



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

**HMP Channings Wood**

for reporting Year  
**01 September 2016 to 31 August 2017**

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*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.

#### **1a INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT**

This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Channings Wood for the period 01/09/2016 -31/08/2017. IMB evidence comes from observations made during visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys and prisoner applications.

The state of the prison infrastructure everywhere shows a serious lack of capital funding and routine maintenance. Specific areas are detailed in Evidence section 7. It is blindingly obvious that continuous neglect inevitably results in much more extensive and costly work. It has also been noted that with the deterioration of their living spaces comes a reciprocal lack of respect from the prisoners.

There has been no noticeable or sustained improvement in staffing levels. As new recruits enter, staff of longer standing leave taking with them their experience of prison work. Regime changes are planned to give a minimum of disruption by avoiding total lockdowns as far as possible and advance information about the regimes is more freely available. However this means that the workshops rarely have their full quota of men. Of more serious consequence, Band 4 Offender Supervisors are cross-deployed and frequently get called to operational duties, making it impossible for them to deal adequately with their Offender Management Unit (OMU) work.

Evidence of further negative effects resulting from staff shortages are detailed in sections 5, 7 and 11.

The ill effects of working with low staffing levels, feelings of being unsupported and overstretched persist and experienced officers are bearing the strain and stress of working with new recruits. Apart from absenteeism, this is also reflected in low morale and some lack of real engagement with the prisoners to encourage, enable and follow through with their involvement in activities, work and education.

### **Main judgements**

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We have found the treatment of prisoners at Channings Wood, with a few exceptions to be fair and humane.

The attention given to the ever-growing number of older prisoners in terms of their care is being revised and improved, but the facilities, especially for those who are disabled are sadly lacking. Their access to activities has been given some attention with a library and activities room on LB5, but this is not sufficiently inclusive for all older prisoners in the prison. (See section 7)

Mental health is not yet given the recognition it needs in everyday contact between staff and prisoners. Many members of staff have limited understanding of prevalent mental health problems which can lead to a lack of empathy when dealing with sensitive situations. (See sections 7 and 8)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release? Dedicated work by those in Education, Work, and Training falls short of its potential benefits due to constraints of regime patterns and time restrictions of sentences. The transitory nature of most of the population of Channings Wood does not allow many prisoners to take full advantage of courses and work experience. (See sections 9, 10 and 11)

## **Main Areas for Development**

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### **TO THE MINISTER**

Once again, it is an overall shortage of staff that prevents every area of the prison achieving its full potential in the care and rehabilitation of prisoners. Whilst recent recruitment drives are bringing in new officers, the steady drain of experienced staff leaving the service is keeping pace and there is no overall improvement in numbers. (Sections 4, 6, 7, 9 10 and 11)

How could the minister improve terms and conditions of employment in order to retain experienced officers and attract a high calibre of new recruits?

### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

Fundamental changes need to take place in the care of older prisoners. A more thorough and consistent result could be achieved by accommodating them in a dedicated wing. (Sections 7 and 8)

What plans are there to reform the overall care of older prisoners so that they may receive more humane treatment that is appropriate to their age?

### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

What supervision and psychological support is available to staff dealing with stressful and testing situations? Similarly, what supervision and guidance is in place for Peer Mentors and Listeners. (Sections 6 and 7)

### **TO THE MAINTENANCE PROVIDER**

The staff employed to carry out cleaning, maintenance and repairs in the prison are always polite and willing to assist but they appear to be constrained and restricted in what they can achieve in these areas by the system within which they operate. From irritating problems such as getting a box repaired and fixed to the wall to more major work in repairing damage to a cell, the time taken to action the job seems to exceed that of the actual job itself. How could Carillion give greater autonomy to its staff on site and thus become more efficient? (Section 7)

## **IMPROVEMENTS**

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Although the backlog of incomplete Offender Assessment System (OASys) remains high, we are pleased to note that the new OMU Governor, who came into post in April has made an impressive start in tightening up the work of her department. Being a non-operational post has given her time and flexibility to establish better systems and working practises. A senior officer (Band 4), level office has been established in LB6, the D Category block in order to facilitate a focus on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) places. This is a welcome move and they have already increased the numbers of prisoners on the scheme.

