



HMP BEDFORD

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

2015 - 2016

1 The Statutory Role of the IMB

1.1.1 The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison 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.

1.1.2 The Board is specifically charged to:

- 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;
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has;
- 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.

1.1.3 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.

1.2 DIVERSITY STATEMENT

1.2.1 HMP Bedford Independent Monitoring Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity that encompasses and promotes interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds, including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age. The Board recognises that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cut across such social and cultural categories as, for example, do mental health and literacy.

1.2.2 The Board integrates this approach to diversity within its recruitment and development practices, to increase its repertoire of skills and to promote awareness among its members of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within the prison.

1.2.3 All members of the IMB at HMP Bedford endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is accessible to everyone within the establishment, regardless of their background or social situation. The Board monitors the experiences and interactions between staff, prisoners and visitors, to establish that these are appropriately fair and without prejudice.

1.3 REPORTING PERIOD

1.3.1 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016

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3 Description of the Prison

3.1.1 HMP Bedford is a Category B Prison with an Operational Capacity of 506, (322 being the Certified Normal Accommodation). A busy 'local' (now Resettlement) prison, HMP Bedford takes both sentenced and remanded prisoners, mainly from courts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

3.1.2 Wings A, B and C radiate from a central hub and were largely built in the 1850s:

- A wing holds up to 146 prisoners (all in double cells built for one man, with the exception of 39 cells furnished as single cells for high risk prisoners and one larger three-man cell);
- B wing holds up to 80 prisoners (Double cells and one four-man cell). Above ground (B2 to B4) this wing accommodates 'enhanced' prisoners and kitchen workers; underground, B1 is the Support and Separation Unit with six furnished and two unfurnished cells, a separate exercise yard, shower and adjudication room, also used for solitary confinement Reviews;
- C Wing has 109 places. Above ground, C2 and C3 constitute the First Night Centre consisting predominantly of two-man cells, but including also two four-man cells, one of which may be used for vulnerable prisoners when the vulnerable prisoners (VP) unit in F wing is full. Listeners have a dedicated cell on C2. C4 remains as a normal location. Underground, C1 is the Resettlement Unit, accommodating what are effectively super-enhanced prisoners.
- E wing, with 41 beds, was until February 2016 the Drug Recovery and Support Unit, for prisoners who are intent on reducing their drug intake.

3.1.3 The following facilities are accommodated in separate buildings on the congested site, within a perimeter wall that is somewhat compromised by the proximity of buildings on the outside:

- F wing was built in the 1800s and houses a 30-place Vulnerable Prisoner Unit;
- D wing was built in 1992 and houses a 100-prisoner Drug Treatment wing;
- The Healthcare Centre, built in 1992, houses an Inpatient Unit on the first floor comprising nine cells, a four-bedded dormitory, a gated cell, a safer cell and an anti-ligature cell. Consulting rooms, treatment rooms and a pharmacy are on the ground floor;
- The gatehouse, built in 1992, houses some offices, a Visits Hall and the Reception suite;
- Large multi-faith room and chaplaincy offices on the top floor with access through to C wing;
- The gymnasium (ground floor) shares a building with Education and the Library (1st floor);
- Maintenance workshops;

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- Kitchens;
 - Administration, with limited teaching workshops on the ground floor.

3.2 CONTRACTORS AND AGENCIES DELIVERING SERVICES TO THE PRISON

Table 1: Contractors and Agencies

Deliverer	Service
Ark H Handling	Employability skills out in the community
Bedford College	NVQ Level 1 in Catering
Bedford Samaritans	Selection training
Bold Moves	Support for veterans and perpetrators of domestic violence
Burner Systems Ltd	Contract for assembly of Gas hob components
Carrillion	Works department
Glazparts LTD	Light packing workshop (F wing)
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller support group	Support for travelling communities in custody
Job Centre Plus	Benefits, job searches and the Work Programme
Langley House Trust	Housing and debt advice service
Milton Keynes College	Library
National Careers Service	Assessment of educational skills and training
National Probation Service	Case management for high-risk prisoners
Northamptonshire Healthcare Trust	Healthcare
Ormiston Trust	Managing the Visitor Centre, Creche in Visits Hall, Parenting Programme and Story Book Dads
PeoplePlus	Education contractor
Philex Electronics	Light packing workshop on F wing
Prison Fellowship	Bible classes, weekly workshop
Royal British Legion	Support for ex-servicemen and families
St Giles Trust	Employment and training for prisoners on release, Resettlement support
Sodexo	Case management for low and medium-risk prisoners, contractor for Resettlement services
Westminster Drugs Project	Drug team

4 Summary, Questions and Recommendations

4.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We observe that HMP Bedford is not performing adequately in the key areas of safety for prisoners and staff, respectful treatment of prisoners, purposeful activity and resettlement.

There has been a sharp decline in safety at Bedford Prison this year, particularly from January onwards. There have been increases in serious assaults on prisoners and staff along with the incidence of self-harm. There were three deaths in custody, two of which are awaiting inquests. There has been an alarming rise in prisoners attempting to hang themselves towards the end of the reporting period, which prompted an urgent letter of concern from the Board to the Prisons Minister. Some officers report that they feel unsafe.

Staff shortages have persisted throughout the reporting period, along with high levels of staff sickness. This meant that the prison was unable to deliver the benchmark regime throughout the whole of the reporting period. The prison regime was severely curtailed due to staff shortages at the start of the period and has been reduced further. Wings now face rotational lock-up whereby they are locked down for set periods to ensure that no single wing bears the brunt of the staffing shortages. Prisoners find the regime unpredictable and frustrating. They need to know when they will be let out of their cells in order to perform basic tasks like showering, making phone calls and accessing services. Any incident can lead to further time locked up as officers are drawn away from the wings. The frustrations of spending extended time locked-up increases the prevalence of such incidents. Some prisoners have requested that the prison be closed because the staffing levels are insufficient. Staffing projections indicate that the shortages are likely to get worse in coming months. The recruitment and retention of staff is now beyond crisis point and requires urgent action from the Prisons Minister.

