low numbers (on average only 4 or 5 a month out of an average monthly total received by the Department of 61). The three exceptions were an inexplicable peak in September 2015 and a surge in May/June 2016, the latter coinciding with changes to the curriculum, "freeflow" and the computerised booking system (see 5.2.7 below.) Of the 1020 enquiries fielded by PALS (Prisoner Advice Line Service) between July 2015 and June 2016 only 23 concerned Education, again peaking in May to June 2016. In the course of 2015-16 the IMB Board received only one Application (from a prisoner complaining that back pain did not spare him from attending classes.) Board members regularly visit the Education Department and talk to men on classes who generally seem to enjoy what is on offer and have few grumbles.

5.2.3 Nevertheless, and whilst acknowledging that many prisoners are close to or already of retirement age and so less in need of "employability skills", the Board expressed a number of serious concerns in the 2014-15 Annual Report about the extent to which the provision was sufficiently challenging and ambitious given the wider ability range and prior attainment, academic and professional qualifications of some prisoners. The prison was offering qualifications predominantly at Level 1 with a smaller number at Level 2 and very few indeed at Level 3 (despite not being limited by OLASS constraints as SERCO is responsible for delivery) and there had been little change to the curriculum since the departure of the young offenders in summer 2013. In addition, Board members on Rota visits were dissatisfied with the fact that, when specialist teachers were away for any reason, other staff without specialist expertise covered those classes and, in some cases, they were just supervised by prisoner orderlies. Whilst recognising that this was preferable to the complete cancellation of classes, the Board was doubtful about how genuinely "purposeful" the activity was that was taking place that nevertheless was being counted as "purposeful activity" hours for contract management purposes.

5.2.4 Moreover, the Board had growing doubts about how rigorously the Department was routinely collecting and analysing comprehensive data about attendance, progress and

attainment and using this for the purpose of continuous quality improvement. What data supplied was imprecise and general and there was no evidence of any sort of recent student needs analysis informing provision. Attendance levels seemed very variable with some classes sparsely attended and some technically operating during some sessions with no students as prisoners had been able, under a bizarre computerised booking system, to be able to book themselves in for up to three activities simultaneously and might, instead, be at the Gym, the barber's or attending a different class altogether. In short, the Department seemed to be coasting rather than engaging in any sort of rigorous critical self assessment or innovations.

5.2.5 The Board's views were endorsed two months later by OFSTED at the time of the HMIP Inspection in August 2015 and the Department was graded "inadequate" for its overall effectiveness of learning, skills and work. Inspectors also highlighted inconsistent initial assessment of literacy and numeracy on prisoners' arrival, variable quality in teaching standards in a number of classroom-based courses, and generally lower attainment rates on such courses than those generated by vocational courses.

5.2.6 Whilst bruising at the time, this provided the prison with the impetus it needed to re-evaluate the range, appropriateness and quality of provision and to introduce more robust management processes necessary to drive improvement. The Board was heartened that, post-Inspection, the prison embarked on a comprehensive review, though this took in excess of six months causing low morale in the Department amongst staff uncertain about their futures. The net result was a handful of redundancies in Spring 2016 and a leaner classroom-based education curriculum, with more emphasis upon relevant vocational qualifications and an expansion of work opportunities within the prison and fewer "orderlies" with insufficiently demanding workloads and responsibilities. Its introduction deliberately coincided with the replacement of the former "freeflow" system by a system of fixed movement times (with movement slips between) to prevent some prisoners wandering around the prison. The changes were only finally put into place in the last couple of months of the period covered by the IMB 2015-16 reporting year so the Board is currently reserving judgment on how successful the new plans will be as it is currently too early to tell what the real impact will be in lifting all round standards and genuinely meeting prisoners' resettlement needs and contributing to the broader reducing reoffending agenda. Nevertheless, the prison's commitment to making genuine improvements is not in doubt.

5.2.7 As a consequence of the review, some courses such as music technology and radio production have disappeared. Others which involved some overlap between courses have merged (e.g. ICT with Digital Arts, Bookkeeping with Business Skills). Some lower level vocational courses have been completely discontinued (e.g. motor mechanics) and also barbering. Instead of being "bolt-on" classes to vocational courses, English and Mathematics are now delivered as compulsory intensive courses with a requirement that those assessed at below Level 1 on entry achieve at least Entry 3 (or where required, Level 1) qualifications in them before they are eligible for certain workplaces around the prison. This is designed to mimic "real world" work requirements in the community. The Board has been informed that there are also plans to offer a discrete part-time ESOL course in the near future. Though some flexibility with regard to starting dates remains, "roll-on, roll-off" courses have largely been replaced with intensive four month full-time courses to maximise completion and accreditation rates and for which accurate data for purposes of quality assurance can be collected. The computerised booking system has been modified and prisoners can no longer double or triple book themselves for each session: prisoners are, instead, allocated designated "free periods" in which to access the Gym, barber's and private study in the Library to ensure that attendance on courses is not disrupted and "purposeful activity" hours can be more accurately counted.

5.2.8 More courses are now available at Level 2 and some (e.g. in Digital Arts and Business Skills) at Level 3, and this is to be welcomed. Quality Improvement Group meetings have resumed on a quarterly basis and the Board has been assured that data is now being collected and analysed. The Board will be in a better position next year to carry out a detailed evaluation of the impact of all of these measures on the relevance, quality and overall prisoners' experience of education and training, but believes that significant progress is now being made to address the issues raised this time last year.

5.2.9 The Library is SERCO-owned and run, well furnished and decorated and provides a pleasant environment for prisoners to study and browse. The Board is pleased to report that, throughout the year, prisoners have been allowed a level of access well in excess of the minimum stipulated in the PSI and specified in HMIP "Expectations". There was a slight dip in attendance (which had typically been around 300 a week previously) after the introduction of the new restricted movement system, as this now required prisoners to book in for an hour and a half instead of shorter periods of time, but attendance levels are now creeping up again to over 250 attendances a week. The Library has been running a creative writing group and negotiations are under way with Roehampton University to fund the purchase of books and run a reading group. Regular visits by Board members to the Library throughout the year indicated that the atmosphere in the Library was positive and purposeful and the Board received no Applications from prisoners about it.

5.2.10 Less encouragingly, the Board had become aware this year that stock was increasingly unsuitable for the older adult population now in residence as little had been replaced or refreshed since the departure of the young offenders in summer 2013. It was also made aware of the absence of a designated budget for the replacement of stock and had to be persistent in requesting that the matter be resolved. In addition, not all the stipulated legal manuals (e.g. the annual edition of Archbold) were stocked. The Board has been informed that these matters are now being resolved through a combination of purchases, donations and a plan to circulate stock around the SERCO estate libraries, but will continue to monitor the situation in 2016-17 to judge to what extent there has been a genuine improvement in stock suitability over the next 12 months.

5.2.11 The Gym has continued to provide very good facilities for prisoners in the form of a large sports hall, fitness and weights room and the astroturf, all of which are well used (and supplemented by equipment on the exercise yards.) Older prisoners are encouraged to use the facilities through a combination of activities such as bowls that do not require as much agility and special "over 50s" sessions four times a week when they can enjoy doing weights, playing badminton and so forth without being so self-conscious when in the presence of younger men. Interestingly, out of the 4 prison orderlies, one is currently over 50 and one is over 60, so they provide good role models. Aside from a standard timetable of various ball games, weight-lifting, fitness, circuit training and so forth, the Gym has continued to offer a mixture of special events (e.g. fundraising events for various charities that involve sponsored "marathons" around the astroturf or on cycling and rowing machines) inter-wing competitions and a special Christmas programme of fun activities. They have also continued to offer a Remedial Programme to support those for whom exercises have been recommended by their GP or physiotherapist, and those with mental health issues can also join this if referred by AWP. The 12-week Life Change Programme providing exercise and advice on diet and nutrition for those seeking to lose weight has operated for most of the year, but at the end of this reporting year has been suspended temporarily following staffing changes. Another new initiative has been the introduction of a multi-sports session on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, providing one-off sessions in circuit training, badminton, five-a-side football and so forth.

5.2.12 Occasionally, prisoners mention that equipment is not the most modern but generally there are few complaints. The Board received none at all in the course of its

reporting year and the prison's own Correspondence and Complaints Department only four, and it is satisfied that the Gym is providing a good service.

5.3 HEALTHCARE & MENTAL HEALTH

HEALTHCARE

5.3.1 The Healthcare facility has now occupied its refurbished Healthcare Centre for two years and the facility is well used and fit for purpose with accommodation for staff and prisoners broadly comparable to that in a typical GP's practice out in the community. It has remained in good decorative order and is bright, clean and welcoming.

