



Annual Report

HMP Huntercombe

January – December 2015

Section 1: Statutory Role of the IMB

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State 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 prisoners records.

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Section 3: Description of the Prison

1. HMP Huntercombe is a Category C training prison for foreign national adult males who are of interest to the Home Office's Immigration Enforcement section.
2. The operational capacity is 430, split between 5 residential units, with a mixture of single and double cells. A residential accommodation refurbishment programme was started at the end of 2013 and is now complete; this included the installation of privacy locks on cells. In addition to the residential wings, the prison complex contains education facilities, a large indoor gym, a healthcare outpatient facility, workshops, gardens (polytunnels and open spaces), sports pitches, exercise yards, a visits hall for domestic visits, a cafeteria run by prisoners and a multi-faith room. Due to the rural location, access by public transport is limited.
3. Healthcare is provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. Education, training, learning and skills are provided by Milton Keynes College.

Section 4: Executive Summary

4.1 Overall judgment

4. Overall, the IMB find Huntercombe to be a well-managed and operated prison. The Governor, her staff and the other agencies work hard to ensure that the needs of the current Foreign National population are effectively catered for.
5. Unfortunately, this report identifies instances in which these efforts are hampered by the low staffing levels, budget cuts and government policy.
6. There are many points of commendation highlighted within this report and the Board believes that the prison is in a good position to address the areas for attention that are identified.
7. Following on from our 2014 report the good professional working relationship with the Governor, the prison staff and agency staff has continued and we receive good support and assistance from all.

4.2 Summary of key points

Summary of points of commendation

8. Equality and Inclusion
 - The prison has been working hard to improve the service and use of Language Line
 - The work of equalities team and their ability to spot and address negative trends to prevent them from escalating is good
9. Education, learning and skills
 - Creative solutions to enable Huntercombe to offer increased work based activities have been developed.
10. Healthcare and mental health
 - Good provision of Health awareness sessions for prisoners on a wide range of topics.
 - Efforts are being made to inform prisoners and staff about the harm that can arise from the use of NPS.
11. Purposeful activity
 - The prison have worked hard to minimise the impact of staff shortage and, where unavoidable, have managed to effectively 'spread' the restrictions fairly.
12. Resettlement
 - The Board acknowledge the severe cuts in funding for resettlement and recognise the efforts made by the Prison to overcome these cuts and do the best they can to support FNOs.
13. Safer custody
 - The continued vigilance of the Safer Prisons Team is good.
 - The general atmosphere within the establishment is considered relatively safe by prisoners.
 - The level of commitment to the new 'national' requirements of Violence Reduction and the work done on this by members of the SMT.

14. Care and separation unit (CSU)
 - Kind and considerate handling of prisoners with mental health issues, and those on ACCTs.
 - Staff to be commended for running a clean and efficient unit and endeavouring to facilitate a speedy return for prisoners to the Wings whenever possible.
15. Residential services
 - The prison continues to identify and manage issues in relation to accommodation, in spite of the significant difficulties imposed by low staffing numbers.
 - Improvements have been made within the kitchens.
 - Smoke free accommodation was well managed and implemented.
 - Implementation of the new core day was smooth and successful.
16. Staffing
 - The prison manage well with the staffing levels available to them
 - The restrictions to regime that are necessary are fairly shared

Summary of points for improvement

17. Equality and Inclusion
 - Responses to prisoner complaints should endeavour to be more specific.
 - Creative solutions to low staffing levels are required in order to ensure that Officers undertaking reviews, etc are independent of the event.
18. Education Learning and Skills
 - The prison must seek to be in a position to provide sufficient education, learning and skills opportunities for all FNOs who are willing and able to attend.
19. Healthcare and mental health
 - Provision for access to painkillers during the night should be investigated, for example, vending machines such are used in other establishments.
 - Better publicise the healthcare events that are run in order to increase prisoner attendance.
 - Improvements in the coordination and response by the NHS and Mental Healthcare in the cases of prisoners with extremely challenging self-harming behaviours.
20. Purposeful activity
 - Consider alternative means by which FNOs are able to gain access to own language items that are currently prohibited to be sent in, in order that this population does not continue to be disadvantaged in this respect.
 - Continue to seek ways to introduce more work based opportunities, including those that do not require level 3 English.
 - Continue to work with the Chaplaincy in order to ensure this area continues to transition to support the changing population.
21. Resettlement
 - Continue to explore alternative options for FNO resettlement support.
 - Seek alternative sources for own language newspapers for those who are unable to obtain these from the current provider.
 - Improve the timeliness and quality of information provided to FNOs regarding the high likelihood of their deportation.
 - Increase the information sharing between HOIE and prison to support the prison in their duty of care.