The prison management have been unable to stem the flow of drugs and mobile phones into the establishment. Prisoners have claimed that some staff are complicit in this trade. There has been an upsurge in gangs bullying prisoners for their canteen and trading so-called New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as spice. Prisoners have been used as guinea pigs for new batches with unpredictable consequences for their physical and mental health. Some prisoners become hopelessly indebted and seek to escape the reach of others by damaging their cells and seeking segregation. Given the high levels of boredom associated with being locked in a cell for lengthy periods, it is unsurprising that there is a high demand for drugs and mobile phones.

Despite the staffing shortages the prison remains overcrowded, averaging a population of 475 men compared to the Certified Normal Accommodation figure of 322. On average 276 prisoners are sharing a cell designed for one with 312 prisoners typically living in crowded conditions. Of particular concern is the continuing high numbers of vulnerable prisoners accommodated on main wings. These are prisoners who are typically under threat of violence from other prisoners and their location on the main wings is an unacceptable risk to their physical and mental well-being. Purposeful activities like education and workshops are frequently running with unfilled places despite the high numbers of prisoners who are locked in their cells with nothing constructive to do.

The privatisation of the works contract, now managed by Carillion, and the Resettlement functions, now managed by Sodexo, have led to worse outcomes for prisoners. There are frequent shortages of basic provisions such as clothing, toiletries, cleaning products, bedding and TVs. Shortages are exacerbated by prisoners hoarding these items in the fear that they will run out again. Officers seem unable to overcome these issues and bear the brunt of the frustrations that build up. Since privatisation, the staffing of Resettlement has been reduced. As previously, charities are sub-contracted to provide the service but they have been unable to show that they are hitting the targets for settled accommodation and employment, training or education on release. Placing ex-offenders in suitable accommodation on release remains extremely difficult due to shortages outside the prison. The designation of Bedford as a Resettlement prison seems laughable given the meagre resources assigned to this function.

Whilst it seems clear that the organisation and operation of the prison can be greatly improved, the numerous serious problems should be viewed within the national context of large cuts to the prison budget, which have inevitable consequences when the prison population continues to rise. In some respects, it is unfair to judge harshly those running the prison when the prescribed system is failing overall. The morale of officers and prisoners is as low as it has ever been and is not helped by persistent rumours that Bedford is in line for closure. The cancellation of major planned investment in the heating and windows along with ministerial statements indicating the closure of Victorian prisons have been particularly disappointing and unhelpful in this regard.

The Board wishes to make clear that, despite the criticisms in the report, it regards Bedford as a valuable local prison, well located with good transport connections. Prisoners particularly value the ability of friends and family to visit. It is confident that significant improvements can be made if the systemic issues around recruitment and retention of staff and the performance of some of the external contracts are addressed.

4.2 POINTS OF COMMENDATION AND CONCERN

Points of commendation

- a) Healthcare is generally of a good standard. (5.3.1)
- b) Prisoners on F wing engage actively and constructively in Education. (5.2.4)
- c) The use of trusted prisoners to run the coffee shop in the visits hall is a welcome development along with the ability to provide laundry qualifications. (5.4.3, 5.4.6)
- d) There have been improvements to the privacy of the showering and phone call arrangements in the SSU. (5.7.5)
- e) Staff in the SSU remain professional, fair and sympathetic in difficult circumstances. (5.7.2)
- f) The move towards smoke-free landings has passed without incident and been well managed. (5.8.9)
- g) The management of the gym represents an excellent example of how to interact positively with prisoners and encourage them to improve. (6.6.1)
- h) Some improvements have been made to the reception area and noticeboards. (5.8.8, 6.8.1)

Points of concern

- a) Black and ethnic minority prisoners are more likely to be disciplined and less likely to be given privileges than other prisoners. (5.1.1)
- b) There is a lack of special provisions for young and old prisoners and those who don't speak English. (5.1.2, 5.1.3)
- c) Places in Education are regularly unfilled (5.2.1)
- d) There is no adequate facility for caring for prisoners with severe personality disorders. (5.3.1)
- e) Prisoners held under segregation conditions who are at risk of harming themselves are often placed in Healthcare. This can be the source of significant disruption. (5.3.3, 5.7.6)
- f) There is insufficient Purposeful Activity for the current population of prisoners; too many of the available activities are under-used and they are typically mundane in nature. (5.4)
- g) There is no information available for assessing the outcomes for prisoners when they leave HMP Bedford and it is likely that targets for settled accommodation and employment, training and education on release are not being met. (5.5.3, 5.5.7)

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- h) There has been a sharp decline in the safety of prisoners. There are more serious assaults on prisoners and staff, incidents of self-harm and attempted hangings. (5.6.10)
 - i) Cell bells are not responded to in a timely fashion. (5.6.5)
 - j) Lessons are not learned following deaths in custody. (5.6.9)
 - k) New prisoners are too often located away from the designated First Night Centre in dirty cells without bedding and clothing. (5.6.12)
 - l) Prisoners are concerned about a lack of private spaces for their discussions with OMU staff and the mental health team on the main wings. Reception interviews lack privacy and it is difficult for IMB members to engage in confidential discussions with prisoners in segregation. (5.3.2, 5.6.3, 5.7.6, 6.5.2)
 - m) The segregation unit remains an unpleasant, dungeon-like, underground environment. (5.7.5)
 - n) The prison is persistently overcrowded. (5.8.2)
 - o) Some cells are unfit for habitation during cold spells due to inadequate heating. Showers often run cold. The education department is cold in winter. During summer, the prison retains heat and in a number of areas the heat is unbearable. (5.8.3, 5.2.4)
 - p) There have been continual shortages of clothing, bedding, towels, TVs, toiletries and cleaning products. (5.8.4)
 - q) Many areas of the prison are unacceptably dirty. (5.8.5)
 - r) The prison regime is unpredictable. (6.2.1)
 - s) There is no drugs strategy. (6.2.2)
 - t) Continual changes in leadership have weakened management processes and authority. (6.4.1)
 - u) There are often delays in transferring property from Reception to the main wings. (6.5.3)
 - v) There is no reliable system for processing applications from prisoners to access services. (6.6.2)
 - w) The security department have been unable to limit the flow of drugs and mobile phones into the prison. (6.6.4)
 - x) Prisoners have insufficient time out of cell due to restrictions to the regime caused by staffing shortages. (6.10.1)
 - y) The arrangements for family members to book prison visits have been inadequate. (6.11.2)
 - z) A number of Vulnerable Prisoners are housed on the main wings which exposes them to the risk of threats and abuse. (6.12.1)

4.3 PARTICULAR ISSUES REQUIRING A RESPONSE

Questions for the Minister

1. Could the minister please explain why the planned upgrade to the heating system and windows was cancelled following the General Election?
2. Could the minister please ensure that a safe and decent environment is provided at HMP Bedford?
3. Could the minister provide further details regarding the proposed reconfiguration of the prison estate?

