



HMP BIRMINGHAM

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

to

The Secretary of State for Justice

2016

1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016

Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

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SECTION 3

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

3.1.i HMP Birmingham is a local category B prison for adult men. It has an operational capacity of 1450.

HMP Birmingham is a Victorian prison with additional modern accommodation including a health care centre, a gymnasium, an education centre and workshops. The prison has a total of 11 residential wings, including an elderly and health care wing, a detoxification wing, a sex offenders and vulnerable prisoners wing and a First Night Centre.

It holds prisoners, both convicted and on remand, including those who are serving life sentences and indeterminate public protection (IPP) sentences. From January to June 2016, with the addition of prisoners from Wolverhampton Crown Court, there have been 12,865 prisoner movements in and out of the prison (previous reports stated that in the course of a typical year the prison dealt with more than 9,000 different prisoners).

G4S Care and Justice Services assumed responsibility for HMP Birmingham on 1st October 2011 and will manage the contract for the following 15 years. HMP Birmingham was the first ever public sector prison to be transferred into the private sector estate.

Since 1st May 2015, under the new legislation of Transforming Rehabilitation and "Through The Gate", most prisoners who come from the local area and are serving under 2 years, or, who are within their last 6 months of sentence, are expected to complete their sentence in HMP Birmingham or come back from the training estate to HMP Birmingham.

3.1.ii Prison population

The prison population on 30th June was:

	2015		2016	
Total	1439		1446	
Sentenced	970	67.4%	944	65.3%
Un-sentenced	469	32.5%	502	34.7%
Life sentenced	31	2.1%	18 (6 FNPs)	1.2%
IPP			13	0.9%
FNP population	144	10%	195	13.5%
FNP beyond sentence	7	0.5%	13	0.9%
Sentenced Sex Offenders	NK	NK	70	4.8%
Category A	0		0	
Category B	141	9.8%	142	9.8%
Category C	719	49.9%	640	44.2%
Category D	19	1.3%	17	1.2%
Unclassified	91	6.3%	145	10.0%

Age Range	11/07/2013	26/06/2015	26/05/2016
21-29 years	541	558	523
30-39 years	464	516	526
40-49 years	238	220	251
50-59 years	75	85	95
60-69 years	27	28	41
70+ years	12	11	10

Ethnic Banding

The Ethnicity statistics on 29th June were:

	2015		2016	
Asian or Asian British	225	15.6%	239	16.8%
Black or Black British	195	13.6%	184	12.9%
Mixed Race	83	5.8%	85	6.0%
Chinese, or other ethnic group	10	0.7%	23	1.6%
White British	804	55.9%	787	55.2%
White Irish or White Other	82	5.7%	91	6.4%
Not Stated	40	2.8%	16	1.1%
Total	1439		1425	

3.1. iii Contractors and Agencies

An extensive range of contractors and external agencies work with the prison to make an invaluable input to the breadth and quality of provision and experience of the prisoners. In some cases this extends beyond release. The following list names some key providers:

Milton Keynes College
Aramark – Food and Catering
HALOW – Help and Advice Line for Offenders’ Wives, Family and Friends
Border Force
Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company
Job Centre Plus
West Midlands Police
BITA Pathways

SECTION 4

4.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to show how HMP Birmingham has progressed over the past year. The board remains of the opinion that, despite concerns and a difficult operating environment, the prison continues to develop and improve. Some of the issues highlighted last year continue to give the Board pride in the establishment. Inevitably other issues frustrate the management, staff, prisoners and the Board. Leadership continues to focus on maintaining and developing initiatives to make the prison a safe environment for all. However, the increasingly difficult behaviour of individual prisoners coupled with staff resource constraints give the Board cause for concern. There are also a number of issues beyond the control of the prison that have given the Board concern over the year.

The Board wishes to restate its concerns about the presence of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) in the prison and their impact on all aspects of prison life. Many staff are now concerned for their personal safety as well as for the safety of the prisoners and how to deal with the next “mamba attack”. A solution is required urgently.

The prison does not always have the capacity to run the full regime when an unexpected issue arises which requires deploying staff away from their regular duties. These competing priorities along with continuing levels of staff sickness and vacancies impact adversely on the prison regime. Purposeful activity, external and internal medical appointments, attendance at education, gym and library have all been affected at some time during the reporting period when there are insufficient escorts available.

Alongside this, the Board has observed that prison management has found it difficult, on occasions, to cover absences in administrative roles such as DIRFs, OASys and sentence planning.

4.2 OVERALL JUDGEMENT

The Board continues to be impressed with the way staff respond to, and support, some of the most difficult individuals in society. The prison continues to provide a safe environment for the majority of those in its care. However, as the year progressed, the Board noticed that this cannot be guaranteed for all.

The work to give prisoners responsibility for developing the prison through the Prison Council and violence reduction work continues to impress. However, throughout this report is the thread that, on too many occasions, in many areas, the service was reduced by there being insufficient staff available at the time.

As last year, in summary, the prison on the whole provides a good service to those in its care and is committed to continuous improvement.

4.3 ISSUES RAISED IN PREVIOUS YEARS' REPORTS AND NOT YET RESOLVED

4.3.i Learning and Skills

There are too few spaces available for all prisoners who should take advantage of learning and skills opportunities.

4.3.ii Transfers

As a Cat B Local Prison, HMP Birmingham is not the appropriate place for prisoners re-categorised from Cat C to Cat B. The prison regime available is not appropriate for these prisoners, who become trapped at Birmingham due to an apparent lack of spaces in other Cat B prisons.

4.3.iii SKYPE

Foreign national prisoners and prisoners far from home are still unable to communicate with friends or family who are distant. The Board awaits the evaluation of the work being undertaken to test the possibility of making greater use of IBVS (internet based video solution) within prisons in general and of the SKYPE pilot run by the Youth Justice Board, in the hope that such an IBVS can be introduced into Birmingham Prison in the near future.

4.3.iv Sex Offenders

It is a concern that it remains difficult to transfer sex offenders to access suitable programmes not available to them in HMP Birmingham. As stated in the last three reports, the prison is not a suitable environment for these prisoners because it cannot offer the range of courses needed.

4.3.v ACCT Documents

These continue to be completed at precise and predictable times, which is not in line with recommendations of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

4.3.vi FNC

The very restricted regime, including the lack of exercise, available to prisoners located for long periods on the FNC, breaches their legal entitlement.

4.3.vii Staff Sickness

Throughout the year levels remained very high and clearly have impacted negatively on daily prison life.

PARTICULAR ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

4.4.1 FROM THE MINISTER

i HMP Birmingham is expected to:

- act as a local prison with a high 'churn' which has been further exacerbated by the introduction of receiving prisoners from the Wolverhampton Courts
- be a resettlement prison offering Education and Skills training and the strengthening of family ties
- comply with the needs of the Prison Service by accommodating very disruptive and often mentally disturbed individuals

The experience in this reporting year has demonstrated that, even with dedicated staff and good leadership, it is impossible to provide all three functions efficiently in an ageing environment, when there are insufficient staff resources and limited purposeful activity available.