22. Safer custody
 - Recruitment of ACCT assessors should be addressed as a priority.
 - The level of resource available to assist prisoners being deported should be improved. Changes in the law during 2015 have resulted in many more prisoners being returned to their countries of origin with little or no support.
23. Care and separation unit
 - IMB should always be notified of the transfer of a prisoner to the CSU.
 - Seek to improve timeliness of mental health diagnosis and relocation of diagnosed prisoners to a more suitable location.
 - Seek creative solutions to staffing issues in order that a single member of staff is not on duty within the unit.
24. Residential services
 - Consider what could be put in place to decrease the likelihood of prisoner's restricted post being opened in error.
 - Consider how additional spaces for worship could be made available
 - Address the issue of prisoners being held in the transport van for extended periods.
25. Staffing
 - The shortage of staff should be addressed as a priority.

Section 5: Specific Areas

5.1 Equality and inclusion

26. It was noted within the 2014 report that it would be desirable for Language Line to be utilised more effectively. During 2015, the Governor has made concerted efforts to ensure this happens. Officers were issued with additional guidance and the budget spent on Language Line subsequently increased, indicating that it was indeed being more frequently used. However, the good efforts of the prison were hampered by the poor service offered by Language Line. Difficulties noted included sourcing a speaker of the required language, the poor quality of translation and the translator apparently being in a location/ situation that is less than conducive to dealing with often sensitive matters. The prison has attempted to address these problems via meetings with Language Line but the Board's observations confirm that the difficulties continue.
27. It was noted in 2014 that the prison were effective in noting negative trends early and 'nipping them in the bud' and this commendable work continues through 2015. For example, a rise in racism between Polish and Black prisoners towards the beginning of the year was noted. This had started to result in minor physical assaults which were addressed quickly and this trend did not continue.
28. During this year, the Board has raised concerns that the quality of response from the Prison to the Prisoner in relation to their Complaint or Discrimination Incident Report Form (DIRF) has been poor. In particular the failure to address the specific point of concern raised has been noted. Further to this, whilst it is acknowledged that the level of DIRFS at Huntercombe is low in comparison to many other Prisons, it was notable that all against prisoners were upheld and all bar one those against staff were overturned (an FNO submitted DIRF was partially upheld in December 2015).
29. Due to low staffing levels (and the prison having to adhere to the timeframe set out) there have been occasions where the officer that issued an IEP was also the officer responsible for subsequently investigating.

Points of commendation

- The prison has been working hard to improve the service and use of Language Line
- The work of equalities team and their ability to spot and address negative trends to prevent them from escalating is good

Points for improvement

- Responses to prisoner complaints should endeavour to be more specific.
- Creative solutions to low staffing levels are required in order to ensure that Officers undertaking reviews, etc are independent of the event.

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

30. As reported in the 2014 report, the vocational provision at Huntercombe continues to be a strong point. However, it is disappointing that the education funding received by the prison was reduced part way through the year, causing some courses to be cut or shortened. This resulted in more men (between 5-10) remaining on the wing during core hours and, as there are not sufficient staff on the wings at these times for them to be unlocked, these men were in their cells all day.
31. The prison has worked hard to develop further work based activities and made a good link with a local charity to 'up cycle' donated items.

Points of commendation

- Creative solutions to enable Huntercombe to offer increased work based activities have been developed.

Points for improvement

- The prison must seek to be in a position to provide sufficient education, learning and skills opportunities for all FNOs who are willing and able to attend.

