



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP/YOI Drake Hall

for reporting Year
1 November 2016 – 31 October 2017

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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A) Sections 1 - 3

1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction to the report

The Board continues to believe that Drake Hall provides a safe and secure environment for prisoners where they are treated with humanity and decency. However, the continuing transfer to Drake Hall of women who are patently unsuited to its open environment, has placed a great deal more pressure on the management and staff to maintain both the resettlement ethos and good discipline within the prison. The direct result of this change in prison population has already started to manifest itself in a worrying rise in bullying and assaults with a resultant increase in adjudications and occupancy of the CSU.

Despite this, high professional standards are continuing to be maintained and there are still good relationships to be found between the majority of staff and prisoners. The prison continues to work towards a committed and innovative preparation of women for resettlement and reintegration into the community. This has been achieved by a focus on developing a positive environment which was validated by the "Enabling Environment" award in March 2016. The continued successful operation and management of the "Open Unit" provides strong evidence of the drive by the Governor and staff to engender effective rehabilitation.

Main judgments

Are prisoners treated fairly?

Prisoners are treated fairly within the prison.

Are prisoners treated humanely?

There is a culture of treating the women with dignity and humanity within the prison. Most of the interactions between the staff and the prisoners are productive and positive. Discipline is used in an appropriate way and prisoners are encouraged and supported to display good behaviour towards the staff and other prisoners. The leadership team provides direction and is generally visible, but it is recognised that the more challenging prisoners being sent to Drake Hall will require the leadership team to ensure that the staff are equipped to meet the changing demands placed on them.

However, the board is becoming increasingly concerned about the suitability of the accommodation provided in Richmond and Plymouth houses and would question that it meets acceptable standards. It also considers that the continued absence of a female General Practitioner (GP) is causing considerable distress to some of the most vulnerable prisoners.

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

The prison provides a positive regime to equip the women for a productive life after release. There are a wide range of educational and training opportunities being offered to the women to prepare them for a productive life on release. Of the 367 women released from Drake Hall this year, 364 had accommodation and 3 were released without, but with arrangements in place to meet with a local housing support officer on release. There is good use of the ROTL system with over 4500 approved this year with no failures.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

To reconsider the decision to postpone the provision of new accommodation units to replace the dilapidated Plymouth and Richmond houses. The IMB (and BOV) have been raising the issue of this poor accommodation since 1996. These houses are now considered to be so poor that the Board is concerned that parts of them fall below an acceptable standard. This new accommodation could also provide lockable cells providing more resilience for the prison. This becomes an even higher priority if the trend to send more challenging women to Drake Hall continues. (See Section 7)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Clarity on the entitlement to inter-prison visits and the availability of video links has been an issue during this year. The Board requests that clear guidance is issued on the entitlement to inter-prison visits and video links including identifying which prison takes the lead. (See Section 5)

Consider the type of prisoner being sent to Drake Hall given the open environment and the very limited segregation facilities. (See Section 6)

There appears to be an increasing trend of prisoner's personal property being delayed or going missing on transfer to and from Drake Hall. The Board thinks that this process should be reviewed, and prisons be encouraged to streamline the transfer of property and answer prisoner's complaints relating to lost property, in a timely manner. (See Section 7)

The Board is concerned that for much of the year the women have been unable to access the services of a female GP. This is an important element of the service and should be addressed as soon as possible. (See section 8)

There was an omission when the Healthcare contract was commissioned in that counselling services were not included. This needs to be addressed urgently, especially given the change in the women now being sent to the prison who generally have more complex medical and mental health issues. (See Section 8)

TO THE GOVERNOR

There has been a considerable increase in the use of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) over this year. The IMB has noted a commensurate increase in workload for the CSU staff without any increase in staffing levels. This has materialised not only by a large rise in occupancy of the unit but also the number of prisoners who have also been on Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCTs). The IMB considers that given the above a review of the staffing levels of the CSU is warranted. (See Section 6)

The Personal Officer system does not appear to be delivering the benefits envisaged. The IMB considers that a review of the system is required to ensure that the envisaged benefits are being delivered. (See Section 7)

There has been a protracted period when the Dentist chair has not been able to be used resulting in dental appointments being cancelled. The chair needs to be repaired or replaced

and robust maintenance measures put in place to ensure that dental appointments can go ahead as planned. (See Section 8)

The on-site family accommodation in the open unit has only been used 18 times. The board considers that a study should be undertaken to see why this facility has not been better utilized. (See Section 11)

Improvements

There has been a significant improvement in the effectiveness of the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) since the last report and a much more collaborative approach is now being adopted.