Moreover, insufficient provision for sex offenders results in a number of vulnerable prisoners, often newly arrived and first time offenders, being accommodated on the First Night Centre without full access to association or exercise for too long, despite the best efforts of the prison. Will the Minister review the policy of expecting Cat B Local Prisons to provide such a broad service?

ii With the continuing problem of prisoners accessing NPS and the challenging management consequences that result, what effective action is the Government taking or planning to take?

iii As highlighted in recent reports from IMBs at other prisons, the lack of sufficient designated accommodation for sex offenders and vulnerable prisoners is an increasing problem. Will the Minister ensure that the available spaces in prison reflect the current and predicted prison population?

iv The Board is concerned that suitable care is needed for the increasing number of elderly men in prison who require support for their multiple ailments. An ageing prison population, frequently in poor health, leads to the need for policies that understand how such prisoners need a radically different environment and resources than the traditional prisoner. Will the Minister authorise the creation of such a policy?

4.4.2 FROM THE CEO OF NOMS

i It is the Board's view, echoed by prison staff, that there are insufficient staff numbers to deal with many of the day to day situations that occur in a local prison. The Board would therefore welcome a review of the level of staffing considered appropriate in the contract, which recognises recent changes in prisoner behaviour and that the prison is not able to guarantee provision of all facilities to all prisoners.

ii A policy is needed to advise elderly prisoners in advance (where suitably cleared) of the intention to transfer them in the next 72 hours, and not with just an hour's notice as currently happens.

4.4.3 FROM THE DIRECTOR

i Systems are needed to ensure suitable cover for staff absences in managerial, non-residential roles e.g. management of DIRFs and OASys.

ii An effective procedure is needed to ensure that low attendance at Education and Vocational Training is counteracted.

iii Sufficient staff need to be employed to take account of the way the prison population is changing.

iv An effective management system to ensure that there is consistency in approach across all areas of the prison is needed.

SECTION 5

5.1 EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

5.1.i The department operates through the Equalities Action Team (EAT) and the prisoner Equalities Representatives Meetings and the External Scrutiny Panel. However, the External Scrutiny Panel has not met this year and EAT meetings did not take place between October 2015 and February 2016, owing to staff sickness.

5.1.ii There was a period when DIRFs were not processed as a result of staff long term sickness. At the time, the prison had no alternative strategy for dealing with the DIRFs and there was a significant backlog from October 2015 to February 2016. This was compounded by the lack of meetings of the External Scrutiny Panel which normally also scrutinises a sample of DIRFs. Subsequently the prison worked to resolve this issue, and implemented a system for handling new DIRFs efficiently, whilst systematically processing and completing the backlog.

5.1.iii A review of DIRFs indicates that inconsistency rather than racial discrimination is the problem that prisoners experience in terms of unequal treatment, for example, with the application of IEPs, or with access to kit. This represents an inconsistent application of the standard regime between one wing and another or for one prisoner and another.

DIRFs sampled gave detailed and thorough responses indicating rigorous and unbiased investigation of the reported incidents. The considerable backlog was dealt with and all incidents were eventually investigated.

5.1.iv Staff sickness and long-term absence in the equalities team has impacted negatively on the ability to deliver the full programme of activities, and the prisoner equality representatives have commented on this. For example, there was no event for Black History Month.

5.1.v The prison has addressed the staff shortage in equalities, owing to sickness, by an internal appointment to the administrative support for the team.

5.1.vi When it is fully functioning there is a high level of prisoner satisfaction regarding the management of equalities. The prisoner equalities representatives individually, and independently, expressed respect for and confidence in the equalities lead prison officer.

5.1.vii The prisoners who are equalities representatives take the view that the prison is good in terms of equalities though some of the younger black prisoner representatives perceived that black prisoners could receive harsher consequences than white prisoners. This perception was not supported by older black equalities representatives, and the IMB found no evidence of this.

5.1.viii Effective and regular monitoring using the SMART tool is used to test out any negative perceptions. It has shown, for example, that BME use of the gym is good but that white men are not accessing the gym in proportion to their numbers in the prison population.

5.1.ix Asian prisoners are under- represented in the equalities representatives team. There are plans to establish a dedicated Traveller equalities representative.

5.1.x When equalities events do take place, they are of a high quality. This year Appleby Fair was celebrated by the Traveller prison community and was well received.

Ethnic Grouping on 29th June 2016:

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups	622	43.6%
White British	787	55.2%
Not stated	16	1.1%
TOTAL	1425	100%

5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

5.2.i Courses available

As in previous reports, prisoners avail themselves of the courses offered and speak well of many tutors and instructors.

It was therefore disappointing to the Board that from 1st July 2015, South and City College Birmingham terminated the local agreement to provide courses at the prison resulting in the loss of 112 education places.

Subsequently, the prison creatively reconfigured and increased workshops and courses, full and part-time, so that by January 2016 there were:

896 full-time activity places

54 part-time activity places

155 sessional places

in comparison to:

863 activity places

79 sessional places

prior to the withdrawal of the College. Decisive, considered action was taken to devise these changes and staff implemented them successfully and incrementally over a three-month period.

5.2.ii Workshops

Staff ensure good, productive relationships with the prisoners in the workshops and maintain a positive working environment.

Prisoners' comments and attitude in workshops underline their appreciation of the support that they receive from the staff and their engagement with the learning activities.

5.2.iii Classrooms

Feedback from prisoners about classroom-based learning is often less enthusiastic than in the workshops and they appear to value vocational training more highly than classroom learning. However, prisoner attitude and feedback in hairdressing, business, hospitality, ESOL and employment skills classes is always good.

An art class has operated from April 2016.

5.2.iv Attendance

The core day is promoted on every wing and cancellations are infrequent, but attendance in activity remains significantly below the target expectations.

SMT monitor daily the attendance figures for education and strive to overcome variable and often low attendance rates. Attendance rates average out at 70% and are about 10% lower on Fridays.

Teaching staff have commented that they feel the use of IEPs to encourage full attendance is used inconsistently by different wing managers.

Delays in approval by security staff for admission to hairdressing and hospitality courses means that not all of these places are always filled.

SMT measures taken to reduce low attendance include:

- introducing a bonus payment for prisoners who attend education or a course for all sessions in the week
- improved monitoring of attendance for each wing and ensuring wing staff are directly involved in challenging those who do not attend and in applying IEP's where needed
- reintroducing popular courses that were lost in electronics, bricklaying, painting and decorating, plastering, plumbing and fitted interiors
- introducing new vocational courses in car valeting, electrical installations, joinery, carpentry and industrial cleaning

However, education and workshop staff advise Board members that attendance and retention of participants continues to be an issue.

- Vocational Workshops average attendance is approximately 65% and up to 130 places not used daily.
- Industrial Workshops average attendance is approximately 75% and up to 111 places not used daily.
- Education places average attendance is approximately 60%, for example in June 2016 there were 9712 scheduled places and attendance was 5891
- 40% non-attendance is high even when allowing for authorised absences.

