



**Annual Report**  
of the  
**Independent Monitoring Board**  
at  
**HMP Lowdham Grange**

for reporting year  
1 February 2016 to 31 January 2017

Published  
July 2017



*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*



## **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any 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.

## **CONTENTS**

	<b>PAGE</b>
1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE BOARD	2
2. CONTENTS	3
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON	4
4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
5. REPORTS	
5.1 Equality & Inclusion	6
5.2 Education, Learning and Skills	6
5.3 Healthcare & Mental Health	7
5.4 Purposeful activity	8
5.5 Resettlement	9
5.6 Safer Custody	9
5.7 Segregation, Care & Separation, Close Supervision	10
5.8 Residential Services	11
6. ADDITIONAL REPORTS	
6.1 Drugs/Substance Abuse	12
6.2 Prisoners' Property	12
6.3 Serious Incidents	13
6.4 Staffing Levels	13
7. INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD STATISTICS	
7.1 The Work of the Independent Monitoring Board	15
7.2 IMB Applications	16

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

HM Prison Lowdham Grange (LGP) is a Category B male training prison opened in 1998

It is located in the village of Lowdham 12 miles outside Nottingham.

The prison is operated by Serco Justice and Immigration a part of Serco Plc. (Serco)

All services in the prison, except Healthcare are provided by Serco.

The Certified Normal Accommodation is 888 with an Operational Capacity of 920.

At the start of the reporting year 1/02/2016 the prison population was 917.

At the end of the reporting period 31/01/2017 the prison population was 913,

The average population for the year was 916.

On the 31/01/2017 the breakdown of the prisoners held was:

Life sentenced prisoners	185
Indeterminate sentenced prisoners	57
Determinate sentenced prisoners	671

### **THE PRISON'S ROLE**

The prison usually receives Cat "B" prisoners with more than 4 years left on their sentence. Many of the prisoners have convictions for offences involving violence. Prisoners arriving at the prison have always spent a period in prison at another establishment. Prisoners are usually transferred to a Cat "C" prison when they achieve their Cat "C" status or to a resettlement prison when they are close to their release date.

### **THE DIRECTOR**

The Governing Governor of private sector prisons is referred to as the Director.

They are appointed under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and have to be a certificated Prison Custody Officer.

A new Director was appointed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

### **THE CONTROLLER**

All private sector prisons have a Controller's Team based in the prison. The role of the Controller is to monitor the contract between the Secretary of State for Justice and Serco to ensure compliance. The Controller and her team have held senior positions in state run prisons prior to appointment.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The IMB is satisfied that LGP continues to be managed and operated well. The prison endeavours to treat all prisoners with respect and decency.

### **The Board draws attention to the following area of good work:**

#### **1 The Education Department.**

The Department is making a difference to the lives and aspirations of a significant number of prisoners. See section 5.2 on page 6.

### **The Board draw attentions to the following areas of concern:**

#### **1 Healthcare**

The improvements in Healthcare have stalled.

The provider, Nottinghamshire NHS Trust needs to address this. See section 5.3 on page 7.

#### **2 Safer Custody**

The Board was concerned that for a period of time the Safer Custody Team was significantly under strength. See section 5.6 on page 9

#### **3 Re-Integration Unit (SEG)**

The Reintegration Unit (SEG) continues to treat the most challenging of prisoners decently and with respect. However the Board is concerned that some prisoners have been kept in the unit for long periods of time in some cases for over 200 days because more suitable accommodation cannot be found in the prison system or in this case a suitable Mental Health facility. See section 5.7 on page 10.

#### **4 Prisoners' Property**

The Board is still concerned about prisoners' property being lost during the transfer of a prisoner between prisons and the failure of transferring prisons to answer prisoners' applications. See section 6.2 on page 12.

#### **6 Staffing Levels and Staff Morale**

The Board is still concerned about the low staffing levels in the prison.

See section 6.4 on page 13.

During the reporting period staff morale was allowed to fall and this should have been addressed.

### **Questions for the Minister**

None

## **REPORTS**

### **5.1 Equality and Inclusion**

Equalities and Inclusion continue to be well led and managed by senior leaders at LGP.