Questions and Remarks for NOMS

1. Could NOMS please ensure that HMP Bedford has at least enough staff to operate the benchmark regime?
2. Could NOMS please outline the best practice for dealing with prisoners who are harming themselves but also posing a risk to others?
3. Could NOMS please assess the appropriate location for prisoners diagnosed with severe personality disorders?

4.4 PREVIOUS YEAR'S CONCERNS

Equality and Inclusion

- A. Incomplete understanding of how to manage prisoners with mental health problems, among some officers. (3) **Partially addressed**

Education

- B. Disappointing attendance record of prisoners in education programmes. (7) **Not successfully addressed**

Healthcare

- C. Too many medical appointments are missed without adequate explanation. (12) **Not addressed**
- D. Healthcare spaces are often used to accommodate prisoners who don't have medical problems. (14) **Not addressed**
- E. Severely mentally ill prisoners are inappropriately held in the prison and it takes too long for them to receive adequate treatment. (16) **Not successfully addressed**
- F. The Mental Health Team are under intense pressure due to the high numbers of prisoners considered to be at risk of self-harm and a more volatile prisoner population. (18) **Not addressed**

Purposeful Activity

- G. There is a chronic shortage of purposeful activity. (19 - 21) **Not successfully addressed**

Resettlement

- H. Although government targets are being met, too many prisoners leave Bedford without accommodation. (26) **Not successfully addressed**
- I. More complete and reliable data analysis is needed of the efficacy of different post-release support interventions in assisting released prisoners to desist from criminal activity (28) **Not addressed**
- J. An achievement target of 30% in Employment, Training and Education on release betokens a depressingly low ambition. (29) **Not addressed**
- K. The inability of the Governor to exercise any meaningful leverage over the conduct of the CRC contract for resettlement, etc., services (30) **Not successfully addressed**

Safer Custody

- L. Prisoners considered to be at risk of self-harm and suicide have suffered delayed responses to their cell bells. (32) **Not addressed**
- M. The prison still needs, after many years of our asking, a credible First Night Centre that offers succour to new prisoners. (35-37) **Addressed**
- N. The following self-harm risk factors are all currently depressingly and dangerously prevalent in HMP Bedford: limited time out of cell, limited staff contact, and lack of access to purposeful activity. (40) **Not addressed**

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- O. The training of staff in mental health first aid and the conduct of ACCT reviews have not kept pace with the number of prisoners at risk of harming themselves. (43-44) **Not addressed**

Segregation

- P. The approach taken by Governors to GOOD reviews has been inconsistent. (49) **Addressed**
- Q. The segregation unit is too small, the quality of the environment is unacceptably poor, and the regime offered unacceptably vacuous. (52) **Not addressed**
- R. Use of Force statistics are judged to be unreliable and are under-analysed. (54) **Not addressed**

Residential Services

- S. Continuation of the lamentable series of delays to initiation of the long-promised heating and windows replacement project. (56) **Not addressed**
- T. Shared cells designed 170 years ago for one man, with an unscreened WC, are still the norm at HMP Bedford. (57) **Not addressed**

Other Matters

- U. The apparently deficient and random system by which prisoners' 'Applications' are handled and responded to. (63) **Not addressed**
- V. The apparent ease with which prisoners and their associates outside seem capable of getting banned substances and articles past the prison's defenses, and the terrible consequences of these trades. (66) **Not successfully addressed**
- W. There is insufficient data published on the efficacy of drugs interventions generally, and specifically to justify use of a discrete unit in the prison as a 'Drug Recovery' wing. (67) **Partially addressed**
- X. The Astroturf is rarely used by prisoners. (70) **Addressed**
- Y. The entry-level IEP grade has had no positive impact on the behaviour of newly convicted prisoners. (71) **Not addressed**
- Z. Officer shortages have caused the Personal Officer scheme to be neglected. (79) **Not addressed**
- AA. The role of the prison Officer is sufficiently subtle and complex to merit significantly more and deeper training. (82) **Partially addressed**
- BB. Too much prisoners' property goes missing during transfers between prisons; it is all-but impossible for a prisoner, without the assistance of others, to take full responsibility for the integrity of his own property. (83) **Not addressed**
- CC. The Reception Facility needs a thorough facelift and rebranding. (84) **Partially addressed**
- DD. A restricted regime has been in place for the entire reporting period severely curtailing the time prisoners spend out of their cells. (91) **Not addressed**
- EE. There is no recording of the amount of time prisoners spend out of their cells each day. (92) **Not addressed**
- FF. Vulnerable prisoners have routinely been placed on the main wings. (97) **Not addressed**

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- GG. The requirement to accommodate sex-offenders in HMP Bedford, on an isolated wing, is arguably one of the subsidiary missions that hinder the prison from achieving excellent performance in its core purposes. (98) **Not addressed**
- HH. The recent privatisation of the Works Department has introduced an unwelcome extra layer of bureaucracy, which has led to delays in repair work and projects being undertaken. (99) **Not addressed**

5 PRINCIPAL AREAS OF MONITORING

5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION.

5.1.1 The monitoring of Equality and Diversity has been lacking over the past two years and this function is only just being revived by the prison management. Initial analysis indicates that black and ethnic minority prisoners are over-represented as a proportion of the prisoners located in segregation, and being placed on Basic regime, compared to the proportion of such prisoners in the population at Bedford as a whole.