5.2.v Number of places

The prison continues to have insufficient activity places for the number of prisoners accommodated. There are 896 full-time activity places and 155 sessional and 54 part-time places.

5.2. vi Completion rates

Only very occasionally now are prisoners moved or transferred from the prison part way through a course.

Removals by staff from class have dropped significantly:

1042 in 2014/15

653 in 2015/16

This is a clear improvement in the current reporting period as Education Management has worked with OCA staff to address the issue.

The Board acknowledges the challenge of ensuring the provision of complete and relevant courses for a total prison population that changes rapidly.

At the start of the year the removal of retainers had an adverse impact on the prison. The Board now notes that the re-introduction of retained prisoners has had a positive effect locally and the recruitment of retainers has been a useful tool to encourage prisoners to make formal applications and attend a recruitment board.

5.2.vii Differentiation

In the past year Learning and Skills Assessments have been introduced as part of the induction process on the First Night Centre. Assessments indicate that many prisoners have low education and literacy achievements, the equivalent of a National Curriculum level 4.

Prisoners with limited English have benefited from the teaching provided. The board has on occasion had contact with prisoners who are genuinely pleased to finally be able to read and write.

Higher qualified prisoners cannot generally access level 3 courses unless they pay, find funding from a charity or take out a student loan, knowing that they risk being transferred prior to course completion.

However, the Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour course was reintroduced in the year and now offers a level 3 NVQ.

There are still no specific sex offender programmes running at HMP Birmingham, although the sex offender wing has been full, frequently to over-capacity, for the whole of the reporting period.

The prison has been proactive in offering suitable prisoners other options including training as Peer Mentors, the equivalent of Teaching Assistants in the classroom, and Listener courses.

5.5.viii Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour

The TSP courses are still running. There are still no courses for either sex offenders or domestic violence offenders. There are increases in convictions within these offending groups yet no offending behaviour provision has been provided as Birmingham is not a training establishment.

5.5.ix Mentoring

The first Level 3 Information, Advice and Guidance offender has completed his course.

5.2.x Again in this reporting period the Virtual Campus, a bank of 14 computer work stations for prisoners to prepare CV's and job applications, has frequently been unavailable for use as the prison and the external supplier were unable to resolve some technical issues.

5.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

5.3.i On arrival at reception, all prisoners are screened by NHS nurses for physical and mental health issues. They attend a Wellman Clinic within 24 hours of arrival.

5.3.ii Full healthcare provision is available at all times, incorporating a 15-bed mental health ward, a 15-bed primary care ward, a Community Psychiatric Team and the IDTS/DART facility. GP, Optician, Podiatry, Sexual Health and Physiotherapy clinics are available on a regular basis.

Staff sickness levels have impacted negatively on the regime in Health Care particularly when a multiple unlock is required.

5.3.iii NHS requests and complaints (798), primarily concerning medical appointments, requests for medical notes etc. and requests for non-indicated medication are slightly fewer than in the last reporting period but no significance is attached to this. Similarly with formal complaints, none of which have been upheld in the period.

5.3.iv The B Wing surgery continues and is an important part of healthcare. However original plans to expand the clinics to other wings have been suspended on account of there being insufficient staff to provide a safe service

5.3.v During the reporting period the Board has observed that the time between appointing staff and their clearance check being approved, has reduced. This is welcomed.

5.3.vi Escort cancellations for external appointments are averaging between 15 and 20 per month. This is the consequence of having insufficient staff to meet all the competing and conflicting demands that arise, for example additional “bed-watches”, and responding to incidents within the prison. The most negative impact of this occurs where the appointment is cancelled and the prisoner, through no fault of his own, goes to the end of the NHS queue. When this happens frequently in a particular hospital, the chance of immediate rebooking is remote. In the case of two cancellations, the prisoner may even need to be re-referred which compounds the unfairness both in absolute terms as well as in prisoner perception. For example, one prisoner missed an MRI scan on seven occasions as his appointments clashed with other prisoners’ appointments at a cancer clinic and there were insufficient staff to cover both appointments. Unexpected cancellation of external appointments is negatively impacting patient treatment.

5.3.vii “Did not attend” rates across all clinics continue at very high levels. The two most used clinics, GP (680 appointments pm.) and Dentist (170 appointments pm.) run at a very consistent 28.5% and 27.5% respectively with no trend evident. There is ongoing analysis by healthcare to understand and reduce this high level; so far without success.

5.3.viii There continues to be a generally high level of prisoner satisfaction with healthcare provision. However, the Board has dealt with a number of complaints during the year from prisoners expressing dissatisfaction with the service, among which the following are prominent

- the ongoing prisoner demand for analgesics which are freely available on the outside, but excluded on the inside for their proven tradability as an alternative

“high”. A pain protocol is in place but the Board has some concerns that in a limited number of cases, this may not provide the required relief. There is no obvious solution to this dichotomy other than in continuing to advise the prisoner to discuss the problem with his GP.

- The Board is aware of a small number of cases where, on account of the nature of the offence, the prisoner has been double cuffed for external appointments. This has made giving bloods and receiving chemotherapy initially difficult. We are pleased to note that a review of risk in a number of cases has resulted in more humane restraint and hope this will continue.

5.3.ix The Board welcomes the fact that the prison dialysis unit is in place and awaits its first patient

5.3.x The Board welcomes the fact that the occupational therapist is in post. Their work has included the preparation of an in-cell activity pack for prisoner use.

5.3.xi Although not present throughout the reporting period, 1 full-time equivalent psychologist is now an established role helping to distinguish personality disorders from behavioural problems. This difficult distinction can sometimes be the source of misunderstanding between involved parties and the presence of this role together with two assistant psychologists is to be welcomed.

5.3.xii The Board is informed that waiting times are comparable to those in the external community. However, the extremely high “Churn Rate” among prisoners in HMP Birmingham and its impact on providing the best health care should not be underestimated.

5.3.xiii During the reporting period, wing healthcare reps were not appointed for some months. The Board continues to believe that such representatives can make a considerable contribution to the effective running of healthcare and is happy that efforts are again in place to provide a network of healthcare reps.

5.3.xiv The Board is concerned that the problem of novel psychoactive substances (NPS) has significantly worsened in the reporting period. NPS are widely available throughout the prison and the effects of taking these drugs are highly unpredictable and potentially life-threatening.

5.3.xv The Board welcomes Healthcare’s investment in additional defibrillators providing almost immediate access from all wings.

5.3.xvi During the reporting period, smoking was banned in all parts of Healthcare and on J wing. Staff, NHS and the prison, worked to ensure the smooth implementation of the ban.

5.3.xvii Some prisoners have complained to the Board about an increase in dentist waiting times. In four cases, wheelchair users have been unable to receive treatment while the lift giving access to the dental surgery has been out of action for several months at a time

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

5.4.i Gym

Prisoners are offered a wide range of physical activities utilising both the gym and the two all-weather pitches. The equipment is regularly maintained and updated. The gym is in regular use by both prisoners, officers and staff. The Prison encourages everyone to engage in physical fund raising activities to benefit the local community.