Changes to the Regime Management Plan to reduce the overall caseload for OMU officers would further improve the effectivity of this department.

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

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HMP Channings Wood is a medium-sized Category “C” Training and Resettlement prison in a rural area of south Devon close to Newton Abbot. Its population fluctuates at around 700, a large proportion of whom are considered vulnerable due to the nature of their offences.

It has limited access by public transport with no public transport on Sundays. Offenders’ accommodation is split into three separate areas: the Main wings, the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit and LB8, which was formerly the Therapeutic Drugs Unit.

None of the buildings are higher than two stories and the grounds are spacious, well landscaped with some attractive gardens. Five of the living blocks are designed around a central entrance area with offices, classrooms, a servery and two association rooms. All the cells are off four corridors on each wing, two corridors on each floor, are arranged at right-angles to each other and around two corners from the main area. Thus, all the activity in and around the cells is around corners and some distance from the main offices. Although there are wing offices in this area, the main staff work and relaxation areas are very separate from the cells and this has been identified as a factor that inhibits staff/prisoner relationships on a number of levels. It also provides hidden areas making any time out of cell difficult for staff to supervise.

Earlier this year, the two of the Mains living blocks which house the most troublesome prisoners, were separated by a high fence. This has improved the security and safety of prisoners in this area. With the exception of LB8 which has double-occupancy cells with en-suite showers, all of the living blocks have single-occupancy cells, though there are still 26 which have bunk beds for dual occupancy. These blocks have communal showers on each landing.

The kitchen provides catering, including special dietary meals, to the living blocks by means of heated trolleys from which food is served.

Contained within the perimeter fence are a sports field and an area that is used for horticulture. The whole is contained within a very large perimeter fence, most of which is accessible on the outside to the general public.

Education and vocational courses are provided by Weston College, the Resettlement Group, Catch 22, JobCentre Plus and Prospects, which is concerned with careers guidance. Psychology and Substance Misuse Services are regionally managed across the Devon cluster (HMPs Channings Wood, Dartmoor and Exeter) and deliver Offender Behaviour courses.

Healthcare was provided by Dorset NHS University Trust until 31 March 2017 and by Care UK from 01 April 2017. There are no in-patient beds. Nurses are on duty every day and out of hours GP service is provided by Devon Doctors.

The prison has a gym which has a well-equipped fitness suite and sports hall which can be used for a variety of team games. There are also facilities for showering and office accommodation. Appropriate equipment for activities such as badminton and basketball are available.

There is a multi-faith chapel available for use of all prisoners and staff. There is extensive representation of leaders of the main and minority faiths.

### 4 SAFETY

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#### **Transfers and early days in custody**

The IMB continue to receive frequent applications relating to lost property during transfers such as four prisoners arriving from Bristol, each having one bag of personal possessions missing despite them signing them out from HMP Bristol. The missing bags contained valuables (credit cards, money and mobile phones). Staff explain that this is a common occurrence but expect that they would arrive at some point and, if not, then the offenders can use the Complaints Process. This process failure is very poor and especially concerning for prisoners who are immediately unsettled when trying to adapt to a new prison.

Whilst there have been improvements in the reception of new prisoners such as the erection of a pod which now facilitates private discussion there is still room for further improvements in regard of better toilets facilities in the cells used to hold offenders after they have been processed and are awaiting an escort to their living blocks.

IMB believe that the introduction of a dedicated induction wing would enable the first night and weeks to be managed more effectively.

#### **Bullying and violence reduction**

The IMB notes that both bullying and violence have increased during the year including three incidents of stabbing during the reporting period.

The IMB have attended 16 serious incidents during the year (87% -15 before the end of April) compared to 10 for the same period last year. It is likely that these trends relate to the smoking cessation programme.