5.1.2 Almost no assistance is available on the wings for prisoners who have difficulty understanding written or spoken English.

5.1.3 There is a lack of special provision for Young Adult prisoners and prisoners over the age of fifty. The latter group of prisoners continues to grow. Our impression is that occasional transgender prisoners are located and treated appropriately by prison staff, given the limitations of the environment. Transgender prisoners are typically housed on the smaller wings, such as E wing, in a single cell.

5.1.4 The infrastructure is very challenging for prisoners with limited mobility. Showers are mostly located above ground level and many of the staircases are narrow. Such prisoners generally indicate that they are well treated by staff, given the obvious difficulties.

5.1.5 Around 13 per cent of staff at HMP Bedford are black or ethnic minority compared to about 30 per cent of prisoners. There are few BME (black, minority or ethnic) staff in management positions and no BME Governors or Custodial Managers.

5.1.6 The diversity of the board has improved in terms of age and ethnicity. There are now more young and ethnic minority board members compared to last year. However, a gender balance is proving difficult to achieve. There are now more women on the board than men and this imbalance is expected to be more pronounced next year.

5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

Education

5.2.1 The education facility, which can accommodate around 100 students, offers a range of learning options. However, take-up by prisoners is significantly below capacity, which represents a wasted opportunity. Prisoners consistently fail to attend classes – they often complain that they are given insufficient time between being unlocked in the morning and movements taking place. Prisoners regularly claim to be sick to avoid classes and this appears to go unchallenged. Many prisoners have had negative experiences at school and are reluctant to participate in education. A stronger focus needs to be given in selling the benefits and supporting prisoners to attend education.

5.2.2 Classes seem to offer insufficient challenge for prisoners who have achieved the basic requirements of numeracy and literacy. Mixed ability classes require teachers to engage with a variety of different students, some of whom require intense support. Able students complete their tasks quickly and are then left sitting with nothing to do. Boredom and frequent disruption may be contributing to the lack of appeal of classes. Perhaps more use could be made of peer mentoring.

5.2.3 In the winter some classrooms become very cold, which is another factor that may discourage attendance. Temperatures could be considered as unsuitable for normal working during cold spells. Some windows and vents don't close fully and need to be repaired.

5.2.4 There is a constructive environment for education on F wing. Prisoners actively participate in their own learning and incorporate prison-orientated tasks into their work. The environment on F wing is conducive to learning as it is effectively a safe-space within the prison with a select group of prisoners, some of whom are serving long sentences and engage in rehabilitation willingly.

Library

5.2.5 Library sessions suffer from being scheduled at the same time as gym sessions and association. Around half of prisoners choose to attend the gym or take association rather than the library. More use could be made of this resource by prisoners. The recovery of books that have been loaned out remains a challenge.

5.2.6 The windows continue to let in rain, which damages stock.

5.2.7 The transition to management by Milton Keynes College appears to have gone smoothly with former prison library staff now being employed by the College however there is no longer a chartered librarian available with links to the local Bedford Borough Library Service.

5.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Healthcare

5.3.1 Our experience is that Healthcare is generally of a good standard. However, there are issues about appointments - prisoners complain about not being taken to appointments and not receiving medications they had been prescribed by doctors before they came to prison.

5.3.2 Prisoners are placed in Healthcare under segregation conditions if there are concerns about self-harm. This can be very disruptive for the inpatient unit and demanding on Healthcare staff as there is typically only one officer on duty.

5.3.3 The high numbers of prisoners requiring visits to hospital has put strain on the ability to provide adequate staffing for the daily prison regime.

5.3.4 Dental services were disrupted for months by a period of refurbishment. The contract is being undertaken by Carillion. There seems to have been no alternative arrangements put in place and this has led to an extended period of discomfort for prisoners with dental problems. The Board finds this situation to have been quite unsatisfactory and is very concerned about the underlying mechanisms that allowed it to happen.

Mental health

5.3.5 The issues of management of people with 'personality disorders' (PD) are not well understood or addressed by officers, although some training has been provided during the year, particularly to staff working in segregation. To manage people with PD effectively requires specialist and expert staff. These are not available and it is therefore inevitable that prisoners with these kinds of problems are the source of much disruption. We would prefer that such prisoners are transferred in a timely fashion to a specialist facility, more suited to their needs.

5.3.6 Prisoners have raised concerns about the privacy of consultations held on the main wings.

5.3.7 The mental health team has been short-staffed for much of the period.

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

5.4.1 Purposeful activity continues to feature as an area of concern in spite of significant efforts by prison staff to find more work. Prisoners need to achieve basic levels of literacy and numeracy before they are able to apply for work. Some of these needs are being supported via Outreach Education, completed in-cell, but whatever best plans the prison puts in place these are disrupted by frequent lockdowns due to staff shortages. There is no doubt that staff shortages are having a hugely detrimental effect on prisoner skills, education advancement and rehabilitation. Until staff numbers are addressed the board sees little likelihood of improvement in efforts to rehabilitate prisoners.

5.4.2 Prisoner attendance at activities is still a problem. Prisoners report failing to be unlocked for activities. The prison had introduced a new 'Activities Compact' whereby prisoners sign a contract agreeing to attend work or education. However, to date, we have not seen any positive impacts as a result of the Compact.

5.4.3 The board is pleased to report a new coffee provision in the visits hall. Prisoners work towards a Barista qualification which is recognised by major employers in this field. The service has received hugely positive feedback from visitors.

5.4.4 Contract work remains mundane in nature. The flow of work on F wing can be patchy. On some days there is nothing, at other times there is plenty to do.

5.4.5 A major disappointment was the planning, effort and cost put into implementing a telephone call centre for a company called Census Data. The prison funded and

installed new telephone wiring for a small call centre for selected and trained prisoners to receive calls from the public. The venture stalled after a lack of commitment from the company and, as the project was not moving forward, the prison decided to withdraw as spending further monies was not deemed reasonable. As a result, workshop 5 has been unused this year. It is expected to be used for recycling training.