5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health

32. The good provision of preventative health screening and health awareness events noted during 2014 has continued through 2015. For example, there was an information event held in January but unfortunately, this did not seem to be attended by as many prisoners as had been anticipated.
33. Language Line continues to be routinely used within the healthcare setting.
34. Within the 2014 report, it was noted that a whole-prison approach to tackling the incidences of Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) entering the prison is required. The prison has made good efforts to address this issue and ran a staff NPS awareness training session that the IMB attended, finding it to be informative and well attended by staff. Additionally, prisoners were able to access information via both CARATs and also Healthcare. Despite this, during 2015 the prison experienced an increasing number of incidents linked to prisoner use of NPS and also of bullying linked with them. This situation was exacerbated by there being no method available to the prison to detect these substances. It is noted that NPS trained drug dogs are planned but were not in place during this period.
35. There have been a number of healthcare cases during the year that have been particularly challenging for the prison to deal with. One was that of an individual who elected to undertake a prolonged hunger strike. Overall, the Board observed that this situation was dealt with sensitively by the prison who did eventually manage to achieve a break through with the individual. However, this was very late in the day and the Board feels that this very difficult and upsetting situation raised questions over the response of the NHS and Mental Healthcare to such situations. Another case involved a prisoner who had already inflicted a number of serious self-harm injuries. He made threats to self-harm again which were not picked up on by the prison, despite there being a care plan in place. The prisoner subsequently seriously self-harmed and ended up in hospital again. Following this, the prison undertook an RLI in order to understand what had gone wrong.
36. The Board was aware of a number of prisoners who were in pain during the night and unable to access pain relief.

37. The introduction of the constant watch cell created situations in which there were, on occasions, conflict between healthcare and the prison. The Board noted instances where healthcare believe a prisoner should remain on constant watch but the prison question this decision. When the constant watch cell is required, the additional staffing requirement has at times caused difficulties for the Prison.
38. The Board noted that mental healthcare did not go and see prisoners who have been placed on constant watch every day and our enquiries revealed that this was due to limited staff numbers.
39. At one point during the year, there were two prisoners on bed watch at the same time. This put significant strain on the staffing levels as both individuals required 2 Officers each and the regime across the whole prison was significantly affected.

Points of commendation

- Good provision of Health awareness sessions for prisoners on a wide range of topics.
- Efforts are being made to inform prisoners and staff about the harm that can arise from the use of NPS.

Points for improvement

- Provision for access to painkillers during the night should be investigated, for example, vending machines such are used in other establishments.
- Better publicise the healthcare events that are run in order to increase prisoner attendance.
- Improvements in the coordination and response by the NHS and Mental Healthcare in the cases of prisoners with extremely challenging self-harming behaviours.

5.4 Purposeful activity (including work)

40. The gym continued to be extremely popular with the FNOs. However, closures due to insufficient staffing, particularly at weekends, became increasingly common as the year progressed.
41. As noted in the 2014 report, the Chaplaincy continued to provide a good range of religious and non-denominational services and events which were well attended. However, the prison itself recognised that with only a single paid position within the Chaplaincy, this is a tall order. In addition to the Chaplain, there are a number of sessional posts but as the religions of the current population are represented in different percentages (increase in Catholic and Muslim prisoners) than was the case with previous populations, this approach has not been working to best effect for the current FNO population. A chaplaincy audit identified that additional admin support is required. Therefore, permanent part time staff will be recruited to replace the current sessional arrangements. As there is no additional money available, the hourly sessional money will be converted into salaries.
42. The gardens continue to provide excellent opportunities. The work done here was recognized by a Butler Trust award for one of the staff members which was awarded (alongside another award for a Huntercombe member of staff) during a well attended visit from the Butler Trust ambassadors.
43. The prison anticipated and dealt well with the change in government policy in September that allowed books to be sent in by relatives. However, the rules surrounding this could be seen to disadvantage the FNO population since items such

as puzzle books were not allowed to be sent in and are very difficult to obtain via other approved methods in languages other than English.