5.3.2 The Board has received very few applications from prisoners about Healthcare matters and this is testament to the fact that, when questioned by IMB members, they are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of care they receive from nurses, GPs and others. A triage facility provide by nursing staff each morning ensures that prisoners can receive prompt assessments of their needs and can usually have an appointment with the GP, if required, with minimal delay. Prisoners benefit from 15 minute appointments (longer than in the community) and prisoners rarely miss appointments, though for a brief period in 2016 there was an issue with prisoners not receiving sufficient notification of appointments and printed movement slips. This resulted from confusion between wing officers and Healthcare staff over new procedures consequent upon the introduction of a new prisoner movement system around the site (a matter which was resolved relatively quickly). Despite the fact that, prior to April 2016, Healthcare was delivered by three separate providers without an overarching "Head of Healthcare" in charge (though one member of Bristol Community Health staff assumed this role on a *de facto* basis and chaired regular meetings) there was a high level of communication and collaboration between them to ensure "joined up" services, something which HMIP commented upon favourably in August 2015. Since the award of the new contracts, more formal working and leadership arrangements are now in place with all three organisations coming under the "Inspire Better Health" banner.

5.3.4 The new contracts led to a review of staffing as a result of which the number of nursing staff was reduced and one fewer healthcare assistant was employed, but this does not seem to have caused any discernible deterioration in the service provided to prisoners during the week. Nevertheless, nursing staff have reported to the Board that they have since felt under greater pressure and strain to deliver everything and some have chosen to leave of their own volition. It is a matter the Board is monitoring closely to detect any negative impact on the level of service prisoners can legitimately expect to receive.

5.3.5 Applications received by the Board, and verbal complaints made by prisoners to it were exclusively about medication arrangements. Until the winter of 2015, the Board continued to receive verbal complaints about the arrangements for the dispensing of medication from the external pharmacy hatch (an issue raised by the Board in the 2013-2014 and 2014-15 Annual Reports as this involved men, including those who were elderly or frail, queuing outside in cold and wet conditions to receive medication). The Board continued to press for a solution and was relieved when this was finally achieved. In early December proposals which had been mooted (which included options such as dispensing from a re-rôled cardiovascular exercise room, constructing a larger shelter or dispensing from inside the Healthcare Centre), were all abandoned in favour of reinstating the former system (which had existed when the prison was a YOI) of dispensing from the indoor pharmacy hatches on Severn and Avon blocks. From early December dispensing resumed on Severn and early in 2016 on Avon as well. This now means that all prisoners, barring the handful of new arrivals briefly housed on Brunel, can receive medication in their own houseblock. The unsuitability of the previous arrangements had also been highlighted by HMIP in their Inspection of August 2015 so a resolution of this problem was an element in the prison's Action Plan.

5.3.6 A couple of Applications were received by the Board from prisoners who were experiencing problems with delays in receiving repeat prescriptions and the Board was also asked to intervene in the case of one prisoner who was Adjudicated for having excess medication in-possession. In his defence, he had been receiving repeat prescriptions with verbal advice that he should just take the prescribed pills as frequently as he felt he needed with no accompanying advice about returning any surplus. The Adjudication was subsequently quashed. These all appeared to be isolated incidents with no evidence of an underlying problem with the prescribing and dispensing of medication. Staff remain vigilant, however, about the potential for in-possession medication to be traded. Random cell checks are made twice daily to check that prisoners (and their cellmates in double cells) only have the correct amount of their own medication and no other. Prisoners are risk assessed for their suitability to hold in-possession medication and are required to lock it away in their cell safes to minimise any possibility of theft. The Board has confidence that these measures are effective as most of the positive MDTs recorded are the result of prescribed medication taken by men for whom it has been prescribed.

5.3.7 To the dismay of the Board, however, the inadequacy of the dental service provided by Somerset Partnership continued to cause both physical and mental distress to some prisoners who could wait up to 12 weeks, in some cases, to have an initial appointment. Given the age profile of prisoners at Ashfield, inevitably some also need ongoing treatment. In the Board's view, waiting lists remained stubbornly long for substantial periods of time (the Board collected statistics on a regular basis as part of its ongoing monitoring of the problem) and it seemed that, as soon as inroads were being made into waiting times, there would be further setbacks generated by a combination of dental staff shortages, or delays in completing vital repair work to equipment such as the dental chair (this led to delays amounting to weeks on two separate occasions) or X ray equipment. Additionally, as waiting lists were maintained by the dental provider and not centrally in the Healthcare department, primary healthcare staff were not authorised to prioritise prisoners who had been identified through triage as in considerable pain or displaying signs of infection. The rigid appointment system led to missed appointments and unfilled vacancies and was the source of frustration to staff in the Healthcare Unit. HMIP had also been concerned about the standard of cleanliness in the dental suite but this has now been addressed.

5.3.8 The Board's relief in learning that the contract had been awarded from April 2016 to an entirely different provider was quickly tempered, however, by the discovery that, although the contract had been awarded over three months earlier, no dentist was in place until mid May and there was a lack of clarity over shift arrangements for dental nurses and therapists working jointly at Ashfield and another prison in the locality. All of this led to yet further weeks of delays before a full service was operational. Prior to the new contract coming into effect, there had already been a halt to some prisoners commencing extended treatment programmes in order to avoid their treatment cutting across the old and new contracts. It wasn't until June that waiting lists reached acceptable levels as a result of additional sessions being provided. Under the new contract the dental service finally operates over two full days each week, a significant improvement on what had gone before, but the Board will continue to maintain a watching brief over this issue.

5.3.9 In all other respects it is the Board's view that a high level of service is offered and some prisoners go out of their way to remark to Board members that, in comparison with their experience in other prisons where they have stayed prior to transferring to Ashfield, this is unquestionably the best medical treatment they have received whilst in custody. The waiting room in Healthcare offers a wide variety of relevant free pamphlets on relevant diseases and conditions and other pamphlets are available on the wings. Prisoners are initially screened on Reception (followed by a more in-depth screening within 72 hours with the offer of immunisation for communicable diseases and blood born viruses) and can access a variety of specialist clinics function such as diabetes and respiratory and cardiovascular health. There are regular scheduled visits by physiotherapists (who now

have their own treatment room), an optician, a podiatrist, occupational therapists and so forth. There continues to be a "Well Man" sexual health clinic for screening and any necessary subsequent treatment. In addition, prisoners wishing to quit smoking are given appropriate support. E-cigarettes are now available on "canteen" as an alternative to nicotine patches.

5.3.10 Any complaints which might formerly have come to the IMB are now channelled through Healthcare's own effective "Listening to You" system. Forms are readily available on all wings and collected daily by Bristol Community Health staff. Over the course of the IMB's entire 2015-16 reporting year, a total of just 56 complaints (21, 11, 12 and 12 over the four Quarters) were received by Healthcare, only fractionally over the number received in the previous six months alone when the system had commenced. This downward trend is encouraging. Almost a quarter of them were to do with failure to provide or dispense medication, but some of this can be attributed to the fact that prisoners' medication needs are reassessed on arrival and often medication received on repeat prescriptions in previous prisons is no longer deemed necessary. Comments made by prisoners (to which the IMB has been given access) were frequently very complimentary about the sympathetic and non-judgmental attitude of staff and about the overall quality of healthcare received.

5.3.10 Sadly in August 2015 the prison experienced its first death in custody since it opened in 1999. This was of an elderly prisoner with a history of COPD. The PPO's investigation confirmed that the death was due to natural causes but recommended that improvements be made to communications between prison healthcare departments as neither the Healthcare department at the transferring prison, nor the prisoner himself, had informed Ashfield's Healthcare department that he had missed a hospital screening appointment scheduled for the date of his transfer. The PPO was satisfied with the quality of care he had received from staff whilst waiting for the emergency ambulance to arrive.

5.3.11 In mid March 2016 the prison also experienced its first pandemic. Over 30 prisoners and numerous staff were infected by the H1N1 influenza virus ("swine flu"), but the prison worked closely with Public Health England and with the on-site Healthcare staff to contain it effectively. For prisoners unaffected by it, as far as possible a normal regime was maintained. Prisoners affected were quarantined in their cells and allowed exercise and association at different times from the rest of each wing to minimise the spread of the disease. They were treated with bed rest and symptom relief and some were given the 'flu vaccination. None required hospitalisation. Staff experiencing symptoms were ordered to stay away. Weekend family visits were cancelled and other non-essential visits to the prison curtailed. The IMB Board decided not to hold its monthly Board Meeting that week for precisely that reason but was kept updated on developments. It received only one complaint about how the situation had been handled, from a prisoner whose family had not been informed of the cancellation of weekend visits and had turned up after long journey only to be refused entry. The Board asked that his request for his family to receive modest financial compensation to cover their travelling costs be granted, and it was. Overall, the pandemic appeared to have been managed very professionally.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE MISUSE

5.3.12 AWP's (Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust) contract to deliver a comprehensive and integrated mental health, learning disability and substance misuse service for prisoners was renewed in April 2016, though the delivery model was changed. Instead of the AWP team at Ashfield concentrating exclusively on this prison, the service is now run jointly across Ashfield and one other prison in the locality. This change triggered a staffing review and, as a consequence of this, the team has been significantly reduced in size and members have to be able and willing to operate across both establishments.