5.4.6 The laundry now provides a training programme and qualification for its workers. This is a welcome development but there have been frequent difficulties in clearing workers for the laundry and the BICS (British Institute of Cleaning Sciences) course.

5.4.7 The current recycling area is limited and somewhat squalid.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT

5.5.1 HMP Bedford was re-roled as a Resettlement prison in 2015 to release prisoners into their own community or as close to that as possible. The Board recognises this policy as a good one, though in a Local prison which has a high churn rate, and with an average stay of 30 days, it is difficult to initiate great change. On average 90 men a month are discharged from the prison. Langley House Trust have lost their subcontract to provide housing and debt advice to prisoners. They were unable to satisfy Governors that they were achieving the target levels of accommodation on release. Langley House claim that the funding they received for their role from the CRC was insufficient. They replaced the role previously filled by St Mungo's and Citizens Advice

5.5.2 St Giles Trust and Langley House Trust along with other agencies have been experiencing difficulties in working with prisoners due to the increasing volatility in the prison and because there are insufficient staff to escort them to their appointments.

5.5.3 The Langley House Trust's contract is not to be renewed and there is currently a backlog of prisoners requiring assistance. This means that the Langley House worker has to concentrate on housing and has no time to work on debt advice, which was previously provided by Citizens Advice. Where accommodation is offered, it is usually a hostel: these are not popular places for ex-prisoners due to the ready availability of drugs and conspicuous drug use. Sadly, men are still leaving the prison with nowhere to live, apparently due to the shortages of suitable housing throughout the region.

5.5.4 The Ormiston Trust continues to provide good parenting courses four times a year and was praised by the inspection team. The Shannon Trust provides materials and oversees the training of peer mentors in reading, an excellent system. However, there is often some difficulty in getting prisoners to the course and then staying in Bedford long enough to complete it.

5.5.5 CRSP (Community Resettlement Project) has ended its well-regarded work in the prison as they were unable to agree a relationship with the CRC and had concerns about working with a for-profit organisation. They provided a befriending service for prisoners on release.

5.5.6 The tracking of prisoners on release is poor. Robust and reliable information is very limited. This makes it impossible to assess the success or failure of different interventions. The Board considers this to be a serious deficit, which must be rectified.

5.5.7 There is little meaningful planning with individual prisoners regarding their lives outside and so it is not possible to identify what would be relevant in the way of preparation for individuals while inside

5.5.8 The previous Justice Minister had a vision where prisoners would be released into their communities, free of addiction and with additional skills. In practice, however, many prisoners are released without a place to live and with very little chance of gaining employment. This is a tragic waste both for the individual and the community. Prisons need more funding for real effective resettlement.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

5.6.1 There has been a very concerning rise in violence within the prison. Assaults on prisoners and staff have risen to unacceptable levels. There were 17 serious assaults on prisoners, seven serious assaults on staff and four sexual assaults recorded during the year, compared to 13, one and two, respectively, during the previous reporting period. There were 52 assaults on staff and 249 prisoner-on-prisoner incidents.

5.6.2 A desire to create evidence-based policies is too often thwarted by erratic statistics. In order to combat the increase in violence, attempts are being made to discover the reason for each violent incident. Too often the cause of each incident is recorded as 'unknown', presumably because it only emerges later.

5.6.3 The prevalence of NPS (new psychoactive substances) on main wings during the period has undoubtedly contributed to bullying and bizarre behaviour. Groups of prisoners have been going between cells to demand canteen from other prisoners and trade drugs. Gangs have targeted lone prisoners to use as guinea pigs for new batches of NPS and given them large quantities of drugs to provide entertainment. At times it has felt that A wing has been barely within the control of officers. The atmosphere has been threatening for prisoners and staff.

5.6.4 Although experienced members of the Board still feel safe enough to go through the wings by themselves, in the latter part of the year Ormiston workers preferred to travel in twos as did those from OMU, partly because of the difficulty of finding a space to talk confidentially to prisoners.

5.6.5 It is the view of the Board that the lack of a consistent regime, long periods of lock-up, shortages of kit for prisoners and the prevalence of gangs bullying other prisoners for canteen and trading drugs increase the likelihood and impact of incidents that affect safety.

5.6.6 Prisoners report having to wait up to 30 or 40 minutes for responses to cell bells. Clearly this increases the chances of an incident and the likelihood of a prisoner being at risk. The Board view this as a very important issue and is concerned that the prison

does not keep its own statistic so as to be able monitor this key piece of information. The issue reflects the pressure on staffing and the inability of the prison to provide a full regime. It seems that IEP (incentives and earned privileges) strikes are not being issued for misuse of the cell bell system by prisoners, perhaps in recognition that the long periods of lock-up mean that they are unable to complete many of the domestic tasks necessary to live decently in prison.

Serious incidents

5.6.7 Board members attended six Serious Incidents during the reporting year, all of which were incidents at height where prisoners climbed onto the netting or ceiling beams in protest at their treatment. Two incidents required the intervention of the national response team, who sprayed PAVA synthetic pepper spray into the prisoner's eyes to incapacitate them. This produces an intense burning sensation for around 20 minutes. Incidents at height that last less than 30 minutes are no longer treated as serious incidents as they happen so frequently. Barricades are now regarded as minor incidents.

Deaths in custody

5.6.8 Sadly, three deaths in custody occurred during this period, one of which was through natural causes. The inquests for the remaining two prisoners who died have not yet taken place. All steps to support families and affected prisoners and staff were made after each death. The Head of Healthcare indeed remained in the hospital overnight on two occasions. The Board would like to place on record its appreciation of the work of this member of staff and especially the very difficult role of being at the bedside of dying prisoners.

5.6.9 The role of Family Liaison Officer appears to have been largely relying on the goodwill of the two staff members trained for this role.

5.6.10 The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman notes that lessons are not learnt following their investigations into deaths at the prison. Issues such as poor recording of interactions with prisoners and the inappropriate shackling of seriously ill prisoners when they go to hospital keep recurring.