44. The range of work opportunities available is limited, exacerbated by the requirement for level 3 English for some of the opportunities. This then decreases the availability and choice for those FNOs who have not attained that.

Points of commendation

- The prison has worked hard to minimise the impact of staff shortage and, where unavoidable, have managed to effectively 'spread' the restrictions fairly.

Points for improvement

- Consider alternative means by which FNOs are able to gain access to own language items that are currently prohibited to be sent in, in order that this population does not continue to be disadvantaged in this respect.
- Continue to seek ways to introduce more work-based opportunities, including those that do not require level 3 English.
- Continue to work with the Chaplaincy in order to ensure this area continues to transition to support the changing population.

5.5 Resettlement

45. The Board's concerns that insufficient funding would result in the Huntercombe FNO population not receiving the level of resettlement care that is afforded to the general prison population were reported in our 2014 report. Whilst the Board commend the prison and recognise the enormous effort they make to support prisoners who will be deported (majority of FNOs at Huntercombe), it is clear that they are hampered in this endeavour by the significant lack of funding.
46. During 2015, there was a loss of the £20,000 that funded the St Giles Trust (provides advice and guidance and also an NVQ in advice and guidance for Prisoners which is very useful to both the prisoner and the prison) and also the £9000 required for Migrant help (advice and guidance). The forgiveness project and Geese Theatre were also completely cut.
47. The bonuses available to agencies that are successful in preventing prisoners from reoffending are not available to those supporting FNOs as the future outcome of those released is unknown.
48. The primary source of information left available to the FNOs is the 'TRACKs' online service (similar category of support as St Giles Trust and Migrant Help). However, whilst the men are informed about this, the advice it provides is so general that it is not particularly useful.
49. The Board feels strongly that FNOs at Huntercombe are 'falling between the cracks' as they would be able to access resettlement if not at an FNO only prison.
50. Access to own-language newspapers was also an issue for certain nationalities/ countries. This important method of keeping in touch with events in the country to which they will be deported was denied to some of the less represented nationalities as the small local newsagent was not able to obtain them due to the low numbers required.
51. It was recognised by the prison that the delivery of information and paperwork relating to deportation needed to be improved and so a process was put in place that determined 'best practice' for delivering this news. Board questioning of both FNOs and staff to date suggests this is working adequately for deportation information.

52. The Board note that it is not clear whether the FNOs are fully aware that they are coming to Huntercombe in order to be deported. This lack of understanding may be an issue if they wish to appeal the decision due to the short timescales available for such an appeal. If there is no intent to appeal, the earlier the fact of deportation is acknowledged and accepted by the FNO, the easier it will be for them personally to make the adjustment and put things in place for their families, etc. At the beginning of the year, this fact of deportation was well covered in induction and prisoner forums were held. However, as the year progressed, the Board noted that the support declined and observations of induction sessions found that there is little to no mention of this fact.
53. The Board has noted that on occasions, there was a lack of information sharing between Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) and the Prison. This meant that the Prison were unaware of issues that may impact on the FNO and require additional monitoring or support from the prison.

Points of commendation

- The Board acknowledge the severe cuts in funding for resettlement and recognise the efforts made by the Prison to overcome these cuts and do the best they can to support FNOs.

Points for improvement

- Continue to explore alternative options for FNO resettlement support.
- Seek alternative sources for own language newspapers for those who are unable to obtain these from the current provider.
- Improve the timeliness and quality of information provided to FNOs regarding the high likelihood of their deportation.
- Increase the information sharing between HOIE and prison to support the prison in their duty of care.

5.6 Safer Custody

54. The Board continued to make regular attendance at the monthly Safer Prisons Meeting. This is usually well attended by a wide variety of staff from around the prison estate. Prisoners are also well represented at the meeting with Listeners (trained by the local Samaritans) and Insiders. The Board is always impressed with the way the prisoners are welcomed and encouraged to participate in these meetings, providing an extremely important insight into problems amongst the prison population. The standard of statistics presented at the meeting is constantly being improved and good discussion takes place as to their continued relevance and ways they can be presented for greater understanding.
55. As was the case in the 2014 report, there continues to be difficulties in recruiting ACCT (Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) assessors from within the current prison staff.
56. Members of the Board attend many ACCT reviews and the good level of commitment and understanding, particularly amongst senior officers, has continued to be maintained. This is a particularly difficult and sensitive area of prison responsibility but the continued vigilance and handling by all those involved in the Safer Prisons team has maintained the high level of the establishment's 'Duty of Care'. It is considered by the Board that prisoners feel relatively safe within the environment.
57. The quality of reporting within the ACCT documents still remains an area that continues to require improvement.