Continuity has been maintained, however, in the form of the on-site manager and some of the longer-serving members of the team.

5.3.13 The Board has continued to be impressed with the quality of service provided to prisoners and the team's innovative approach. At any one time as many as 50 or more prisoners (i.e. approximately 1 in 8 of Ashfield's population) may be clients to varying degrees. One of the strengths of the service prior to the contract change was the very comprehensive referral system that existed following initial screening of prisoners on transfer which meant that those in distress could quickly be identified and provided with help and support. Patients could be referred to AWP by GPs, Safer Custody, Catch 22 OMU case managers, solicitors, wing officers and the IMB itself, and prisoners could also self-refer. The Board is concerned that this system has been discarded in favour of a new single assessment tool that is being used to signpost prisoners to all providers of healthcare at Ashfield. Only time will tell as to whether or not this is as effective a system and it will be something the Board will wish to monitor in 2016-17.

5.3.14 AWP has worked closely with psychiatric services, the Safer Custody team, the OMU, PPU, wing staff and Security so that it has had an effective input into GOOD reviews, Safer Custody reviews, risk assessments and so forth. This has given it a pivotal role in influencing the quality of life of many vulnerable and psychologically complex individuals at the prison and ensuring they receive the structured support they require. They were criticised in the HMIP Inspection for not providing a counselling service for those experiencing trauma or grief, but in all other respects were rightly, in the Board's view, complimented on the quality and breadth of service they deliver. Only 8 complaints about AWP's service were made via the "Listening to You" system in 2015-16 and the Board received only one Application from a prisoner about AWP, complaining that he had been very well supported by them until he transferred to Grendon but that, upon his recent return from Grendon, he had not immediately been offered the one-to-one support he had previously enjoyed. Upon looking into his complaint, the Board did not uphold it as he had failed to appreciate that AWP needed first to conduct a full review of how his needs might have subsequently changed before deciding what level of support he now required.

5.3.15 As well as running psycho-social groups which utilise a cognitive behaviour therapy approach to address issues such as mood disorders, anxiety, self esteem and emotional regulation, AWP has continued to provide one-to-one support. It is currently developing courses in developing self-esteem, anger management, anxiety management and managing emotions. It has also been running a fortnightly peer-to-peer group meeting called "Mutual Aids". A recent innovation has been the decision to involve clients/patients in the selection of new staff by involving them in the interview process and taking their evaluations into consideration in making appointments. This time last year the Board complimented AWP in this Report on the creation of a dedicated outside "Good for You" area where prisoners could engage in gardening and "pet therapy" in the form of rabbit-keeping, chicken-keeping and looking after aviary birds. This was designed to complement the other occupational therapy sessions which developed self-confidence, communication and general coping skills for those prisoners whose psychological and emotional problems mean they find life in prison particularly challenging. They included activities such as cookery, art, cross-stitching and model-making. It was disappointing that one of the first casualties of the revised contract was the initial curtailment of much of this programme and the Board has been heartened to observe that some of it has been reinstated *pro tem* but its longer term future is still uncertain.

5.3.16 A more minor role for AWP at Ashfield is providing support for prisoners with a prior history of substance misuse. It offers "Roads to Recovery" group therapy sessions for those with previous addiction problems and further advice and support on desistance for prisoners about to be released from Ashfield who might be tempted to return to drug use. In the past year a handful of prisoners have transferred in from other prisons still on

methadone scripts and AWP was criticised by HMIP in August 2015 for not providing them with the support they needed. The Board can report that it understands that this has now been rectified. Illicit drug use in Ashfield is on a very low level compared with most prisons and it is rare for a prisoner to test positive on an MDT for anything other than prescribed drugs. Consequently, AWP does not need to devote a significant amount of its resources to this feature of its work. There has only been one confirmed instance of NPS, for example, detected on site in the course of the last 12 months and only 7% of prisoners commented to HMIP that it was easy to obtain drugs at Ashfield compared with an average of 37% in other prisons. It is acknowledged that a small amount of trading in prescribed medication inevitably exists but Ashfield does not have a significant problem with illicit drugs being smuggled onto site.

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

5.4.1 The Board has continued to be impressed with the range and number of work opportunities offered at Ashfield and there is little or no unemployment as there are sufficient Activity places to ensure that all those eligible, fit and willing to work can engage in either work or education, regardless of age, and their timetable can be built around their other commitments if required. Wages are consistent across both education/training and work to ensure that there is no disincentive to learn. They are fair and broadly in line with those in comparable establishments elsewhere. New arrivals can indicate their preferences and they will be accommodated subject to their being vacancies and subject to their suitability as identified at the fortnightly Interdepartmental Risk Assessment Meeting (usually observed by an IMB Board member) when their offending history and their overall level of risk are taken into consideration. At that meeting it is clear that some will not be able to work with computers or with tools and these are offered another alternative if necessary.

5.4.2 As a consequence, the Board is pleased to report that it has received no Applications this year from prisoners complaining about waiting lists for employment or of failing to be employed in one of their chosen areas. The Correspondence and Complaints Department received only 10 complaints in the course of the year relating to employment and prisoners were generally complimentary about work opportunities to both HMIP inspectors and the MQPL team.

5.4.3 As a result of the review of education and training following the HMIP inspection, further improvements have been made. In addition to qualifications already offered in vocational and work areas such as Painting & Decorating, Carpentry, Plumbing, the Kitchen and Bistro etc., new qualifications are now being provided (via the Plumbing course) in tiling and dry lining. Qualifications are also about to be offered in Waste Management. The Industrial Cleaning course now incorporates some Level 3 units. The space available for training in Electrics has been expanded by virtue of the course being offered some of the space vacated by the discontinued motor vehicle course and qualifications are being offered in PAT testing and electrical wiring up to level 3 with the workshop providing a practical repair and testing service for prisoners' in-cell electrical equipment and televisions. There is now the potential for prisoners in the Bakery/Food Technology room to acquire cake decorating qualifications up to Level 3 and the room is scheduled for refurbishment with the old cookers originally provided for the Young Offenders being replaced with three commercial ovens suitable for Bakery.

5.4.4 The light industries area has benefited from further expansion and, as well as providing an NVQ Level 2 qualification in Performing Manufacturing Operations for those for whom it would be beneficial, continues to provide an employment option for those older and less mobile men who wish to work in a role that is physically not too demanding and also provides social interaction whilst ensuring they earn more than they would on retirement pay.

5.4.5 A number of the workshops provide essential services around the prison for the direct benefit of prisoners and this provides an incentive to work to high standards. Board members continue to be impressed with the level of care taken by industrial cleaners and painters and decorators to maintain the fabric of the building to ensure it provides a clean and decent environment for both residents and staff. Most recently the number of workers in the main Laundry has been reduced and some assigned to the new laundries on Avon and Severn to run the new system for wing-based domestic laundry there (see 5.8.14 below), so that training for formal laundry qualifications has had to be suspended *pro tem*. All such workers are supplemented by a group of wing cleaners and servery workers who ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively on each wing and by orderlies in the Stores, Gym, prison shop, Chapel, Induction, PALS, Resettlement and so forth, though the total number of orderlies was reduced after a review to ensure that they all had genuinely meaningful jobs which carry real responsibility. Orderly posts carry a slightly higher rate of pay in recognition of this.

5.4.6 Workshops, such as Carpentry, Digital Arts and the Bakery continue to take in external orders and generate a modest income for the prison whilst providing qualifications. Prisoners take evident pride in their work and are keen to display photographs of their work in folders and on notice boards.

5.4.7 Horticulture continues to go from strength to strength and offers Levels 1 and 2 qualifications in grounds and maintenance. It seems that almost no area of the prison is safe from "urban guerrilla gardening" as flowerbeds and vegetable patches seem to spring up unexpectedly on previously underutilised areas of grass, however small, and prisoners are encouraged to use their own initiative in designing them. The range of animals cared for by prisoners in this department has also expanded as the canaries and rabbits previously owned by AWP have been moved there and the prison also houses a few Cats Protection League cats at any one time awaiting adoption.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT AND OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

5.5.1 Responsibility for the Offender Management Unit has remained sub-contracted to Catch 22. For part of the year, Catch 22 was also charged with delivering the Induction programme for newly transferred prisoners, but responsibility for this has now been reclaimed by SERCO.

