



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP Ford

for reporting Year
1st November 2016 to 31 October 2017

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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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 and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?

The Board believes that prisoners are treated fairly by staff and management at Ford. The last HMIP inspection at Ford in 2016 found evidence of prisoners feeling racially discriminated against when applying for single rooms. Since then the prison's monitoring of Equalities has improved, although the reasons for any racial imbalances are not always established. (5.3-5.4)

Are prisoners treated humanely?

The Board considers that prisoners are treated humanely by staff and management at Ford but believes the dilapidated accommodation falls below acceptable standards of decency at times. Attempts to refurbish billets have been patchy and are often overtaken by the rate of decay of the elderly infrastructure. (7.1)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

The Board still believes that not enough of the work placements inside the prison provide improvements to employment prospects after release. We are encouraged by the Governor's desire to refocus purposeful activity inside and outside the prison on future employment and by the appointment of a Business Community Engagement Manager this year.

The Board is disappointed at the lack of progress during our reporting year in developing a planned Independent Living Accommodation Unit to help prepare long-sentence men to cope with life after release.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

After our last annual report you noted our concerns about the accommodation and facilities at HMP Ford. The billet refurbishment programme has been largely ineffective. Will you now take steps towards a more radical improvement to the accommodation at Ford? (7.1)

The Board is concerned about the poor performance of the CRC (11.2) in helping prisoners to resettle after release. Can the government take steps to improve the outcomes of Community Resettlement Companies?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

With very few staff on duty at night in a prison where men are not locked in their rooms, will you consider providing staff with means to protect themselves in an emergency? (4.2)

The Board is very concerned by the time it has taken this year for the Prison Service to source funds for a fully-functioning CCTV system to improve perimeter security.

The Board is also concerned by the time taken to vet the appointment of a new Imam to the chaplaincy in a prison where 20-25% of the prisoners identify as Muslim (4.4).

We would again like to urge the Prison Service to take steps to deal with the well-known issues surrounding prisoners' property. The mishandling and loss of property is very distressing to offenders and very wasteful of public funds because of the frequent need to make compensation payments.

TO THE GOVERNOR

The Board would like to commend the Governor and many of his staff for their personal engagement with prisoners.

Improvements seen over the past year

The monitoring of equalities.

Efforts to find paid employment for prisoners in the community.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

HMP Ford is a Category D Open establishment with an emphasis on resettlement. It was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station. It is situated 3 miles south of Arundel in West Sussex and covers an area of 110 acres bisected by a busy public road.

The open estate is required to cater for all Category D prisoners assessed as suitable for open conditions within the criteria agreed between the Governor and the Group Director for Surrey and Sussex prisons. Prisoners selected for transfer to Ford should present a low risk of absconding and a low risk to the public. The operational capacity during this reporting year was increased to 546 male prisoners, nearly half of whom are lifers, indeterminate sentence prisoners or MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) cases. The prison does not house prisoners serving sentences for sex offences.

The accommodation comprises a brick-built block with 274 single rooms and a number of prefab billets, with mostly two-person rooms originally designed for single occupancy. Much of the accommodation dates from when Ford was a Royal Naval Air Station. All of it has shared washing and toilet facilities. There is accommodation for fifteen prisoners with some degree of disability. Prisoners have access to a large, well-equipped gymnasium.

Healthcare and the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team (DART) are provided by the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Resettlement assistance for low to medium risk offenders is offered by the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company – Seetec.

Education and Training are provided by NOVUS and the National Careers Service. The works and maintenance contract was with Carillion during the reporting year.

There are on-site opportunities for prisoners to work or be trained with DHL, LMB Recycling, Intelling call centre and the Ministry of Defence. The prison also runs a large market-gardening enterprise with a farm shop open to the public, engineering, carpentry and injection-moulding workshops.

Voluntary organisations providing assistance to prisoners include the Samaritans, The Citizens Advice Bureau, The Terence Higgins Trust, The Shannon Trust, the Gypsy and Travellers Community Support Team, Cruse, Relate, Sycamore Tree and SSAFA.

All available spaces at Ford are offered to the Prison Service's Population Management Section.

Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

4.1 The Governor's high expectations for responsible behaviour by prisoners has resulted in 179 men being returned to closed conditions during the year. 582 adjudications for misdemeanours have been held (compared to 541 in the calendar year 2016). The Board has been impressed with the way adjudicating governors and the Independent Adjudicator have used the opportunity to counsel prisoners as to their behaviour and future conduct. The Board believes that these measures contribute to the generally safe conditions in the establishment.