58. The diversity of the prison population and the difficulties this creates continues to test the translation services and whilst there has been some effort to improve the use of the language Line facilities (as discussed in Section 5.1) this is far from perfect.
59. There has been considerable discussion at the Safer Prisons Meetings over the reporting year to try to ensure that the process of deportation is handled as sensitively as possible. The old system of paperwork getting to prisoners individual solicitors was not helpful, particularly bearing in mind the sometimes very short window of appeal. These documents are now e-mailed in a bid to ensure as little time as possible is wasted in transit. Much work has also been done during the year to ensure that officers are kept fully informed by HOIE of impending deportations so they can make sure that prisoners in the final stages of the deportation process can be supported. And whilst many prisoners are happy to be returning to their countries of origin those with strong concerns maybe due to family ties etc. are extremely vulnerable during that time.
60. The Board continues to have concerns at how little support (nationally) there is for prisoners in this situation, particularly legal support. Whilst the prison has fought hard to maintain the help of charities such as Migrant Aid etc. these are woefully inadequate for the scale of the issues and again adds to the concerns these prisoners have. There is clearly a will within this prison to do more but they are hampered by resource.
61. A great deal of work has been done during this reporting year on Violence Reduction and whilst there has been some increases in tension between various groups of prisoners, the zero tolerance to violence of any kind within Huntercombe is taken very seriously by staff. The highest levels of violence are within the Mountbatten Wings and it is hoped that once the newly refurbished Rich Wing comes into commission in April (2016) pressure will be taken off the population in this area. The resulting increase in the availability of single cells should also help to improve the situation.

Points of Commendation

- The continued vigilance of the Safer Prisons Team is good.
- The general atmosphere within the establishment is considered relatively safe by prisoners.
- The level of commitment to the new 'national' requirements of Violence Reduction and the work done on this by members of the SMT.

Points for improvement

- Recruitment of ACCT assessors should be addressed as a priority.
- The level of resource available to assist prisoners being deported should be improved. Changes in the law during 2015 have resulted in many more prisoners being returned to their countries of origin with little or no support.

5.7 Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision

62. The Board recognises the diligent and patient work undertaken by the majority of the staff in the Care and Supervision Unit (CSU) to ensure that all prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. We are usually (but not always) informed by staff when someone is relocated to the CSU.
63. The Board also recognises that the prison makes every effort to hold prisoners in CSU for the minimum amount of time possible. However, in this regard they are frequently thwarted due to the fact that of the 18 prisoners held in CSU for periods in excess of 10 days during 2015, the majority were there because they refused to

move back to the Wings into a double cell. Despite various incentives being offered by the Prison this has proved a difficult issue to manage and has resulted in some inmates of the CSU being reduced to a Basic regime and others have eventually been transferred to other establishments. This was an ongoing issue throughout the year, worsened in part due to the Wing by Wing refurbishment programme which necessitated additional doubling up of cells whilst any one wing was closed. Even following the completion of the refurbishment works, the Governor was unable to reopen the final Wing due to staff shortages.