5.5.2. Last year the Board reported that the Resettlement function appeared to be relatively undeveloped and not very high profile within the prison, not least because the number of prisoners being released directly into the community from Ashfield was very low. Any concerns the Board had, however, were not borne out by HMIP who reported that the quality of resettlement advice and support was generally good, albeit poorly coordinated at management level.

5.5.3 The number of prisoners released from Ashfield has continued to be very low (73 only in the course of the 12 months covered by this Report) as HMP Oakwood and HMP Channings Wood have now been designated as specialist resettlement prisons for sex offenders and the majority of Ashfield's prisoners nearing the end of their sentences now transfer to one or other of these for their final 12 weeks or so before release. The Board as yet to be convinced, however, that transfer elsewhere is ensuring that prisoners have any more targeted and efficient resettlement support than they already receive at Ashfield. In the 12 months covered by this report, 148 have secured recategorisation to Cat. D open conditions and a number of these have transferred to either HMP Leyhill or HMP North Sea Camp.

5.5.4 The majority of prisoners, given that they are classified as "high risk", fall under the responsibility of outside Probation services with regard to addressing their resettlement

needs and not to Catch 22. Between 95% and 98% of those released from Ashfield were found accommodation in approved premises with considerable restrictions and conditions placed on them and under close monitoring by their Offender Managers. As a result, only a small number of prisoners, namely those deemed to be at lower risk to the public, needed advice and guidance at Ashfield itself. The service is provided by a very knowledgeable prisoner orderly supervised by Catch 22 and the Resettlement office is well stocked with relevant literature and, located in the Education department, is easily accessible to prisoners. The Board has received no complaints from prisoners in the course of this last year about the level of service provided and, consequently, is now satisfied that needs are being adequately met.

5.5.5. It has, however, had to field a handful of complaints by prisoners about the quality of their relationship with their offender supervisors who they have claimed have been either unsympathetic, inefficient or obstructive in terms of managing their Sentence Plans and assisting them with recategorisation. Correspondence and Complaints also handled 81 complaints about recategorisation, representing 11% of all the complaints they received. These were mainly from prisoners disappointed that they had not been recategorised as suitable for Cat. D open conditions, in some cases because they felt that paperwork was not totally up to date with regard to courses they had completed or other progress they had made in addressing their offending behaviour. In such cases the complaints were passed on to the Assistant Director i/c Reducing Reoffending to review the process. HMIP also reported a mixed picture in terms of prisoner's perceptions of the management of their offending behaviour and of their Sentence Plans. Both, however, need to be set in the context of around 395 prisoners in the prison at any one time, almost all with Sentence Plans, the overwhelming majority of whom made no such complaints at all. Each Offender Supervisor at Ashfield typically manages a caseload of around 60 prisoners at any one time. In the case of complaints to the IMB, usually about delays in the production of important paperwork for parole board or recategorisation reviews, many were, upon investigation, not the fault of the Offender Management Unit but of outside agencies upon whom it was reliant for updated information and the Board's judgment is that, overall, Catch 22 are providing a competent service. Delays in updating OASys reports remain an issue but much of this is outside the control of the Offender Supervisors on site who are dependent upon reports being updated externally.

5.5.6 Nevertheless, prisoner doubts about the effectiveness of some staff in the OMU persist and, at the very end of this reporting year, the prison proposed in its post HMIP Inspection Action Plan to reinstate regular prison clinic sessions to identify concerns, an annual prisoner survey and also exit questionnaires. The Board welcomes this development and proposes to monitor this new system closely in 2016-17.

5.5.7 The Board also welcomes the fact that the Prison has now completed a Reducing Reoffending Needs Analysis designed to inform the delivery of a variety of services within the Prison. Both the IMB and HMIP were concerned in summer 2015 that the absence of such a document was a weakness in the prison's approach.

5.5.8 The Board remains concerned, however, that at any one time over the course of the past 12 months there has been a high number of prisoners on indeterminate sentences (including ISP and IPP), around 75% or more of whom have been "over tariff" for a variety of reasons, and some of whom substantially so. At the time of the HMIP Inspection in August 2015, there were 73 ISP and 52 IPP prisoners on site.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

5.6.1 The Board randomly sampled ACCT documentation throughout the year and members were broadly satisfied with the quality of entries. Encouragingly, levels of self-harm in the prison remained very low and, as a consequence, there were rarely more than two or three prisoners on an open ACCT at any one time and in some weeks none at all.

5.6.2 This was perhaps fortunate as staffing in the Safer Custody department was reduced part way through the year as a consequence of the loss of the two officers who had in the previous year been awarded a Commendation by the Butler Trust, one through maternity leave and the other through redundancy following a management restructuring exercise. The department then became part of the remit of one of the Assistant Directors. The Board noted that some of the momentum that had developed in the previous couple of years to develop innovative approaches to mental distress seemed to have waned for a time as the department had to reorganise itself. The department had developed its PIPS (Personal Improvement Plan Scheme) for those deemed not sufficiently at risk to be placed on an open ACCT or needing ongoing support after an ACCT has been closed, and was in the throes of making up distraction boxes with puzzles, colouring activities, stress balls and the like. Safer Custody meetings have taken place but the Board member who has attended some on a random basis has been struck by the lack of in-depth discussion and statistical analysis taking place.

5.6.3 Prison staff are supported by an effective team of prisoner orderlies, easily identifiable by their purple T-shirts and based in an office in the Education Department. In addition the Safer Custody team has continued to operate its "Here to Hear" scheme which provides a confidential listening service for prisoners in distress and which is staffed by unpaid volunteer prisoners who are now receiving more guidance and support than formerly. Men are also able to access the Samaritans free of charge via their in-cell telephones.

5.6.4 The Board received no Applications at all from prisoners about Safer Custody issues other than one complaint from a prisoner about bullying by another prisoner. While an element of bullying and occasional prisoner-on-prisoner violence is almost inevitable in a custodial environment, the Board has no reason to believe that it is on a significant scale at Ashfield. The prison effectively deploys its anti-bullying strategies to challenge bullying behaviour on the few occasions when this is identified as a serious issue. Over all, notwithstanding its slight anxiety over the restructuring of the Safer Custody team, the Board feels that prisoner safety is well managed at Ashfield and that most prisoners feel safe, consistent with the impression conveyed by prisoners both to HMIP and the MQPL team in the course of the last twelve months.

5.7.8 The Board would issue one note of caution, however. Until recently, the Personal Officer scheme appeared to have worked well. The fact that officers got to know their prisoners and prisoners had confidence in approaching them helped to foster good day-to-day relations and to resolve any minor issues at an early stage before they developed to the IEP warning stage. The Board is uneasy, however, that new shift patterns brought in from February 2016 involve greater flexibility in how staff are deployed around the prison and it is now not uncommon for a minority of staff to inform Board members visiting wings that they do not usually work on a particular wing and do not know who the prisoners are on there. Whilst this has to be set within an overall context of very good relations between officers and prisoners at Ashfield, it is a development that is deserving of close monitoring in the course of this coming year to ensure that it does not contribute to any deterioration in the otherwise excellent level of care afforded. So far it does not seem to have caused prisoners any due concern and they report that, if they can't see their personal officer, they are happy to talk to another officer instead.

5.7 SEGREGATION, CARE AND SEPARATION

5.7.1 There is no official Care and Separation *Unit* as such at Ashfield, merely 8 cells on the first floor of Avon D wing (which otherwise operates as a normal wing) that are only very occasionally used for this purpose but for the most part are vacant. The reasons for this are set out in the following paragraphs.

5.7.2 The Board repeats its judgment that it made in the 2014-15 Annual Report that HMP Ashfield provides a safe, secure and decent environment for prisoners in its care, a verdict endorsed by both the HMIP and MQPL prisoner surveys. Many prisoners are midway or in the latter stages of lengthy sentences: at any one time typically over 90% of prisoners are serving four or more years and around half are a mixture of Lifers, ISP and IPP. With the exception of those on Indeterminate sentences, most have a clear idea of when they may be eligible for recategorisation or parole. Consequently, they are anxious not to jeopardise their chances of a positive outcome and generally conform to rules and regulations. This translates into a calm, stable and surprisingly informal atmosphere at almost all times and on no occasion when a Board member has been present has he or she witnessed a violent incident. It is very rare indeed that the prison needs to resort to Use of Force to deal with a situation. The majority of prisoners are as keen as staff are to preserve this atmosphere and, whilst inevitably, some prisoners test the system (e.g. by circulating inappropriate DVDs or making illegal alcohol) or are disruptive, most are prepared to operate within the rules. The result is a generally upbeat mood and officers are able to hold informal conversations with prisoners and interact positively with them with both parties aware of the necessary boundaries. Prisoners and staff are, unusually for prisons, generally on first name terms but are appropriately respectful and courteous and the Board is not aware of any internal disciplinary proceedings stemming from inappropriate behaviour on the part of staff as a result of their being "groomed" or "conditioned" over the last 12 months.