ACCTs

5.6.11 An ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) is the mechanism whereby prisoners at risk of self-harm are monitored and assessed. During the reporting period 444 ACCTs were opened, compared to 396 previously. A peak of 50 ACCTs were opened in May. This represents a further increase on the almost 50 per cent increase recorded in last year's report. There were 280 recorded incidents of self-harm during the period, compared to 187 the previous year; an increase of almost 50 per cent. These figures are indicative of a continuing decline in the safety of prisoners at Bedford. There was a very worrying trend of prisoners attempting to hang themselves towards the end of the period.

5.6.12 There is a place on the ACCT form to give the reason for opening but too often it is given as 'unknown' so no lessons can be learned.

5.6.13 The Board regrets that there has been little effective First Night provision throughout the reporting period. The C2 landing was designated as the First Night Centre but new prisoners are often scattered around wings due to a shortage of place. They are too often placed in dirty cells with no bedding or clothing. E wing will be designated as the First Night Centre from July onwards. Drug rehabilitation courses held on E wing ended in February; they will be held on D wing. The board will assess the effectiveness of this new provision in the coming year.

5.7 SEGREGATION, CARE & SEPARATION, CLOSE SUPERVISION

The practice of segregation

5.7.1 The Board remains concerned about the relatively high level of usage of segregation and the high numbers of adjudications. The Board would like to see a stronger focus on reducing adjudications through affirmative, consistent, confident and evident leadership, particularly in the importance of the softer skills.

The segregation unit (SSU)

5.7.2 The segregation unit remains a harsh and uncivilised subterranean environment. On occasions IMB members have heard continual shouting, wailing and howling in a manner reminiscent of accounts of Bedlam. It often seems that progress in mental health and personality disorder treatment has been somewhat limited. The punishment should be the confinement – the loss of association, work and other out of cell benefits. But, actually, the punishment is also the conditions of the SSU. This is wrong.

5.7.3 Plans for expansion provide no facility where visitors to SSU can have private conversations with prisoners. This is a serious deficit, considering the extreme vulnerability of the prisoners located here. It is a statutory requirement that segregated prisoners be visited daily by a Governor, the prison Chaplain and a Healthcare professional. It is further a statutory requirement that all segregated prisoners be visited within 72 hours of their re-location, by a member of the IMB. There are currently only two ways to hold such conversations:

- By shouting through the crack between locked cell door and the frame.
- By finding a moment when two or sometimes three staff on duty can find the time to accompany the visitor, unlocking the cell, and (standing vigilantly between them and the prisoner, for safety) supervise a 'conversation'.

These options are, to say the least, undignified, and neither is in the least private. Prisoners who have complaints about their treatment understandably feel inhibited to express their reservations and fears in such circumstances, rendering the safeguards ineffective. The Board have suggested provision of a facility similar to that used in the visits centre for 'closed visits', but this has not been recognised as a priority.

5.7.4 Some improvements have been made to the unit. There is now a screen so that prisoners can shower in private and a phone booth has been installed to improve the privacy of phone conversations.

5.7.5 There are SSU overflow cells on B2. Prisoners on B2 have prisoners coming to their doors which allows them to potentially intimidate victims or be subject to intimidation themselves. It is difficult for segregation prisoners on B2 to receive the full regime, some prisoners report that they don't always have the opportunity to take exercise.

5.7.6 Occasionally, prisoners considered to be at risk of harming themselves are placed in a cell in Healthcare under segregation conditions. There tends to be just one officer on duty in Healthcare and, at night, none at all. The board recognises that Healthcare is likely to be a more suitable location than the segregation unit for such prisoners but neither arrangement is ideal given the low numbers of officers in both areas. Segregated prisoners have caused considerable damage and disruption to Healthcare.

5.7.7 There is a lack of activities in segregation, frequent shortages of radios, and TVs are never provided.

5.7.8 The layout of the review and adjudication room is not ideal for the more relaxed approach required for GOOD reviews. However, we are pleased to note that the consistency of GOOD reviews has improved.

5.7.9 No statistics were available for segregation during the reporting period.

Staff in SSU

5.7.10 Staff have to work in these difficult conditions as well. Despite this, and the fact they can be dealing with some very challenging prisoners, they remain professional, fair and sympathetic. The Board acknowledges the work of these officers and the positive impact it has.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Accommodation

5.8.1 Much of the prison is approaching 200 years old and the basic infrastructure reflects the limitations of a facility of that age. Many cells are cold in the winter, due to inadequate heating and a lack of ventilation makes hot summer days hard to bear.

5.8.2 The prison in general is persistently overcrowded compared to its Certified Normal Accommodation number.

5.8.3 On average 276 prisoners are housed two-to-a-cell in cells designed for one person. There are typically 312 prisoners living in crowded conditions. During the reporting period, the population of the prison has averaged 475 prisoners, compared to 491 in the previous year. This is a slight reduction which may be accounted for by a

period, around the turn of the year, when as many as 20 spaces were offline due to vandalism. There was also an expectation, after the summer, that the heating system and windows would be upgraded so the population was reduced slightly in anticipation of this work.

5.8.4 The window and heating upgrade contracts have been cancelled – we believe this decision to be a disgrace. Effectively it condemns prisoners to unreasonable conditions during the winter and is an affront to any idea of common decency. Showers often run cold, which compounds the impact of dingy cells with inadequate heating.

5.8.5 There have been recurring shortages of towels, blankets, pillows, TVs, kettles, toiletries, cleaning products and clothing. These shortages seem to be a product of a lack of clear processes together with the additional bureaucracy following the privatisation of the works contract and budgetary decisions taken by the Governor. Wing officers give the impression that they are unable to correct these failings in matters of basic decency. Apart from ordering new items, kit culls and more rigorous checking are required to ensure that items do not leave the prison and that individual prisoners do not accumulate excess kit. Undamaged clothing is recovered from the rubbish and washed at high temperatures so that it can be re-used.

5.8.6 Prisoners often complain about the length of time post takes to be delivered within the prison and there is evidence of hold ups in replying to applications and general slow delivery of items around the prison.