The smoking ban has been introduced and the Prison has been providing support to the prisoners to live in a "Smoke Free" environment.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

Drake Hall is situated in rural Staffordshire, about a mile from the town of Eccleshall and 10 miles from Stafford and the nearest railway station. Although currently designated a closed prison, Drake Hall was originally designed as an Open Prison and as such the layout provides significant freedom of movement for prisoners within the perimeter fence. The women and young offenders are accommodated in 15 individual houses spaced around the grounds, each with around 20 rooms. Most are single rooms, with a small number of doubles. An average of 7 Young Offenders were accommodated during the year alongside adult prisoners. The Closed element of the prison has a certified normal holding capacity of 315.

An additional house lies beyond the perimeter fence of the prison as recommended in the 2013 Review of the Women's Estate. This "Open Unit" provides a notional additional capacity for 25 women bringing the total Drake Hall prison capacity to 340.

The capacity of the Open Unit cannot always be fully utilized as strict criteria for admission are rigorously applied. The unit aims to provide those in residence, and of working age, with employment in the community. It also aims to prepare all residents as fully as possible for a productive life in the community after release.

The population of the prison averaged over 98% of capacity this year.

B Evidence Sections 4 – 11

Section 4: SAFETY

Drake Hall continues to be a safe place, however, the IMB considers that it has become less safe than it was at the time of writing last year's report. This is supported by a considerable increase in adjudications from 984 in 2015/2016 to 1683 in 2016/2017. A further significant indicator is that the number of ACCTs has increased and now stands at 285 in this report as opposed to 228 in last year's report. These increases in the number of adjudications and ACCTs appears to be a direct result of the decision to send more prisoners with complex issues to Drake Hall. Although these challenging women may be relatively few, they have disproportionately contributed to heightened tensions within the prison. For two days in September the governor raised the prison status to Stability State 3 for concerted indiscipline resulting from smoking cessation. This is an action previously unknown at Drake Hall.

Drake Hall is an open environment where prisoners are given a relatively large degree of responsibility and freedom within the confines of the perimeter fence. There has been an increase in prisoners with mental health issues and drug dependency. This combined with a growing number of difficult prisoners, who are more inclined to exploit these vulnerable women, is an unwelcome trend. These extremes are not conducive to the normal enabled environment at Drake Hall and is causing significant stress on prison staff and increasing anxiety and tension within the prison population.

The cessation of tobacco in September 2017, has also been a contributing factor in heightened tension within the prison. However, the early distribution of alternative sources of nicotine and help with nicotine dependency was well orchestrated.

The ingress of drugs and an increase in mobile phones has been challenging for prison security. A small number of incidents involving "spice" have had a disproportionate effect on prison discipline. New mobile "Sherpa" cameras promised for the last 18 months have failed to materialise and drugs still enter the prison from visits and outside working. Having these cameras operational together with collation of good intelligence and the diligence of staff would have helped to reduce the ingress of contraband.

Safer Custody Statistics

	2015/16	2016/17
Average CSU occupancy	Average of 23 days per month	Average of 140 days per month
Average monthly adjudications	83	151
No of adjudications related to safe custody	48 (fight/assault)	109 (fight/assault)
Average % population on ACCT	6.42%	7.82%
Average % population on drug rehabilitation	18%	20%
% of women who feel safe. Prison survey	88%	85%
Use of force	20	52