5.7.3 At any one time typically around a quarter of all prisoners are on Standard and three quarters on Enhanced status on the IEP scheme. There are very rarely more than two or three on Basic. Maintaining their IEP status or improving it is very important to these prisoners so, unsurprisingly therefore, there has not been a single incident of concerted indiscipline in the last 12 months or, indeed, any serious disciplinary incident that has required the Command Suite to be opened up. Similarly, there have been very few prisoners whose behaviour has necessitated the use of GOOD or CC (Cellular Confinement.)

5.7.4 At any one time there has rarely been more than two or three men on Cellular Confinement or GOOD and some weeks none at all, and they are managed with humanity and respect. It is pertinent that Correspondence and Complaints received no complaints at all about segregation in the course of 2015-16. The Board has been punctilious in visiting prisoners each week, checking that they are receiving their entitlements and that they understand fully the reason for their confinement. Just occasionally prisoners have complained to the IMB that staff have been too hasty in placing them on GOOD for what they themselves regard as minor misdemeanours, but most have confirmed that they are being treated well and a handful have claimed that they actually welcomed the opportunity for quiet reflection and solitude. In a few instances prisoners on GOOD have been offered more relaxed regimes on a discretionary basis after a few days after a GOOD review or further risk assessment. Bizarrely, one of the most frequent reasons for men being in Cellular Confinement was following an Adjudication for refusing a lawful order to relocate from a single to a double cell. By refusing to cell-share they could, ironically, ensure they remained in a single cell by being placed on Cellular Confinement. Board members have been staggered to learn that some have even tried to ask for CC to be extended for precisely this reason. This nonsensical situation suggests that the prison's approach is actually counterproductive in a handful of cases.

5.7.4 The very low numbers on CC or GOOD led HMIP in August 2015 to query why there needed to be allocated cells for this purpose at all as such small numbers should be capable of being managed in their normal location. This is a recommendation that the prison has not fully accepted. The Board has no strong view on this, other than questioning the award of CC for refusing to cell-share, but can find no evidence to suggest that men on

CC or GOOD are disadvantaged in any way by being located on Avon D other than by the fact that they are inconvenienced by not being in their own cell and may occasionally be relocated to a different cell (or lose their single cell and be relocated to a double) when their period in confinement ends.

5.7.5 Despite the very low numbers on CC, HMIP still felt that the number of times Cellular Confinement was awarded at Adjudications was disproportionately high. At the time of drafting this IMB Annual Report, the Adjudication figures for April-June 2016 had yet to be collated and analysed, but nevertheless a useful comparison can be made between the figures for April 2015 - March 2016 and the equivalent period in the previous year. The overall number of Adjudications (including adjourned adjudications) more than halved, from what was already a low total of 436 to just 216. Of those 216, 26 were dismissed, 115 were proven and, of those, only 43 (37.4%) were awarded CC. However, only 29 Adjudications had been held for prisoners charged with using threatening or abusive words or behaviour and the next most common reasons were for disobeying lawful orders, refusing to comply with rules or possessing unauthorised articles. The conspicuous absence of Adjudications for what might be deemed more serious charges such as fights, sexual or racially aggravated assaults, setting fires, alcohol and so forth (and only three for positive MDT results) may possibly be behind the HMIP criticism of the number of awards of CC. The Board believes that the prison has to be given credit, however, for how few times it resorts to Adjudication and for its general tendency to err on the side of leniency. In many cases awards are actually below the official tariff (in Jan-March 2016, for example, 10 of the 36 proven Adjudications were given awards below tariff). There are very few cases where an award has been over tariff and these have normally been identified by the prison at its quarterly SMARG (Senior Management Adjudications Review Group) meeting when a full analysis is conducted of all the relevant statistics and awards.

5.7.6 Management checks suggest that there can be quite a high number of minor technical flaws in the paperwork (e.g. unticked boxes, mistakes with dates, omitted signatures etc) but overall, the Board is broadly satisfied that Adjudications are conducted correctly. The Board has, in fact, received a total of only two Applications from prisoners claiming that they were unhappy with how an Adjudication had been conducted or with the punishment they received (and Correspondence and Complaints received a total of only 9.) Nevertheless, given the infrequency of Adjudications, the Board has no means of knowing when they will be taking place unless it is specifically notified in advance. The prison was conscientious in doing so immediately after the publication of the last Report, but very much less so in the last 6 months, so the Board repeats its request from 2015 that it be notified of when they are scheduled to enable members to attend rather more frequently than has proved possible in the last 12 months.

5.7.7 More worryingly, however, the Board received 10 Applications (1 in 9 of all Applications received) from prisoners who claimed that a minority of staff were too quick to issue IEP warnings, a message also picked up by the MQPL team with almost a third of prisoners suggesting that the scheme is not being implemented fairly. One reason, undoubtedly, why the number of Adjudications is so low is because the IEP warning scheme has continued to be used dynamically to prevent minor misdemeanours and poor behaviour escalating into anything more major. This means that prisoners are well aware that IEP warnings may and can be issued for infringements of the rules. Provided this policy were applied consistently and fairly this would not, in itself, be an issue, but the Board is conscious that the matter it raised last year does not appear to have been resolved, namely that some prisoners perceive that some staff use IEP warnings excessively. Some prisoners have complained to the Board that they view such behaviour as tantamount to bullying or victimisation, though the Board has found no evidence to support such claims. This was an element in most of the additional 12 Applications received by Board members about staff/prisoner relations. Whilst there appears to be no real substance to prisoners' allegations, the fact remains that their view of life at Ashfield was coloured by the

interpretation they were placing on officers' motivation for such actions. Correspondence and Complaints also received 72 complaints in the course of the year about aspects of the IEP system, equivalent to almost 1 in 10 of all the complaints they received and PALS also fielded a handful of queries.

5.7.8 There thus remains a perceived lack of consistency and fairness in applying the IEP warning system, with prisoners alleging some wings are quicker than others to issue warnings and that some younger, less confident or less experienced officers are inclined to overreact to a minor situation and issue a warning rather than trying to resolve a matter in some other way. Although 64% reported to HMIP that they felt the scheme was managed fairly, a higher percentage than at comparator prisons, the fact remains that 29% did not. There is thus a consistent pattern emerging, with IMB, HMIP and MQPL figures in essence telling the same story. The Correspondence and Complaints department also received 72 complaints about the IEP system (9.8% of the total) in the course of July 2015-June 2016 and PALS also fielded a handful of queries.

5.7.9 The Board repeats its advice included in last year's report, therefore, that the implementation of the IEP warnings system must be fair and, equally importantly, to be seen to be fair, if prisoner misgivings are to be overcome. Given the consistency with which prisoners are reporting this as an issue, the Board would welcome a review being carried out by the prison into this matter.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

FOOD

5.8.1 The Board remains very impressed with the quality of catering provided for those held at Ashfield and the professional way in which the catering and prison shop ("canteen") services are managed. Catering issues are discussed with prisoner representatives at a special monthly PIAC (Prisoner Information and Consultation) meeting at which prisoners can make suggestions for improvements and menu changes. Prisoners can also send suggestions and complaints directly to the Catering Manager via the ATM kiosk system. Prisoners as a whole at Ashfield are overwhelmingly positive about what is on offer. They frequently comment to IMB members that the food at Ashfield is significantly better than at their previous prisons. In the course of the last 12 months, the Board only received one complaint, and Correspondence and Complaints only 6. Prisoners were equally complimentary to HMIP Inspectors and via the MQPL survey. Levels of satisfaction are some of the highest recorded by HMIP and MQPL.

5.8.2 There are a number of explanations for this. Ashfield generally spends rather more per capita per day on meals than HMPS prisons do and this translates into good portion sizes and good quality food. The Kitchen also benefits from the advantage of being able to recruit some workers who have gained skills and experience in their previous prisons so that many do not require as much basic training. The Kitchen offers a number of hot and cold options each day to cater for different tastes, including at least one vegetarian option per meal, so that prisoners have a good choice at lunchtime and on an evening, and these can be pre-selected using the ATM kiosks on each wing. The Kitchen is also increasingly using fresh produce for meals, including ingredients produced by the prison's horticulture department, and has been developing a range of home-made soups for lunches. Additionally, considerable trouble is taken to cater for those requiring special diets on either medical or religious grounds, including those who are vegan, vegetarian or lactose intolerant. New recipes are tried out from time to time, often including Asian or Caribbean recipes to take account of the ethnic mix in the prison. Special meals are provided to celebrate various religious festivals and the Kitchen goes to particular lengths to ensure that those fasting for Ramadan are provided with nutritious meals at times of the day when it is permissible for them to eat. Separate implements are used for Halal food preparation

and there is also a separate freezer for Halal raw food to prevent any accidental cross-contamination. Concerns some prisoners raised with the Board about the use of the same stainless steel baking trays being used for Halal and non-Halal were allayed when it was explained that they were washed in the industrial dishwashers at a temperature that would sterilise them.

