



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP Northumberland

for reporting year
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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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2 Statutory role of the IMB

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.

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

3 Executive Summary

3.1 Introduction

Issues with substance misuse, safety and over-crowding are well-publicised across the prison system. There is no over-crowding at HMP Northumberland (The Prison), but, like many other prisons, it faces challenges in dealing with substance misuse, protecting the safety of prisoners and staff, and supporting those most at risk.

To carry out their role, Members of the Independent Monitoring Board (The Board) made 599 visits to The Prison in 2016, dealt with 335 applications from prisoners, spoke with hundreds of prisoners, many members of staff from all parts of The Prison and met regularly with the Director and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

3.2 Main Judgements

The Board is conscious that prison safety is a matter of public concern. However, most of the prisoners who speak to The Board are concerned with serving their sentences, demonstrating that they are complying with the regime, and progressing towards release. Some raise safety concerns, but most of the issues they raise with The Board are to do with everyday life, maintaining family contact, and resettlement. In that context, the main findings in this report are:

Are prisoners treated fairly?

- Systems to monitor equality and fairness appear robust. Work is under way to improve the speed of response to allegations of discrimination. Work with older prisoners has been recognised as exemplary, and progress has been made on addressing under-reporting of some protected characteristics (5.2.1, 5.2.2).

Are prisoners treated humanely?

- Safety remains a concern, but is receiving proper attention, and progress is being made in areas such as addressing the supply of illegal substances, dealing with incidents related to use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), and protecting those most at risk from bullying (5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.1.6).
- Some concerns over the physical condition of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) are documented, and are being addressed. CSU staff have remained caring and professional, whilst often working in difficult and stressful conditions. (5.3.1)
- Initiatives are under way to improve conditions for, and scrutiny of, those on self-imposed isolation (5.3).
- Historic under-investment in the estate is being addressed (5.4.2).
- Regime restrictions are more frequent than the ideal, but not routine. Within the constraints of the system the impact is fairly balanced across the prison population (5.4.11).
- Healthcare continues to face the challenges arising from substance misuse and complex needs, but there has been progress on dealing with drug and alcohol dependency, an increase in health promotion and improvements in collaboration across a complex system (5.5.1).

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

- Measures have been taken to improve attendance in education and to ensure that the assessment of needs is sufficiently robust to support skills planning (5.7).

- The Board (and most prisoners) always welcome a wider choice of training and employment opportunities, but there has been significant progress in the number, variety, and quality of work options that are available. As well as reducing unemployment, this brings wider choice and more opportunities for progression (5.7.1).
- Initiatives such as improved liaison with community substance misuse services and the introduction of a “Departure Lounge” are helping to smooth the transition from life inside, to life in the community (5.6, 5.9.5).
- Although security during visits has been tightened, the Visits Hall remains a cheerful place, with an attractive layout, enabling families to be relaxed and children to play (5.9.8).

The Board also wishes to highlight some of the contributions that have been made in 2016 by prisoners for the benefit of fellow prisoners (and others):

- Fundraising by prisoners for the Children's Heart Unit Fund (5.6.4)
- The first eleven prisoners to qualify as SMART Recovery Facilitators (nationally) are all from HMP Northumberland (5.6.2).
- The positive influence of User Voice (5.4.8).
- The contributions made by Prisoner Information Desks (PID)s and others, to the smooth running of The Prison and contribution that Listeners, Peer Mentors, and others make to the welfare and quality of life for prisoners (5.4.5).

3.3 Main areas for development

To the Minister

3.3.1 Families play a key role in rehabilitation. The proportion of prisoners in The Prison from outside the local area has reduced, but the location of The Prison makes it difficult to visit, even for some families within the region. Even where a more suitable location has been identified for a prisoner, there can be long delays in arranging a transfer closer to their home. Is the minister satisfied that enough is being done to ensure that all prisoners are able to maintain family ties throughout their sentence? (3.4.1, 5.9.6)

3.3.2 Is the minister satisfied that resources available for Offender Health are sufficient to deliver equivalence of care, in light of current pressures? (5.1.7, 5.3.3, 5.5.5, 5.5.6)

To the Director

3.3.3 Can the Director assure The Board that there are plans in place to continue refurbishment of ageing parts of the estate and facilities? (5.3.2, 5.4.2)

3.3.4 With increasing numbers of older prisoners and increasing numbers of prisoners reporting disabilities, is the director satisfied that current capacity will be sufficient to accommodate a growing number of prisoners with limited mobility? (5.2.5)

3.3.5 In the context of regional changes in the placement of prisoners at the start of their sentence, is the Director satisfied that the assessment of education and healthcare needs will be sufficiently robust? (5.7.4, 5.2.5)

3.4 Issues raised in the previous report

3.4.1 **Travel difficulties for visitors:** changes in resettlement have reduced the difficulties for families of some approaching the end of their sentence, but the issue remains for some of those trying to maintain family ties throughout the body of their custodial sentence.

3.4.2 **Pressures on the CSU:** Pressures have continued, but scrutiny has improved, and alternatives tested for prisoners needing protection. Segregation Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG) meetings have been more regular, more structured and better-attended. There have been new initiatives which The Board believes will improve care and scrutiny for those on self-imposed isolation and reduce pressure on the CSU (5.3)

3.4.3 **Pressure on Mental Health Staff:** resolved during early 2016 (5.5.2)

3.4.4 **Transferable workplace skills:** there has been progress in 2016 (5.8.2)

4 Description of The Prison

4.1 Description

4.1.1 The Prison is located on a large secluded site in a rural area. It is a Male Adult Category C prison, classified as a Working Prison and Resettlement Prison, with capacity (Certified Normal Accommodation) of 1,348. The average unlock for December 2016 was 1,335. There is no prisoner on remand.