64. Staffing pressures have resulted in only a single member of staff being present in the CSU at times throughout the year.
65. Through the course of 2015 there have been three cases of Prisoners held in the CSU who were finally diagnosed with serious mental health issues. In two of these cases it took over 12 months for this diagnosis by the Mental Health team and psychiatrists to be made. In all these cases attempts were made by the individuals to seriously self-harm. In two of the cases the men were eventually deported and in the remaining case, a bed was finally found for the prisoner in a prison with In-patient facilities. In addition to these 3 prisoners, there have been rare occasions when a prisoner on an open ACCT has been transferred to the CSU and others have been placed on an ACCT whilst being held there. In most cases, the Board have been satisfied that their needs are well catered for whilst in the CSU.
66. The Board would like to highly commend the prompt actions of two Officers, who managed to cut down a prisoner who had attempted to self-harm via a neck ligature whilst in the shower in CSU.
67. The unit is kept clean and tidy. Electric sockets were fitted in 2015 in all the cells in CSU. 3 of the cells were already ligature free and following the suicide attempt the showers are now also ligature free.
68. The Board attends Prison disciplinary adjudications on a random basis. There were a total of 674 during 2015. Of these, 6 cases were referred to the Independent Adjudicator (IA), excluding those prisoners transferring with outstanding IAs from other establishments. A total of 7 cases were remanded to a police Investigation.
69. During this period, Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) reviews were rescheduled to be routinely held on a Friday morning. This regularity has made it far easier for both the IMB and Healthcare to plan for and has resulted in attendance by healthcare being more consistent.
70. The Special Accommodation cell has only been used for "Strip and Search" and very occasionally for short periods of time (minutes not hours) with staff present. The door has not been locked.
71. In the course of 2015 one of the regular cells in the CSU has been adapted to become a Constant Watch cell, but whilst physically located in the CSU it is not under the remit of the CSU staff. It can however, if necessary, still be used as a CSU cell if not occupied.
72. Two discrimination Report Forms (DIRFs) were submitted from prisoners located within the CSU against individual staff members there.
73. The Language Line is used regularly but The Board has witnessed on several occasions the wasted time and frustration this frequently creates while the operator tries to locate a particular language speaker. On occasion it is apparent that the translator is attending to domestic tasks whilst simultaneously translating for the Adjudication.

Points of commendation

- Kind and considerate handling of prisoners with mental health issues, and those on ACCTs.
- Staff to be commended for running a clean and efficient unit and endeavouring to facilitate a speedy return for prisoners to the Wings whenever possible.

Points for improvement

- IMB should always be notified of the transfer of a prisoner to the CSU.
- Seek to improve timeliness of mental health diagnosis and relocation of diagnosed prisoners to a more suitable location.
- Seek creative solutions to staffing issues in order that a single member of staff is not on duty within the unit.

5.8 Residential services (including accommodation, food, catering and kitchens)

74. Huntercombe continues to have a good atmosphere and has a high level of cleanliness with well-kept grounds.
75. The wing refurbishment was completed during the beginning of the year and although the electricity supply to Segregation cells was not included within the refurbishment budget, the Prison was able to find the money to complete this.
76. The refurbished wing remained closed throughout the year as there were not enough staff to run a full regime if it were to be opened. This has done nothing to address the 'doubling up' (housing 2 prisoners in a modified single cell) that the Board reported as a point of concern during 2014.
77. Notable instances of unrest on the wings have been attributed by staff and prisoners as being the result of the additional numbers on wings, exacerbated by the curtailed regime (due to staff shortages).
78. The cell temperature continues to be an issue with some being very hot and others very cold. This again caused issues regarding provision of fans in the summer particularly as there was an allowance placed of only a single fan within a double cell.
79. An external assessment of the catering provided a green rating in all areas in January. However, during the year, there were recurrent issues with equipment and the flooring. The floor initially had a basic 'patch and repair' but couldn't be fixed properly until it had dried out completely which required a wait for the warmer weather. During the summer, a temporary kitchen was put in place within the closed wing and this enabled the floor to be completely replaced to a good standard.
80. By the summer, it had been deemed necessary for the Kitchens to receive support from the regional catering manager (following the issue with the Ramadan food boxes- see below) and this enabled many deficiencies to be noted and subsequently addressed. There is now a daily log book giving a proper record of checks which will be checked daily by the duty Governors and by the Head of residency weekly. A review of the kitchens undertaken in November noted the many improvements.
81. Staffing issues were also prevalent in the kitchens as staff left and despite advertising, they were unable to recruit.
82. Kitchen equipment continues to be a concern, for example, there is no back up freezer provision should the current freezer break.