5.8.7 The prison is often dirty and untidy, particularly in the outer areas, which are regularly strewn with rubbish. Cockroaches are regularly spotted on A, B, F and C wings; there are pigeons everywhere and occasionally rats. The limited regime has prevented a high standard of cleanliness as cleaners are not always unlocked for work.

5.8.8 The wing noticeboards have been updated and their appearance is greatly improved.

5.8.9 The introduction of smoke-free landings has so far passed without incident and appears to have been well managed.

5.8.10 Wing phones are in short supply and frequently require repairs.

5.8.11 The provision of phone PINs to new prisoners takes too long.

Food, Catering and Kitchens

5.8.12 Prisoners give mixed feedback on the quality of the food. Some say it is very good while others regard it as appalling. There appears to be some variability in quality depending on who is working in the kitchen. Prisoners still express dissatisfaction with the serving of a cold meal in the late afternoon. They are issued their breakfast packs at the same time which tends to be eaten during the evening.

5.8.13 Prison staff conducted a questionnaire offering a hot evening meal in exchange for reduced evening association time but the small sample of prisoners who responded were understandably reluctant to give up any association time. It confirmed that on the whole the prisoners prefer the main meal to be served at lunchtime. However, the Board does regularly receive complaints from individuals who say that the baguette served in the evening is inadequate to keep them going until breakfast. In the opinion of board members, the survey was flawed because it contained leading questions and the sample size was too small.

5.8.14 Prisoners are required to eat their main meal in close proximity to the in-cell WC, which is often poorly screened. Such conditions cannot be regarded as decent. C wing prisoners are required to carry plates sloshing with gravy from the main server, through two wings and up a spiral staircase if they are on C3 or C4 landings.

6 Other issues upon which the Board wishes to remark

6.1 CHAPLAINCY

The Board would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Sharon Grenham-Thompson during her 5 years as Prison Chaplain who introduced useful media skills and a touch of glamour to the role with many initiatives such as the choir workshops and other community involvement. The Board wishes her well in her future career as a parish priest. A new Managing Chaplain has been appointed, however the Chaplaincy team is under-staffed and there have been problems moving prisoners to services.

6.2 DRUGS

6.2.1 The use of Spice and other former 'legal highs' continues to have a disproportionate impact on the running of the prison. These substances can have a psychotic effect on users' personalities, which presents significant challenges for prison management. In addition, there is the associated debt and bullying issues that come from the trade in these substances.

6.2.2 The prison currently has no drugs strategy in place, which is a disappointment. It means there is no overall framework or clear set of outcomes that can guide the actions that will control drug supply and encourage rehabilitation. Generally, between 80 and 95 prisoners are on methadone (a heroin substitute) at any time with between 25 and 35 on a reduction programme. This would appear to indicate some level of success, although the prison has no information to show how many inmates remain clean after leaving the facility.

6.2.3 Drug rehabilitation courses have been hampered by frequent, extended lock-downs.

6.3 GYMNASIUM AND ASTRO-TURF

6.3.1 The gym is a well-managed and popular facility. However, as with many areas, the lack of staff time means that the potential of the facilities is not fully utilised. For example, there are no structured programmes and few training events. Prisoners tend to turn up and just use the equipment as they wish. Nevertheless, the gym represents an excellent example of how to interact positively with prisoners and encourage them to improve.

6.3.2 There has been a better use of the AstoTurf as an exercise yard. However, it now requires some maintenance if it is to be used again for football and sport. Staff shortages in the gym have meant that one rarely sees a game taking place.

6.4 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

6.4.1 There have been four different Governing Governors in the past two years as well as four different Deputy Directors of Custody for the Eastern Region, three of these in the last six months of the period. These constant changes in leadership have led to an erosion of management authority, processes and oversight. Many of the management processes, such as the collection and analysis of key statistics, feel like they are being revived following a near extinction level event.

6.5 RECEPTION

6.5.1 The Board has remarked over the years upon the mess, clutter and disrepair of the reception area, which can give new prisoners (by far the most vulnerable group) the impression that their wellbeing is not valued at HMP Bedford. We are pleased to say that recently some improvements have been made to the entrance area to make it smarter and less foreboding. This is welcomed. However, the basic processing area remains broadly similar; we hope the improvements are extended to the whole reception area.

6.5.2 Prisoners note a lack of privacy during reception interviews.

6.5.3 There are continuing issues with prisoners being re-united with their possessions when they are not able to take them to their cells on arrival. In one case, it took over six weeks for a prisoner's possessions to get from reception to his cell. This is a source of great frustration for prisoners and one of the most common applications we receive. The Board is of the view that it would not be too difficult to make significant improvements in this area.

6.5.4 Prisoners describe the time allowed on arrival for a phone call as inadequate.

6.6 RESPONSES TO PRISONERS' COMPLAINTS AND APPLICATIONS

6.6.1 The prison is run by forms. In order to see anyone, do anything or get anything a prisoner must complete a form – these are known as application forms, or just 'applications'. There are ten such forms, each with different styles and clarity. Few of them say what will happen next or what the prisoner can expect. As a general observation, there is little in terms of corporate style or consistency in terms of font or layout. This does not help prisoners in understanding how to complete the forms correctly.

6.6.2 The application system is of vital importance to prisoners and in our experience it often does not meet basic 'fit-for-purpose' criteria. Prisoners report that they have to submit multiple applications in order to attain a response from the prison to access basic services like obtaining work or medical appointments. There is no monitoring of the applications process and the lack of a discernible system is a source of great frustration for prisoners. Prisoners have no confidence in the applications and complaints processes. Investment in an electronic kiosk system could improve the prisoners' access to services, reducing bureaucracy and irritation.

6.6.3 The complaints system, on the other hand, is well-managed. A recording system is in place and it is easy to see at what stage the complaint is at. There were 948 complaints in 2014/15 and 974 complaints in 2015/16. This represents an increase of 2.7 per cent.

6.7 SECURITY

6.7.1 The Security department has been under-staffed throughout the period. The department has struggled to limit the supply of drugs and mobile phones into the prison. Prisoners indicate that some staff are complicit in the provision of contraband. The most common route into the prison for contraband is via packages thrown over the wall. An upgrade to the windows could help to limit the ability of prisoners to recover these packages.