5.8.3 With regard to comments made by prisoners via the ATM system, to all of which the Board had access, they gave the range of home-made soups a mixed reception, some complained about the range of fresh range of fresh fruit available, and others the size of portions (and particularly the small amounts of meat in some dishes) or the volume of hot seasoning. A handful were about intermittent problems with the provision of soya yoghurts for vegans or those with dairy intolerances, and the Board received oral representations from diabetics (who are around 10% of the prison population) about the lack of diabetic jams and marmalades in the breakfast packs and on "canteen". All of the complaints were, however, relatively minor and did not suggest that they were indicative of more widespread dissatisfaction. They need to be set within the broader context of many compliments also being sent in via the ATM kiosks and the exceptionally high satisfaction levels recorded overall. The Kitchen received 634 applications (including, curiously, 72 which were addressed to OMU or Turning Point staff) and these also included 39 general questions about working in the Kitchen and Bistro and 15 miscellaneous ones, some of which should have been addressed elsewhere. When these are deducted from the total, just 508 comments were about the food, a remarkably small number over the course of a year in a prison with nearly 400 prisoners on site at any one time.

5.8.4 Food is wheeled in trolleys from the Kitchen over to the wings by wing servery workers who ensure that food is served at the correct temperature. There have been some continuing problems with the trolleys, but they have gradually been resolved (see 5.8.11. below). In all other respects the Kitchen is modern and very well equipped, and high standards of food hygiene and general cleanliness are maintained. The Bistro, in contrast, has continued to cope with old and damaged equipment for much of the year (see 5.8.12 below.) Both kitchens have continued to offer training and valuable work experience for the prisoners employed, providing them with a combination of Food Hygiene certificates and other qualification at Levels 1 and 2.

5.8.5 The Catering Manager is also responsible for the prison shop ("canteen") which has to operate out of very restricted premises and offers a wide range of goods for prisoners to purchase on a weekly ordering system. The shop is run on the ground by a full-time shop manager assisted by prisoner orderlies, and prisoners comment to Board members that they are generally happy with the level of service provided. The range of items available is reviewed regularly in response to prisoners' suggestions and the shop manager goes to considerable trouble to stock special seasonal items. Only 3 complaints were received by Correspondence and Complaints. Items unobtainable from the shop can be supplemented on a monthly basis by a mail order system from approved shopping catalogues held by the Finance Department, and PALS offer an effective updating service for prisoners enquiring about the status of their orders.

5.8.6 Overall, the Board judges this to be a very well run department which offers a high level of service to prisoners.

BUILDINGS & EQUIPMENT

5.8.7 Prison buildings, both residential and those providing space for classrooms, workshops and offices, are functional, generally fit for purpose, well maintained and provide a safe and attractive environment for prisoners and staff alike. The prisoner Painting and Decorating Team does a very good job of keeping all painted areas in excellent decorative

state and the Industrial Cleaning team is also efficient in cleaning communal areas. Prisoners generally look after the environment and appreciate how much better it is than in other prisons where they have been held. That they take pride in it is evidenced by the conspicuous absence of litter and graffiti.

5.8.8 The prison is fortunate in having its own in-house Works Department so it is spared the problems experienced by others in the region locked into NOMS external contracts. The Department has an effective rolling programme of ongoing maintenance and repairs. Consequently, defective equipment or issues to do with the fabric of buildings are only infrequently reported to the IMB by prisoners and staff with the notable exception of the ongoing problems of showers on the wings (see 5.8.9 below) and the long delays experienced in refurbishing the Bistro (see 5.8.12 below). There has been no major building work on site in the last 12 months or major refurbishment project, but new stainless steel serveries were installed on all wings on Avon and Severn, the family visits room adjoining the Visits Hall was redecorated to make it more child-friendly and work has been scheduled in 2016 to improve the visitors' toilets and to improve the Visits Bungalow used by prisoners' families.

5.8.9 Throughout the year, the Board has repeatedly raised the matter of showers out of action on several wings as a result of defective drainage arrangements, especially on the upper floors, which have caused the flooring material in the showers to lift and stain, and have resulted in pools of standing water, in some cases spilling out onto landings and necessitating the use of hazard warning signs and non-slip matting on wing corridors. Not only is this problem very unpleasant and inconvenient for prisoners needing to access the showers but it is also potentially a health and safety matter. In some weeks as many as three showers out of eight on one or more wings have been unusable. Given that there can be between 40 and 60 men on a wing entitled to a daily shower, this is an unacceptably high number. It took some time for the Senior Management Team openly to acknowledge to the IMB that this was a problem and there seem to have been long delays in getting to grips with it. Only at the very end of the reporting year did the Director inform the Board that funding had now been earmarked for a rolling programme in 2016-17 to resolve the problem, but it clear that there is not going to be any swift solution. On a more minor note, the Board also noted part way through the year that some showers were suffering from peeling paint on the ceilings but this was rectified very promptly. Other matters such as the inability of prisoners to regulate the temperature of showers (variously reported as too hot or too cold) and the lack of privacy screens to some showers (supposedly ordered months ago but yet to be installed) remain unresolved.

5.8.10 Other ongoing issues include the inadequate ventilation and air conditioning in some of the workshops on the top floor of the Education Department and the issue of inadequate ventilation in some cells. Some prisoners have complained orally to IMB members about cells being too hot on occasions and HMIP also identified cell ventilation as an issue.

5.8.11. The Board is pleased to report, however, that the problems it identified last year with the trolleys used to transport hot food from the Kitchen to the wings have largely been resolved. Some trolleys are now equipped with brakes, many have had new wheels, sharp corners are now taped over with black and yellow hazard tape and all have had their soup containers replaced. It is acknowledged that they are only temporary solutions as the trolleys are generally ageing, but there are now plans to replace them with new ones in the foreseeable future. Kitchen staff are managing the situation well and the critical thing is that the trolleys are still fully functional in keeping food at correct temperatures for food safety purposes.

5.8.12 The Board is delighted to report that in May 2016 the Bistro kitchen was finally refitted after exceptionally long delays in part caused by the need to bid for additional

funding, in part by technical difficulties and in part by the prison's decision, post-HMIP Inspection, to conduct a full review of all the education and training areas in the prison to determine which were still relevant and required. The Bistro, which acts as a training site, was included in that review and for a time its future looked uncertain. It is finally now well equipped and fully functional and provides a suitable training facility.

5.8.13 Last year the Board reported that concerns previously expressed about the waste management area had largely been allayed. This is still the case but the Board has noted on some occasions overflowing bins and waste lying around in polythene bags outside so the potential for vermin still remains. To its credit the prison appears to be working hard to improve matters and new waste sorting systems are being installed on residential wings.

ACCOMMODATION

5.8.14 Part way through this reporting year the prison took the decision to change the function of Brunel. It had been used as an Enhanced wing. Various ideas were mooted, including a suggestion that it should be a combined Induction and Resettlement unit. In the end the Board was relieved that this particular idea, the practicality of which was questionable, was abandoned in favour of a plan to convert the entire Wing to a First Night and Induction Centre but with a few chosen orderlies in residence to provide help and guidance to new arrivals. The Board judges that Brunel is functioning well in its new role with prisoners remaining there for anything between four days and, occasionally, up to a couple of weeks, depending upon how much pressure is generated by the number of new arrivals. On most occasions in the latter part of this reporting year when Board members have visited, there has been a handful of empty cells and there has been no pressure to move prisoners quickly onto normal location. The original plan was to provide the full Induction programme on the wing itself, but that proved impossible until a ground floor room was refurbished and equipped in Spring 2016 for this purpose so, for most of the reporting period, induction sessions had to continue to take place in a former classroom in the Education Department. Reception and Brunel staff have worked closely together to welcome and process prisoners decently and humanely on arrival and settle them in quickly. The Board has received only a handful of complaints from prisoners about how they had been treated, exclusively in connection with excess property that the prison was refusing to receive (see 6.1.3 below).

5.8.15 There have been no changes in the functions of the other wings, though the Board has been led to understand that consideration will be given to increasing the number of non-smoking wings over this coming year as only one wing (Avon B) is currently designated as non-smoking.