The Equalities Officer is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and respected by colleagues and prisoners alike.

She leads regular consultation with prisoners, plans carefully with senior managers and provides training for staff on a regular basis.

The Board believe that equalities issues are addressed in a timely and effective way by the systems within the prison and this view is reinforced by statistics which show that less than 2% of applications to the Board during the reporting year related to Equalities matters.

The prison population remains very diverse with 47% of prisoners being from a BME background.

The Muslim population of 26% poses a number of challenges which are generally handled well by the Imam team working closely with the Equalities Officer and senior leaders.

For example, arrangements for serving of meals during the weeks of Ramadan are planned in advance which allows consultation with prisoners to be well conducted. Some concern exists about the 'contamination' of Halal food at wing serveries but this is currently being addressed. The support of older prisoners with specific needs is now being addressed and Nottinghamshire Adult Social Care staff have assessed 7 prisoners and made recommendations for adjustments where necessary, which have been carried out.

It is of some concern that prisoners over 60 have not been receiving bowel cancer screening as they would outside of prison and those over 65 have not received aortic aneurism screening. These matters are being pursued with the NHS Trust who provide healthcare at Lowdham.

### **5.2 Education Learning and Skills (ELS)**

The IMB believes that Education Learning and Skills continues to be a strength at LGP. This view was endorsed by HMIP during their inspection in June of 2015 when they judged ELS provision to be 'Good'

The Service is managed by a senior manager and two managers who provide strong and clear leadership and effective management.

A good range of courses is offered which range from Foundation Level to degree courses through the Open University. 46 students are currently undergoing degree level courses.

HMIP noted that the 25+ courses offered represent an excellent range and variety of opportunities for prisoners. Achievement levels are generally good.

IMB has noted a number of particular examples of good practice including:

- The Sports Academy which offers courses up to level 3.
- A Pro Social Modelling course, that was written 'in house', is well structured and delivered by experienced staff that have the respect of the prisoners.
- Multi Media courses, the highlight of which is the 'Story time Dad's' course where prisoners can make story videos for their children.

- A ‘white goods ‘repair course, which supports the work of the prison as well providing vocational experience for prisoners.
- Good monitoring of and support for teaching staff.
- Relationships between prisoners and staff are generally good. Prisoners report that the quality and availability of education at Lowdham is better than that elsewhere.

During the reporting period the Board notes that LGP has more strictly enforced the policy of all prisoners reaching a basic standard of numeracy and literacy before being allowed to work. There have been complaints from prisoners as they felt that they were being denied the opportunity to work. This does reflect the reality of obtaining work in the outside world. The numbers of prisoners achieving these skills is shown below:

2015	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>English</b>	42	27	42	-	-
<b>Maths</b>	124	32	18	-	-
<b>ESOL</b>	7	4	4	-	-

2016	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>English</b>	21	19	18	7	17
<b>Maths</b>	156	9	24	1	4
<b>ESOL</b>	9	8	7	0	0

### **5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health**

Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust continue to provide LGP with healthcare services. The Head of Healthcare resigned in October 2016 and her replacement commenced in January 2017.

The Board notes that no demonstrable improvement overall in Physical Healthcare has been observed in the reporting period.

The Mental Health team has become more pro-active however, and prisoner access to this service has improved.

The following issues are of concern:

- Healthcare Staff shortages remain, despite recruitment efforts, and this impacts on prisoner welfare and service delivery across the board.
- Prison staff shortages also impact on prisoner access to Healthcare.
- The number of failures to attend appointments continues to rise.
- The planned relocation of Healthcare Management/ Admin staff has taken place creating additional clinical space; however the environment within the consulting area remains very poor and continues to impact negatively on prisoners and staff.
- Since the Nottinghamshire NHS Trust service provision commenced the Board have been unable to access meaningful information about the levels of, or reasons for, Complaints.
- There was provision for prisoner representatives to meet with Healthcare Managers to raise issues / concerns but this did not take place throughout the reporting period. The prisoners feel their concerns are not being seriously addressed.

Healthcare will continue to be a priority of the Board and will raise these concerns with the new Head of Healthcare.

