



**Annual Report**  
of the  
**Independent Monitoring Board**  
at

**HMP/YOI Rochester**

for Reporting Year  
1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017



*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A Sections 1 - 3

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### 1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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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.

### **Main judgements**

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***Are prisoners being treated fairly?*** The Board believes that HMP/YOI Rochester is a well-run prison and that its prisoners are treated fairly. A new Governor and Senior Management Team (SMT) have brought stability and increased safety to the prison. They have an approachable and responsive attitude to prisoners, the staff, and IMB members. (For example see paragraph 4.10) The introduction of the Special Measures initiative has been well managed, and prior to the announcement of closure, was delivering significant benefits to the prison. Drug abuse at Rochester is extensive and a cause for concern because of the risk to stability it creates. The Board considers that the SMT has made commendable efforts to manage this risk but nevertheless Rochester continues to be a difficult and challenging prison environment, made more difficult by the inept decision making process about the prison's closure.

***Are the prisoners treated humanely?*** Prior to the announcement of the prison's closure, the Board considered that a humane and rehabilitative regime was being delivered within the prison in spite of the deteriorating and deplorable state of many of its buildings. There had been improvements in delivery across all areas of the prison. Given the condition of the buildings the Board totally supports the decision (albeit delayed) to redevelop the prison. The Board acknowledges the downside to this decision in that the current team at Rochester have made it, in a prisoner's words, "a better place" and their achievement will not be recognised.

***Are prisoners prepared well for their release?*** Preparation for release is given high priority at Rochester, and there is a considerable range of programmes and activities. Last year the prison achieved its goal of 80% attendance at work and education. The initiatives being undertaken to address offending behaviour are diverse and, at times, innovative. There is a well-structured Reducing Re-offending Strategy in place, bringing together all strands of resettlement activity.

### **Main Areas for Development**

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#### **TO THE MINISTER:**

- 1) The Minister is asked to note the Board's disappointment and dismay at the decision announced on 19 July that HMP Rochester will not be closed for redevelopment until at least 2019. More importantly, the Board's view is that the way in which this announcement has been handled is unfair and unreasonable for all those working at the prison. The disruption and chaos the original decision caused and then its subsequent iterations of delay and change have made HMP Rochester a less safe and humane environment. This is not a reflection on the staff working there but on those decision-makers who are not directly affected by the consequences of their decision making.**
- 2) The Minister is asked to note that the Board at HMP Rochester will be diligent in monitoring that the same standard of care and rehabilitation is being provided at the prison, and there is no diminishing or lessening of input although the prison is scheduled for closure. Paragraph 4a refers.
- 3) The Board retains the view that to enable a better outcome for less future offending, greater resources should be targeted across the entire prison estate at drug-using

prisoners, to enable fewer compromises to treatment programmes. Paragraph 8.10 refers.

## **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

- 1) The Board commends the findings of the research undertaken by Acting Band 8 Governor Emma Burch (now Baker) for her Masters Thesis into prisoner-on-prisoner violence and strongly recommends her paper and her conclusions are taken forward and considered by the Prison Service. Paragraph 4.5 refers.  
Burch, E. (2016). *An examination of prisoner-on-prisoner violence at HMP Rochester*. Unpublished Mist. dissertation, University of Cambridge
- 2) Property losses on transfer: There appears to have been no progress in the problems which occur when a prisoner and their property are transferred from other establishments. Frustratingly items are still going missing and unnecessary delays occurring. In the response last year, the Board was informed this issue was under review; however no further information has come forward. Can this be addressed please?
- 3) Can the Prison Service ensure that the opportunities provided at Rochester for rehabilitation and preparation for release is not compromised in the run up to closure? There is some evidence that this is already happening – with key staff moving on. The Board is expecting the Prison Service to provide all possible support to the Governor and his staff during this difficult time. Paragraph 4a refers.

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- 1) During the year, the Board has noted a general increase of more collaborative working across the prison. However there are still some basic areas where this needs to be addressed, for example when prisoners are released from wings when they shouldn't be. Paragraph 4.14 refers.
- 2) Emma Baker's thesis outlines that perception of poor processes at Rochester is a cause of anger, which can in turn manifest itself as violence (towards staff as well as prisoners). While response times are better (and prisoners are often impatient with unrealistic expectations) – can the Governor please consider what other measures can be taken to increase efficiency around administration/finance processes etc.? Paragraph 4.5 refers.
- 3) Can there be a review of the staffing allocation for medication collection as we are still receiving reports of intimidation in the queue? Paragraph 8.4 refers
- 4) Please note the Board's concerns about the backlog of appointments with the Optician and the suggestion that a review of the contract is undertaken. Paragraph 8.8 refers.