4.1.2 The prison population continues to characterize themselves predominantly as White British. Although there have been increases during 2016 in the numbers reporting as Gypsy or Irish Traveller and in the number of foreign nationals, the population remains less diverse than the prison population nationally. The number of prisoners aged over 55 increased by 15% over the year and the number reporting a disability by 25%.

4.1.3 The Prison has fifteen house blocks, all currently containing only single cells. Five house blocks hold Vulnerable Prisoners (VP)s. The Gateway Unit is a dedicated recovery unit for drug and alcohol misuse. The remainder of the house blocks are categorized as normal locations; housing Mains prisoners. All cells have their own light switch, integral sanitation and a kettle. There is an extensive range of workshops, three gyms, two libraries and training facilities.

4.2 Contractors and Agencies:

The Prison has been operated by Sodexo since December 2013.

Healthcare:

Commissioned by: North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit (NEOHCU)

Nursing and Administration: G4S;

Physiotherapy and Podiatry: G4S;

G.P and Pharmacy: Spectrum;

Mental Health - In Reach team: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV);

Dental: Burgess and Hyder Dental Group

Learning and Skills Development: Novus (Formerly Manchester College)

Police Liaison: Northumbria Police

Prisoner Escort Services: GEO/Amey

Canteen Services: DHL

Community Rehabilitation Company: Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company (Sodexo in partnership with NACRO)

4.3 Changes during 2016

4.3.1 There have been no significant changes of provider during 2016, with most activity consolidating changes introduced during 2015. Progress has been made on refurbishment of accommodation and security systems.

4.3.2 The Board continues to view relations between Members, prison staff and service providers as healthy. The Director or his representative attended all meetings of The Board in 2016. The Board was regularly briefed on developments by members of the SMT and major service providers. Any immediate concern raised in a rota report received a prompt response. The Board would not be able to fulfil its role without the support of staff who carry out a job that can be difficult and is easily under-estimated.

4.4 Agencies that provide support to The Prison

Agency	Provision
Age UK	Services and advice for older people in prison
Alcoholics Anonymous	Addiction support groups in prison
Angel Tree Project	Provides Christmas presents for prisoners' children. Available to Mains only for security reasons
APM	Employment services as part of Northumbria CRC's supply chain
CRC	Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company
Crisis	Progression coaches help prisoners to identify a goal(s) and steps to achievement
Fine Cell Work	Materials/tuition in embroidery and tapestry work.
Fulfilling Lives	Supporting people with multiple needs, within CRC
Junction 42	Outreach and mentoring alongside chaplaincy team
Make your Way	Sunderland based community outreach team
MIND Mentoring Project	Alongside chaplaincy
NCC Sure Start	Working with supporting prisoners' families, including running food banks.
NEPACS – North East Prison After Care Society	Independent community based charity supporting prisoners and their families. Visitor Centre provider
NERAF – Northern Engagement into Recovery from Addiction	Predominantly drug and alcohol focussed and work closely with jobcentre volunteer scheme.
NORCARE and Fabrick Housing Group	Accommodation for prisoners on release who are socially excluded, vulnerable or disadvantaged
Northern Learning Trust	Education and Mentoring
Northumberland Recovery Partnership	Services for those experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol.
Oswin Project	Support, training and employment via Chaplaincy
Phoenix Futures	Drug and alcohol recovery charity. Assessment, therapeutic relationship between worker and client, negotiated recovery plans, working towards achieving abstinence - linked to Gateway Unit
Royal British Legion	Advice and practical support during and post custody including food bank referrals.
Samaritans	Select, train and support prisoners to become Listeners.
Shannon Trust	Supports the Toe-by-Toe Literacy Scheme
Shelter	Housing and advice service, debt advice, help with housing benefits etc... Two Shelter workers based at The Prison. Also run training for prisoners in money management, prioritising debts
Smart UK	Recovery from addictive behaviour
SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families	Advice and practical support during and post custody
Sycamore Tree	Victim awareness programme that teaches the principles of restorative justice
Tyne Gateway	Family support with CRC
User Voice	Aims to deliver a powerful rehabilitation experience for offenders. Developed the Prison Council at The Prison
Veterans in Custody	Sign-posting to agencies as necessary
Veterans Response	Support and advice services for former members of H.M. forces

5 Evidence

5.1 Safety

5.1.1 The main challenges for HMP Northumberland in maintaining prisoners' safety arise from the inter-related problems of substance misuse and violence. These affect a prisoner's own health, his ability to control his behaviour towards fellow prisoners and staff and his need to maintain a supply of drugs.

5.1.2 Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) rates suggest that the number of prisoners involved in substance misuse has fallen over the year. At the same time The Prison has strengthened measures to control the flow and use of drugs and other items. There has been a 36% increase in the number of finds, and some major discoveries. The Board regards these as confirmation that the issues are taken seriously, rather than a sign of failure.

5.1.3 There has been increased scrutiny in the visits hall. The number of banned visitors increased. Visitors, staff and Members of The Board have been randomly searched on entry to the prison.

5.1.4 Protocols for dealing with NPS-related incidents, and suspected swallowing incidents have been revised and strengthened.

5.1.5 Adjudications have continued to be held on the wings throughout 2016. On a large estate this reduces the level of prisoner movement. The Board monitored its target of 5% of adjudications in 2016. The Board has no concerns over the way in which these are conducted, but in some instances the accommodation used is unfit for purpose. This not only affects the practicalities of the process, but can also undermine the gravity of the proceedings. The proportion of dismissed adjudications has reduced, which suggests that more care is being taken in preparation, but The Board continues to see cases where justice is hindered by errors in the paperwork, or poorly presented evidence. The Board understands that plans are in place to rationalise the locations, which would improve consistency of the accommodation.