5.8.16 Board members have continued to be impressed by the overall cleanliness and quality of decor and furnishings on the wings. Some in-cell toilets and washbasins are in need of refurbishment as they are stained and ageing, but in general cells are in good order and adequately furnished and the Board would reiterate the point it made last year that, by prison standards, the overall standard of wing equipment and facilities is very high indeed. Wing noticeboards display a considerable amount of information about rules, procedures and services and key departments such as the OMU and Equality and Diversity. Not all of the information is up to date, however, especially in Brunel which still has noticeboards headed with the Seven Pathways to Reducing Reoffending with information displayed under those headings which is irrelevant or inappropriate.

5.8.17 Prisoners appreciate the provision of in-cell phones. They also value the electronic ATM kiosks which enable them to order canteen, book visits, pre-select their meals and send short Applications to various departments. The provision of board games, table tennis and billiards tables, and freely accessible ironing boards and irons, toasters, sandwich-

makers, and microwaves on the central concourse of each wing, along with a ready supply of sliced bread throughout the day, provide just a few domestic comforts to make life more tolerable. A recent addition, much appreciated by prisoners, has been the provision of a full-sized snooker table on each wing on Avon and Severn. It is the Board's view that Senior Management has achieved a good balance between its fundamental role as a place of confinement for offenders with its duty to treat prisoners decently and humanely in order to promote a positive atmosphere in which rehabilitation can take place.

5.8.18 Wing facilities and other aspects of life at Ashfield can be discussed at wing level and monthly at prison level via the PIAC (Prisoner Information and Consultation) system. This is an effective means for prisoners to raise concerns, to request clarification about rules or procedures and to ask for improvements. All meetings are minuted and published on each wing. Many requests made are sensible and reasonable and the Prison's management endeavours to address them wherever this is appropriate, practical and affordable.

5.8.19 Controversially however, in May 2016 Senior Management, after deliberations that had taken place over a number of months, took the decision to change arrangements for prison laundry. This was understandable given the steady trickle of complaints both it and the Board was receiving from prisoners about their personal clothing being damaged or going missing from the main Laundry. From May 2016, only prison-issue clothing and institutional laundry has been processed in the main Laundry. All privately owned and personal clothing has now to be sent to a separate laundry located on the ground floor of each of Avon and Severn in former storage cupboards. These have only been equipped with a small number of domestic grade washing machines and tumble dryers some of which, within the first two months, are already breaking down under the strain of having to cope with the laundry of anything up to 150 or more prisoners a week. The rooms in which they are housed have no natural light or ventilation and are very hot. Prisoner laundry workers have to work with the door open at all times. The Board has been told that a full health and safety risk assessment was conducted before this arrangement was introduced, but remains unconvinced that these are acceptable working conditions for the laundry workers and also questions how robust the equipment will be to withstand the demands made upon it. The situation will be monitored closely in 2016-17, especially given that both prisoners and wing staff have expressed real concerns about the new arrangements.

5.8.20 On a more positive note, whereas in the first two years after the prison's re-role the Board received regular complaints from prisoners about the requirement that many cell-share owing to the configuration of cells, most of which are doubles, this has notably diminished in the course of this last 12 months. The majority of prisoners seem to be resigned to the fact that cell-sharing is the necessary price to pay for a standard of accommodation that, overall, is much higher than at many comparable prisons. A handful choose, instead, to refuse a lawful order to cell-share and face the risk of Adjudication and Cellular Confinement on Avon D, but they are very small in number (see 5.7.3 above).

6.1 PROPERTY

6.1.1 The Board has continued to receive a steady trickle of queries from prisoners about clothing issue and in particular the prison's requirement that, on arrival, those in Standard and Enhanced must choose between wearing prison issue clothing or wearing their own clothing. If they choose the former (and very few do), the prison provides all the necessary items. If, however, they choose to take up the privilege of wearing their own clothing instead, they then discover (often belatedly) that they are no longer entitled to receive replacement clothing or footwear if their own wears out (other than that required for health and safety reasons in work areas) unless they are completely unable to fund it. An extreme case was that of one elderly prisoner who resorted to wearing a bin liner outside when

queuing for medication as he claimed to HMIP inspectors that he could not afford to purchase an outdoor coat. Belatedly the prison lent him a coat until he could order a new one. The cost of purchasing some items at commercial prices can be prohibitively expensive for prisoners on prison wages and this can cause a mixture of disbelief and annoyance.

6.1.2 That the prison is legally entitled to operate this local policy is not in question as there appears to be no PSO or PSI setting out precisely what prisoners are *entitled* to (other than what they may be *permitted* as set out in the generic facilities list in Annex F of PSI 30/2013) and it seems, therefore, to be at the discretion of each prison to determine its own clothing policy. What has emerged, however, from the Board's investigation into this matter is that the information prisoners receive at Induction is scanty and they do not always realise the full implications of their choice. Whereas some comparable prisons have a formal Clothing Policy that is published and unambiguous, no such formal printed and published policy exists at Ashfield (merely a few brief sentences buried in Section 13 of the IEP Policy) and prisoners who query this local arrangement are simply referred to the "Facilities List" displayed on each wing which sets out what clothing items are allowable at each IEP level. It is the Board's view that the prison is doing itself no favours in operating such an opaque system and that much confusion and ill-feeling could be avoided by the publication of a clear and unambiguous Prisoner Clothing Policy.

6.1.3 Between July 2015 and June 2016, Correspondence and Complaints received 88 complaints to do with aspects of property, slightly fewer than in the previous year, though representing 11.9% of the total of 736 received and still the largest individual category. Last year the Board reported that it received 25 Applications concerned with property (21% of all Applications). In the last 12 months there have been just 13. A handful have been about property not being transported in full from previous prisons or about Ashfield's policy of applying strict volumetric controls. At one point the Board discovered that Reception staff were loading excess property back on vans (see 5.8.14 above) and refusing to accept it but, following the Board bringing this to the attention of the Director, the practice was immediately stopped. Most have been complaints about prisoners' clothing going missing or being damaged in the main Laundry (see 5.8.19 above). The Board is pleased to be able to report, therefore, that for the last 12 months, property seems to be diminishing in importance as an issue.

6.2 PROGRAMMES

6.2.1 In 2015 the Board commented in its Annual Report that it was concerned that the prison was, through no fault of its own, not fully able to fulfil its planned role as a treatment prison owing to the number of prisoners it was being obliged to receive who were neither eligible, ready, nor willing to engage in the offending behaviour programmes on offer so that Turning Point, who were and are contracted to deliver them were, on occasions, struggling to fill the courses.

6.2.2 The Board is pleased to report that there has been a significant improvement in the course of the last 12 months. At any one time around 100 prisoners at Ashfield will be deemed to be at low risk of reoffending so have no need of the SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Programme) course. The prison has, however, been more successful than formerly in moving on those prisoners on long sentences who would not benefit from such courses in order to offer more places for those who are, and it is now receiving applications from prisoners elsewhere specifically to start these programmes. This led to a higher level of "churn" in the early part of this reporting year than had been the case over the previous 12 months, but there is now greater stability. Whilst at any one time there are still anything up to 50% of prisoners in some form of denial, protesting their innocence or contesting their conviction, recent national modifications to the SOTP have meant that many of these

whose denial would previously have rendered them ineligible are no longer barred from access and some are now joining the groups. Consequently Turning Point is now populating courses some months ahead. Quite rightly, those required by their Sentence Plans to complete SOTP and due for release in the next 18 months are prioritised, but this is not causing unduly long waiting lists for other prisoners. In short, demand for courses and availability of supply are now well balanced. The Board has received no Applications from men disappointed at being unable to access TSP and SOTP courses in a timely manner, nor have there been any Applications identifying concerns with either the content or the delivery of the courses.

6.2.3 The Turning Point contract year runs from April to March and in 2015-16 there have been 47 TSP (Thinking Skills Programme) completions (2 over target) and 43 SOTP completions (1 over target). Up to June 2016 two staff had completed training, with two others on the verge of completion, in readiness for delivering the Extended SOTP from August 2016. There are no plans, however, at present to offer the modified SOTP ("Becoming New Me") for prisoners with learning difficulties: any requiring this course will continue to need to be transferred elsewhere.

6.2.4. The HMIP Inspectors in August 2015 commented that the prison should be doing more to encourage those who were not suitable or ready for TSP and SOTP to confront and challenge their offending behaviour. In response, the non-accredited Lifeskills course run by the Education Department has now been modified to incorporate aspects of offending behaviour. It is, however, too early to assess how effective this will be in changing attitudes and reducing reoffending on release.