Safer Custody Statistics

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Average Population	299	299	266	309	309	327	334
No of Adjudications	338	719	609	609	1029	997	1812
No held in CSU	118	199	133	142	279	288	228
No of ACCTs opened	106	152	143	171	231	228	285
Self-harm incidents	N/R	326	182	178	166	189	104
No of R&C	847	693	444	531	474	510	843
No of ASBOs	N/R	N/R	12	43	99	109	N/R
No of UBRFs/CABs	105	96	67	235	125	76	337
No of DIRFs/CAB	47	19	36	N/R	14	19	22

Section 5: EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

The Equalities Committee meets monthly and is regularly chaired by the Governor or his Deputy. The Committee deals fairly and expeditiously with all issues raised. Prisoners' attendance at the meeting is generally good and feedback is usually timely. The appointment of a new Managing Chaplain has improved communication and pastoral welfare within the prison. Inter-prison visits and the availability of video-links for prisoners have been an issue this year. The PSI is open to interpretation and in reality the prison is rarely able to fulfil prisoners' expectations. This can be distressing for women and makes it difficult for them to maintain relationships.

Currently the IMB has no concerns over the running or efficiency of the Equalities Committee.

Section 6: SEGREGATION / CARE AND SEGREGATION UNIT *

Although Drake Hall is a closed prison, it has an open environment allowing free movement of prisoners during the day. For most prisoners this represents an introduction to assuming responsibility for their own actions (in some cases for the first time), for others, transferring from fully closed establishments, it merely offers opportunities to indulge in unacceptable, frequently aggressive, behaviour.

As a result, adjudications have risen to an average of 151 per month, a significant and worrying increase from 83 last year. Although the average number of individual prisoners segregated each month remains similar (18 this year, 15 last year) the average number of total days per month for which prisoners were segregated has risen to 140 as opposed to 85 last year. For the first time at Drake Hall, there have also been 2 "long stays" in the Unit.

There have also been a number of women on ACCT documents during their stay in the CSU this year (26 during this reporting year). However, their welfare has always been closely monitored during their stay in the CSU.

CCTV has been installed in the CSU common areas during this year which has helped considerably. However, there has still inevitably been greater pressure on the Staff who have nonetheless continued to work in commendable and compassionate fashion to try to return women to normal location as soon as appropriate.

Board members are notified routinely within 24 hours of all prisoners being located and the Board has attended almost every Segregation Review during the year. Overall therefore, the Board commends the working of the CSU and its Staff, but is concerned about the added pressure on staff and considers that a review of staffing levels is now required.

Other than the comments above, the operation of the CSU gives the Board no cause for concern.

** Locally referred to as the Care & Support Unit (CSU) at Drake Hall.*

Section 7: ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

It is disappointing that the dilapidated Richmond and Plymouth accommodation Houses have not been replaced this year as planned.

These houses were constructed in the World War II era and despite a number of improvements remain archaic and expensive to service. Some rooms in Plymouth are subject to damp during the winter months and some prisoners complain of asthma and chest infections as a result. Richmond is a particularly intimidating environment for some prisoners. The narrow corridors, lack of light and layout is conducive to bullying and anti-social behaviour. The installation of new CCTV and the redecorating of rooms and corridors will hopefully help, but the real solution is to make these houses redundant as the Board has recommended in previous reports.

In contrast, the remaining accommodation houses are clean and in a good state of repair. Communal rooms are relatively sterile and devoid of bright pictures and comfortable seating, however, there is a programme of works to improve these rooms. The standard of cleaning is varied, but in general good. The open unit and addition of family rooms have been well received and provide a conducive environment for prisoners at the end of their sentence to enable them to adapt to normal surroundings.

The personal officer scheme does not appear to be working as intended. There is not regular contact between the women and their personal officers and often there is confusion over who the allocated personal officer is. The nature of the shift system also makes it difficult for contact to be established. The system needs to be reviewed to ensure that the benefits envisaged from the personal officer system are being realised.

Increasingly this year there have been problems with the transfer of property and money from other prisons when women are transferred to Drake Hall. The prisoners use the complaints process, but responses can take a considerable amount of time to be answered fully and often require the administration staff at Drake Hall to send a number of reminders to the sending prison. This delay in getting personal property and money can often cause considerable distress and hardship to the prisoner involved.