The Board will also be emphasising the need for better access to management information about the services to support a more evidence-based approach to monitoring, focussing on:

- The need for a robust and transparent complaints process
- Prisoner access to services, waiting times and failure to attend rates
- Provision of Data and Performance indicators including Quality Measures

#### **5.4 Purposeful Activity**

The Board notes that a range of Purposeful Activity for prisoners exists at LGP including education, work opportunities, tackling substance misuse, maintaining family ties, and offender behaviour programmes.

All prisoners at LGP are expected to participate in either work through Business Enterprises, residential work within the establishment or to attend Education.

During the reporting year (April 2016) the target hours per week for Purposeful activity for each prisoner changed from 28 hours per week to 24 hours per week; as a result of the introduction of the new Core Day. Even allowing time for the new arrangements to properly bed in, no improvement was noted. A review of Purposeful Activity has since been commissioned by the new Director.

On average during the reporting period each prisoner spent an average of **23.15** hours engaged in purposeful activity.

This is a significant reduction on the **26.29** hours per week reported in 2015/6.

Number of prisoners	January 2017	January 2016
Available for work/purposeful activity but unemployed	163	125
Long term sick	19	9
Retired	2	1

The Board notes that at the end of January 2017 unemployment was 18%, which would appear to indicate that there is not sufficient Purposeful Activity available. There was and continues to be a lack of clarity regarding activity profiles and breakdown of full-time/part-time positions, and long-term unemployed prisoners are not being actively challenged. There is no evident links to sentence planning targets.

The Board has noted with concern that there are waiting lists for many areas of employment and the average waiting time to gain employment is around 9 months. This has been due to a backlog of risk assessments. For some 'premium jobs' it might take up to 18 months to reach the top of the waiting list.

### **5.5 Resettlement**

The Offender Management Unit arranges accommodation, employment, education or training for prisoners in the area in which they will be released.

The prisoner's Offender Supervisor works with the Offender Manager in that area, to provide the best possible support for a released prisoner.

There are no specific release courses provided at LGP as numbers released are low as most prisoners are moved to a Cat "C" resettlement prison prior to release,

During the reporting period there were 39 prisoners released.

	2016	2015
Prisoners released	39	17
Prisoners found accommodation	38	15
Prisoners found education training or employment	14	13
Deported	6	2
Repatriated	3	-

### **5.6 Safer Custody**

In January 2016 the Safer Custody Manager was given the additional responsibility of managing House Block 3. This meant that the only full time member of the team was an administration clerk. We were surprised that the previously high level of focus on this area was depleted to this extent.

This was against a background of high levels of self-harm, assaults, weapon finds and the use of NPS drugs across the entire prison estate details of which are shown below.

	2016	2015
Prisoner self-harms	308	286
Acct documents opened	238	n/a
Prisoner assaults on prisoner	128	218
Prisoner assaults on staff	64	n/a
Weapons finds	227	n/a
Mobile phone finds	n/a	20

By proactively using intelligence the number of weapons, drugs and alcohol finds remains high for which LGP should be commended.

It is disappointing that HMPPS has still not introduced technology that would prevent the use of mobile phones in prisons.

Assaults on staff continue to be high at 64. Similarly prisoner on prisoner assaults continue to cause concern at 128, although this is a welcome decrease from the previous year.

Overall it can be seen from the above that there is a continuing need for vigilance on the part of staff.

It was disappointing to note that Violence Reduction in the prison was lacking and no strategy was in place in the reporting year. This meant that there was little work taking place in the form of violence reduction/anti bullying or monitoring of known perpetrators.

LGP has done a lot of work reducing the opportunity for prisoners to manufacture illicit alcohol.

In January 2017 the new Director created a new Safer Custody & Violence Reduction Team consisting of an Assistant Director, an Operational Manager and 3 Prison Custody Officers. The new arrangements, when staffed appropriately, should support the Director's plans in respect of the safety agenda.

### **5.7 The Reintegration Unit (Segregation)**

This unit consists of 25 cells, office, kitchen, showers and 3 separate exercise yards. The conditions, facilities, staffing and management of the unit continue to be of a high standard, in the most challenging part of the prison.

The unit has been full to capacity for almost all of the reporting year.