The introduction of the Violence Reduction Action Plan on 1st May 2017 was welcomed but it is too early yet for the IMB to comment on its impact.

The number of prisoners on basic level has also risen since the HMPI last year then 24 to 36 and this mostly related to violent behaviour (offender on offender) and/or the use of New Psychoactive Substances, (NPS).

However, whilst adjudications remain fairly constant at 10 offences per day, those relating to debt and possession of illicit substances have substantially increased.

Members of the IMB took an unprecedented decision to suspend some rota visits throughout the month of May 2017 prompted by the general level of unrest and concerns for individual's safety across the prison.

The introduction of body cameras for officers would be a sensible addition to managing individuals' safety. Currently, progress of the pilot appears to be at about 20%. The IMB will monitor with interest as it continues to be fully rolled out across the prison.

#### **Self-harm and suicide prevention**

Self-harm incidents remained a constant issue until their peak in March and April 2017 to 50 (of which 27 were cutting) and 42 respectively. In addition there have been two deaths in custody during this reporting period; one by natural causes and the other self-inflicted. The latter remains the concern of the Coroner together with earlier death which dates back to June 2016.

Listeners in the prison have been increasingly responsive to prisoners needs and

report that their call outs have increased reaching a peak in November 2016 of 63, citing bullying and smoking cessation issues to be the majority of the concerns. A 20% increase has been reported amongst the more vulnerable prisoners (LB1) who said they feel less safe during this mid-year period.

The IMB continues to be concerned about the number of open ACCTs especially at their peak in April at 38 and May 2017 at 33 which includes offenders housed in Segregation.

The prison put a new Safeguarding policy in place in June 2017 but it does not yet appear to be embedded throughout the establishment.

## **Security**

The earlier part of the year demonstrated that the prison needed to gain a greater awareness of the significant ringleaders involved with the trade of illicit substances; the production of hooch and the redirection of medication and the associated violence and bullying. During the last quarter the IMB note that this has been managed more effectively and individuals dealt with in a more timely manner.

However, staff shortages due to slow recruitment in the department (currently 1.5 instead of 3 FTEs) limit full operative function.

## **Substance misuse**

The IMB noted the significant presence of illegal substances during the year. It is very easy to obtain both drugs and hooch at the prison which reflects the difficulties in managing the layout of the estate. Prisoners also report that the use of substances can change during their time at the prison, especially the use of NPS when spiking tobacco. Being bullied into being a "guinea pig" to test the strength of a new batch is regular practice. The cost of obtaining NPS and tobacco has also increased since the introduction of smoking cessation. More recently the smoking of NPS has been largely confined to behind cell doors with some officers appearing to turn a blind eye to the practice. There have been several incidents when officers have been adversely affected by the passive inhalation of smoke from these substances.

The rise in hooch production resulted in the withdrawal of both fruit and sugar during the earlier part of 2017 which caused considerable unrest amongst prisoners and many complaints to IMB. More recently distilled alcohol is being produced in smaller quantities which are more difficult for the authorities to find.

Distribution of nicotine patches was poorly controlled in the earlier part of the year (December - March) because of long waiting lists for smoking cessation programmes which peaked at 150. This was due mainly to the number of offenders transferring from smoking prisons and the one programme only limit. The introduction of the Smoke Free Pathway in July 2017 has been welcomed by the IMB and the inclusion of all the South West prisons (except HMP Bullingdon) has already impacted on this situation.

The incoming health care provider, Care UK has introduced a more vigorous programme of reducing prescribed medication since April 2017 and thus reduce the queues for offenders waiting for their medication. Bullying behaviour in this area especially against vulnerable, elderly and disabled offenders should hopefully be reduced in the future.

IMB regret the discontinuation of the dedicated SMS programmes on LB8 during the year and will be pleased to see the introduction of the new Recovery programme later this year in November which should be more flexible in its approach albeit in its early development phase. In addition staffing will be reduced from 13.5 FTEs to just 8. The changes in the regime with additional and frequent delayed unlocks especially in the middle part of the year had considerable impact on the attendance of offenders at the SMS programmes and interventions.