83. The new core day was introduced across all wings by the end of March, bringing Huntercombe fully in line with Benchmarking. This resulted in more limited activities at the end of the day but slightly longer for association in the afternoon. All wings were unlocked over lunch time.
84. A new 'safer cell' on one of the wings and a constant watch cell in Segregation were implemented. The introduction of the constant watch cell seemed to have the unintended and unexpected consequence of increasing threats from prisoners to self-harm due to a perceived desire to be located there.
85. During the 2015 Ramadan period, 21 Prisoners out of 70 who were in receipt of the Ramadan food boxes reported having symptoms of mild diarrhea. No one wing was affected in particular and no cause was identified. However, the Environment Agency (EA) investigation noted that the way in which the boxes were packed meant that the ability for them to retain heat was lessened. Subsequently, Huntercombe received visits from the area catering manager approximately once per week. New Ramadan boxes were purchased for 2016 at a cost of £250 each. As 150 were required, this used a large proportion of the equipment budget.
86. A two week plan for the Christmas regime was carefully considered and put in place. As Christmas fell on a Friday in 2015, the staffing also had to accommodate the requirements of Muslim Prayers which also occur on a Friday.
87. Carillion failed to provide an adequate service regarding the stores. When they initially took over the contract they requested that the Prison continued to run aspects of it as they were unable to recruit sufficient staff. Huntercombe was able to support this for a time but after 4 months, this has had to stop. Carillion did subsequently manage to recruit and train staff but the service continued to be inadequate with impacts on the wings such as lack of toilet paper, etc.
88. Overall, the range and adequacy of the food is considered to be good. However, the Board have found that the vegan options are less satisfactory in terms of taste.
89. The new policy regarding smoke free accommodation was very well thought through and managed. A series of meetings were held with all relevant stakeholders and the IMB were invited and attended. Whilst the best option for air quality would have been to have a complete wing designated as smoke free, this was not considered the best option for Huntercombe. This was because a lot of effort is made to ensure that there is a good mix of nationalities on each wing and there are certain nationalities who smoke more than others. Therefore, The Ground floor of three wings have been determined to be sufficient to accommodate all of the known non-smokers. This will enable a continued good mix of nationalities to be maintained. Moves were to start early in January 2016.
90. The Board has noted concerns over prisoner movement vans waiting outside the prison for long periods of time. This is often whilst cells are cleared which can be due to insufficient staff numbers but also the fact that Huntercombe is now running much closer to capacity and the 'overbooking' policy used by the Population management unit (PMU) appears to be sending too many prisoners. If a prisoner was not allocated a cell straight away, they were held temporarily in reception or Segregation cells.
91. During the year, the Board raised concerns regarding restricted post being opened accidentally- predominantly by weekend staff. This was been acknowledged by the prison but little to no improvement in this area was noted by the Board.
92. During the autumn the DHL Catalogue who supply the canteen were unable to supply items to prisoners. This was not reported back to the prisoners who understandably made reorders. Monies were not refunded for extended periods of

time, causing great concern and difficulty to the prisoners concerned. There appeared to be a complete breakdown of communications between DHL, the Prison and the FNOs.

93. There was no suitable space for Muslim Friday prayers. The prison has been using the gym but this is not ideal and it is not possible to split in to two groups as there is only one Imam. The prison has considered using the Visits hall, and may apply for the money to build a space but at the end of 2015, there was no remedy decided upon.
94. There is no space for the Rastafarian worship. However, this concern has fallen by the wayside as there has not been anyone in place to lead this service, a point picked up by the Board from prisoners on a number of occasions. The prison have made several attempts to recruit but with no success.
95. Issues relating to the transfer of property from other prisons remain the source of a significant number of applications to the Board and cause great distress to individual FNOs. Huntercombe have been successful in utilising the skills and dedication of one of the FNOs who has been able to achieve success in a number of cases. Notwithstanding, the Board recognise that this is a Prison estate wide issues that requires a coordinated solution.