## **Improvements**

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The Governor and his team introduced several quick simple actions which significantly impacted on morale across the prison, such as Band Three wing managers being located back to their wing, and senior staff being a more visible presence around the site.

During the year, the staff at the prison demonstrated a shared commitment to achieving the changes outlined under Special Measures. A good example is the production of the Reducing Re-offending Strategy. The Board will be interested to see how this strategy is implemented in the period running up to closure.

There has been a significant improvement in Carillion's performance. This is, in a large part, due to the relationship built up by the Deputy Governor and the Carillion manager, which has produced a better understanding of requirements and improved timescales for repairs.

### **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

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Rochester is a Category C Resettlement prison for both adult male and young offenders; it has Certified Normal Accommodation, and an Operational Capacity of 743. Offenders are held in nine residential units: one is a dedicated drug reduction unit, seven are general accommodation, and a Segregation Unit. One wing has been allocated for first night accommodation and induction into the prison. For the majority of the year C Wing has been partially closed for substantial maintenance, and throughout the reporting period remedial maintenance on all wings has been required.

As a Resettlement prison, the regime is intended to give prisoners training through a structured sentence plan. Rochester actively engages with prisoners to address their offending behavior and offers opportunities to engage in training, education and work linked to employment where possible. Increasing the links to real employment vacancies is a continuing aim. Significant work has taken place in re-educating offenders, in particular highlighting the dangers of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). KSSCRC and RAPT provide services including drug-recovery programmes, housing, finance and mentoring. The physical well-being of prisoners is catered for through two well-run gymnasiums, offering competitive and recreational activities. Support for prisoners is available from the NHS/OXLEAS Healthcare team, In-reach and Chaplaincy, as well as community support from external organisations.

The prison has gone through major changes in recent years, but unfortunately has not made the progress hoped for. This has resulted in it being placed in 'Special Measures', due to its poor performance on the Prison Reporting System. Significant support has been in place to assist the prison's recovery during the reporting period. It is a prison, however, not without advantages, for example it has sufficient activity and a clear sense of purpose, serving as a resettlement prison to its local community.

It was announced at the end of March that Rochester will close by December 2017 to be redeveloped and replaced by a modern larger establishment in 2020. This original decision has now been deferred and the prison will not close for redevelopment until 2019.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 11**

### **4a Prison Closure**

This report includes references to the closure of HMP Rochester. This was announced at the end of March and originally scheduled for the end of 2017. Given the disruptive impact this decision has had on HMP Rochester since March, on its staff and on its functionality, it would have been neglectful of our duty not to refer to it in this report, although it is outside the reporting period.

Closure has now been delayed without any specific timescale being given. The unreasonable way in which this decision has been handled and the subsequent disruption it is continually causing across all areas of the prison is regarded with concern by the Board. The Board expects that when a final closing date is announced, this is kept and there is no further slippage over dates and unnecessary delays.

The Board expects that sufficient resources will be made IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE for the Prison to both return to the position it was in before the (non)-closure debacle, especially with regard to meaningful Rehabilitation activities and to enable it to repair areas within the Prison to a sustainable standard.

The Board will be diligent in monitoring that prisoners are receiving the same standard of care and rehabilitation right up to the moment they are transferred or released; and there should be no diminishing or lessening of input just because the prison is scheduled for closure.

## **4 SAFETY**

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### **Safety**

4.1 The availability of drugs, especially NPS, at Rochester continues to be the main issue for Safety and Security management at prison. Drug related debt, bullying and intimidation remain significant elements to life at HMP Rochester. The Safety Custody Audit in December disappointingly gave the prison a red rating. The key criticisms related to administrative issues, such as lack of multi-disciplinary attendance at ACCT reviews, lack of training for non-uniform staff on ACCT process, and poor record keeping. It is good to report that all recommendations are now in place, and the Safer Custody Officers at the prison are performing well. Information is timely, the Safer Custody meetings are thorough and held regularly, and ACCT reviews completed properly.

4.2 During the year, it is apparent that Rochester has felt a safer prison environment. The HMCIP report of 2015 identified Rochester as a “high-risk environment for violence” – however large numbers of prisoners appear to feel safe despite the risks posed to them. Conversations with prisoners enable us to conclude that the Safer Custody team is well-regarded and trusted. E Wing has been established as a dedicated arrival and induction wing for the prison. Samaritan-trained Listeners are doing good work in identifying the most vulnerable prisoners when settling in, and support is increased as appropriate.

4.3 Between January and March 69 ACCT documents were opened compared with 106 for the similar period last year. This significant decrease is directly related to the improved atmosphere being generated at the prison, through changes in how wings are managed, new initiatives from the Governors and pro-active action by the Safer Custody team. Research

into ACCT triggers show that mental health and drug use remain the key ACCT factors. Incidents of self-harm are averaging at 15 per month – which is roughly the same as last year.