## 5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

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A new Equalities Officer has taken over what was a very part-time, fractionalised post. He has inherited a backlog of paperwork due to the unplanned and sudden departure of the last Equalities officer. His training and experience in the post to date has been minimal. He is to gain training and experience of his role with the Equalities Officer at HMP Dartmoor.

We feel that he is inadequately resourced, his office being little more than a storage cupboard with no telephone. Though full time, his Equalities duties are frequently interrupted by a need for operational duties. This is particularly regrettable when it results, as sometimes happens, in the cancellation of an Equalities Action (EAT) Meeting. These are scheduled to take place bimonthly but are frequently postponed or cancelled due to staffing issues. In the past two years there have been only four meetings a year.

Discrimination Incident Forms (DIRFs) are freely available and each one is now being thoroughly investigated. This has led to an increase in their use as the perception is that there is now a point to reporting incidents. The issues behind the complaints are generally perceived to be genuine mistakes for example, a late arrival whose meal was further delayed by his request to pray, was served non-halal beef by wing officers in the belief that, being beef, it was acceptable. The Equalities officer intends to produce clear information on the requirements of Moslems to mitigate such mistakes.

The Equalities Orderly is well supported and takes his responsibilities very seriously. Comprehensive inductions take place weekly and forums for minority groups, monthly. A travellers' forum has recently been started and is helping to reduce the friction experienced around these groups as evidenced by reduced adjudications amongst travellers.

A transgender prisoner was given permission to have his own clothes but a wing officer insisted that they be removed from his possession. This prisoner has since left Channing's Wood. It is recognised that this raises issues for future transgender prisoners and a satisfactory policy has been outlined to deal with such cases.

There is a perception amongst prisoners, including the Equalities orderlies, that the Incentive and Earned Privileges scheme (IEPs) is arbitrarily applied and does not provide an incentive. From the management's perspective, the scheme is being reviewed but it admits that a certain amount of subjectivity operates as in the following recent example: a prisoner with marked autistic symptoms was given an IEP. In this case, it was deemed expedient to allow him to watch his television – which otherwise would have been removed – after a given time at night as it helped him to stay calm through the long hours behind his cell door.

### Visits

Although the mandatory hour is generally met, prisoners on the Main Blocks complain that they are called for their visits by the wing which results in their visitors sometimes having a long wait and fostering the perception that their visit time is being wasted.

Disabled prisoners are taken often by inexperienced handlers in unserviceable wheelchairs – one recently used had no foot rest – thus adding to the stress experienced by many at this time.

There is one family visit for Mains prisoners every month and prisoners commend the efforts made by Choices in preparing activities and a family friendly environment in the

visits hall. More frequent family visits would be desirable as only twelve families can be *accommodated* in one visit.

Choices is a Children and Families Provider that works with prisoners and through the Gate services. They are present in the prison five days a week and they also deal with referrals, inductions and resettlement referrals.

### **The Board**

Attempts by the Board to improve the diversity of its complement have unfortunately been unsuccessful in recent recruitment campaigns. We would be keen to recruit Board members from a more diverse range of backgrounds and are particularly keen for applications in future recruitment campaigns from younger people, those of working age and individuals from black and minority ethnic communities since these groups are currently under-represented on our Board.

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

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The Segregation Unit continues to be full most of the time with prisoners frequently remaining there for four weeks or longer. Many cells through the year have been occupied by prisoners who have committed a relatively minor offence and then refuse to go back to the wing because they feel, and evidence supports this, that they are under threat. In recent months, a few of the more active and aggressive bullies have been split up and transferred to other prisons and reintegration has become a more favoured outcome of reviews. Members regularly attend reviews which are carried out in a sensitive and timely manner with a representative of Health Care always present. The Adjudications we attend are procedurally correct and we are always supportive of the judgement reached.

There are no privacy curtains and the use of CCTV cameras is sometimes an issue with prisoners wanting privacy to use the toilet. Although the staff are sensitive to this issue, it is not a wholly satisfactory arrangement.