5.1.6 Early in the year, The Board carried out checks on prisoners who self-isolated for their own protection on the wing. These typically number around a dozen at any one time. Some coped well, but the welfare of others was a concern. The Board therefore welcomed the introduction of a more structured approach for dealing with these prisoners. Although the intended model was not completely implemented, it offered an alternative to segregation for some and improved the scrutiny of prisoners who might be at risk. Towards the end of the year further developments, including the use of a dedicated wing on one house block were being tried. It is too early to assess how effective this will be in improving support for those who self-isolate and reducing the risk of bullying for others who are having difficulty coping with prison life.

5.1.7 Both the number of prisoners who self-harm and the number of self-harm incidents have risen during the year. As a result, throughout the year the number of prisoners on Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT)s has gradually increased, from under 20 in January and February, to over 30 in November and December. Effort has been needed to recruit sufficient ACCT assessors. The system is systematically scrutinised by The Prison and Members check a sample of ACCT documentation. Reviews monitored by The Board were undertaken in a professional, transparent and caring manner. The only issue The Board has observed is the need to improve Healthcare attendance at ACCT reviews. The Prison and Healthcare are aware of and responsive to, the need to improve attendance.

5.1.8 The number of IMB Applications linked to relationships with staff and other prisoners has continued to fall and in 2016 it decreased by 44%. The overall reduction is welcome, although within that total, allegations of bullying, or fears about safety persist. The issues of those who have difficulty in coping with prison life, tensions between different groups, bullying and risks arising from debt, are well-known to management and wing staff. In response, The Prison continues to refine the role of different house blocks in the search for improvement. Within the constraints of the system and the format of the estate, The Board finds that individual cases are handled sensitively.

5.1.9 Because The Prison does not receive prisoners directly from court, the risks on first night are of a lesser order than elsewhere in the prison estate. The Board did not find any issues with arrangements for prisoners on arrival and The Board has observed the thorough and attentive way in which they are treated. Induction is conducted in two dedicated house blocks and is prisoner led; prisoners needing extra support are identified by both their fellows and staff. A range of peer mentors and listeners is in place and efforts are made to overcome difficulties in recruiting and training suitable candidates on some wings. Each house block has a dedicated Samaritans phone; The Board was concerned to note that during the year some of these did not appear to be working and staff were requested to check them.

5.1.10 Sadly, during 2016 there were 7 deaths in custody. The Board was informed of these promptly and attended as appropriate. The Board is aware of only one occasion when it was not informed about the opening of the Command Suite and The Board is satisfied that this resulted from a misunderstanding. With that exception, Members monitored every serious incident. The Board has attended the majority of the subsequent debriefs and has witnessed issues discussed openly by everyone involved and lessons learned.

5.2 Equality and fairness

5.2.1 Compared with the national picture, the population at The Prison is not diverse. The proportion of those who characterise themselves as White British has fallen slightly over the year, and now stands at 87%. The reduction is primarily the result of an exercise to address under-reporting among the Gypsy or Irish Traveller Community. Following that exercise, the number reported from this group increased to 6% of the population. The number of foreign nationals has increased by 50% over the last twelve months, but remains low at less than 3% of the prison population. More than half of the population record their religion as Christian, with the next largest group at 3% recorded as Muslim. The fastest growing age-groups are those aged 55-65 (25% increase in 2016) and those aged over 65 (13% increase in 2016). The number of prisoners identified with at least one disability increased 25% over the year, and currently accounts for 29% of the population. The number with more than one disability almost doubled over the year. There are two prisoners undergoing gender re-assignment.

5.2.2 The Prison typically receives around three Discrimination Incident Report Form (DIRF) reports a month and The Board received eight Applications over the year relating to Equality and Diversity. Although low in number, both of these represent an increase over the previous year and need to be judged in the context of a lack of diversity in the overall population mix. The Board looked into all of the Applications received in this category without uncovering evidence of discrimination. A relatively small proportion of DIRF reports are upheld, but The Board is satisfied that the DIRF investigation process is thorough and robust. A new allocation process and more efficient tracking have been implemented to ensure DIRFs are dealt with in a more expedient manner, but the size of the backlog and length of time that these still take to investigate warrants attention.

5.2.3 Because most minority groups represent only a small number of prisoners, consultation with prisoners is largely handled by wing equalities representatives who cover the whole range of protected characteristics. Although the prison population is not diverse, many different cultural and religious events are publicised, celebrated and embedded in the work of the Education and Catering Departments, with the Chaplaincy and Library playing active roles. In addition to their role in the spiritual life of the establishment, the Chaplaincy also provides the breadth of pastoral duties and delivers a range of education services in conjunction with a number of different third-sector organisations. New appointments in late 2015 and early 2016 resolved the staffing pressures in the Chaplaincy that The Board reported last year.

5.2.4 During 2016 the proportion of prisoners on Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Standard level fell (71% to 66%), while the proportion on Basic increased (5% to 8%) and Enhanced stayed much the same (24% to 25%). The Board receives few Applications challenging changes to IEP status and in the cases The Board dealt with in 2016, The Board was satisfied that the rules had been applied correctly.

5.2.5 There are several cells suitable for prisoners with limited mobility, safety arrangements have been tested and most issues with accessibility are addressed by The Prison as they are identified. There is a

protocol in place with the local provider of social services, but referrals are still few in number and most needs are addressed through well-established peer support arrangements. However, the increasing numbers of prisoners with disabilities suggests that demand will increase. Both support arrangements and other adjustments will warrant more attention in future.

5.2.6 There are currently two transgender prisoners in The Prison. Both receive regular meetings with a Gender Psychologist, as well as quarterly meetings with their Senior Prison Custody Officer. Both report that they feel well supported. There are special arrangements in place to ensure privacy for any transgender prisoner. Appropriate female clothing and feminine supplies can be purchased from catalogues and the canteen.