4.4 There are 8 trained Listeners and 2 Listener Co-ordinators, with a Samaritan rep attending most weeks. There is mixed response to the Listeners and other prisoner support teams – with some prisoners concerned about the vulnerability it brings, while others significantly appreciate the help they receive.

4.5 A Masters Thesis produced by Emma Burch (now Baker), an Acting Band 8 Governor at Rochester, into prisoner-on-prisoner violence provides a useful insight into the potential reasons for the level of violence within Rochester. Her conclusions are based on 166 responses to her survey and qualitative follow up interviews. The Board commends her research with many of the findings reinforcing the Board’s experience of prisoners’ safety concerns. Among other more expected causes of violence, Ms Burch’s research shows that frustration with delays in the prison system – such as the long wait for a response to complaints and applications – can produce a violent reaction. One prisoner identified “*unfair processes*” as causing a lot of violence in the prison: “... *there is no consistency. It causes a lot of violence because there’s no fairness in the system ... People feel like they’re being mugged off and instead of hitting the screws, they find someone on the wing to have a fight with*”. Another prisoner referred to the frustration of not being heard and then doing something “... *like climbing ... or really hurt someone. They boil over, and its then they get listened to. ...*” It is disappointing to note that perceptions of poor processes at Rochester are still causing anger, and in turn violence. The research also identifies there is significant under-reporting of violence on the prison’s incident reporting system – probably due to fear of “breaching the inmates code”, but also a lack of confidence in the process and staff response and due to the current limited scope of measures on IRS. It suggests changes to the reporting systems at a national level are required.

4.6 **Violence Reduction:** Initiatives have led to more effective monitoring by the Safer Custody team and involving CMs where necessary. Record keeping is very good with regular updates to information. The Violence Reduction Forum referred to in last year’s report has been introduced and is working effectively. It takes place following the Governor’s meeting every Wednesday and considers the most complex cases in a multi-disciplinary way. A VR gym session for offenders on C Wing, has been introduced which is seen as a way to help re-integrate vulnerable prisoners back to main wings. All of these initiatives have contributed to the better atmosphere within the prison, in that it is less threatening and more positive.

4.7 There were 180 incidents of Use of Force at the prison. IMB members are alerted when a forced removal has taken place and those incidents observed have been proportionate. There were 47 incidents at height. The National Team was called to the prison on 2 occasions, compared with 5 last year.

4.8 There were no Deaths in Custody during the reporting period; however there were three Inquests into deaths which occurred in previous years. The Board notes that all recommendations and actions from the PPO and the Coroners have been adopted by the prison. Commendable swift action by prison officers has prevented other suicide attempts from being successful.

4.9 **Closure:** Since the closure announcement at the end of March, the prison has gradually become more unsettled. For example, the IMB has been notified of more incidents at height, and there have been several serious violent incidents, not seen in the reporting year. Staff are naturally concerned about their future prospects and prisoners may be picking up on this. Until there is clarity about a closure date and a clear understanding of what the future holds, the Board anticipates this situation will continue.

## **Movement to Work**

4.10 Because of the open site of Rochester, there are opportunities for all forms of illicit activity during the movement to work periods. This has been reduced during the year by the Governor's initiative for managers of all grades (including himself) to be present in the grounds while freeflow is happening. As well as acting as a deterrent, this presence also provides an opportunity for Governors and managers to be seen in person by prisoners. Prisoners are able to approach a manager if they have anything to discuss –and in particular from the Offender Management perspective, this practice has enabled issues to be handled quickly in person, without the need to put in an app or complaint. This procedure happens whatever the weather (and Rochester can be a cold and windy place!) and is commended by the Board for its effectiveness.

## **Security**

4.11 The openness of the Rochester site presents the greatest challenge for the Security team in its effort to stop drugs and mobile phones coming into the prison – mainly via packages coming “over the walls”. Security is intelligence led and over the year has achieved some notable successes. An increase in funding has provided the means for new higher security fences, more razor wire and more cordoned off areas around wings. While the amount of razor wire etc could be said to resemble a Cat B environment, given the amount of contraband coming into the prison over the walls and the climbing skills of the prisoners, the Security Governor had little choice. The prison is working with Kent police to improve patrols, at key times and aid the prosecution of offenders.