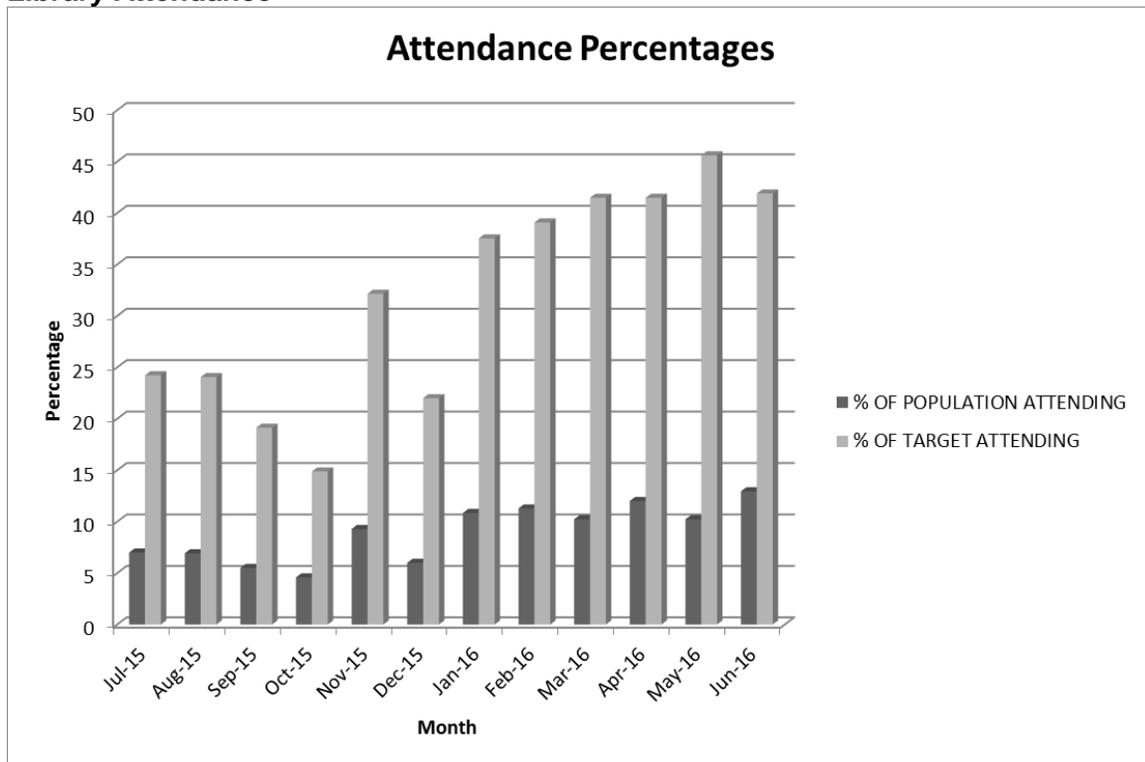
However, access to the gym has been restricted during the reporting period. Although staff sickness levels have had an impact, the majority of gym closures have been as a result of unplanned emergency escorts.

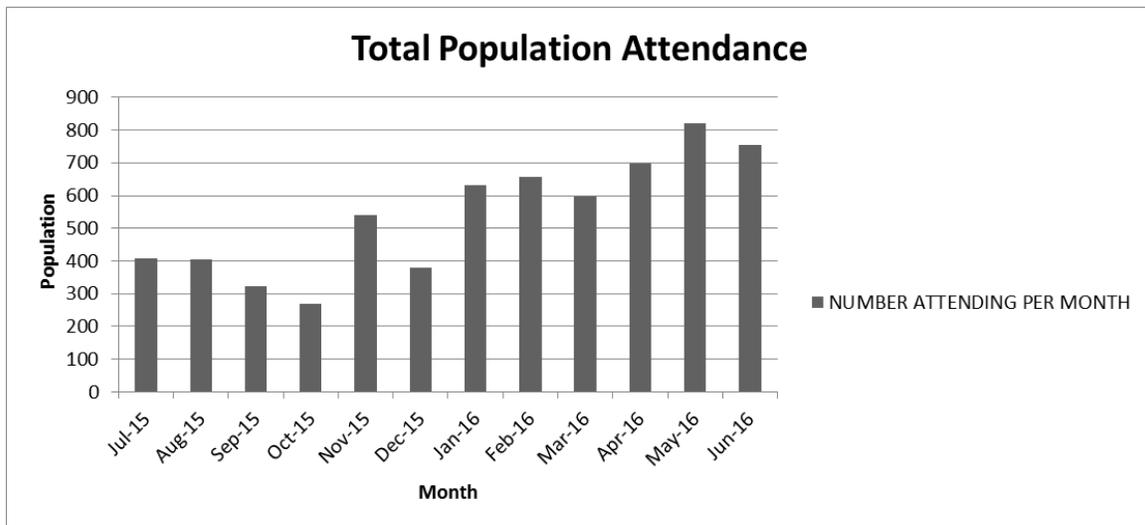
5.4.ii Library

This continues to be a well-resourced and valuable asset to the Prison. It is run by the Birmingham City Library. Equality of access to the library for some wings is a problem with prison workers missing some of their planned library sessions. During the reporting period attendance at planned sessions has been variable and constantly below target. e.g. of the sessions planned for October 2015, 32.5% were completed and in November 2015, 63.3% were completed. Since then the Prison has taken steps to improve access to the Library by allocating two Activity Prison Officers. In the first week of their allocation attendance went from 79 (week beginning 17th April) to 258 (week beginning 24th April). Whenever one of the activity officers has been reallocated elsewhere, attendance drops but has remained above 100. This still represents a significant improvement.

This increase in staffing has freed up the library staff to run “Storybook Dads” (bedtime stories recorded by prisoners to be listened to by their children at home) and the IDTS/DART reading group.

Library Attendance





5.4.iii Kitchens

The kitchens continue to be run by Aramark and provide a good range of courses and work for prisoners. The Board has been told that Aramark’s plans to provide work for prisoners on their release is in jeopardy as prisoners are being transferred with little or no notice leaving courses uncompleted. The supply of trained prisoners is therefore unpredictable and staff inform the board that employers willing to take on” ex-offenders” are looking elsewhere.

5.4.iv Workshops.

The establishment faced a huge challenge when on July 1st 2015 South and City College, Birmingham withdrew from the Prison and 112 activity places were lost and three workshops were closed. The SMT acted quickly and effectively to restructure workshop provision. By January 2016 SMT had ensured:

896 activity places and 155 sessional places,

in comparison to the earlier:

863 activity places and 79 sessional places.

New short term courses provided by Milton Keynes College enable prisoners to complete a course before transfer, or at least provide a base upon which skills can be developed in another establishment and are which are relevant to future employment.