5.2.7 In December 2016, there were 136 prisoners over the age of 55 years, fifty-three of whom were over the age of 65. Age UK (North Tyneside Branch) and Northumbria University have continued to work in partnership with The Prison to provide services for older offenders. During the year more than 70 older offenders have benefited from the programme. Although this programme is currently only offered to VPs, it is anticipated that the "Inside Out Club" will be extended to Mains Prisoners in the near future. Gym sessions have been introduced to promote a healthier lifestyle and increase the physical well-being of the older offender. For many of the users, this had been the first time they had used the gym while being in prison. The success of the Inside Out Club is largely due to the hard work and dedication of prison staff and their positive working relationship with Age UK and Northumbria University. In the hope that similar programmes in other establishments can benefit from their experience, an event for external organisations outlined some of the challenges faced by this category of prisoner and how the programme was addressing these issues, including presentations by some older prisoners about their experience of prison life. The Board wishes the team success in expanding the programme and hopes their work will become a permanent feature of the work of The Prison.

5.3 Care and Separation Unit

5.3.1 Despite efforts to reduce the demand on the CSU, it has been operating at or close to full occupancy of the 18 cells for much of the year. 2016 saw a reduction in the numbers of prisoners on Rule 45 (both Good Order, and Own Interest) and an increase in the numbers on Rule 55 (Cellular Confinement) and Rule 53 (Pending Adjudication).

5.3.2 The Board has concerns about the impact that high levels of CSU occupancy can have on the running and efficiency of the unit. It is not well-configured for high levels of occupancy. Staff are to be commended for their efforts to ensure that prisoners have sufficient access to showers, exercise, telephone calls and use of the kiosk. Some facilities are not up to an acceptable standard, particularly the one shower and the single exercise yard; the limitations these impose are a source of stress to both prisoners and staff. Plans have however, been drawn up to provide an extra shower in 2017 and at the time of writing work had begun.

5.3.3 In 2014 inspectors noted that Care and Integration Planning was almost non-existent. This has now been rectified and every prisoner in the CSU has his own individual plan to help him reintegrate back to a house block. These are revisited at each Segregation Review. Scheduling of Reviews has been less haphazard than in the past, but changes sometimes made it difficult for The Board to attend. However, The Board monitored approximately 30% of all Reviews and a higher proportion of Continuation Reviews. Where attendance has not been feasible, Members attending Reviews have taken the opportunity to read the files of those prisoners whose Reviews took place when The Board was not present. The Board has found that Reviews are consistently conducted with sensitivity, in almost all cases with the prisoner present. Demands on their time meant that Healthcare staff were not always present, but in the majority of cases they had provided input and advice for each prisoner in advance. Efforts to improve re-integration planning are reflected in a 20% reduction in the number of Continuation Reviews.

5.3.4 The Board ensures that every prisoner in the CSU has an opportunity to speak with a Member of The Board each week. Procedures are in place for the Duty Member of The Board to be notified whenever a

prisoner is brought to the CSU. This process worked well when regular staff were on duty, but not always with staff who are less familiar with CSU procedures. The Board is satisfied that there is no systematic under-reporting and steps have been put in place to prevent it happening.

5.3.5 The quality of relationships between staff and prisoners on the CSU remains good and very few prisoners complain about the quality of care they are receiving. The Board often observes staff going out of their way to ensure prisoners' well-being. Nevertheless, whilst prisoners are experiencing broadly adequate physical conditions, it is harder to offer purposeful activity and education in these circumstances. The Board has observed more prisoners reading and asking for writing or colouring materials: a small step, but an improvement nevertheless.

5.3.6 SMARG meetings are now held regularly, and are well-attended by a multi-disciplinary team.

5.3.7 In previous Annual Reports, The Board has recognised the work of CSU staff, expressed concern over Healthcare attendance at Segregation Reviews, high levels of CSU occupancy and the condition of the unit. All these concerns are recognised by The Prison and some progress has been made in 2016. The Board continues to be impressed by the quality of care provided by CSU staff, who remain caring, whilst often working in difficult and stressful conditions.

5.4 Accommodation

5.4.1 **House blocks:** The functions of house blocks remained substantially the same during the year. The planned reduction of Mains prisoners in the VP house blocks continued and by the end of 2016 the numbers were very low. Forthcoming changes in the designation of different residences aim to spread the responsibility for prisoners on Methadone treatment and are designed to provide a better mix of prisoners in those house blocks that have been under extra pressure during 2016. Each Member of The Board is assigned one or more house blocks and The Board will be monitoring these changes in 2017.

5.4.2 In normal circumstances, no prisoners share cells at HMP Northumberland. On two house blocks each cell has its own integral shower. Over the last three years significant investment has been made in both the estate and equipment. For example, a programme of replacing windows on older house blocks commenced in autumn 2016 and is addressing long-standing problems. However, several house blocks still require improvements / upgrades to the shower facilities.

5.4.3 Facilities on the house blocks are maintained to a good standard, largely by wing cleaners. Some prisoners have also been involved in redecoration programmes for their own cells and the public areas. Recreational areas tend to be well-used and some wings have orderly, up to date notice boards. Prisoners are responsible for their own personal laundry, although on the majority of house blocks this is carried out according to a rota, and administered by a wing orderly, usually in a systematic way.

5.4.4 **Kiosks:** As reported last year, the touch-screen kiosks in every house block have simplified many aspects of daily life for both prisoners and staff, particularly when ordering meals and canteen, or organising appointments. There is at least one per wing/spur and some are installed at a height suitable for wheelchair users. The use of kiosks is being extended and the desirability of booths to assist with privacy (for instance when making healthcare appointments) has been recognised.

5.4.5 **PID Workers:** A review by The Board of the PID arrangements revealed that most house blocks had someone operating in this role, in some cases to a very high standard. The facilities they were provided with varied from a dedicated office to using their own cell. The Board identified some inconsistency in the way these services are delivered and this is being addressed. The Prison is keen to extend the role and improve the training for and status of, PID workers. A consistent approach to both training and recognition is important to underpin this.