7.1 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	4
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	3
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	21
Total number of visits to the prison	217
Total number of applications received	83
Total number of Confidential Access applications included in the above	6

7.1.1 Throughout the year the Board has continued to operate significantly under strength. A national recruitment campaign in the Autumn of 2015 drew no applicants at all, though the Board was fortunate to acquire an additional member at the very end of the reporting year as one of the successful interviewees for another South West prison agreed to consider Ashfield as an alternative. Similarly numbers were swelled part way through the year by three members of other Boards offering to "dual board", one of whom had to resign at the end of December owing to the shortage of members at his first prison. Two long-standing members of the Board resigned for personal reasons in the course of the year. As a result of a more successful national recruitment campaign in Spring 2016, five new trainee Board members will be taking up posts in July 2016, but this will place a significant mentoring burden on the four remaining experienced members, though the "dual boarders" have indicated a willingness to continue to assist for the first few months of transition before returning to their full-time duties elsewhere.

7.1.2 As in 2014-15, therefore, the Board has had, perforce, to be realistic about the frequency and intensity of monitoring that has been feasible. The focus has had to be on responding thoroughly and conscientiously to prisoner Applications and informal approaches, and carrying out comprehensive weekly Rota visits to monitor prisoners' general welfare and entitlements and in ensuring that all departments and providers of services have been maintaining high standards with regard to safety, decency, humanity and respect. Board members have attended GOOD reviews and Adjudications on a random sampling basis and when their presence has been requested by individual prisoners. The fortnightly Interdepartmental Risk Management Meeting is crucial in

determining each new prisoner's quality of life and general entitlements at Ashfield, so the Board has ensured that the majority of meetings have been attended by a Board member. The Board's ability, however, to attend other prison committee meetings has been constrained by the time available and members have had to be reliant, instead, on reading minutes and studying statistics provided for them rather than observing them in person. It is to be hoped that the expansion of the Board from July 2016 will enable members to adopt a more systematic approach to first-hand monitoring of key prison committees whose work impacts directly on prisoner welfare and entitlements.

7.1.3 It is important to stress, however, that it has been possible to adopt this "light touch" approach over the last 12 months purely because, measured against almost all official standards (Including HMIP, MQPL and the NOMS contract requirements), the prison is well managed, performing at a high level and providing a safe, stable and decent environment for prisoners who consistently express very high degrees of satisfaction in comparison with those in other Cat. C prisons. Had it been otherwise, the Board would have been unable to have had the same degree of confidence in its overall evaluation. It was reassuring to learn that there were considerable similarities between the judgments of HMIP and IMB arrived at independently of one another, the former presenting a "snapshot" view and the latter an evaluation based on 12 months' continuous monitoring.

Visitors

7.1.3 The Board hosted a visit from members of the Board at HMPs Usk and Prescoed in Autumn 2015.

Local, regional and national training

7.1.4 Members of the Board visited HMP Channings Wood in summer 2015. As this is one of the designated specialist resettlement prisons for sex offenders, Board members sought to ascertain what rehabilitation and resettlement services could be provided for them which could not be delivered at HMP Ashfield.

7.1.5. In addition, training was provided on site by Turning Point on the sex offender treatment programmes, by Catch 22 on resettlement services, by the Employment Development Manager on labour allocation and vocational training embedded into work areas and by the Skills Development Manager on the progress made in implementing the action plan to redesign the education programme following the OFSTED/HMIP inspection. The Board continues to be very grateful to HMP Ashfield employed and contracted staff who have contributed to this training at Board meetings.

7.1.6 The current Chair (who was also Chair throughout 2015) attended the three South West Regional Chairs' Meetings held since the last report was drafted and was struck by the extent to which Ashfield has largely avoided many of the problems besetting other prison establishments in the region. She also attended a regional seminar on the new National Monitoring Framework and the 2016 National Conference. She continues to be a member of the IMB Learning and Skills Support Group and, in that capacity, drafted the IMB's official national submission to the review of prison education and training chaired by Dame Sally Coates in 2015-16.

Prison staff induction

7.1.7 The Board has provided training sessions as required on the role of the IMB on SERCO induction courses for newly appointed non-custodial staff.

7.2 APPLICATIONS STATISTICS

Code	Subject	Year 2015-2016	Year 2014-2015	Year 2013-2014
A	Accommodation	1	4	11
B	Adjudications	7	7	4
C	Diversity related	4	6	3
D	Education/training/employment/IEP	11	18	33
E	Family/visits/resettlement/phone	9	4	6
F	Food/kitchen related	1	0	1
G	Health related	5	11	22
H	Property/canteen	13	25	49
I	Sentence related	3	9	11
J	Staff/prisoner related	12	12	17
K	Transfers	1	1	2
L	Miscellaneous	10	12	30
	Confidential Applications	6	6	0
	Total number of applications	83	125	189

7.2.1 There has been a further 33% decrease in the number of Applications received by the Board in comparison with 2014-15, and this year's figure is over 100 lower than in 2013-14. Whilst Board members encounter the occasional prisoner who confesses ignorance about who and what the IMB is, most prisoners are well aware of the Board's presence within the prison and recognise members' faces and names as they see members visiting wings and work areas on a regular basis. The Board encounters very little negativity on the part of prisoners, in fact quite the reverse, so that there is nothing to suggest that the reduction in the number of Applications received is due to any general lack of confidence in the ability and commitment of the Board to address prisoners' issues. As a consequence the Board believes this further reduction is indicative of the general level of prisoner satisfaction at HMP Ashfield. It also suggests that most prisoners find that their concerns can be resolved at an early stage either by PALS (Prisoner Advice Line Service), now

finally with electronic access to PSIs after the Board pursued this vigorously on their behalf, or by the prison's own Complaints process without the need to escalate them to IMB level.

7.2.2 Despite this, the Board does continue to have some concerns about the variable quality of responses to complaints provided by SERCO and some contracted staff. The fact, however, that the overwhelming majority of Comp1 complaints by prisoners are not followed up with a Comp1a suggests that the majority of prisoners are satisfied with responses and see no need to take matters further. The Board is also uneasy that not all Comp2 Confidential Applications addressed to the Director are answered by him and that there has been a tendency for the Director to pass them down to other members of staff to investigate and answer, thereby defeating the point of a prisoner, dissatisfied with the quality or content of the response from middle or senior managers to date, addressing it to him in the first place. The Board has been approached in the course of this last 12 months by some prisoners expressing dissatisfaction that their complaint has not been responded to by the Director himself after they have specifically addressed their complaint to him.

7.2.3 Nevertheless, with three full years of statistics and with the HMIP and MQPL surveys, it is now possible to see a clear pattern emerging of broad prisoner satisfaction, with few or no complaints about the quality of food and accommodation, few about Healthcare (albeit that most of these are now directed to the Health providers themselves via their own "Listening to You" complaints process) and only very few related to Diversity issues as they are largely resolved via the DIRF process. Many issues are also resolved by the PIAC system which provides an opportunity for wing representatives to raise issues each month with senior and middle management in a constructive atmosphere of mutual respect. In short, the mechanisms by which prisoners can express concerns or raise issues generally function effectively at Ashfield and ensure that few prisoners feel the need to refer matters to the IMB.

7.2.4 The obverse of this, however, is that the Board has noticed that a higher proportion of those which are directed to it are of increasing complexity in comparison with previous years and often require more in-depth investigation, involving research into numerous PSIs and the technicalities of Adjudications processes, interpretations of the IEP scheme, sentence planning, and restrictions on family communications generated by Sex Offending Prevention Orders (SOPOs) and PPU risk assessments. Another trend has been for a handful of prisoners to become serial complainants, including more than one item on any Application and persistently refusing to accept any answer that does not endorse their own interpretation of events or circumstances. Consequently a number of the 83 received were from just half a dozen prisoners including one whose approach to the HMIP team, as part of his strategy of making multiple complaints, triggered a request by HMIP for the IMB at Ashfield to investigate his concerns a second time. The overwhelming majority of prisoners, however, submitted no Applications at all, and far fewer than previously attempted to use the IMB Application process to bypass the prison's own complaints system.

7.2.5 A handful of prisoners refer matters to their solicitors (or, at least, inform IMB members that this is their intention) but very few choose to take matters further by contacting the PPO, as they argue that the system is so slow that there is little point in pursuing it.

Caroline Thompson (Chair, IMB Ashfield) on behalf of the IMB Board, HMP Ashfield

8. GLOSSARY OF ESTABLISHMENT- RELATED ABBREVIATIONS

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork
AWP	Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust
CC	Cellular Confinement
CSU	Care and Separation Unit
DEAT	Diversity Equality Action Team
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IPP	Indeterminate Public Protection
ISP	Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoner
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPS	New Psychoactive Substance(s)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
OLASS	Offenders' Learning and Skills Service
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PALS	Prisoner Advice Line Service
PIAC	Prisoner Information and Consultation
PIPS	Personal Improvement Plan Scheme
PNOMIS	(Prisons) National Offender Management Information System
PPO	Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
PPU	Public Protection Unit
SMARG	Senior Management Adjudications Review Group
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOPO	Sex Offences Prevention Order
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
TSP	Thinking Skills Programme
YOI	Young Offender Institution