4.12 The Security Department estimates they are intercepting about 50% of all items thrown into the prison. The numbers of finds are up – Mobile Phones: 217 cf 206 last year, Illicit substances: 161 cf 116 last year. In addition 57 weapons were found. 2 Drones have been caught, but intelligence suggests there have been others dropping off items. Checks on visitors have increasingly become intelligence led. There are random checks undertaken on staff. Mandatory Drug Testing is now taking place regularly, Random Test – 447 (with 82 positive), Suspicion Test – 298 (with 99 positive). There was a significant increase in the number of refusals, probably indicative of the level of drugs circulating in the prison. Tests are carried out efficiently.

4.13 Two issues would assist Security at the prison greatly.

- An ability to block or intercept calls to mobile phones would undoubtedly be effective in improving the security of the prison.
- The introduction of circular cameras rather than fixed point ones. When an alarm goes off the prisoners know which direction the cameras will be looking in, thus providing opportunity for illicit activity.

The Board strongly recommends these points are taken into account when the design of the new prison is considered.

4.14 Once again, it is the Board's view that too many prisoners appear to be wandering around the prison unchallenged during times when they should be either at activity or returning to a wing following a Healthcare visit. The prison's layout enables this to happen, but the Board believes more challenge is required.

## 5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

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5.1 The Equality Action Team (EAT) is combined with the Safer Custody team. There are regular meetings, and effective partnerships between governors, officers and offenders with open and constructive discussions. The Board attends all Equality meetings and maintains an effective relationship with the EAT.

5.2 Across the prison's population, white prisoners remain in the majority (approximately 74% with BME at 26%). For YO's the mix is slightly different with approximately 69% White and 31% BME. These figures represent no change from last year. Adult prisoners comprise approximately 91 % of the prison's population – which is about the same as last year. However, interestingly, the latest statistics indicate that only 19% BME prisoners are on Enhanced IEP status. The Board will be examining this in more detail in the coming months.

5.3 The number of Discrimination Incident Reports appears to be following the downward trend reported last year, for example in March there were 7. The Board will take a deeper look into why so few applications are being received. The Board has been unable to establish if the decrease is caused through offenders and staff being less inclined to categorize an incident as racist. While we suspect this is the case, there is no supporting evidence either way from our Board Applications or Rota Reports. The Board only received 1 Application about Equality this year. The Board will take a deeper look into why so few applications are being received.

5.4 While the majority of prisoners are in the below 35 age range, there are around 36% of prisoners aged over 36. This percentage has been roughly the same throughout the year. There has been some good work taken forward regarding disability which has been given a higher focus in the prison, particularly regarding the placing of older prisoners. For example, in the past there had been an incidence of an elderly prisoner being allocated a cell in a top bunk on a top landing. Such situations no longer occur. At present, 35% of prisoners have a self-declared disability, including 87 with mental illness, and 109 with learning difficulties including dyslexia. The newly formed Disability Group is meeting regularly and the IMB attends their meetings.

5.5 During the year the number of prisoners designated as Foreign Nationals as at March 2017 is 21 from 13 different countries, the same as last year. The IMB received just one application directly relating to immigration issues. The contract with the Migrant Helpline has ended nationally, and Rochester is exploring other channels to give support. In the meantime members of the Equalities Red Band team are seeing foreign national prisoners fortnightly to offer peer support.

## **6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT**

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6.1 The improvement in the standard of management of the Unit reported last year has continued. So too has the policy of segregating the perpetrators of disorder rather than the victims, which has led to virtually no prisoners being classified as separated at their own request (OR). These prisoners go to the Community Development Unit (CDU) instead (see below). It is very pleasing to note that the issue of prisoners choosing to remain behind their doors on wings appears to have been negated by the existence of the CDU.

6.2 The purpose of the CDU is to equip prisoners with the skills, knowledge and support to enable them to return to mainstream locations after struggling on residential units. In theory prisoners should only be on the CDU for 12 weeks, however in many cases residency there has been longer. CDU staff are specially trained to work in this unit, and there have been some significant successes. However, there is still a hierarchy of prisoners within the wing – in that those who were previously intimidated now do the intimidation. Unfortunately the poor state of the building has meant that of the 90 cells on the unit, only 64 are available. C Wing is in a structurally poor state, in disrepair and badly designed. The Board notes that good work is being achieved on the wing in spite of the conditions.

6.3 During the year, there have been several prisoners in the Segregation Unit who have proved exceptionally difficult to manage. The change to having a more settled cadre of officers working on the Segregation Unit has enabled a more skilled and experienced approach in dealing with them.

6.4 The Board visits the Unit several times a week, regularly attending Governors' and Independent Adjudications, and Good Order and Discipline reviews. With few exceptions, all reviews and adjudications attended are dealt with carefully, fairly and appropriately. Two prisoners have exceeded the time limit of 42 days and the Board monitored that the correct procedure with the DDC was undertaken. Both cases were reviewed regularly by the Board and members were content the retention of these prisoners in the Unit was appropriate.