Points for commendation

- The prison continues to identify and manage issues in relation to accommodation, in spite of the significant difficulties imposed by low staffing numbers.
- Improvements have been made within the kitchens.
- Smoke free accommodation was well managed and implemented.
- Implementation of the new core day was smooth and successful.

Points for improvement

- Consider what could be put in place to decrease the likelihood of prisoner's restricted post being opened in error.
- Consider how additional spaces for worship could be made available
- Address the issue of prisoners being held in the transport van for extended periods.

Section 6: Additional Areas

6.1 Staffing

96. The Huntercombe IMB feel strongly that the situation relating to staffing levels should be highlighted within a separate section. Low staffing levels can be seen to be a theme through every section of this report. Whilst it is recognised that this will be an issue for all prisons and that relatively speaking, Huntercombe is in a better position regarding staffing numbers than many other establishments, it remains a great source of concern to the Board.
97. Within the 2014 report it was noted that whilst there were staffing shortages, the prison had mostly been able to maintain a full regime. However, during 2015, it was with disappointment that the Board must report that the staff shortages had reached such a low that this could no longer be said.
98. Notwithstanding the above, we would like to make it clear that we recognise the excellent work the Prison do, both in terms of the hard work of the dedicated staff

that they do have and in terms of thoughtful implementation of restricted regimes when they are a necessity, such that the impact is shared 'fairly' across all Prisoners and essential services continue to be available.

99. The management team have been working hard to increase recruitment although this remains a challenge. The Prison is located in an area which is not well served by public transport and has high cost of living. These factors, coupled with the changes in government pay structure which saw some staff taking a reduction in salary at the same time as a promotion in responsibilities and also trainee (POELT) officers were being recruited at lower levels of pay do not make recruitment an easy task.
100. Difficulty in recruiting has been impacted by a number of staff being sent on detached duty to Bullingdon. This has all resulted in a situation in which any increase in staff requirement within the prison impacts across the whole establishment. For example, it is common for Deportations and Hospital Trips to be cancelled when the Constant Watch cell is in use due to the increase in requirement for staff to cover this duty.
101. Staffing pressures were particularly apparent during the summer months when more staff are on annual leave and less staff are willing to volunteer for overtime.
102. We have concern regarding flexibility for the unexpected in general and also concern for effects on staff morale.
103. The difficulties associated with shortage of staff have been particularly apparent in the Prison's ability to provide adequate purposeful activity opportunities.

Points for commendation

- The prison manage well with the staffing levels available to them
- The restrictions to regime that are necessary are fairly shared

Points for Improvement

- The shortage of staff should be addressed as a priority.

Section 7 The Work Of The Independent Monitoring Board

7.1 Board Statistics

Recommended complement of board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period (01-01-15)	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period (31-12-15)	14
Number of members joining within the reporting period	6
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	383
Total number of segregation reviews (adjudications) held	674
Total number of segregation reviews (adjudications) attended	63

7.2 Application Statistics

Code	Subject	2012	2013	2014	2015
A	Accommodation	23	10	15	14
B	Adjudications	14	5	7	6
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)	5	16	6	15
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP	7	29	14	19
E1	Family/visits inc mail & phone	7	11	10	9
E2	Finance/pay	3	1	10	13
F	Food/kitchen related	19	9	10	3
G	Health related	14	21	20	24
H1	Property (within current establishment)	37	11	14	10
H2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	6	16	37	16
H3	Canteen, facilities, catalogue shopping, Argos	4	9	6	9
I	Sentence related (inc, HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat, etc)	26	41	35	23
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc bullying	10	28	14	18
K	Transfers	11	20	5	6
L	Miscellaneous	11	25	46	21
	Total number of IMB applications	244	252	249	206

Section 8 – Glossary of establishment-related terms and abbreviations used in this report

ACCT	Assessment care in custody teamwork
CSU	Care and Separation Unit
FNO	Foreign National Offender
GOoD	Good Order or Discipline
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HOIE	Home Office Immigration Enforcement
IA	Independent Adjudicator
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
NPS	Novel Psychoactive Substances
OMU	Offender Management Unit
SMS	Substance Misuse Service