Provision for sex offenders and vulnerable prisoners in workshop 4 is good. Since the number of sex offenders has not reduced as anticipated, the prison has increased the amount of work available in an improved environment to meet this challenge. Workshop 4 has classroom facilities for Mathematics and English. The midday meal is served here and prisoners are able to undertake paid over time.

A broad spectrum of relevant vocational work is delivered by very dedicated and experienced officers and staff in buildings which are fit for purpose. However, the high “churn rate” makes it increasingly difficult for the Establishment to meet targets. The Board recognizes the challenges facing the Prison in trying to meet the needs of prisoners who are perhaps new to learning a skill or to education. Some of these prisoners are serving short sentences and, in the time available, find it difficult to access the Purposeful Activities which are appropriate to them.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT AND OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

5.5.i Resettlement Prison Status

In May 2015 Birmingham was redesignated a Resettlement Prison and staff worked hard to put new systems in place.

However, during the year population pressures have required NOMS to transfer some prisoners back out from Birmingham even though they should be completing their resettlement as they are in the final six months of their sentence. This defeats the object of a resettlement programme.

CRC staff regularly complain that they face daily delays or an inability to reach the external probation services who are also responsible for the management of prisoners prior to release.

Reports are sent by post as the CRC team do not have access to a scanner to send reports securely by email. This is very inefficient.

5.5.ii Housing

Birmingham began taking prisoners from the Wolverhampton courts in February 2016. This has placed an extra strain on the resettlement teams to find additional accommodation for these previously out-of-area releases.

CRC staff working within the prison have generally successfully arranged housing. Over 90% of prisoners on release have gone to recognised and accepted accommodation. This has been achieved by experienced staff using long established connections, though the challenge should not be underestimated. Approximately 10% have no recorded accommodation on release, out of an average monthly release of 200.

Birmingham City Council accepts housing applications within two weeks of release. There is now support in the community from Fry Housing for high risk offenders; for example, sex offenders and convicted arsonists for whom there was previously no provision.

5.5.iii Education

The Prison acquired additional funding in order to provide additional shorter vocational courses including car valeting, industrial cleaning and electrical installation. These popular, short courses have been introduced because the average sentence is 13 weeks and previously courses were not being completed.

5.5.iv Families

HALOW maintains family days once a month for enhanced prisoners and their families. They invite local museums and libraries along to inform families of "what's on" locally and to interact with the children on the family days. There is a six-week course being delivered on maintaining relationships. Although there is an anger management course, there is no domestic violence programme available, and this is a concern as more individuals are coming before the courts and being convicted for this type of offence.

5.5.v Mental and Physical Health

BITA Pathways, based in Digbeth, provide social enterprises such as textiles, garden maintenance, packing and assembly to those offenders who have had mental health

issues. BITA come into the prison to work with prisoners prior to release to support them in developing action plans for life in the wider community.

5.5.vi Drugs and Alcohol

NPS were made illegal in April 2016 but, as yet, there have been no prosecutions. Since then, cannabis use has increased in the prison. In June the MDT rate reached 20% whereas previously the 12% target was regularly achieved. There are still several programmes running, including COVAID, for those with violence when misusing alcohol. However, the numbers using Alcoholics Anonymous have decreased recently.

5.5.vii OMU

Most OASys sentence plans are completed within 10 weeks, despite the increased workload, and without extra staff or resource. On occasions there have been individuals that have missed being considered for HDC; but these are exceptions. One impact of the Wolverhampton courts being added to the Birmingham area from February 2016 was that it incurred, initially, a considerable backlog of offender sentence plans. This has now been resolved.

Completed OASys in 2016:

January	37
February	29
March	48
April	27
May	13
June	14

In March, the backlog for OASys reports to be completed was 90, with 58 internally delayed and 32 externally delayed in the probation service. Although there has been an improvement, OMU staff regularly advise that they are behind in their work as they are called away to cover other tasks due to staff sickness.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

5.6.i The Safer Custody Team

The team meets monthly and attendance is good. The team seeks to ensure that the prison is a safe environment for prisoners and staff and looks at a range of issues impacting upon this. The priorities for Safer Custody in 2016 are:

- i. ensuring the quality of ACCT documents
- ii. publishing information regarding violence and violence reduction so that everyone is aware of the standards expected and strategy implemented
- iii. the continued evolution of the Violence Reduction Strategy – including more and better use of Violence Reduction representatives (“VR Reps”)
- iv. the reduction of incident of self-harm – in particular by using ACCT and PNOMIS tools
- v. prompt and effective searches at Reception, especially now that the prison is servicing Wolverhampton courts as well

5.6.ii Violence Reduction

As with the last reporting period, serious incidents of violence have increased over the course of the last twelve months. Again, this is especially so where there are unexplained injuries. However, the prison has built upon the foundations laid, as set out in the last report, through the introduction of a Violence Reduction Strategy. It is noted

that the prison takes seriously the risk of self-harm and suicide and has sought to put into place procedures to reduce the risk of these occurrences, especially in Health Care.

The Violence Reduction Strategy has evolved over the course of the reporting period and new techniques and strategies have been tested and applied. Some of the main characteristics are as follows:

- areas on wings for VR Reps to talk to new prisoners
- the use of VR Reps before and after incidents
- VR Reps to work with segregated prisoners to aid integration
- Regular weekly meetings between VR Reps and Head of Safer Custody or the Director
- Regular and effective wing association reviews
- Better use of Listeners
- Use of mediation
- Working with the Prison Council and Staff Forum

It is felt that the initial marked success of the Strategy has been built upon in an effective manner and has had a positive impact upon the life of the prison and the safety of prisoners and staff alike.

5.6.iii ACCT

There have been continued concerns expressed by IMB members and also the Safer Custody Team as to the quality of ACCT documents and the timing of checks, especially during the night, as well as post-closure reviews. This is an on-going concern and one which is being addressed by the Safer Custody Team through regular reminders to staff backed up by enhanced checks of ACCT documents and training of FLMS. Towards the end of the reporting period a 6-point set of requirements to ensure higher quality in this area was issued to all staff.

The Board notes that the quality of entries in ACCT books is still a concern, as are the predictability of visits during the night and the quality of ACCT reviews.

5.6.iv First Night Centre

Although there is still pressure upon the FNC, this has been eased to some extent by structural work on another wing so as to aid induction and move “bed-blockers” on. There are still, however, significant concerns regarding accommodating prisoners in the FNC for long periods.

The FNC is being increasingly used, for up to three weeks at a time, to house prisoners that cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the prison. The wing is not designed to house prisoners for extended periods. It has no exercise yard and no formal regime, meaning that prisoners on this wing have little opportunity for exercise or association. There are regularly between twenty and thirty Rule 45 prisoners on the wing, the highest number being noted as thirty-two on 8th June 2016, with some prisoners having been there for two months. This requires the wing to run on a split regime to keep the two populations apart.