The exercise yard remains unpainted and experiments to have two prisoners out at the same time have not been successful. The shower is in a poor state of decoration but with the unit being in constant use, there is no time to repaint. Similarly the exercise yard is shabby with graffiti on the walls which reappears soon after it is painted over. There are some exercise bars in the yard.

The staff report frequent problems getting basic supplies.

The unit is generally very well managed, the staff are sensitive and attentive to the needs of some very demanding and disturbed men. They spend time listening to their concerns and the prisoners always report that they are receiving good care. We always have access to the prisoners and are able to have a private conversation if appropriate. Dirty protests are dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

However, the staff in the segregation unit routinely have to witness and deal with extremely disturbing behaviour. There is presently no automatically triggered support after very serious incidents, such as the suicide last year. Routine supervision or mentoring for these front line officers might go some way to alleviate the particular stress they experience

A staff care team as recommended in the initial Ombudsman's report following the suicide in the Segregation Unit last year has not been set up

## **7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)**

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The fabric of the Living Blocks is generally in a very poor state. Leaking roofs have forced the closure of the association room on LB3 for most of this reporting period. Many areas would benefit from redecoration, a relatively inexpensive means of improving the aesthetic of the living areas. A lack of furniture throughout the site has become increasingly problematic - we frequently have to search for useable chairs in order to conduct application interviews. New dining furniture has been delivered to the association rooms but though we would welcome the opportunity for the prisoners to eat in a more sociable environment, there is little evidence of them being used except on LB5. It has been demonstrated that the stools that fold out from the tables are too close together and do not leave enough space for grown men to sit down together and eat comfortably.

Kitchen equipment is regularly out of commission for one reason and another and always takes an inordinately long time to repair causing great inconvenience to the staff. This forces undesirable and expensive menu changes for example, packets of instant soup when the boiler is out of action. Some food trollies have been replaced but they suffer from bad treatment on their way back to the kitchen when prisoners ride them down the slopes without being reprimanded by the accompanying officers. The recent downgrading of the hygiene rating in the kitchens is attributed to poor maintenance of plumbing, fridge seals and other equipment.

The showers on many of the living blocks are in an appalling state of repair. They are hard to keep clean and offer nothing in the way of privacy or disabled access. This is the ninth year running that we have noted this and it is imperative that money be found to improve this situation providing prisoners with access to very basic need for decency. Plans have been drawn up to provide disabled facilities on the ground floors on LB5 and either LB1 or 2, but without funding, this cannot happen.

Elsewhere in the prison facilities are in an unacceptably poor state. We have been complaining about the toilets in the Horticulture building for three years. We do, however welcome the new floor in the Gym which was laid last year.

The Senior Management Team makes a conscious effort to arrange regime changes so as to cause the minimum disruption and to disseminate information effectively. However, too many days are lost to lockdowns and this has a very detrimental effect on the well-being and attitude of all.

Despite a minimal increase in the budget, little has changed in the quality of the day to day food served to the prisoners. The increase has been used to purchase occasional treats such as chocolate fudge cake and greater variety of fruit but the overall standard of the food is unchanged. The quality of some of these treats is questionable. Doughnuts for example, deemed inedible by many prisoners, a judgement with which the member sampling lunch that day agreed, were being thrown away. This is but one example of an unacceptably casual attitude to the quality of the food served.

The quality and quantity of the breakfast and lunch packs is woefully inadequate. The catering manager has told us that his purchasing power is limited by the Prison Service contract and that the current breakfast packs (a small packet of dry unsweetened oats, two slices of bread, a small carton of milk and tea bags) cost more than a cooked breakfast. This is an unacceptable situation and we consider that providing nutritious and satisfying meals should be a priority of the Prison Service. The cooked evening meals are largely freshly prepared and of fair quality though there are complaints about the small quantity of meat in stews.