5.4.6 **Food:** Whilst The Board received only four Applications during the year relating to food, Members present on house blocks at mealtimes often receive adverse comments about various aspects of the food. The Board's experience of tasting food served in house blocks is that the standard is reasonable. The User Voice Food Forum has been very active during the year and influenced the new menus introduced at the

end of 2016. The Board has no concerns about the standard of hygiene in the kitchens, which had investment to improve equipment. Prisoners are encouraged to comment on food by using the forms introduced during the year, available at serveries, rather than in a book, as before. The Board has reviewed a sample of complaints, which were dealt with thoroughly. In particular, The Board noted the prompt response early in the year to a handful of complaints about food being cold: an investigation identified a need for training wing staff in the use of the servery hotplates. Changes to the timing of the working day mean that on some wings certain workers might return later than others to the house block. Without close supervision they can find food shortages. Although wing staff work with the kitchen to address these, it results in regular informal complaints to The Board.

5.4.7 Gyms: In its previous annual report, The Board identified that unreliable equipment was being replaced under a new leasing arrangement. The Board understands that this has been successful. In conjunction with Healthcare, staff are planning the introduction of smoking cessation sessions at the beginning of 2017. Whilst prisoners who work and are in education have priority, as well as those who need the gym for health reasons, The Board is satisfied that all prisoners have the opportunity to use a gym for at least an hour a week. At present, usage across the three gyms is at 94% of capacity. A shortage of staffing in the gym has been resolved and at the time of writing it is fully staffed. The re-introduction of level 2 qualifications will help prisoners to seek employment on release as a basic fitness trainer.

5.4.8 User Voice: The User Voice forum has gone from strength to strength in 2016, with about 20 prisoner representatives attending the main meetings and involving themselves in dedicated sub-groups, such as Finance, to look at various aspects of prison life in a systematic way. In 2016 such topics included window replacement; "emailprisoner" reply service; a newsletter; dress code and use of kiosks. The Board has been impressed by the organisation and enthusiasm of prisoners involved, as well as the support they receive.

5.4.9 Property at other prisons: Late responses to property issues at other prisons used to account for the bulk of the complaints backlog at The Prison. However, The Board has seen a noticeable improvement during the year. The number of outstanding responses to these particular complaints has halved. This reduction is largely attributable to closer working between complaints clerks at The Prison and their counterparts at HMP Durham and HMP Holme House (the main feeder prisons). As a result the number of times the IMB receives Applications in this category has reduced to a third of the volume we were seeing in 2015.

5.4.10 Property at The Prison: There has not, however, been an equivalent reduction in the volume of Applications to The Board about property in The Prison, which increased by 33% in 2016. Many of these issues appear to have escalated when no response was received to a General Property Application. There was scope for improvement in the way General Property Applications were handled and by the end of the year The Board welcomed the progress that had already been made.

5.4.11 Regime restrictions: Staffing shortages were anticipated over the summer and the effects of this were managed through August and September with scheduled regime restrictions. This resulted in an increased number of such restrictions. The view of The Board is that any such restriction is regrettable: the impact on the daily life of prisoners, on their access to education and work and on their contact with family and friends is unsettling. However, the nature of the estate at The Prison means that unplanned restrictions can affect prisoners in some house blocks more than others. A well-planned approach in the summer meant that the impact on prison life could be better managed and shared more fairly across the establishment. The approach was generally well accepted by prisoners, although patience was wearing thin towards the end of the period of planned restrictions. Changes have since been made that were expected to reduce, but not eliminate, the need for regime restrictions, and this has been the case.

5.4.12 Complaints: Applications to The Board are often raised as a result of perceived problems with the prison complaint system. When Members examined responses to formal prisoner complaints, The Board consistently found that these were of satisfactory quality. However, in 2016 the proportion of formal complaint answered within time did not improve over the previous year, despite a slight reduction in

volume. A number of Applications to The Board that were dealt with suggest that there is scope for improvement in the way that General Wing Applications are handled.

5.5 Healthcare (including mental health and social care)

5.5.1 In addition to the challenges faced by any organization delivering healthcare for prisoners, the team at The Prison contend with a large site, remote location and a complex contract involving multiple suppliers. Nevertheless, important progress was achieved in 2016.

5.5.2 During the first half of the year, difficulties with recruitment eased and working arrangements between different healthcare providers and The Prison became more settled. In the second half of the year escorting of prisoners for internal Healthcare appointments improved and at the time of writing Healthcare staffing is close to planned levels.

5.5.3 In our previous report, The Board anticipated more emphasis on preventive health in 2016 and a number of innovative health promotion activities has been introduced. There has been progress on smoking cessation and screening. An initiative to help prisoners to deal with stress was well received by prisoners. Two house blocks are currently smoke-free. Real progress on screening programmes is not always reflected in the standard measures, because of disruption to screening programmes when prisoners are moved across the prison estate.

5.5.4 On a large and remote site dispensing medication, attendance at Healthcare appointments, and outside escorts all rely heavily on close collaboration between operational and Healthcare staff. The Board received a number of complaints in these areas during the first half of 2016. The Board expected to see little improvement over the summer of 2016, but in practice, improved processes and more collaborative working at an operational level achieved a significant improvement in handling of movement for internal appointments in the second half of the year. The Board believes there is still room for improvement in dispensing medication and will continue to monitor this.