The Board monitors at least 98% of the Segregation Review Boards (SRB). The SRBs are held on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. All documentation is up to date and readily accessible to Board Members.

During the reporting year there have been a high number of difficult prisoners who have been on 3 officers unlock, in some cases deployed in full PPE. This has substantially increased the workload of the Unit.

The care and support from staff in the RIU for the prisoners is to be commended often under very difficult working conditions

The Board speaks to each prisoner in the unit weekly. The Board are advised of prisoners being taken into the Unit and the use of Special Accommodation.

Following the introduction of new procedures for the Reviewing and Authorisation of Continuing Segregation in October 2015 the LGP has made efforts to improve its approach to the management of SRBs.

However, due to operational and staffing pressures within the RIU it was noted that managers with inadequate training were being asked to undertake SRB's. When the Board raised this issue with the Director, training and support was quickly put in place.

Longer term management of Complex/Healthcare/Mental Health prisoners located in segregation conditions creates significant increase in the workload for all of those involved.

The Board also notes that at the first 72 hour SRB the Chair of the SRB sometimes does not always know the full reasons for the initial segregation other than what is written on the Initial Authority to Segregate Form. This is particularly apparent when the reason for segregation is security based.

The Board also notes that, as the prison holds multi-disciplinary meetings twice per week to case-manage prisoners held in the RIU, the decision to continue to hold in segregation is not actually made by the Chair of the SRB.

Whilst the Board is satisfied that at the 42 day and 84 day time limits the required authority from the DDC or Deputy is obtained it has serious concerns at the length of time some of the prisoners are being held in segregation whilst transfers or alternative provision is secured for them.

During the reporting period a total of 40 prisoners were held for over 42 days in Segregation. Of these 12 were held for more than 84 days, with 6 prisoners held for over 100 days, 1 prisoner was held for over 200 days and another prisoner is approaching 200 days in segregation.

The Board feels that it cannot be right to hold prisoners in segregation for over 200 days and that this does not constitute humane and decent treatment.

HMPPS must address this situation.

### **5.8 Residential Services (including accommodation, food, catering and kitchens)**

The prisoners are housed in five house-blocks on 2 levels.

House-blocks 1 and 2 are standard cross design of four wings with communal showers on each level.

The other 3 house-blocks, each consisting of two wings, have en-suite shower facilities.

All cells have telephones. All calls can be monitored.

Accommodation at the prison consists mainly of single occupancy cells, with some double cells.

The Board notes that LGP ensures that the prison accommodation is maintained to a high standard and any repairs are carried out promptly.

All of the exercise yards and the wings have a variety of exercise equipment installed for the use of prisoners. Gym facilities are also available.

The prison grounds are well maintained, modern, clean and tidy. There is no graffiti.

## **6 ADDITIONAL REPORTS**

### **6.1 Drugs/Substance Misuse**

	2016	2015
Alcohol finds	169	n/a
Drug finds	163	66

The Mandatory Drug Testing figures continue to show that drugs are available in the prison with NPS (synthetic cannabis) usage continuing to be high.

These drugs can cause prisoners to behave irrationally and to be extremely violent.

LGP makes great efforts to prevent these drugs entering the prison but they still get in. The Security Department regularly carries out intelligence led cell searches, which have been successful.

There have also been a number of searches carried during Wing lock downs which have reduced the number of drugs and other contraband material in LGP.

Not all the required MDTs were carried out. One month non were carried out because of staff shortages and the disbanding of the dedicated team that carried them out.

#### **Drug / Substance Misuse Programs**

Nottinghamshire NHS Trust provides the substance misuse treatments and programs.

The courses were:

NPS (synthetic cannabis)

Alcohol and Hooch

Triggers Cravings and healthy Living

Change and Motivation & Emotional Awareness

Substance Awareness & harm Reduction

Bullying, Debt, Peer Pressure & Substance Misuse

Overdose, Tolerance and Blood Borne Viruses

Steroid Awareness

### **6.2 Prisoners' Property**

We repeat what was said in our last report.

“The issue of property is still a major concern to the Board. When a prisoner is transferred from another establishment they are often separated from their property.

