



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

**HMP Thameside**

for reporting Year  
July 2016 – June 2017

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*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A Sections 1 - 3

### 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.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

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1. HMP Thameside's operating environment is uncertain. Throughout the year there were discussions about the future status of the prison (resettlement or reception?), which constrained the planning and implementation of improvements in some areas.
2. In May 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons undertook an unannounced inspection. The published report is expected in September. This Executive Summary gives the IMB's evaluation of the quality of the prison at 30 June 2017.

### Main judgements

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#### Are prisoners treated fairly?

There were isolated individual instances of unfairness on wings during 2016/17, which the prison's director dealt with robustly, but custodial staff generally treat prisoners fairly and fulfil their duty of care well (see *e.g.* paras 6.3, 6.4). There are areas of unfairness in the way the prison's administration operates, such as a poorly functioning complaints system (paras 5.7, 7.6) and undesirable delays in organising home detention curfew (paras 11.8, 11.9).

#### Are prisoners treated humanely?

HMP Thameside is a humane prison with an unoppressive ethos. Prisoners' rights are respected and the nine protected characteristics are taken seriously (para 5.2). Prisoners generally feel safe despite the impact of gang membership (para 4.1). Those with serious mental ill-health are cared for prior to transfer to a more suitable establishment (para 8.3) and there are good programmes to help prisoners reduce their substance abuse (para 4.9). Some healthcare functions are stretched (para 8.6) but, overall, healthcare is adequate.

#### Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

Too many prisoners are not prepared well for their release (paras 9.6, 10.3), though some factors (such as the availability of suitable accommodation) are beyond the prison's control (para 11.6). Too few activities relevant to resettlement are offered (para 10.3). The collection and use of data about prisoner progress on release is weak (para 11.5), limiting the planning and delivery of well-targeted interventions because it is not clear what works best. Uncertainty about the future role of the prison (paras 1, 10.5) has inhibited good planning.

### Main Areas for Development

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#### TO THE MINISTER

*Urgent action by government departments, charities, local boroughs and the London Mayor to increase the availability of good hostel accommodation for prisoners on their release, because good accommodation is a vital factor in reducing reoffending.*

#### TO THE PRISON SERVICE

*Clarity in planning of the prison estate and its development so that HMP Thameside can develop services in line with a long-term strategy, free of planning blight.*

#### TO THE DIRECTOR

*A high-quality complaints system that prisoners can trust and that promotes improvement.*

### Improvements

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The arrangements for care and induction of newly arrived prisoners have improved with the development of the Early Days regime: still a work in progress but already a significant improvement (see IMB 2015/16 Annual Report para 1.4; also paras 4.6, 4.7 below).

The prison is fully staffed and generally accommodation and grounds are smarter than they were a year ago (see IMB 2015/16 Annual Report para 1.8; also paras 7.1, 7.2 below).

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

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- 3.1 HMP Thameside opened in 2012 as a Category B local prison, with an operational capacity of 900 men. In April 2015, an extension opened with an additional capacity of 332, intended for resettlement prisoners (mainly Category C) close to their release date. Throughout the reporting year the prison has been occupied close to its occupational capacity of 1232. It has generally held about 450 remand and 750 convicted prisoners, including 75 young offenders, mostly on remand.
- 3.2 The prison benefits from being modern and purpose-built. All cells have integrated toilets and showers, a telephone and in-cell information technology for communication within the prison. Eligible prisoners can opt to pay for access to a limited number of television channels. There is a Care and Separation Unit with 20 cells and a Healthcare Unit with 18 cells for in-patients and surgeries for out-patient consultations.
- 3.3 There is a well-equipped sports academy, a library, an education centre, a multi-faith centre and an activity centre with workshops, classrooms and the potential to accommodate a range of activities suitable for resettlement prisoners.
- 3.4 The prison is managed under contract by Serco Group plc. It has two partner agencies, Catch 22 (focusing on offender management) and Turning Point (issues arising from drug and alcohol misuse).
- 3.5 A range of centrally contracted organisations provide other services. Education is contracted to Novus; healthcare is contracted to the Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Oxleas); Change Grow Live (CGL) provides social care; career information and advice is provided by Prospects; the community rehabilitation company (CRC) is MTC Novo; the escort contractor is Serco Wincanton.