5.5.5 Direct prisoner feedback on their experience of Healthcare services is generally positive, and the number of Applications to The Board related to Healthcare at The Prison is normally lower than in similar prisons. However, there are indications that some aspects of the service are under pressure. There was a 35% increase in the number of Applications to The Board relating to Healthcare in 2016. Over the same period The Board understands that the number of prisoner complaints submitted to Healthcare doubled. Whenever The Board has pursued a healthcare complaint it has been dealt with promptly, but the target response time for Healthcare complaints does not seem sufficiently ambitious and there are inconsistencies in the way the different Healthcare providers handle complaints. Waiting times for urgent care are not a concern, but waiting times for routine care have deteriorated (GP waiting times have increased by 50% over the year, and some other services by more). The Board believe that this contributed to the increased number of complaints. At the time of writing, a plan has been put in place to improve GP waiting times. Earlier action to improve waiting times in Dentistry resulted in a 30% improvement.

5.5.6 As reported elsewhere, both Healthcare and The Prison recognise that the frequency of Healthcare attendance at both Rule-45 and ACCT reviews needs to improve. Work continues to achieve this. However, in The Board's experience, Healthcare always make daily visits to prisoners in the CSU, initial Segregation Safety Screens are carried out promptly, Segregation Review Boards have access to up-to date healthcare reports, and where a Segregation Review Board needs to consider a serious healthcare concern, it has access to the information it requires.

5.6 Substance Misuse

5.6.1 The effects of NPS have continued to be a concern throughout the year. Progress has been achieved in developing protocols for dealing with an NPS-related incident and for dealing with a suspected swallowing incident. There are more than 500 prisoners on some form of treatment for substance misuse, including more than 200 on Methadone programmes. Considerable effort has been made to improve the balance between the number on Methadone maintenance and the number on Methadone reduction

programmes and these have achieved progress – with currently more reducing than on maintenance doses and growing numbers who have successfully completed the programme. However, population turnover means that genuine progress achieved by individual prisoners is not fully reflected in the overall figures.

5.6.2 There has been considerable effort to reduce levels of substance misuse by providing additional support on the wings, including peer mentors and awareness courses. Eleven prisoners at The Prison have qualified as SMART Facilitators. (SMART is a programme to help people manage recovery from addictive behaviour). These are the first prisoners to gain this qualification in the UK and all those involved are to be commended. Measures have been strengthened to ensure that prisoners with a history of substance misuse have the support they need on release, to continue their treatment in the community. This includes strengthening family ties and working with the “Departure Lounge” scheme to ensure prescriptions, dates of appointments and community support contacts are in place on release.

5.6.3 The Board welcomed efforts by the Non-Clinical Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team (DART) to put additional weekend support in place for substance misuse. This service was briefly disrupted during the middle of the year due to regime restrictions. However, the service was reinstated once the restrictions were resolved.

5.6.4 Re-installation of the gym equipment on Gateway (the drug rehabilitation wing) is welcome. In 2016, prisoners across Gateway and the VP estate raised £1,384.50 through a sponsored “cycling marathon” (Tour de Gateway). This was almost entirely raised by contributions from other prisoners. Prisoners took pride in being able to give something back to the local community as the money raised went to a local charity (Children’s Heart Unit Fund). Similar events are planned for the coming year and The Board wishes them every success.

5.7 Education

5.7.1 The education service is provided by Novus. Progress is monitored by a quarterly cross-functional Quality Improvement Group, with representation from Novus, The Prison, industries, and the CRC.

5.7.2 The Education Service offers a range of courses covering functional skills (e.g. Maths and English), Personal and Social Development (for hard-to-reach learners), and Vocational skills (e.g. decorating, horticulture, hospitality, barbering), IT and business skills. Developments in the scope on offer include the introduction of a Level-2 qualification in Performing Manufacturing Operations, in collaboration between the Education Department and workshops. This is currently available to prisoners working in Textiles, Engineering and the Vacuum Cleaner workshop. Outreach classes have been taken to prisoners at work, so that basic Maths and English can be learnt on the job. For example, a Maths teacher will visit workshops delivering a half day’s session once a prisoner has signed up for that workshop.

5.7.3 During local induction, prisoners receive a presentation and tour of educational facilities, existing educational assessments are reviewed and further educational assessments are scheduled when required. The initial Skills Action Plan influences allocation to house blocks. Prisoners can also apply for education classes through the Kiosk system.

5.7.4 There have been concerns whether the initial assessments carried out before prisoners arrive are sufficiently robust for skills planning. Forthcoming changes regionally in the movement of prisoners at the start of their sentence will place additional pressure on this process, so work is under way to explore how to maintain continuity, and achieve a better match between education allocations and prisoner needs.

5.7.5 The number of times prisoners raise Applications to The Board in relation to education and employment has fallen significantly in 2016, and is at the lowest level for four years. Most of those The Board receives regarding education are concerned with dismissal from courses. Changes have been made in the system for dealing with these in 2016. The Board is satisfied that a robust system is in place and it has not encountered any case where it was felt that a prisoner was dealt with unfairly.

5.7.6 Allocation of education places improved in 2016 and has not been of concern to The Board. However, there is room for improvement in both attendance and punctuality. Systems for measuring

attendance were improved in 2016. These and The Board's own observations, suggest that it is not uncommon for around a third of those who have been allocated a place to fail to attend or arrive late. Some of these absences are outside the control of individual prisoners. A proportion of the shortfall is the result of authorised absence (e.g. a GP appointment), and a proportion is the result of regime restrictions (reported on elsewhere). However, the majority of absences are unauthorised. Work has been carried out to examine how to encourage better education attendance and measures have been put in place to challenge absence and lack of punctuality. It is too early to assess the effect of these.

5.7.7 The Library is run by the Northumberland County Council Library Service. There are two library sites and attendance has been fairly consistent throughout the year. The 'storybook Dads' service continues to be successful. Work will soon be completed to provide a common IT system, linking the two sites and providing access to a virtual campus. The Library runs a programme of events and displays throughout the year to mark cultural and other events.

5.7.8 The Prison offers a range of Accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes. In 2016 these included Thinking Skills, and the Core SOTP programme. Work was under way to implement changes to the SOTP programme.