An exercise regime has been implemented whereby the Rule 45 prisoners are taken to G wing (sex offenders wing) however this is dependent on staff being available to

facilitate this. Association is also limited and often not feasible due to staff shortages and difficulties in having to manage regimes simultaneously.

The Board has raised its concerns with the SMT as it is recognised across the prison estate that prisoners in their first weeks who do not have access to education, showers and association are at a higher risk of suicide (PPO Annual Report 2015-2015).

5.6.v Sex Offenders and RULE 45s

The sex offender wing runs at full capacity. As a result some sex offenders and vulnerable prisoners have been:

- held on the FNC for several days and occasionally weeks, without exercise or association, a breach of prison rules.
- relocated occasionally to other wings where, as VPs, they cannot be let out of their cell.

There have been up to 36 prisoners waiting for space on the sex offenders' wing. To address this issue SMT opened a landing on another wing to provide 30 more places for vulnerable prisoners. Despite efforts to prioritise association, staff shortages on the FNC and sex offender wing have resulted in an inability to move prisoners from FNC for daily association on the sex offender wing.

5.6.vi Deaths in Custody (DIC)

There has been one DIC in the reporting period. Subject to the Coroners' inquest, indications are that this was from natural causes and occurred in hospital external to the prison.

5.7 SEGREGATION: CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT (CSU)

5.7.i The CSU remains a very well run unit with low numbers (average of 4, never exceeding 8) and generally prisoners spend only short periods of time on the unit. Good engagement between prisoners and CSU staff yields positive results.

5.7.ii Changes came into place this year governing extended stays in the CSU, but this has only affected two prisoners in the reporting period, where the CSU has needed to request authorisation for extended stays - these were the most challenging of cases and attempts were made to secure exit before the initial time limit expired.

5.7.iii There has been an innovative approach to potential long stayers who refuse to leave the CSU. Recognising the potential for mental decline whilst in CSU for extended periods a whole-prison approach has been developed with the possibility of prisoners spending periods of time in healthcare, to break the cycle and to allow for proper mental health assessments to take place. This approach has worked in practice, with the individuals concerned returning to normal location.

5.7.iv There are limited opportunities for purposeful activity whilst in the CSU, especially for those who are illiterate. These opportunities include access to in-cell education, if the prisoner wants this, but it is dependent on spaces available. Library books are available and replenished regularly.

5.7.v Statistics have not been compiled by the CSU – SMARG (segregation monitoring and review group) and Standardisation have not been completed for a considerable period of the reporting year.

5.7.vi GOODs still occasionally lack residential input meaning that exit strategies cannot always be implemented.

5.7.vii Communication with the IMB regarding prisoners' entry to the CSU and reviews, remains haphazard.

5.7.viii The Board recognises that it is not best practice to place prisoners on an AACT into the CSU. However, the Board is reassured that when this happens all the correct checks are made (Mental Health and health care algorithms) and that with the low number of prisoners in the CSU staff are able to attend to the needs of prisoners on ACCT exceptionally well. It is clear that on many occasions the placing of a prisoner on an ACCT into the CSU is the most appropriate place for the prisoner.

5.7.x Adjudications

Over the period board members have attended adjudications and are satisfied that there is a consistent and fair approach.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES:

5.8.i ACCOMMODATION

In general, given the age of the prison, the Board remains satisfied with the appearance, cleanliness and maintenance of prisoner accommodation. The Board were impressed with the improvement made by the replacement of floor covering and repainting of wings in the original prison. Over the past year it has proved very difficult to maintain a constant comfortable temperature, with complaints being received of accommodation being too cold during winter months and too hot in the summer.

5.8.ii Staff shortages due to sickness and vacancies remain very high and clearly impact negatively on daily prison life. Frequently, prisoner applications to the Board and observation have indicated that accompanying prisoners to the library, dentist and collecting clothes that have been handed in on visits, have suffered as a result of a reduction in the regime. This is further complicated by the provision of emergency escorts when prisoners are taken to A & E.

Towards the end of the reporting period there were increasing occasions when staff reported to Board members low morale relating to their perception of inadequate staff numbers leading to perceived unsafe working environments.

5.8.iii Each prisoner should have on display outside their cell a cell card for identification. Sometimes some prisoners remove these cards and then identification of cell occupants is problematic for people who do not work on the wing.

5.8.iv Lost Property matters remain a concern to the Board. The high rate of "churn" creates significant logistical problems in dealing with incoming and outgoing prisoners and their property. Between January and June 2016 there were 12,865 prisoner movements in and out of the prison. Over the reporting period, members have had reported to them instances of property going missing, either between prisons, from courts to prison, or from within the prison itself. There have been occasions when

prisoners who are entitled to compensation have initially been refused it, or have had to wait an unacceptably long time to receive it. Cell clearance certificates are not always prepared, leading to future prisoner frustrations.

5.8.v Following the last report initially there were fewer complaints about a lack of kit, including clothing, cleaning materials, toilet rolls towels and razors. However, this improvement was not maintained throughout the year, although the situation is still better than at the time of the last report.

5.8.vi All of the flooring in the Victorian wings and landing was replaced and the walls repainted. This made a dramatic improvement to the environment, making it look lighter and cleaner.

5.9 FOOD, CATERING AND KITCHENS

5.9.i Food preparation and consumption are regularly monitored and though occasionally prisoners complain about the food the Board believes that the food provided is of reasonable quality and quantity.

5.9.ii Malfunctioning of kitchen equipment and leaks and spillages on the kitchen floors and in wing serveries remain an issue. It is the Board's impression that kitchen equipment and flooring are currently in a rather better state of repair than they have been in recent years, though at some stage major investment will be needed.

SECTION 6

OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON

6.1 NPS

The disturbing effects of widespread use of life-threatening NPS provide a significant challenge to the prison. This stretches the resources of the prison as well as those of the emergency and medical services. These pressures are unsustainable and seriously undermine the good work that the prison is undertaking with rehabilitation and care. Illicit NPS affects all wings, involves intimidation and bullying and creates a climate of fear amongst many prisoners. SMT and prison staff work relentlessly to overcome and prevent these NPS related difficulties but the problem is too great for the prison alone to manage.

6.2 Disruption to prison life

During the reporting year the regime on wings has been curtailed on occasions as has access to various other activities including gym, library, outside hospital appointments, religious services.

In addition to staff sickness levels and vacancies which have had an impact, these curtailments are often as a result of:

- the increasing age and poor health of the prison population
- assaults by prisoners
- unexplained injuries
- the illicit use of NPS by prisoners
- self-harm by prisoners

The growth in the older prisoner population brings with it an increase in the number of medical conditions and ill health requiring treatment. Incidents of self-harm and drug abuse have also required emergency treatment. The impact is illustrated in the increase of emergency ambulances in attendance:

- in April 2016 - 9 ambulances were called
- in May 2016 - 19 ambulances were called
- in June 2016 - 29 ambulances were called (five on one evening).