6.5 Communication between the Unit and the IMB is good, with the Board being informed within 24 hours of new arrivals. A welcome development has been the provision of updates on all prisoners in the Seg unit by the current Segregation CM every few days.

## 7. ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

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7.1 The decision to completely rebuild Rochester is unanimously supported by the Rochester Board. Our view is that the prison has been successful this year in spite of the deteriorating state of the buildings.

7.2 There continues to be a variation in the standard of accommodation between the older Edwardian wings and the newer wings. But there are problems relating to ventilation, heating and water supply across all the wings. For example, the newer wings have tin roofs, creating acute heat problems during hot weather. C Wing is in a very poor state, and prior to the closure, was due to be rebuilt (see Section 6 above). The provision of additional funding under Special Measures has enabled the HMCIP requirement for HMP Rochester to “get the basics right” to be achieved. The Board has received fewer applications about the state of cells, provision of TVs, kettles, etc, than in previous years. There have been on-going issues with washing machines and tumble driers across most wings, which has led to clothing being hung up to dry across banisters, etc, and in turn creating a damp and humid environment. This has led to more use being made of the laundry by designated workers, when wing machines are out of use –with more chance for clothing to go missing. More wing washing machines and driers are required.

7.3 During the year, most wings have been repainted, including the Segregation unit. General cleanliness is good, as is the actual site itself – where the grounds are well maintained and cared for.

7.4 **Carillion:** Following the introduction of weekly meetings instigated by the Deputy Governor and a change of Carillion area management, repairs are being carried out more speedily. This is in marked contrast to the position we reported on last year, and very pleasing to note. However, given the age of the buildings and their general poor state of repair, the maintenance at Rochester continues to be a never-ending task.

7.5 **Catering:** The quality of food has improved due mainly to an increase in budget from £2.02 per prisoner to £2.25. Adhoc comments from the prisoners are welcoming the introduction of cooked breakfasts on occasions and generally slightly larger portions. Given that prisoners are expected to following a working day, their nutrition must be considered a priority. The last research into nutrition was undertaken in 2006, when food budgets were considerably higher. The Board reiterates its request from last year that a further study is undertaken as a matter of priority.

7.6 **Communication:** In general this appears to be satisfactory, with information about changes to regime, visits, meetings and lock downs being communicated well. Notices are either pinned up on boards, or information given out through the PA system. Some wings have an information folder – a good practice the Board would like to see followed throughout the prison. An ad hoc check showed that some prisoners were not aware of some changes – for example a group of prisoners were not aware of a notice about prison radio.

7.7 **Property:** The promised change in how the Rochester Property Office was manned has materialized and there is now more regular access.

There are two key issues to be addressed

- Last year we raised the issue that many transferring prisoners arrive without their clothing, shoes and family photographs (all of which are detrimental to their well-being) and it takes an unacceptable length of time for these to arrive and, in turn, many items go missing. It is a source of needless frustration for prisoners and it is the hard-pressed wing staff that deal with this frustration. This is born out by Emma Burch’s

research quoted at Section 4. The reply from NOMS last year stated that a revised policy was to be issued in 2016/17. The Board is not aware of any such revision. The lack of a facility to include property on the prison transport vehicles is a major flaw in the transport.

- The loss of property within the prison usually arises from the lack of a cell check following a disciplinary incident, and the individual's removal to the Seg. The possessions belonging to the prisoner who is being removed become 'available' to other prisoners, and there is some evidence of a lack of care around securing them. A new system is being introduced to mitigate this; the IMB will monitor this situation closely during the months before closure.

Emma Burch's research also noted the importance placed by prisoners on both material goods and status, which reflects an individual's position in prisoner hierarchy. Those who do not acquire such status inevitably become prone to victimisation, which in turn makes the property process and the loss of property a significant issue for many prisoners.

7.8 **Complaints:** As was the case last year, a significant proportion of Complaints generated at Rochester (circa 70%) relate to missing property. Once again these are mainly generated by items going missing following removal from a cell, or on transfer. The way the prison handles complaints has significantly improved since last year. There are now dedicated resources allocated to Complaints, and outstanding complaints are reported at the weekly Management meetings. We note there has been a corresponding decrease in the number of applications the Board receives about property. The Board is concerned that Cell Clearance checks (see above) are not being carried out properly, and has taken this up with the Governor.

## **8. HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)**

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8.1 Last year we commented that the Healthcare Unit was fully staffed. However, almost immediately this position changed. Healthcare is commissioned for eight Band 6 nurses but during the year it has managed to provide service with four Band 6 nurses – significantly less. Two new Band 6 nurses were recruited earlier this year but recruitment is frozen due to the impending closure of the prison. The Board is very concerned about the provision of Healthcare and its staffing during the run up to the closure period.