Section 8: HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

The Prison Service, in partnership with the NHS (who commission the service), is required to ensure that prisoners have access to health services broadly equivalent to that in the wider community. Overall the IMB is satisfied with the standards of health care provision provided within the establishment.

The IMB monitors all areas of health care through its regular visits to the prison. A member also regularly attends the monthly clinical governance meeting and a bi-monthly partnership board.

All women are subject to a health screening on admission to the prison. They have access to a range of health services within the prison and where necessary obtain more specialist secondary care services provided at local hospitals.

Many of the women have complex health care needs demonstrated by the high level of prescriptions for both physical and mental health problems. A significant number of the women have problems relating to drug and alcohol dependency.

In last year's report we expressed some concerns about problems associated with the transfer of services from an NHS provider to Care UK. The teething problems associated with the initial transfer of services appear to have been resolved.

We also noted the issue of a Requirement Notice by the Care Quality Commission. This related to problems associated with waiting times for treatment in a number of areas. Good progress has been made in resolving these issues although the high level of women failing to attend booked appointments remains a challenge. The Prison has worked hard to try and resolve these issues and some progress has been made in improving the system of informing prisoners of appointment times and putting in place procedures to ensure that they attend.

The Board is concerned that there was an omission when the Healthcare contract was commissioned in that counselling services were not included. This needs to be addressed urgently, especially given the change in the women now being sent to the prison who generally have more complex medical and mental health issues.

The Board is also concerned that for much of the year the women have been unable to access the services of a female GP. This has been due to a failure to recruit. Although we understand the difficulties in recruiting GPs generally and female GPs particularly, this is part of the service specification and was an important element of the contracting process. The unavailability of a female GP is a significant service deficit. Many of the women at Drake Hall have a history of trauma which means that medical consultations or examinations dealing with issues of an intimate nature require the attention of a female rather than a male doctor.

There has been a protracted period when the Dentist chair has not been able to be used resulting in dental appointments being cancelled. The chair needs to be replaced and robust maintenance measures put in place to ensure that dental appointments can go ahead as planned. We understand that a capital bid to replace the current dental chair has been submitted and we will monitor the outcome of this process.

In September the prison went smoke free following a planned transition period involving support from health care staff to ensure that nicotine replacement therapy was available for all the women who required it.

There are two additional issues that have come to our attention this year and cause us some concern:

- Firstly, the number of cancelled medical appointments at hospitals due to insufficient escorts over and above the current allocation.
- Secondly, women have expressed concerns about the time it takes to receive prescribed medication. This occurs for two reasons; when insufficient medication is transferred with the woman when she is moved from another establishment and delays in the medication being dispensed by the Pharmacist and arriving at the Prison.

We will continue to monitor both closely in the coming year.

Section 9: EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

This area is managed well and coordinated by well-motivated and enthusiastic staff: it is identified as a key priority at Drake Hall. From the time the women arrive in Reception, NCS, Education, Offender Supervisors, Programmes and Purposeful Activities are actively involved in designing an appropriate plan for each woman to work achieving employment and a crime free life on release.

The quality of OLASS classes observed was good with good teaching and learning.

The achievement rates were:

98% for all courses

98% English and Maths at all levels

98% English level 1 and 2

97% Maths level 1 and 2

There are 34 women enrolled on distance learning programmes, three of which are at degree level.

The Education Department has been identified by Milton Keynes College as a Centre of good practice and thus far has given support to a several other OLASS departments including Aylesbury and Featherstone. They also deliver the Assessor qualification across the region for both Milton Keynes College and HMPPS. The average attendance is 96%.

Section 10: WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

Drake Hall provides a range of activities to prepare the women for release and resettlement. The Activities Team now offer paid work placements for all prisoners who are able and willing to work (97% work, 2.1% are unable to work and 0.9% are retired). There is a close working relationship between the Activities Team and the Education Provider ensuring a complementary and joined up approach. There are currently 24 purposeful activity work placements providing over 300 jobs.