5.8 Work, vocational training and employment

5.8.1 Considerable effort has been made over the year to increase both the quantity and the range of employment that is on offer. All metrics used in reporting on Work, Vocational Training and Employment show improvement. Over the year there was a 15% reduction in unemployment, and the number of complaints that The Board received relating to employment and education fell by a third and is at the lowest level for four years.

5.8.2 The range and quality of work on offer has also improved, with notable developments in the introduction of a Call Centre, DVD Refurbishment and Return Processing, Vacuum Cleaner Recycling and Maintenance, Re-purposing of Workwear and the Nissan Academy.

5.8.3 Together these initiatives have created around 100 new work places. Additional places also create new opportunities for prisoners to progress to higher skill levels. Examples include more skilled prisoners becoming demonstrators, or learning new skills in record keeping. Some of the newer partnerships open up possibilities for transition into employment on release and there have been commendable examples of prisoners successfully completing the Nissan Academy, then obtaining employment on release.

5.8.4 Within the long-established workshops, new initiatives, such as Re-purposing of Workwear, are building on established tailoring capabilities, and providing an opportunity to introduce new skills. The laundry experienced some teething problems with new equipment early in the year, but these have been resolved and the unit is a busy place, working well and offering a weekly laundry service under contract to two other prisons. It provides employment that demands attention and skill, although it is not possible to gain a qualification and there is frequent turnover of workers.

5.8.5 2016 has seen the extension of a qualification in Performing Manufacturing Operations, led by Novus, in close collaboration with the workshops.

5.8.6 The general atmosphere in the best workshops is cheerful, busy and workmanlike. Prisoners normally report that they enjoy the work, are positive about the opportunities on offer, and optimistic about the chances of future employment.

5.8.7 Some prisoners have limited experience of the disciplines associated with a working environment. So it is important that The Prison offers a spectrum of work opportunities, from fairly repetitive tasks, that require limited organisational skills, to more demanding opportunities, associated with vocational qualifications.

5.8.8 As there are usually waiting lists of prisoners who want to work, it is disappointing that workshops often operate below full capacity because of unreliable attendance, or (more rarely) have to be suspended because of regime restrictions.

5.9 Resettlement preparation

5.9.1 Preparation for release covers a range of activities throughout a sentence but 2016 saw the full roll-out of the revised arrangements for the final stages of resettlement and this has been a priority in monitoring by The Board.

5.9.2 In 2016 more than 800 men were released from The Prison. The Northumbria CRC dealt with about 35%, the remainder being the responsibility of other Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service.

5.9.3 During 2016 progress was slower than expected for several reasons: communication and information sharing were hampered by incompatible IT systems; some agencies were behind their target of working with prisoners for 12 weeks before release and there were changes in the Probation Service.

5.9.4 The Prison has taken positive steps towards easing the transition from prison life to living outside:

- in October a Resettlement Day offered 180 offenders the chance to talk to the agencies involved and pick up information relevant to their release planning; feedback was positive
- on the suggestion of User Voice a single leaflet explaining what happens upon release is being developed
- the Northern Learning Trust, which supports ex-prisoners who are veterans, is exploring the possibility of training mentors in The Prison. Typically, between 40 and 50 prisoners identify themselves as veterans.

5.9.5 **Departure Lounge:** The Departure Lounge opened in September in the existing Visitors' Centre which is now open on weekday mornings and provides a warm and welcoming place, with refreshments, for family and friends to wait, and meet prisoners who are being released. Some are escorted by their Offender Supervisor, who can rehearse the details of travel and licences, which may have appeared straightforward inside, but can be quite daunting once the door closes. It is particularly useful for those with complex licence conditions. This development is part of planned investment in measures to support resettlement. A new NEPACS post provides extra family support, and NEPACS offer extra clothing and plan to introduce toiletry packs and mobile phone chargers for those going to hostels.

5.9.6 **Contact with family and friends:** The Board's last two reports commented on arrangements for visits, drawing attention to the importance of arrangements and support for families, given the remote location of The Prison and the difficulties this can present. A thematic report from HMIP on this wider subject, published in August 2016, also emphasised the importance of prisons enabling prisoners to keep in touch with family and friends. The Board was pleased to note that some of the key measures identified in that report, such as emailprisoner and Story Book Dads, are already in place.

5.9.7 The Board received 17 Applications relating to visits during the year, a significant reduction on previous years (36 in 2015 and 53 in 2014).

5.9.8 Although security during visits has been tightened to counteract attempts at passing packages, the Visits Hall remains a cheerful place, with an attractive layout, enabling families to be relaxed and children to play. The Board was pleased to note that during times of pressure on the regime escorting prisoners to visits remained a priority (5.4.11). In December an Indeterminate Sentence Prisoner Family Day offered an opportunity for 15 prisoners, many of whom are not local, to spend more time with their families and show them display stands illustrating how they spend their time.

6 Work of The Board

6.1 Board Statistics

Board Statistics	2016
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period	14
Number of new Members joining within the reporting period	7
Number of Members leaving within the reporting period	6
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to The Prison	599
Number of Rule 45, 14 Day Reviews attended	Approx 33%
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	March 2016

The Board recruited seven new Members during 2016. Six of these were through a recruitment campaign and one was on a reserve list for another prison and moved into this area. One of the new Members resigned very soon after commencing induction and a second one resigned later in the year. Three experienced Members left for personal reasons. The Board has 14 Members at the time of reporting. The recommended complement is 20. Two recruitment campaigns were carried out in 2016. One commenced in February and a second one in October and will be completed early in 2017. The Board is committed to equality in its recruitment procedures.