8.2 Healthcare staff said they feel supported by prison management, who are responsive and assist them in sorting out problems. Measures have been taken to improve the safety of the healthcare staff, including the provision of body worn cameras.

8.3 There is currently a 2 week wait for routine non-urgent appointment but each day there are emergency slots for urgent cases. GPs see 13 routine appointments 5 days a week. However, approximately 3 of these will be ‘no shows’ each day (ie 23%) for various reasons – mostly reported to be not being unlocked on the wing, caught in the freeze, or a movement slip not being given out on the wing. All ‘no shows’ are re-booked. This percentage of “no shows” remains more or less same as last year.

8.4 On average there are 180 medication appointments per day – the last audit showed that around 30% of prisoners did not collect their medication. Reasons for this are complex: some patients report that they do not feel safe in the line; patients often turn up for morning and evening medications but miss their lunchtime collection as they report they ‘can’t be bothered’. The safety aspect of this has been raised before by the IMB, and additional staff allocated to medication collection, but the Board would like this reviewed.

8.5 For the 4 months - January to April of this year - Healthcare received 33 complaints (a decrease from last year when there were 83 complaints for the same period) The Healthcare manager looks into each complaint and provides a written response to the complainant. The manager feels that because she is a visible presence on the ‘shop floor’ issues are resolved before they get to the complaint stage.

8.6 For the same period (i.e. January to April) there were 128 outpatient appointments. Of these 14% were cancelled by the prisoner, 12% were cancelled by the prison because it could not provide and escort, and around the same percentage was cancelled by the hospital. While the delay caused by lack of escorts is unsatisfactory, this is an improvement over the position we reported on last year. It is reflected in the number of applications to the Board which has decreased from 79 to 59 – once again these are mainly about delays in getting medical/dental/optical appointments.

8.7 Despite the staff shortages, the Healthcare team continued to make progress in the area of health promotion. For example, the clinics for smoking cessation, sexual health, NPS education and the Well Man clinics are well attended, and reportedly have the highest uptake in the Area Cluster. There are now 2 non-smoking wings. The Board has monitored the introduction of the non-smoking policy closely. Although there was some disruption to prisoners in changing wings, this has been handled well, and the Board has received relatively few complaints about its introduction.

8.8 **Optical and Dentistry Services:** The waiting list to see the Optician has not altered from last year when it was running at 3 months’ wait. The waiting list was round 40 but has now increased to 100. The Optician attributes this to insufficient time being allocated for optical services. His view is that the contract was based on historical evidence of requirement relating to when Rochester was YOI. With a Cat C population there is a more demanding of

older client base, requiring changes in glasses plus those requiring glasses on transfer or repair when they are broken. There is also the problem of not turning up for appointments (cf medical appointment issue). The Board supports the Optician's view that the appointment system should be reviewed, and if possible changed to a first come, first served basis. As reported last year, there is still a long waiting list for the Dentist, who is doing extra hours to get the list reduced.

### **Drug Recovery**

8.9 Significant work takes place in re-educating offenders, in particular highlighting the dangers of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). The service provider is RAPt, and throughout the year it has provided good clinical and psychosocial services to the prisoners. Since the announcement of prison's closure it is no longer able to run the 12-step programme which would have supported around 60 offenders this year. At present they are supporting 260 prisoners actively, with a further 130 receiving unstructured support. There is a dedicated drug recovery wing – A wing, and all prisoners who engage in the programmes or clinical treatment pathways reside on the drug recovery wing. RAPt has forged very constructive links with A wing resulting in A wing staff receiving training at RAPt headquarters. The See Life Clearly campaign is specifically designed to address the problem of NPS at Rochester, introduced because of a need to identify more innovative ways to engage offenders in the issues. It includes a range of interventions and has been successfully re-launched in 2017.

8.10 As was the case last year, the Board is still concerned that the wing involves the integration of prisoners seeking different outcomes for their drug use being mixed together (and sometimes alongside prisoners with no intention to change). More generally our view remains that to enable a better outcome for less future offending, greater resources should be targeted across the entire prison estate at drug-using prisoners, which would lead to fewer compromises in the treatment programmes.

8.11 **Mental Health:** Support for mental health problems is provided by Inreach, which is staffed by three full-time and one half-time professionals. This year has seen the introduction of Mental Health peer workers, which has proved a useful new addition to the service provided. If necessary, prisoners are referred to the Inpatient service at Elmley. Inreach have said they are making fewer referrals to inpatients because of the positive input of the Dickens Therapy Centre. They are, however, receiving more referrals for anxiety related issues since announcement of closure. There are many prisoners at Rochester with mental health issues. The Board, once again, questions whether Courts should be referring prisoners, with clearly identifiable mental health problems into a prison establishment, which is, unsurprisingly, unable to meet their needs.