The provision for property on Geo Amy vans is inadequate and needs to be addressed on the renewal of the PECS contract. The problems occur particularly when the sending prison is slow or even unresponsive to requests form the receiving prison over lost property issues. This causes unnecessary frustration and anxiety for the prisoner. This is a fundamental problem that requires serious attention.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 LGP had 41 prisoner property applications to other prisons that were over 1 month old and still outstanding compared with 94 the previous year.

### **6.3 Serious Incidents**

Board members attended seven serious incidents that required the Command Suite to be opened during the year, which is consistent with the previous reporting period.

Incidents included:   2 Hostage incidents  
                              3 Incidents at height  
                              2 Incidents of prisoners barricading themselves in cells or other rooms.

The Board observed that these incidents were managed efficiently, calmly and humanely. The prison has well developed procedures for handling such matters. Board members who attended Serious Incidents were impressed by the professionalism shown by all staff involved and the cooperation with external agencies including: Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, & The East Midlands Ambulance Service.

The National Tactical Response Group (NTRG) has been called to assist in a number of the Serious Incidents, when it was deemed to be appropriate. The IMB observed thorough briefing, close working with staff from LGP, good joint planning and handover for the resolution of Incidents. The NTRG feedback at the 'hot' debriefs were very positive about the staff attitude & actions at LGP.

### **6.4 Staffing Levels and Staff Morale**

Throughout the year the monthly staffing levels of Prison Custody Officers has been on average 20 officers below establishment compared with 22.66 officers last year. This has caused additional pressures for those members of staff on duty.

The Board is concerned that there are not enough staff on duty, especially at weekends and bank holidays, to maintain control of a difficult population.

This has impacted from time to time on the treatment and welfare of prisoners. For example on one Saturday, Healthcare, on the advice of the Eye Casualty Department, wanted to send a prisoner to hospital. They were prevented from doing so because there were not enough staff on duty to escort him. He was taken to hospital the following day and his condition was so serious that he remained an inpatient for 11 days. A few days later there was a protest by about 10 prisoners on his wing about the delayed hospital admission.

The Prison has continually recruited during the reporting period and has made every effort to manage staff absences. A new core day was introduced but it has done little to alleviate the problem.

Pay levels have been increased but up to 28% of new recruits leave when they learn the realities of working in a prison in 2016.

A new Core Day was introduced following recommendations from a management consultancy team from India. This was not a success.

Staff Sickness -The monthly average number of sick days for staff as a percentage was 13.56% against a target of 9%. The average in the prison service, including open prisons, was 10.39%.

All of the above had a detrimental effect on staff morale.

However it must be reported that notwithstanding the staff shortages the prison regime was not curtailed and there were no regular lockdown of Prisoners on wings as happens in most public sector prisons.

## **7.1 The Work of the Independent Monitoring Board**

<b><u>BOARD STATISTICS</u></b>	
Recommended Complement of The Board	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	16
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	5
Number of members leaving within reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	514
Total number of days segregation reviews held	153
Total number of segregation reviews attended	149
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	21/01/2016

## 7.2 IMB Applications

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year 2013-14</b>	<b>Year 2014-15</b>	<b>Year 2015-16</b>	<b>Year 2016-17</b>
A	Accommodation	2	4	3	3
B	Adjudications	12	9	9	3
C	Equality & Diversity (including religion)	4	11	6	9
D	Education/Employment/Training including IEP	20	18	18	9
E 1	Family/Visits including mail & phone	12	10	5	19
E2	Finance/Pay	14	6	7	10
F	Food/Kitchen Related	0	1	10	5
G	Health Related	30	29	22	24
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	70	74	42	45
H 2	Property (during transfer in / Or other establishment)	In total	48	47	42
H 3	Canteen, Facilities, Catalogue Shopping,	2	2	2	1
I	Sentence related (including, parole, release dates, re-cat, rotl.	2	17	15	13
J	Staff/Prisoner concerns including bullying	13	14	18	14
K	Transfers	2	6	2	7
L	Miscellaneous	70	52	35	23
	<b>Total Number of Applications</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>229</b>

		<b>Year 2013-14</b>	<b>Year 2014-15</b>	<b>Year 2015-16</b>	<b>Year 2016-17</b>
	Number of IMB Confidential Access Applications	17	25	36	29