## B Evidence sections 4 – 11

### SAFETY

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- 4.1 **Violence.** When surveyed on behalf of HMIP in April 2017, most prisoners said they felt safe. Although levels of violence have increased in prisons generally, data shows that HMP Thameside is an exception. The number of assaults is stubbornly high but there was no upward trend during 2016/17. Throughout the year, the monthly number of assaults (prisoner on prisoner and prisoner on staff) has averaged 43 (range 33-51), with 9 of them classed as 'serious' (range 5-12). When an assault occurs, medical treatment and, if appropriate, counselling are provided promptly.
- 4.2 The prison's analysis shows that almost all the perpetrators of assaults in 2016/17 were being held for a violent crime.
- 4.3 **Deaths in custody.** There were three deaths during 2016/17. None were self-inflicted.
- 4.4 **Self harm.** There are frequent incidents of self-harm (monthly average of 32, range 24-54), most of which are apparently expressions of frustration or anger. A small number, however, are more serious and, were it not for the vigilance and quick response of staff, might have had very serious consequences.
- 4.5 In November 2016, the IMB examined every Assessment, Care in Custody, Teamwork (ACCT) document open at that time (33 altogether), wing by wing, to monitor how effectively the system helped to promote prisoner safety.
  - 4.5.1 In general, the ACCTs were being updated at the required frequency. In one instance, however, the observations were not recorded for a ten-hour period (this does not mean that the observations were not made): the error was picked up by the wing manager during a routine check.
  - 4.5.3 The quality of many ACCT entries on 19 of the documents scrutinised was barely adequate and provided scant evidence that there had been substantive interactions between staff and the prisoner concerned.
  - 4.5.2 In the IMB's opinion, the ACCT paper-work, a standard prison service document used in all prisons, is cumbersome and barely fit for its purpose. It may provide an audit trail but it does not encourage officers to monitor vulnerable prisoners thoughtfully because it promotes a box-ticking mind-set.
- 4.6 **Early days.** It is well known that the first few days in prison are particularly stressful. In January 2017, HMP Thameside introduced a new 'Early Days' regime, involving close monitoring as standard for all arriving prisoners, improved induction, greatly enhanced and extended mentoring by trained prisoners, and clearer information provision.
- 4.7 Full implementation of the new practices has taken longer than expected and was still in progress on 30 June 2017. However, it is already clear that the new arrangements are an improvement and the Board is optimistic that prisoners are benefiting and will continue to do so. If HMP Thameside converts to a reception prison in 2018, the number of arrivals will increase and the Early Days processes will need to be scaled up.
- 4.8 **Substance abuse.** It is common for prisoners to have a history of substance misuse and the prison faces a battle to minimise the drugs getting into the establishment. Quantities are intercepted, but not everything. Random drug testing of 5% of prisoners found 28% positives in June 2017. 'Spice' is a major hazard in the context of prisoner safety.
- 4.9 Turning Point sees all new arrivals referred within 72 hours and runs a range of group sessions designed to help men address their drug habits, with some notable successes. However, some areas of collaboration with other professionals have flagged during 2016/17 (e.g. Drug Strategy meetings involving staff from several areas of the prison, cooperation with healthcare to support men with both substance misuse and mental health problems).

## EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

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- 5.1 **Diversity and equality.** There have been staff changes in the prison's Diversity team which led to some loss of momentum early in the reporting year (*e.g.* there was a hiatus in meetings of the Diversity and Equality Action Team, DEAT). By June 2017 the new team was working with energy and commitment.
- 5.2 In general, the prison provides well for prisoners whatever their backgrounds and needs. The chaplaincy supports a wide range of faith groups. The kitchen provides diets as required and good arrangements are made for religious observances and celebrations (such as Ramadan and Christmas). There is currently a dynamic LGBT representative who is helpful approaching gay prisoners who are fearful. Prisoners with disabilities are appropriately accommodated and virtually all areas are accessible to those with mobility difficulties.
- 5.3 Ninety-two Discrimination Incident Report Forms were submitted in 2016. Over half concerned racism, a fifth religion/belief and a fifth disability. Most were from prisoners but about a fifth were from staff. Allegations are taken seriously and investigated.
- 5.4 **Disability and social care.** When the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG, the local authority) assesses that a man requires social care, it is mainly provided well by trained prisoner orderlies. When hands-on care is needed, it is delivered by CGL staff. In June 2017, the range of reasons why men were assessed for a social care plan were *learning disabilities, vision impairment, suspected dementia, multiple sclerosis, cancer in remission, mobility problems, drug-related disability, heart disease, behavioural disorders*. RBG meets its obligations well and has confirmed to the IMB that the prison cooperates effectively in arranging the delivery of social care as necessary.
- 5.5 The transfer of responsibility for delivery of social care from Oxleas to CGL (see para 8.1) led to some unanticipated communication difficulties (different computer systems that cannot intercommunicate) which the Head of the DEAT has worked to resolve because they restrict the prison's ability to fulfil its duty of care for some prisoners.
- 5.6 **Special educational needs.** Education tutors are skilled at tailoring their methods to the needs of prisoners, addressing barriers to learning and specific difficulties, like dyslexia, appropriately. One-to-one sessions are offered to men unwilling to participate in group classes because of previous bad experiences, to build up their confidence. Similar sessions are provided for some prisoners held in the CSU and the healthcare in-patient unit (see para 9.5).
- 5.7 **Unfairness.** The way that prisoner requests and complaints are handled by the prison is not reliably fair. The central issue is the variable quality of the way responses are communicated (see para 7.6). Sometimes prisoners are told that submission of a formal complaint is not the appropriate way to deal with their issue (which, for instance, should be dealt with by wing staff) but without sufficient explanation to make clear what the prisoner needs to do. Sometimes (as observed by the IMB in Education) a response is sent quickly saying that the matter has been passed on to someone who will deal with it, but this 'someone' fails to contact the prisoner within a reasonable period of time.
- 5.8 Another broad area where prisoners frequently feel their treatment is unfair is in the ways their property is handled. Significant amounts go missing within the prison and during transfers from one establishment to another. The IMB receives more prisoner Applications about property than any other concern (see page 15). It is a common issue in almost all prisons, well recognized by the Prisons and Probation Service, which promises to promulgate new guidance. HMP Thameside tightened up on the way property regulations are implemented half way through the reporting year, and the routine practices and procedures are being applied more smoothly by staff. However, the number of property Applications to the IMB has not decreased significantly, nor has the number of property-related complaints to the prison.

## SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

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- 6.1 **Turnover.** The Care and Separation Unit (CSU) was usually occupied to about three quarters of its maximum capacity throughout the reporting year. Only a few prisoners spend more than a week there at a time, though there are many returners. For example, during May 2017 there were 79 'admissions' of only 53 individuals (six of whom were young offenders). During the same period over 1500 men spent one or more nights in the prison, illustrating how about 3% of troubling prisoners absorb a disproportionate amount of the prison's resources and effort.
- 6.2 **Adjudications.** Consistent with the large turnover of men in CSU is the large number of adjudications that the prison performs – typically at least ten a day – a number that is increased by the considerable proportion that are adjourned. The adjournments are required to ensure that prisoners are treated fairly, but a significant proportion could be avoided by ensuring that all paperwork is well-prepared and the officers required for each hearing are present. Delays that might have been avoided can in themselves be unfair and stressful (as well as wasteful of the prison's resources). *This is the fourth year that the IMB has made these points in our Annual Report.* There have been some improvements during the year and more are in train (*e.g.* additional staff to release officer witnesses to attend) but have yet to have an impact.
- 6.3 These comments aside, when IMB members monitor adjudications they are performed well and the outcomes are fair.
- 6.4 **Reviews.** During May 2017, a typical month, about 40 percent of the men held in CSU were there under Rule 45 to maintain good order in the prison and not as a result of a process of adjudication following an alleged misdemeanour. In these circumstances, to be legal the continuing detention in CSU must be reviewed at specified intervals. IMB members have been impressed by the great care and thoughtfulness displayed by the staff leading and attending these reviews, their background knowledge of the individual, their manifest concern to decide what is in his best interest, and the considerable efforts then made to explain decisions in ways that help the prisoner to understand and accept the outcome.
- 6.5 **Healthcare.** Healthcare staff visit CSU daily and the care of prisoners held there is equivalent to that received on normal location. However, there are some particularly challenging prisoners who give rise to disagreements between custody and healthcare staff as to how they should be held and need to be treated. The IMB is not satisfied that there is a robust system (such as round table meetings) for resolving such situations in the proper interests of the man concerned (see para 8.5).
- 6.6 Healthcare staff are not reliably present at Reviews (see para 6.4), as they should be, and sometimes the individual who comes is not fully briefed and has little knowledge of the prisoner concerned.
- 6.7 **Regime.** The regime in CSU is not a rich one. There are in-cell education opportunities (see para 5.6), and some library books are made available.



## ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

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- 7.1 **Wings.** HMP Thameside is a modern prison and the general quality of accommodation is good. Nevertheless, constant effort is required to maintain a proper standard because some prisoners are careless or deliberately destructive. The quality of facilities management has not been high during 2016/17. Essential repairs (*e.g.* to lifts) and replacements are often delayed and graffiti accumulates in cells, although the IMB has recorded some improvements during 2017. Grounds maintenance (by prisoner work parties) has been good and the environment of the prison within its walls is pleasant.
- 7.2 The cleanliness of accommodation varies from one wing to another, depending on the conscientiousness of the wing workers and the quality of their supervision. Generally, standards are fair but might be higher. Prisoners have good opportunities to keep their cells clean, though not all of them do so, and there is an appropriate supply of cleaning materials and equipment for them to use.
- 7.3 **Kit.** In September 2016, the IMB checked the handling of prisoner laundry and the issue of clean kit on all 14 residential wings by interviewing 5 prisoners on each.
- 7.3.1 There are some variations in practice between wings (for no particular reason that we discerned) but all work effectively from a prisoner viewpoint. The niggles were relatively minor – sometimes there were not enough large size clothes, for example – but no one suggested that they were unable to keep themselves clean and tidy. Of greater concern were certain health and safety issues that the survey uncovered, relating to secure storage of materials and equipment, for instance.
- 7.4 **Activity.** In April 2017, the IMB launched a project to review what prisoners spend their time doing when not participating in work, education or other activity off their wing.
- 7.4.1 The short answer is ‘very little’. Although the project was still on-going at the end of the reporting year and will be reported fully in 2017/18, it is already clear that there are at least two ways in which prisoners could be encouraged to make more productive use of their time.
- 7.4.2 The prisoners’ fund, which holds a healthy balance, could be used to purchase a range of modest items (like draughts, backgammon *etc*) that would encourage men to use their brains and to interact with each other. A few such items are already held on some wings but not others, and the range and general availability might be enhanced.
- 7.4.3 Prisoners report that they do not often engage with staff other than for the purposes of running the regime. So far, the IMB has found little evidence of staff encouraging men to be more active – either in what they do on the wings or by engaging in more off-wing activities (such as education). Whilst it is recognised that staff are often busy, this seems to be a missed opportunity.
- 7.5 **Communication.** Some aspects of prisoner communication are very good. In-cell information technology is used effectively to enable men to take responsibility for many aspects of their personal administration (*e.g.* booking medical appointments or arranging family visits). In-cell telephones enable men to contact approved numbers readily and at all hours. In contrast, the prison does not operate a switchboard to accept incoming calls, making difficulties for anyone who does not have a direct-dial number.
- 7.6 Written communication with prisoners is not reliably good. Generally, the problems are not content but clarity. Sometimes simple elements of good practice are overlooked (such as dating a communication). Sometimes language is abrupt rather than persuasive (*e.g.* in responding to a prisoner complaint). Some formal documents are composed and laid out as if for a civil servant, which is inappropriate for the intended readers, a group of men many of whom, it is well known, have poor literacy skills. The use of notice boards to provide information is haphazard – frequently the material displayed is dated. This is an area of significant and (it seems to the IMB) unnecessary weakness in the way the prison is managed.

## HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

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- 8.1 In 2015/16, the IMB found weaknesses in healthcare at HMP Thameside, as delivered by Oxleas. In 2016/17, monitoring of healthcare found that some shortcomings remain. Social care provision passed from Oxleas to CGL in April 2017 (see paras 5.4, 5.5).
- 8.2 **Screening.** Health screening of new arrivals is a two-stage process – a primary screen in reception followed by more thorough screening within a few days. The target of 100% within 48 hours is being missed (*e.g.* in April 2017 62% were screened); the figure is 88% screened after 72 hours. New arrangements from June 2017, involving a team of nurses based in the Early Days Centre (see paras 4.6, 4.7), may improve testing rates.
- 8.3 **Inpatient services.** The inpatient unit is usually almost full. Most patients suffer mental ill-health. The 18 spaces are just sufficient providing they are all usable (sometimes some may be damaged and out of commission for a period) though occasionally there is a waiting list. Generally, prisoners diagnosed with acute mental health needs, who cannot be cared for properly in a prison like HMP Thameside, are transferred to a more appropriate facility within four weeks of diagnosis (there are two or three transfers from HMP Thameside most months). This is an improvement on previous years but too many seriously ill men are still being held for a time in the prison.
- 8.4 **Outpatient services.** The prison provides GP clinics every day and specialist clinics such as dentist, optician, and physiotherapist services at less frequent but reasonable intervals. Prisoners receive a booklet when in reception about how to access healthcare. Action has been taken to reduce non-attendance at GP and dentist appointments (*e.g.* telephone triage by nurses and changing the order of priorities in the IT booking system when a prisoner is down for more than one activity), but it remains quite high. Access to screening programmes (*e.g.* for bowel cancer) is not in place.
- 8.5 Prisoners can present with a range of personality disorders. The healthcare provider treats any psychosis or depression suffered by such patients but there have been disputes with prison management about taking responsibility for men whose disorder makes them highly disruptive and who might benefit from psychotherapeutic interventions. When such disagreements occur, as they did several times during the reporting year, the person who suffers is the prisoner.
- 8.6 Services are provided for prisoners with less acute mental health conditions, including counselling, anger management and occupational therapy, but staffing is inadequate to ensure reliable support because numbers are insufficient for cover when staff take leave or resign. The number of men attending smoking cessation courses increased to over 100 each month during 2016/17.
- 8.7 **Infection control.** There have been instances of men arriving at the prison suffering from TB or with an MRSA infection. IMB members are not convinced that infection control procedures (such as routine hand washing) are reliably implemented well enough, though when raised with the head of healthcare he affirmed that procedures are sufficient and appropriate. This is an issue to which the IMB will return during 2017/18.
- 8.8 **Healthcare complaints.** Oxleas operates an NHS complaints procedure, not the prison's process, which confuses some prisoners. Medication issues feature frequently. It is a challenging area because prisoners may try to obtain additional medication, or fail to take it as they should, in order to use it as currency within the prison. About 20% of complaints to healthcare concerning medication were upheld in the period November 2016 to March 2017, usually because there was a procedural error. Medication concerns often underlie healthcare Applications to the IMB (see page 15). A proportion show that communication between healthcare staff and prisoners has been weak.
- 8.10 A Patients Council has been established to provide a forum where healthcare issues can be discussed with prisoners. The IMB sees this as a positive step.

## EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

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- 9.1 **Induction.** Education induction is carried out over a morning or afternoon. Prisoners' attainment levels are assessed and they are offered appropriate education courses according to their levels. The whole process is completed within a few days of arrival.
- 9.2 **Education classes.** The prison encourages engagement in education by paying the middle tier wage that is available for work. Attendance is given priority over a number of other activities and is preceded only by attendance at court, legal visits, healthcare appointments and Turning Point sessions. However, despite this, attendance at Education classes is on average 60%, a high non-attendance rate even allowing for authorised absences. The IMB has not found evidence that wing staff are proactive in encouraging men to attend their courses on a daily basis (see para 7.4).
- 9.3 Those prisoners who do attend education classes are almost always pleased with them and are complimentary about their tutors. When courses are fully subscribed, waiting lists are kept and prisoners are offered places strictly on the basis of how long they have been waiting. This is fair.
- 9.4 A range of classes leading to an accredited qualification at Level 1 or 2 are offered in English (including ESOL), Mathematics and ICT. There are some other accredited courses in personal and social development as well as on specific industrial skills. There are well over twice as many English courses offered as mathematics (for which there are longer waiting lists), which is inappropriate given the crucial importance of numeracy skills for successful employment. The IMB has been told that there are plans to increase mathematics provision, which we will monitor in 2017/18.
- 9.5 **One-to-one sessions.** An education tutor is timetabled to offer one-to-one learning sessions on wings, in CSU and in healthcare to those prisoners who are unable to attend the main education classes. This includes prisoners who are on basic regime as well as those reluctant to engage in group sessions due to previous negative experiences of education. One of the key aims for this latter group is to build confidence and encourage them to join group classes. Prisoners express appreciation of the opportunity afforded by such sessions. On average 12 prisoners a day are seen.
- 9.6 **Distance learning.** The position for prisoners who applied to enrol on Open University (OU) or distance learning courses during the reporting year was unsatisfactory.
- 9.6.1 In May 2017, there were about 20 prisoners wanting to apply, of whom the IMB interviewed 15. Ten waited between 3 and 11 months before their request to undertake a distance learning course was acknowledged, 7 waited over 6 months. None has actually started a course. One, who registered his interest 11 months ago, has been told that because he is now within 6 months of his release date, he is no longer eligible. All complained that there was confusion regarding the application process. For example, one prisoner was initially told that he was eligible for an OU course, then told he wasn't in two subsequent meetings and then told he was in the latest meeting. This is unsatisfactory.
- 9.6.2 Several prisoners have told the IMB of difficulties in accessing the Virtual Campus (VC). One prisoner who was enrolled on an OU course said he had not been given a PIN number by the IT department, despite repeatedly requesting one. Other prisoners said that they have given up trying to use the VC either because they are unable to log in or because the system is very slow and frequently crashes. There was similar feedback from several education tutors. This situation, too, is unsatisfactory.
- 9.7 **Other activities.** The operation of the prison library continues to be one of HMP Thameside's great strengths. The Sports Academy, too, provides prisoners with good opportunities. There is a range of other activities offered periodically (*e.g.* drama, restorative justice, faith based classes) but the IMB has not evaluated their impact or quality during the reporting year.

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

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- 10.1 **Work placements.** No prisoners at HMP Thameside receive external work placements.
- 10.2 **Vocational training.** There are limited opportunities for specific vocational training (*e.g.* in the textile and print workshops), but relatively small numbers of men are able to participate (10-20 in each area at any time). Overall, there are few opportunities for men to acquire new skills in order to improve their employability.
- 10.3 **Employment.** There is a range of work opportunities within the prison (*e.g.* cleaners, listeners, kitchen workers, bag and tag workers, laundry workers, grounds maintenance workers), about 495 full-time equivalent jobs in all. Some offer the opportunity to obtain either experience or even a formal qualification that might help the individual concerned to secure employment on release. However, the IMB has not been able to find data to suggest how many men who are released do, in reality, get jobs.
- 10.4 Periodically the prison organises 'employment fairs' in which a range of local employers come to the prison to provide information about job opportunities to the prisoners who attend. The events are well-organised and attract interest from employers and from prisoners. The IMB has not found data showing how many men find work as a result.
- 10.5 Development of these areas of support for prisoners has been constrained during the reporting year by the on-going uncertainty about the role that the prison service wants HMP Thameside to play within the prison estate as a whole. The probability that it is shortly to become a 'reception prison' has militated against putting effort into developing services for convicted prisoners about to be released because there are unlikely to be many men in this situation in the future. However, it has not been helpful for the pre-release prisoners who have been held in the prison during the reporting year.

## RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

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- 11.1 **Accommodation.** Although the numbers fluctuate, typically about five convicted men are released from HMP Thameside every weekday (when the IMB monitored the numbers in December 2016 to March 2017 the average was 5.8). This figure does not include men being transferred to another prison or who are released by a court. On average, those who are released have been in the prison for five weeks, which is not sufficient for transformative education or training to assist resettlement. The focus of the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) has to be on more immediate concerns, like CV writing and help obtaining accommodation on release.
- 11.2 The IMB monitored how well prisoners are prepared for their release by interviewing a sample of 74 men within two weeks of their release date during early 2017. There was a stark contrast between those with a home, who were generally looking forward to their release, and those (45% in our sample) who felt they would be homeless and were not confident (and in some cases actually fearful) about their future.
- 11.3 We asked the men who felt they would be homeless *have you discussed accommodation with a member of the resettlement team?* In reply, most men said that there had been some contact with a resettlement adviser, but often any promised follow-up discussion or provision of information was delayed until the day of release or never delivered.
- 11.4 The CRC refers prisoners for support with resettlement planning in respect of accommodation to another specialist organisation, DePaul. In response to the question *what have you done to respond to each man's needs?*, DePaul informed us that prisoners are frequently referred to their Local Authority. However, DePaul also confirmed that this is only of practical value if the Authority accepts the referral and has accommodation spaces available at the time, which is not so in a majority of cases.
- 11.5 In summary, IMB monitoring finds that the CRC and DePaul do indeed speak to most prisoners in need of help to find accommodation before they are released, but many of the referrals are of little value because there are no vacancies. The IMB was unable to obtain evidence of follow through and in most cases data for outcomes was non-existent.
- 11.6 The scarcity of suitable accommodation for released prisoners is not a direct responsibility of the CRC or DePaul. The IMB has been told that they perform well against their contractual performance measures. What this demonstrates is that those measures bear little relation to the reality of the accommodation problems many men face when they leave HMP Thameside. A number told the IMB that they would soon reoffend in order to be returned to the relative security of prison: and they do.
- 11.7 **Family links.** The resettlement of prisoners with families continues to be well supported by the prison through a range of activities from 'story book dads' to family visit days. This continues to be one of the prison's strengths.
- 11.8 **Home detention curfew.** Prisoners who meet a set of criteria can qualify for early release under a home detention curfew (HDC). It is highly desirable that all those eligible who apply are released early for their own benefit and to free up the space they occupy within prisons. There are various reasons why agreeing HDC may be held up, some of which (such as checking the home address) are not the prison's responsibility. However, during the reporting year there have been times when considerable delays have resulted from slow administration within the prison.
- 11.9 For example, on 1 June 2017, the prison had 158 current applications for HDC. In 30 instances, the prisoner concerned had been sent the application form at least 10 weeks late and so was completely unable to obtain agreement for HDC by the date when they were eligible for it. This is unfair.

## C Section – Work of Board

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During this reporting year the IMB has developed its approach to monitoring to embrace the messages of the National Monitoring Framework, published early in 2016. In particular, this has involved agreeing monitoring priorities in the specific context of HMP Thameside, and setting up a range of projects to collect reliable evidence to underpin the Board’s judgements. The main priorities were the quality of a prisoner’s daily life, the delivery of healthcare, preparation for release and resettlement.

Two Board members resigned during the year. Four new candidates have been recommended for appointment, but formal appointment itself is still awaited following delays caused by the General Election on 4 June 2017.

<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the Establishment	323
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not recorded

## D Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	22	25
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	11	10
C	Equality	6	8
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	48	38
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	28	51
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	15	18
F	Food and kitchens	5	5
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	102	127
H 1	Property within this establishment	124	118
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	74	52
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	11	13
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	91	65
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	78	107
K	Transfers	5	5
	Miscellaneous	30	48
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	642	690