Rota and other visits: Members of The Board visit The Prison every week in order to carry out their duties. Members recorded 599 visits in 2016. Three separate rotas were in operation, as well as a weekly panel dealing with Applications. Each rota has specific responsibilities:

- Rota 1 takes phone calls to The Board for that week, co-ordinates The Board's response to any serious incident and covers User Voice meetings
- Rota 2 covers attendance at R45 reviews
- Rota 3 visits the CSU and covers adjudications

All planned and ad hoc rota visits are reported and issues of immediate concern are raised with appropriate departments. Reports are shared with senior managers, who comment on immediate issues. Where appropriate, issues are followed up by discussion with the Director at meetings of The Board.

Applications are dealt with by a weekly Applications Panel consisting of two Members of The Board. All prisoner applications to The Board are acknowledged on receipt and the prisoner is kept informed if there is to be any delay in response.

Areas of Special Responsibility (AoSR) broadly mirror the structure of the Annual Report. Each Member also monitors their share of residential accommodation and provides The Board with periodic reports on their area of special responsibility and residences.

Board Members also observe selected meetings within their AoSR.

Board Meetings are held monthly and are well-attended. The Director or his delegate attended all meetings in 2016 and gave a report on progress. Thirty minutes before each meeting is devoted to Board Development Time, when invited speakers provide information on a variety of subjects.

Area and National Meetings: The Chair and/or the Vice-Chair attend the quarterly Area Chairs meeting facilitated by the National Council representative. In 2016, two Members of The Board attended the IMB National Conference.

The Board has a Service Level Agreement with The Prison under which clerking and secretarial services were provided throughout the year.

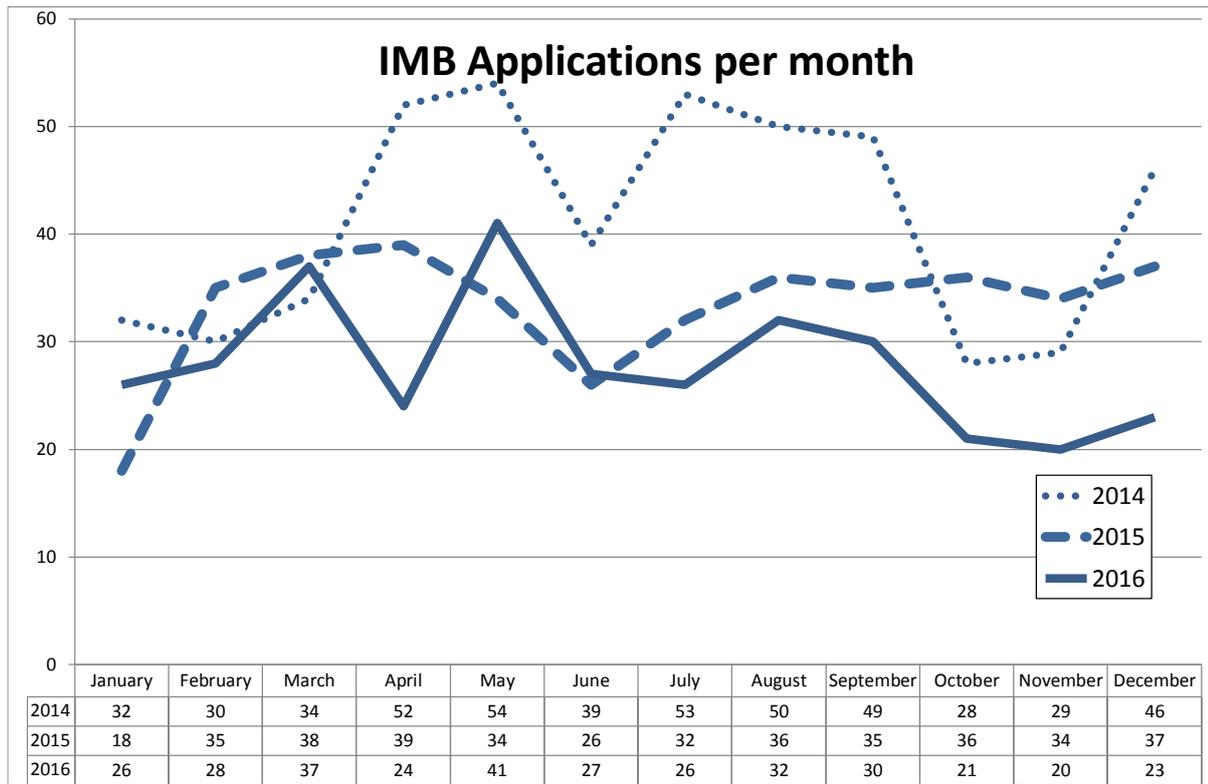
The IMB Secretariat has provided support throughout the year.

6.2 IMB Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year (2016)	Previous reporting year (2015)
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	4
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	1	3
C	Equality & Diversity; including religion	8	1
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell (inc IEP)	21	33
E1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	17	36
E2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	7	25
F	Food and kitchens	6	7
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	42	31
H1	Property within HMP Northumberland	37	28
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	19	61
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	14	6
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	40	41
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	34	61
K	Transfers	36	41
L	Miscellaneous	48	19
	Total number of IMB Applications	335	400
	Monthly Average	28	33

The underlying downward trend has been fairly consistent since May, and the total number of applications for the year was 16% down on the previous year. The mix of applications that we see is similar to the mix encountered by other Boards, though we have a higher proportion related to transfers, and lower proportions related to property in other establishments and accommodation. The proportion of IMB

Applications related to transfers seems to confirm our belief that, while part of the high number of transfer issues is due to factors shared with other prisons, part is due to factors unique to HMP Northumberland: particularly to the remote location.



6.3 Conclusion

It is my responsibility as Chair to sign this report, but it has been produced as a collaborative effort by the whole of The Board. 2016 was a demanding year for both The Prison and The Board. I would like to thank all Members, past and present, for their commitment and support throughout the year, and pay special tribute to long-standing Members who are no longer on The Board, and whose contribution is missed.

Isobel Wilson IMB Chair, HMP Northumberland March, 2017