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Complaints about food are generally only heard at meal times and applications on the subject are usually confined to problems with special dietary requirements, which are usually addressed. The Food Forums are very poorly responded to by prisoners and the Food Comments books on the wings, rarely used. It is our opinion that this is due to a perception by the prisoners that there is no point as nothing will change and with the exception of the treats, noted above, this is also our perception.

We also continue to regret the absence of fresh vegetables grown in the Horticulture Department.

The Muslim prisoners commended the kitchens and the prison as a whole for the measures they put in place to allow Muslims their observance of Ramadan.

Property management within Channings Wood appears to have improved slightly and most issues we encounter relate to theft from cells by other prisoners. The management of Reception is much improved. An unacceptably high amount of property goes missing between jails and the services of Geo Amey are being supplemented by TNT to transfer prisoners' property.

We note that recruitment and training are bringing more staff into the establishment but this has not rectified the loss of experienced operational officers of the past few years. We encounter numerous examples of Wing Officers failing to respond to basic queries, for example, a request for toothpaste from a newly arrived prisoner was ignored from his arrival on Friday until Monday morning. We deplore the absence of a Personal Officer scheme which would give all prisoners an easily accessible point of contact.

Morale amongst officers is very low and we frequently encounter situations where it appears to be hanging by a thread. When a serious incident arises and front-line staff are required to delay the end of a shift, a lot of very bitter feelings are expressed and it is only a matter of time before their good will is exhausted.

We have attended a wing representative's meeting at the request of prisoners involved and found it to be the frustrating exercise that was described to us. After being cancelled and rescheduled at least three times, when it finally took place, no more than six items from an agenda of 29 received satisfactory answers. We feel that this is an underused means of communication between management and prisoners.

Problems with the Prison Complaints System are frequently the subject of our Applications - no or late replies being the most common issue. Duplicate forms would, we feel, make the system more traceable.

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

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Since Care UK took over the provision of Healthcare in March we have noted a gradual but marked improvement in this department. There is now a manager and an assistant manager creating a smoother administrative base. Ultra sound and x-ray equipment is in place, there is aortic aneurism screening, a physiotherapist attending once a week. The shortage of permanent post nurses has been addressed and there are now only two regular agency nurses.

The basic GP cover is eight clinical and one administrative sessions a week however there is no sickness or holiday cover which results in very long waiting lists of up to three months.

The dispensing of prescription medicines is sometimes chaotic but the situation has improved and failures in the system have been reduced by half since March.

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The delivery of the Smoking Cessation programme has greatly improved through the last few months. With the training of more staff, waiting lists are reducing and a Second Chance programme has been introduced to start 90 days after the first.

### **Dentist**

The attendance of the dentist has been increased to three days a week since April. The waiting list has consequently been reduced from 10 -11 weeks last year to currently 5-6 weeks. Efficiency would be improved with greater cooperation by the Wing Officers.

### **Mental Health**

A Complex Care Team of Psychiatrist, Psychologist, GP and Lead Nurse have worked together with Safer Custody to reduce the average weekly level of ACCTs from 35 to 15 since April.

Group work for prisoners with depression and anxiety is scheduled to start in the next month. This is a welcome development which we will monitor.

A self-referral system open to all prisoners wishing to access psychological help has just been put in place. Again, we will need to monitor the use and benefits and how well provision meets demand.

We are pleased to note that Staff Development Reviews are due to be implemented and that for the first time, work is beginning on job profiles and succession plans. Along with staff training for officers on Mental Health issues we consider this to be a very welcome development. However, courses on Borderline Personality Disorder did little more than introduce the concept and the number of operational staff attending is still in single figures. Whilst we applaud the intention, we note with caution that a much more concerted effort will be needed for these measures to bear fruit.

### **Social Care**

In line with national trends, Channings Wood is experiencing an increase in offenders over the age of 55. Currently this is 24%. The resulting increase in social care needs and disabilities is mostly amongst the Vulnerable Prisoners (VP).

At this time there are three prisoners who are supported by Devon County Council (DCC, Ark) Domiciliary Carers, 26 who are registered for personal emergency evacuation plan, (PEEP) five wheel chair users, and 19 who require assistance of a Buddy.