The request for and management of an ambulance visit is a significant staff resource and is unpredictable in nature and timing. Unplanned emergency escorts to outside hospital remove from planned duties at least two prison officers per prisoner escorted. G4S cannot plan for these emergency escorts and so the Board accepts the difficulties that management have to face on a daily basis. However, the Board is concerned that a cycle develops where a reduction in the normal regime for whatever reason leads to frustration amongst the prison population, often resulting in further disruption.

For the prison to be successful in reducing levels of violence and antisocial behaviour the gym, library and other facilities need to remain open. Therefore sufficient staff need to be found to ensure that normal prison life is not disrupted to a critical extent.

6.3 Staff Sickness

Daily absence rates have ranged between a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 40 staff absent at any one time, including operational and administrative staff. This represents an absence rate of up to 7%. Unfilled vacancies compound the problem.

6.4 Older Prisoners

J wing continues to provide exemplary care for elderly prisoners (the oldest this year was 92 years old). For example, one prisoner was released on ROTL to attend hospital as an in-patient over several days. This terminally ill prisoner was released with an excellent care package and accommodation organised between the CRC and local authority.

NOMS policy to transfer prisoners with less than 24 hours' notice, in the case of one 92-year-old, caused considerable distress, resulting in him needing 24-hour close care for several days on arrival at the next establishment. The Board does not consider this to be fair or humane treatment.

6.5 Consistency across all areas of the prison

SMT has identified that inconsistency is an issue for the prison, leading to unequal treatment and a sense of injustice between some prisoners. The Board has observed examples of this in the application of IEP for basic prisoners, in the varying quality of ACCT documents, to the implementation of regime rules e.g. one landing at a time to the servery at meal times. While SMT has recognised this is an issue and is taking steps to improve consistency, the problem persists.

6.6 Complaints

Over 95% of complaints are answered on time. Additionally, each month 20% of complaints and staff responses are redacted and reviewed by Prison Council members for the quality of the reply. This is a positive and welcome initiative.

6.7 The Prison Council

Elections were held with three parties campaigning and all staff and prisoners eligible to vote.

The Council meets weekly and minutes are evidence of a considered approach to issues raised and discussed with SMT. Together they have effected improvements in a number of areas. For example:

- making and installation of privacy screens in shared cells
- clear job description and eligibility for the role of wing cleaner
- purchase of better serving spoons for meals
- display of prices of food in the visitors' centre
- improvements to the menu and choices
- canteen issues
- updating notices and the website
- raising awareness of inconsistencies from one wing to another in dealing with rising levels of violence
- extending times of access to the Samaritans' phone line

The Council has proven to be a valuable line of communication between the wings and SMT, particularly with a view to violence reduction.

6.8 Cultural initiatives

A choir was established in the reporting period and it has performed at family events in the visitors' centre, at internal awards evenings, for official visitors to the prison and has given a concert jointly with Birmingham City's "Choir With No Name".

The first prison debate was held in conjunction with Birmingham City University and was very successful. There are plans to hold a debating competition.

Both of the above initiatives benefit the participants in terms of team work, confidence and self-esteem.

6.9 The Samaritans

The prison has a good relationship externally with the Birmingham Samaritans and the Board is advised that the training of "Listeners" by the Samaritans this year has been very good.

6.10 Foreign National Prisoners

Staff record an increase in the number of FNPs who are convicted of serious offences.

- 1 year or more 69
- 5-10 years 10
- 10 years or more 18
- Life sentenced 6
- Under 30 days 92

The Board notes that the opportunity to Skype family and friends is provided in prisons in Holland, Norway and Spain. It would be an affordable means of enabling FNPs to be able to maintain contact whilst avoiding the possibility of ingress of illicit items.

6.11 Site and Buildings

The prison environment has been widely improved by the installation of posters in and around the site. There are motivational posters of prisoners engaged in purposeful activities, large scale photographic posters of Birmingham city, sports and nature photographic posters in Healthcare and Education. One poster was produced using a prisoner's design.

Work continues to maintain the site with freshly painted pathway signage.

Although the site is regularly kept clean there can be an accumulation of litter in certain external gulleys or corners.

6.12 Mail

There have been a significant number of prisoner complaints and applications to the board about late or undelivered incoming mail. Bank holidays and weekends seem to aggravate any delay in delivery.

Staff vigilance in the post room has led to the detection of NPS soaked pages and thus has prevented some ingress of drugs onto the wings.

6.13 Drug Strategy

IDTS, DART and G4S interact to provide extensive group work and care planning including day-to-day contact on landings. Monitoring of medication is strictly controlled and any prisoner suspected of not taking the medication is likely to be removed from the list.

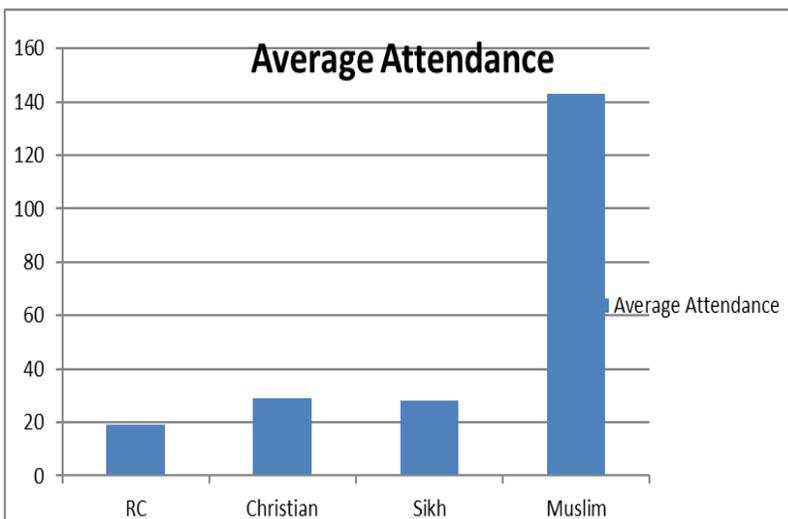
On a monthly average, some 350 prisoners engage with the DART psychosocial programmes, part of which is to help prepare them for release back into the community. Prisoner feedback forms for these programmes are unanimously positive and value the commitment and skills of the course leaders and acknowledge the improvement of their own understanding and hopes for the future. The programmes also involve probation, OMU and external drug workers working to ensure adequate support on release and signposting to external drug treatment providers. Although drug rehabilitation constitutes a significant part of the overall NHS care programme there are no data to indicate the success rate of these programmes.