After 6 weeks an individual can request a job change and will be considered for alternative work. Work is available in a range of areas including the Kitchens, Gardens, Laundry, Hair and Beauty, Packaging Centre (CFM), Gym, Waste Management Unit and Cleaning and Peer Support roles. There are also industry-led activities provided by DHL, a Call Centre by Data Census, Halfords and Greggs. The last two provide opportunities for the women who are successful in meeting their recruitment criteria and pass the training programme. All areas of work (except CFM) now provide the opportunity to gain NVQs. The Outwork Department continues to provide positive opportunities and, now, has 16 women in paid employment and 7 in volunteer placements. Attendance levels continue to improve and have averaged 96% over the last year.

Section 11: RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

The focus on resettlement across the prison is a strength, as identified by HMIP report 2016. The staff support the women's efforts to develop and lead crime free lives on release, as noted elsewhere. The open environment within Drake Hall provides living conditions that replicate community living. Self-reliance and personal discipline are encouraged by the regime as well as the development of a work ethic.

The Offender Management Unit is well organized and managed. Offender assessment documents and sentence plans are kept up to date and any needing completion identified in the morning briefing. During the reporting year there were 4,811 Release On Temporary Licenses (ROTLs) approved and no failures. The systems for consideration for ROTL are robust and those for PP and high-profile prisoners excellently managed. ROTL is used effectively to support resettlement and enhance contact with families.

During this year there were 367 women released from Drake Hall of whom 364 had accommodation, 3 were released without, but with a requirement to meet with a local housing support officer on release. Accommodation through the Stonham BASS (Bail and Support Services) project is increasingly difficult to secure, as there are so few places available for women. The issues with the CRCs identified in the last report have been addressed and a good working relationship has been established. The support is now well coordinated through meetings and the development of collaborative working relationships with internal and external groups.

The Open Unit, which opened in February 2015, is an excellent facility and provides opportunities for 25 women to demonstrate reduced risk and employability skills, facilitating independent life skills. 68 women have been discharged from there with only two recalls noted. There is also a low incidence of women being returned to the main prison.

The IMB considers that work needs to be done into why there is such a low take up of the on-site family accommodation, which has only been used 18 times since the unit has been open.

C Section – Work of the Board

The board complement is 12 members, but currently consists of 6 members. There has been the loss of three experienced members and the recruitment of one probationer. One member of the board has also had a sabbatical due to family issues. The board meets monthly and most board meetings have an element of training delivered by one of the specialist areas within the prison.

The board operates with one member being on rota at any time who visits the prison on two or more occasions during the duty week. The areas visited during the week always include the communications hub, kitchens, CSU and Healthcare. The remainder of visits are decided each week on the requirements at the time or the length of time between visits to that facility. This ensures that all facilities are monitored within the reporting period.

Members on duty normally attend reviews and sometimes attend adjudications, ACCT reviews and judicial adjudications.

The IMB is directly approached by prisoners during their rota visits to the prison and these enquiries are normally dealt with there and then but if appropriate the member will get the prisoner to sign a written application form. Applications are dealt with by the rota members and a close watch is kept on complaints made through the prison system to ensure that they are being managed within the guidelines. The IMB has noted that complaints raised by prisoners relating to other establishments often take much longer than the guidelines to be answered.

Board members take areas of special responsibility which generally cover the areas in Section 4 of this report. This involves them attending the meetings relating to their specialist areas and keeping a watching brief. Members report on significant issues in their specialist areas to the monthly board meetings.

In July the Chair attended a preliminary Coroner's inquest on a death in custody which occurred in November 2016.

The Board has also had a member provide support to the National Council/Secretariat Communications group during the year. It has also provided a training opportunity for HMP Oakwood IMB to familiarise themselves with the workings of a Female prison.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the Establishment	276
Total number of segregation reviews attended	82

D Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	6
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	6	6
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	6	5
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	Included in E1 above	5
F	Food and kitchens	1	0
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	13	20
H 1	Property within this establishment	13	2
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	Included in H1 above	14
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	Included in H1 above	1
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	9	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	2	14
K	Transfers	3	6
	Total number of IMB applications	64	87