We deeply regret that a dedicated Social Care wing has not yet been established in response to the requests of those operating in this area. This would enable better planning, resourcing and co-ordinating accommodation for these individuals and their Buddies. It would also enable more appropriate treatment of newly arrived older prisoners, preventing for example the recent occurrence of a man in his seventies having to occupy a top bunk because his cell mate, also in his seventies, was less mobile.

Availability of trained Buddies has been limited through the year, dropping to one in June and currently standing at three. A much higher profile is needed to develop and expand this programme as demand increases.

Complex social care needs amongst the older population combines with mental health needs, including dementia. This is a rapidly emerging issue which requires specialised training and provision. Access through DCC to a social worker, occupational therapist, and end of life specialist is a welcome development.

Education provided by Weston College is of a good quality with a curriculum that is well matched to the prisoners needs. This includes identifying basic skills needs and learning difficulties, both through the initial assessment process and through conversations with workshop instructors and other staff. The IMB commend the Shannon Trust for their achievements in teaching reading and their work is complemented and supported by a part time Learning Disabilities teacher.

However prisoners entering the system with higher qualifications are frequently frustrated by not being able to access courses and training appropriate to their level of qualification. This suggests a shortage of availability for the more advanced courses. Peer mentoring is one such course for which demand exceeds availability. Given the importance of the role Peer Mentors can play, this is a regrettable situation.

Despite disruptions caused by late unlocks and regime changes, sufficient time is allocated for the courses to complete. Typically it is expected that four days a month are lost to staff training and to lockdowns due to operational staff shortages.

Attendance on courses is acceptable, typically around 75% and tutors are usually aware of the reasons for absences.

Prisoners were seen to be engaged in the lessons visited during monitoring visits. They sought help when required and took control of their own learning by helping each other and seeking out appropriate resources in and beyond the classroom. There is a widely held belief that the education and training they receive and undertake will improve their future employment prospects.

Vulnerable prisoners have equal opportunities compared to those on the Main blocks and can access Education Department learning programmes and workshop placements. Their access to the library is woefully inadequate, limited to only half a day per week. We will monitor how effective an additional library that is being created in the VPU to give them better access to library resources. At present it is very under resourced.

Library attendance has been 30% – 50% per month down on the previous year due, mainly, to a shortage of library staff but also due to escort staff shortages. It is unacceptable that cover is not provided for long term absences as was the case with the librarian.

Approximately 40 prisoners are participating in Distance Learning courses with twelve of them working towards Open University degrees. They receive good support and adequate access to computers.

The Gym provides a suitable range of activities including accredited courses. It is well used by the prisoners with appropriately light-touch support from the staff. PE staff support the work of Health Care for example on the Smoking Cessation programme, physical and emotional strength building and remedial work where physiotherapy support is needed.

All the vocational courses are well attended and successful in their outcomes. We are pleased to note that Horticulture is supplying vegetables to the Newton Abbot Food Bank. We commend the Men Supporting Men initiative established on LB1 by the Safer Custody Department in the model of a National Charity, Andy's Man Club. It addresses issues of psychological need mainly through peer support, using the skills and interests of the prisoners themselves in art, music, Mindfulness meditation and other disciplines. Harnessing prisoner's abilities for the benefit of each other and the fostering of creative activities are having many positive consequences. Rolling out this initiative through other areas of the prison would be very desirable.

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## 10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

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Rates of pay offered to tradesman by Weston College to come to the prison to run courses in plastering, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing etc are not competitive enough to encourage those who are already employed to give their time to tuition. It is unlikely that HMPPS or its contractors would pay or offer relocation incentives sufficient to attract suitable candidates other than from the local travel-to-work area. Qualified tradesmen would most likely be earning in excess of what they would receive tutoring in a prison, so targeting retired tradesmen on fixed-term contracts could be a solution. In the shorter-term, it would be desirable for courses offered to match the current needs of the employment market – the construction trades are a good example as building skills are much in demand.