6.7.2 Throughout most of the reporting period the prison was without dogs to patrol the Visits Hall and search visitors as well as conducting routine cell searches. This was due to the unexpected death of one dog handler and the resignation of another.

6.8 STAFFING

6.8.1 In recent months the prison management have been unable to deliver a consistent, predictable regime due to persistent staff shortages. There was a net loss of five staff over the period with 38 joining and 43 leaving. A restricted regime has been in place for the entire reporting period but it has been a struggle to fulfil even this reduced timetable. The result has been prisoners spending long periods locked up in their cells with little to do. Staffing problems are particularly evident at weekends and during school holidays.

6.9 STAFF-PRISONER RELATIONS

6.9.1 It has become apparent during the reporting period that staff and prisoner relationships have become more difficult. There has been emerging evidence of a breakdown in trust between prisoners and officers due to the prevailing conditions in the prison and the rising number of assaults on officers.

6.9.2 The continuing high levels of staff turn-over mean that there are significant numbers of new staff. They need to be given an increased level of training and support. Prisoners feel that some inexperienced officers engage with them in an antagonising way which creates unnecessary conflict and that new officers are unable to solve problems on the wings. A relatively high proportion of new officers leave before completing their training.

6.9.3 Prison staff too often fail to react to, and take ownership of, conditions that are clearly indecent or unacceptable.

6.9.4 Officers and Governors tend not to intervene when they observe prisoners engaging in low-level inappropriate behaviour.

6.9.5 The personal officer scheme no longer exists in any meaningful sense.

6.9.6 Despite the above, the Board acknowledges that the role of a prison officer can be demanding and difficult. It has seen many examples of good work by officers and of positive relationships with prisoners. Prisoners value the straight-forward approach exhibited by many officers.

6.10 TIME OUT OF CELL

6.10.1 The reduced time that prisoners are able to be out of their cells continues to be a concern. On average, 41 per cent of prisoners are locked in their cells during the daytime, with prisoners having between one and nine hours out of cell per day. This is another consequence of a continuing theme of this report – understaffing. The lack of officers led to a restricted regime being operated throughout the year. Evening association, which is no longer provided, is important for prisoners to be able to contact family who are out in the daytime. Full-time workers also need sufficient time for showers and family contact in the evening.

6.10.2 Time out of cell is not recorded. It is difficult to understand why such a fundamental statistic is not monitored.

6.10.3 Prisoners report failing to be unlocked for activities such as work, library sessions, chapel and medical appointments. The management of prisoners who are being kept in cell on the main wings for disciplinary reasons is poor and some report not receiving regular exercise. Problems are particularly acute at weekends and during school holidays.

6.11 VISITS AND LINKS WITH THE OUTSIDE

6.11.1 It was pleasing to note that the Visits Centre was repainted and toilet facilities improved at the beginning of the reporting year after many years of neglect. However, rain damage due to a blocked drain and vegetation growing out of that drain has resulted in considerable damage which has not yet been repaired. A meeting room reserved for the use of the region is likely to be similarly damaged but has not been accessed for several months.

6.11.2 Throughout the period, there have been problems with the visits booking system due to a poor level of staffing. The result has been overbooking and visitors turning up without proper documentation or not being listed.

6.11.3 Ormiston staff are regularly being abused by visitors.

6.12 VULNERABLE PRISONERS

6.12.1 A number of vulnerable prisoners are routinely housed on C wing due to a shortage of spaces on the vulnerable prisoner wing. Some prisoners find this arrangement stressful. Prisoners are typically escorted to F wing for work. The overflow of vulnerable prisoners onto the main wings exposes them to the risk of abuse and threats from other prisoners, from which they should be kept safe.

6.12.2 There are no toilets on F wing available for prisoners who are housed on the main wings but who attend F wing for work. Prisoners are required to use toilets in the cells of other prisoners.

7 SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE BY THE IMB

7.1 APPLICATIONS FROM PRISONERS

Table 2 Applications from prisoners 2015/2016

Code	Subject	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	Change
A	Accommodation	10	16	6	13	-6
B	Adjudications	3	9	11	9	-6
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)	2	4	10	3	-2
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP	10	19	52	28	-9
E 1	Family/visits inc mail & phone	14	33	82	41	-19
E 2	Finance/pay	7	4			3
F	Food/kitchen related	3	8	16	4	-5
G	Health related	56	71	77	56	-15
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	20	38	37	28	-18
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	23	40	27	23	-17
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	3	2	9	4	1
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	13	41	44	34	-28
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc bullying	15	23	28	30	-8
K	Transfers	19	20	12	23	-1
L	Miscellaneous	17	30	26	26	-13
	Total number of IMB applications	215	358	437	322	-143

7.2 BOARD STATISTICS

Table 3 Board statistics

BOARD STATISTICS 2014 - 2015	
Recommended complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	15
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5
Number of members leaving within reporting period	0
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the Establishment	405
Total number of segregation reviews held	No data
Total number of segregation reviews attended	165
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	25/4/2016

8 GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork
BICS	British Institute of Cleaning Science
CC	Cellular Confinement
CNA	Certified Normal Accommodation – the number of prisoners that can be held decently
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company – contractors managing some probation and resettlement services
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
HMIP	Her Majesty’s Inspector of Prisons
IAG	Information and Guidance
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges – Prisoners can be on Basic, Standard or Enhanced
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances, formerly known as legal highs
NOMS	National Offender Management Service – amalgamation of the Prison & Probation Services
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OMU	Offender Management Unit
OpCap	Operational Capacity – the number of prisoners that can be held without seriously risking good order
PAVA	Pelargonyl Vanillylamide – a synthetic pepper spray
PD	Personality Disorder
PSI	Prison Service Instruction
SMARG	Segregation Monitoring And Review Group
SORTT	Supporting Offenders in Recovery & Treatment Team
SSU	Separation and Support Unit
VP	Vulnerable Prisoner
VR	Violence Reduction
YA	Young Adult