## **9. EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

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9.1 Education Services are provided by NOVUS. There is a good range of classroom based activity, such as literary, numeracy and IT skills. It is regretted that fork-lift truck training was discontinued due to funding issues. Peer mentoring is proving a successful addition. The lessons the Board has monitored are carried out well, with individual prisoners making good progress towards the targets. There is still some disengagement from older prisoners who do not feel the need to become literate, which in turn prevents them from taking up other activities. In-cell study is supported, and those in the Segregation Unit are always offered this facility.

9.2 Unfortunately many of the plans proposed by the Education Manager appointed last year are unable to come to fruition because of the prison's closure, but he has generated a keenness for education within Rochester, which is commendable.

9.3 The target level of 80% attendance at Activities has been achieved. The introduction of revised staffing profiles resulted in fewer cancellations when staff are diverted to other duties, such as escorts or for security reasons. This is a significantly better position than last year.

9.4 The Library is well-used and offers books for all levels of literacy. The library team was commended by the CEO of Storybook Dads for its efficient and professional delivery of the scheme.

9.5 The provision of physical activity at the Rochester is extremely good. The two Gyms are well equipped, and run efficiently with suitably qualified staff. There is facility for indoor sports, such as badminton, indoor tennis, etc. Football sessions are popular. In addition the open and large estate at Rochester means there is plenty of opportunity for fresh air exercise when walking between wings and activity (which in turn has its downside in the passing of contraband).

## **10. WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT**

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10.1 Training leading to qualifications is provided in construction skills, industrial cleaning, rail track, catering, waste disposal, and market gardens (the latter two are now regarded as work activity). It is regretted that fork-lift truck training was discontinued due to funding issues. Other work includes bicycle recycling, Floplast plastic and the production of MOD camouflage netting. During the year there has also been training in welding and stone masonry, but difficulties in providing instructors have impacted on both these activities. Worthy of special mention are:

- a) Industrial Cleaning – Rob Urquhart, the tutor, received a special award from the Worshipful Company of Environmental Cleaners presented by The Princess Royal in recognition of his continued work in training and supporting offenders in gaining City and Guilds Level 2 qualification.
- b) Market Gardens – there has been a significant improvement in the training provided, with new greenhouses, and greater opportunity to learn all aspects of horticulture. The enthusiasm of the new tutors is commended. There has also been a closer connection with the kitchen, so that more food being grown by the prisoners is used for food preparation.

10.2 During the year, there was sufficient work and/or activity for all prisoners, albeit that some is on a part-time basis. However, the Board is concerned that during the period running up to closure less activity will be available to prisoners –in work, training and education. Tutors will naturally be looking to find new jobs and the loss of meaningful activity is likely to lead to more frustration for the prisoners. There is some evidence of this already emerging. Attendance during the reporting year has been good and met the target, however since the beginning of April and the announcement of closure there has been some evidence that attendance has slipped, possibly related to the fact that some staff have moved to another role or other establishments.

## 11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

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11.1 Resettlement is an important element to the regime at Rochester. There is a Reducing Re-Offending Strategy produced for 2017 which clearly sets out its purpose, objectives and principles, and outlines how HMP Rochester approaches this essential area. This is the first time such a co-ordinated and integrated document has been produced, and the Board looks forward to its implementation.

11.2 **Offender Management:** The Rochester Offender Management Unit are to be commended for their efficiency and effectiveness. The position on OASys completion is much improved, with only 16% of prisoners without an OASys; this has been achieved in spite of 50 new prisoners arriving per month without an assessment. The unit is now fully staffed. Additional agency staff have been deployed to prepare casework records etc for closure; this mitigates the need to use OMU staff for this task. Removals and transfers are handled effectively with prisoner's requests to be located closer to family taken forward where this is possible.

11.3 The IMB regularly monitors HDC meetings, where applications are dealt with in a timely way and there is no backlog. The Board notes that these are conducted professionally and fairly. All Cat D referrals are also considered on time and ROTL is dealt with as cases arise. Emma Burch's research revealed prisoner frustration at what they *perceive* as inconsistency in decision making – such as moving to a Cat D environment. However, the cases the Board has looked into show fair practice and a good understanding of risk management. The Appeals process works well, and Parole Board targets are being met. *See also paragraph 4.10 – movement to work comments.*

11.4 The Board is indebted to OMU for the assistance they give to us in addressing prisoner questions and for showing a willingness to re-address queries when new information comes to light.