The segregation of VPU and Main Block prisoners creates staffing and administrative difficulties and leads to a loss of potential working days.

By examining the regular reports of employment availability, there is an imbalance between VP and Mains opportunities, in favour of the former, especially in the work areas prisoners consider to be “good” and “well paid” positions. The rates of pay are a source of concern in certain areas. An example of this is the management of biohazard materials where those working in Recycling receive a higher rate than those dealing with similar materials in the Stores.

Many prisoners arrive towards the end of their sentences with the expectation that they will be able to complete courses that will be useful to them on release. However, due to necessary assessments, course availability and duration, prisoners find themselves unable to access meaningful training appropriate to their abilities and requirements. This not only causes frustration and discontent, but is a waste of opportunity and resources. Too many prisoners find themselves idle during the last months of their sentences.

Looking at prisoner reoffending rates (Exploring the Outcomes of Prisoner Learners: Analysis of Linked Offender Records from the Police National Computer and Individualised Learner Records 27/07/2017) it would seem that prisoners who take on any form of learning activity have a significantly lower re-offending rate on release from prison (proven one year re-offending rate is 34% compared with 43% for non-learners). Looking at the type of offences that are most common to reoffending, it would seem that those who are principally on the main block, i.e. violence, theft and drug offences, are those offenders who need to be concentrated upon. At present the VP prisoners (probably due to social and/or educational background) have much better external employment prospects.

Education staff are generally upbeat about opportunities at Channings Wood. In particular, about the introduction of the ‘virtual campus’ which is being developed. It is being funded to provide courses, improve literacy and job search and there will be some 70 computers available. Many computers are already on site though unavailable for use as they have been waiting for security clearance for over two years.

The nursery garden is in need of investment. This is badly run down and offers considerable potential. It is underused and neglected at present. There are frames for poly tunnels which could be utilised if some decent irrigation could be provided. Clearly, additional garden staff would be needed to help offenders get the benefit of the facility. Clearly, substantial funding would be needed, but would be viable in the longer-term. If the kitchens could be upgraded to include vegetable washing facilities,

then there would also be significant benefits to the prison's finances by using home-grown vegetable on a regular basis, rather than buying-in expensive produce.

## **11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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The OMU department continues to operate under a great deal of pressure due to the fact that the seven Band 4 Officers who work in OMU, not only have a caseload of 55 - 65 Prisoners but are called upon to perform operational duties, often at a moment's notice. The backlog of OASys reports therefore remains high and is unlikely to fall due to the Local Prisons failing to do the Start Custody OASys.

Since March, and the appointment of a non-operational Offender Management Governor, the department is becoming more stable and effective and we have noted a reduction in applications from prisoners complaining about lack of contact with their Offender Supervisors. Most significantly, the number of outstanding recategorisation Reviews which stood at 160 is now zero. This has alleviated a lot of anxiety amongst prisoners wanting to feel that addressing their offending behaviour was being recognised.

Similarly, Home Detention Curfew (HDC) assessments which were operating with a typically three to four month delay are now delayed by only two to three weeks. Thus prisoners are feeling more in touch with their progress through their sentences

Of great regret are the cuts to accredited Offender Behaviour programmes offered at Channings Wood. There have been no interventions or group work for sex offenders since April, when the Sex Offenders Thinking Programme (SOTP) was replaced by a new programme that the Channings Wood Psychology Department has not been commissioned for. Currently, prisoners requiring this course on their sentence plans have to travel to treatment sites in distant prisons or face inevitable consequences of not having completed their sentence plan.

## C Section – Work of Board

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<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	16
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the Establishment	737
Total number of segregation reviews attended	93

## Section - Applications

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Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	9
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	10
C	Equality	17	11
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	33	21
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	19	17
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	5	23
F	Food and kitchens	4	12
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	109	56
H 1	Property within this establishment	27	29
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	52	42
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	11	15
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	79	82
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	41	20
K	Transfers	51	40
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>387</b>