6.14 The Chaplaincy

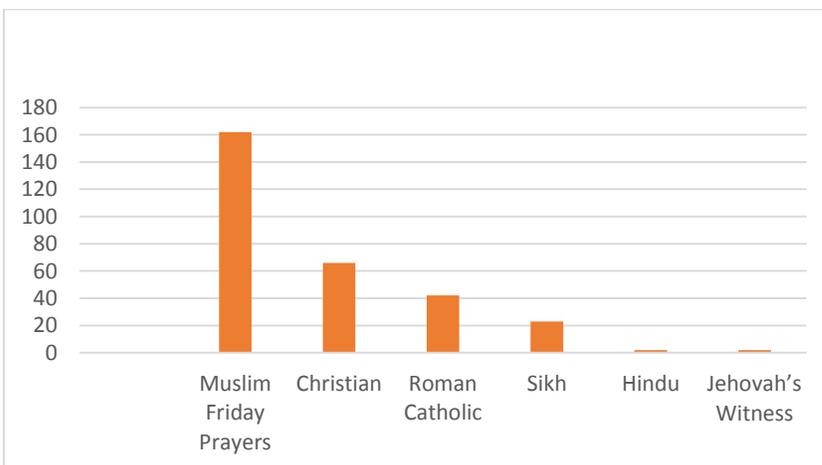
The Chaplaincy team work well to support prisoners with emotional issues as well as offering faith-based support and provision.

Attendance at corporate worship

2015-2016



2014-2015



Faiths in the prisoner population on 30th June 2016:

No religion	495
Muslim	261
Roman Catholic	180
Church of England	176
Christian	168
Sikh	50
Rastafarian	16
Mormon	11
Buddhist	10
Jewish	9
Atheist	7
Hindu	7
Not specified	7
Baptist	3
Eastern Orthodox	3
Greek Orthodox	2
Jehovah's Witness	2
Pagan	2
Protestant	2
Seventh Day Adventist	1
Church of Wales	1
Methodist	1
All others	5

6.15 Leadership and Management

The SMT continue to give clear vision and direction, leading by example. There are recognition of success and service events for staff and for prisoners and their families which impact positively on the self-esteem and motivation of all concerned.

The SMT work closely with prisoner representatives and the Prison Council to improve the prison. This level of consultation and the involvement of prisoners in identifying the issues and in the search for solutions is highly effective in securing commitment to the proposed strategies.

Many of the challenges faced by the SMT are externally imposed; in this reporting year the prison has had to implement redesignation as a resettlement prison and has had to receive prisoners from the Crown Courts and the Magistrates Courts of Wolverhampton, both of which impact upon the "churn" and prison population.

Staffing shortages and sickness absence levels require careful adjustment to the regime and often reduce the ability to provide access to purposeful activity or education. However, SMT strives to prioritise association. Staff shortages are a major issue for the prison, impacting on morale, wellbeing and efficiency. The Board has observed a number of incidents which have been managed extremely well.

SECTION 7 THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

7.1 General Duties of the Board:

Applications
 Attendance as observer at independent adjudications with the District Judge
 Observation of internal adjudications
 Attendance as observers at establishment committees
 CSU review boards
 Presentation of an induction programme to new members of staff
 Weekly rota visits
 Producing an annual report
 Meetings attended by the Board
 ATPR
 IMB Annual Conference
 Midlands Area Chairs Meeting
 Meetings within the prison

7.2 IMB statistics

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Recommended Complement of members	20	20	20	20	20	20
Number of members at start of period	11	8	8	10	17	14
Numbers of members at end of period	9	8	10	17	14	19
Number of members joining during period	2	1	6	11	2	6
Number of members leaving during period	4	1	6	3	5	1
Total number of visits to prison by members	412	263	327	340	468	573
Total number of Applications received	636	544	372		428	493
Total number of Segregation reviews attended	214	72	132	100	133	125
Number of Board meetings held	12	12	11	11	12	12
Date of Annual Team Performance Review		03.02.12	12.01.13	N/A	17.01.15	31.01.16

7.3 Application statistics

Code	Subject	2011/12	2012/13	13-14	2014/15	2015/16
A	Accommodation	23	17	-	18	30
B	Adjudications	6	5	-	5	4
C	Equality and Diversity (Inc. religion)	16	7	-	4	7
D	Education/employment/training(inc IEP)	25	20	-	13	10
E1	Family/visits (inc. mail and phone)	31	37	-	36	23
E2	Finance/pay	25	24	-	15	9
F	Food/kitchen related	13	13	-	11	5
G	Health related	87	68	-	58	85
H1	Property (within current establishment)	52	26	-	40	37
H2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	27	23	-	24	25
H3	Canteen, facilities, catalogue shopping, Argos	13	10	-	11	7
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat. etc.)	63	27	-	82	76
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns (inc bullying)	28	12	-	23	15
K	Transfers	20	28	-	20	16
L	Miscellaneous	115	55	-	26	62
	Total number of IMB applications	544	372	-	386	411
	Of total: No. of confidential access	33	85		42	82

A number of Applications received were submitted under the category of “Confidential Access to the Chair of the IMB”. None of these were considered to be appropriate as “Confidential Access Requests to the IMB” and all were returned to the individual concerned with a written explanation for their return, or were treated as basic Applications to the IMB and dealt with accordingly. The Board maintains its stance in not condoning the misuse of the Confidential Access process. Occasionally they were appropriate for the system but should have been addressed to the Director as they were about named members of staff.

7.4 The Chair’s Comments

During the year the Board recruited 6 new members, radically changing the mix of the Board by predominantly recruiting younger members. For a brief time, the Board achieved its full complement of 20 members, though having 8 members in probation provided challenges both for new and established members. I am grateful for the help and assistance that these new members received from prison staff at all levels and the on-the-job training provided by prisoners.

In a prison with the amount of churn and number of prisoners that Birmingham receives, it is important to be present on most days of the week and at times other than the standard working day. The Board is now able to achieve this. Board members visit all areas of the prison on a more regular basis than had been the case in recent years and they are approached by prisoners with issues that were not raised previously. This report is therefore written with the confidence that members have seen and experienced the issues that have been chosen for inclusion and response.

Again the Director and his senior managers were generous with their time and frank and open in their briefings of the Board. Both the current and the previous Controller and staff have been accessible and open with the Board. The Board’s rota reports are distributed across the prison and the Director expects that issues identified are responded to. Thus, members can see the impact of their monitoring and hopefully the observations, sometimes seen as critical, are used to improve the prison.

It is difficult in fewer than 32 pages to convey just how complex and challenging HMP Birmingham is. Board members observe and experience a range of events, from small acts of kindness by both staff and prisoners, to prisoners behaving incredibly badly, causing both physical destruction and harm to themselves and staff. Monitoring in this environment is not easy and the dedication and hard work by members of the IMB at HMP Birmingham is to be commended.

Rodger Lawrence
Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Birmingham

SECTION 8 **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

ATPR	annual team performance review
ACCT	assessment care in custody teamwork
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
CSU	care and separation unit
DART	drugs and alcohol recovery team
DIC	death in custody
FNC	first night centre
FNP	foreign national prisoner
HDC	home detention curfew
IBVS	internet based video solution
IDTS	integrated drug treatment strategy in prisons
IEP	incentives and earned privileges
MDT	mandatory drugs test
NPS	new psychoactive substances
OASys	offender assessment system
PPO	the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
Rule 45	remove from association either in own interest/protection or in the interest of good order or discipline
SMARG	segregation monitoring and review group
VP	vulnerable prisoner