11.5 **Offending Behaviour Programmes:** The Thinking Skills and Resolve courses are carried out effectively and have once again met their target for this year. The Board attends as many of the completion ceremonies as it can, and commends the level of care and achievement by those involved in delivering this training. The Board would also like to mention the Sycamore Tree restorative justice programme, run via the Chaplaincy, which continues to be a very successful addition to the programmes available at Rochester. The pastoral care provided by the Chaplaincy Team at Rochester continues to be an important part of prison life. All men are seen on induction, and we have good reports of the support being given following any event in their lives.

11.6 **Preparation for Release:** All men at Rochester receive Through the Gate support, which is working well. The careers service is provided by CXK, and prisoners are offered one to one sessions. The initial session is used to allocate men to particular training and work opportunities available at the prison. During the year the Activities Unit held several Job Fairs – with employers in the area coming into the prison. These proved extremely successful with a significant number of prisoners getting jobs on release.

11.7 **Probation:** There has been a change in CRC provider; with a move from DePaul to Nacro; this has taken a while to settle down. The Board has engaged with the Probation team at the prison – who are only just getting to the level of staffing that is required for a Resettlement Prison.

11.8 The key difficulty remains that too many prisoners are leaving prison without anywhere to go. Finding suitable accommodation is a very difficult task, especially when trying to link this up to a job opportunity. Accommodation in the South East is at a premium and the frustrations felt by the Rehabilitation Team are considerable. The Board's view is that re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless there is suitable accommodation and support for all leaving prisoners.

## **VISITS AND VISITOR CENTRE**

11.9 It has been rather a mixed year. On a positive note, the Family Days which are held in the Gym during school holidays and some weekends, allowing prisoners to interact with their children with games, physical activities and just behaving like a normal family, are excellent. They are always well supervised and a welcome innovation. There has been an improvement in the booking arrangements, and the backlogs reported last year are not longer occurring.

11.10 The actual Visits Reception and Visitor Centre has been continually criticised by visitors – partly because of the separation between reception and the actual centre. A video made to record a child's experience of arriving at the reception centre and then walking down to the prison was eye-opening, and the immediate response by the Governors was to look at the accommodation and to see how the Visits accommodation and general experience could be improved. The closure of the prison has meant that many of the proposed changes cannot be carried out, but new furniture is being purchased and there is more for children to do while waiting for the transfer down to the actual prison.

11.11 One positive feature is that the Equalities Group undertook a feedback questionnaire to get the thoughts and concerns of visitors surrounding equalities and diversity. The results were good – with the majority saying they had not seen, heard or experienced any form of harassment or discrimination during the visit, or knew of anyone in the establishment being treated in that way.

## **B Section – Work of Board**

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The Board continues to enjoy a constructive working relationship with the management of Rochester prison. Shortages in Board members at the beginning of the year were mitigated by recruitment during the year of 5 new members, of which 2 have completed training, 2 are in training and one resigned. Since April, two more members were recruited, with one in training now, and another due to start in the summer. Unfortunately as of June, 3 Board members have resigned. We are not recruiting additional members because of the prison's proposed closure. The Monitoring Framework is used as the basis for how the Board conducts its work.

All statutory visits and visits to Areas of Special Interest have been undertaken. The Board regularly attends adjudications and has a close working relationship with the Segregation Unit staff. There is a regular training session held before our monthly meeting, with speakers from all areas of the prison.

The number of applications has fallen by 23% during the year. We are concerned about the drop in Equality applications – which implies that prisoners are not contacting us about such issues, and will investigate this further during the period the prison remains open.

The closure of the prison brings a range of challenges for the Board; including how it manages training for new members as the prison begins to close. Our key aim will be to ensure that the opportunities for rehabilitation and activity are not significantly reduced during the closure period, with courses being closed, trainers and staff leaving, and the general proactive atmosphere of the prison diminishing as it begins to wind down.

The Governor has attended most of the Board meetings this year, with the Deputy Governor standing in on a few occasions. He regularly follows up on any points we have made. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the SMT team and all the Staff at Rochester for their openness and willing support to the Board during the year.

Board Statistics and Details of Applications to the Board are below.

<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Total number of visits to the Establishment	527
Total number of segregation reviews attended	129

## C Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	12
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	35	14 (*a)
C	Equality	1	17
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	8	19 (*b)
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	36	31
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	Included in above	Included in above
F	Food and kitchens	3	9
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	59	75
H 1	Property within this establishment	23	115 (*c)
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	38	-
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	12	-
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	67	86
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	7	13
K	Transfers	12	16
L	Miscellaneous	60	88
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	372	485

### Notes:

\*a Did not include IEP related applications

\*b Included IEP related applications

\*c Included all property applications – comparative figure is 73