4.2 The incidence of violence remains low - 4 episodes during the year - although towards the end of the reporting year there was a serious attack on staff by a prisoner suffering from an apparent drug-induced psychotic episode. The attack highlighted the vulnerability of the very few staff on night duty and the Board shares the Governor's concerns over their safety. The Board supports his view that staff on duty overnight should be issued with appropriate means to defend themselves. Staff carrying batons in an open prison is not current HMPS policy, however.

4.3 An increased number of highly visible Violence Reduction (VR) representatives has been appointed from the prisoner population and their profile raised. They now play a part in the Induction Programme of all newly arrived prisoners and one is housed in the Induction Billets to provide additional support during prisoners' early days at Ford.

4.4 The Chaplaincy service plays an important role in contributing to prison safety. It supports prisoners of all faiths or none, and helps to prepare prisoners for return to family life on release. The year has seen proactive recruitment for a new permanent Imam to meet the spiritual needs of the 20-25% of prisoners who identify themselves as Muslim, but the appointment has been delayed by a protracted vetting process.

4.5 Twenty-one ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) documents were opened for prisoners deemed to be at risk during our reporting period, compared with twenty-five last year. The prison population has been consistently higher during this reporting period than in previous years. Board members regularly review the relevant documentation and have found that officers normally undertake the ACCT process with care and sensitivity.

4.6 During the year, the use of body-worn video cameras by officers has been introduced. This has the potential to deter violence and to diffuse situations which might otherwise escalate. These cameras will be deployed more widely as additional staff are trained in their use.

4.7 Despite the initiatives referred to above, drug and substance abuse amongst prisoners represents a major challenge for the prison's management. Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) has been intensified during the year and the failure rate has fallen from 11.7% last year to 7% at the end of the current reporting period. The geography of the prison is such that contraband can quite easily be thrown over the perimeter fence or left in the unfenced half of the prison grounds. The Board has been impressed by the ingenuity of staff in finding contraband including drugs, mobile phones and SIM cards. We have reported many times in the past on the lack of an effective CCTV system to monitor the security fence at Ford and noted in our last annual report that the Governor was applying for funding for an upgrade. A year later we find it extraordinary that new equipment has still not been installed.

4.8 There were no deaths in custody during our reporting year.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 The principle of Equalities monitoring is now firmly embedded into all areas at Ford. We believe that prisoners have confidence in the way Equalities are managed in the prison. However, the Board remains concerned that staff members continue to be taken off Equalities duties when needed for more pressing matters either at Ford or elsewhere in the prison estate.

5.2 The population at Ford has changed in the past 12 months from 64% white/36% BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) to 58%/42% now. The population has also aged, with 20% of the population now over 60 years old. In May, two prisoners were 79 and Ford has had a number of prisoners with a social care plan during the reporting year. There is some limited enhanced accommodation provision for older prisoners and for those with a disability.

5.3 An Equalities meeting is held monthly which should be attended by all departments within the prison. An IMB member monitors the majority of these meetings. Each department is expected to submit a monthly report to be scrutinized at the meetings. Department heads do not always attend however and do not always send a report in absentia.

5.4 Where the representation of white and BAME offenders appears out of line with the prison population as a whole, Function Heads report this at Equalities and Senior Management meetings. However, although statistics are compiled from areas including education, complaints, accommodation, work placements and access to Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), they do not often result in a full investigation into the reasons for any imbalances.

5.5 In the nine months to the end of September 2017, 11 DIRFs (Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms) were received and investigated. Staff as well as prisoners initiate DIRFs.

5.6 Travellers' month was celebrated in June. Black History month in October included a sports day and health matters with a focus on Sickle Cell syndrome. Religious observance and active faith communities flourish at Ford and IMB members were welcomed at Eid celebrations.

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

6.1 The “segregation unit” at HMP Ford is only used as a holding area for transfers back to closed conditions, which are usually conducted within hours. Prisoners are rarely kept in the unit overnight. Segregation reviews are never required. The Board considers the cells to be well managed. A local arrangement for the prison to notify the IMB when a prisoner enters the cells works most of the time.

6.2 Adjudications for misdemeanours are undertaken by the Governing staff three times a week and IMB members regularly attend as observers. On the whole, adjudications are observed to be managed fairly and consistently, although prisoners are not always notified of their right of appeal.

6.3 The Independent Adjudicator visits Ford once per month and hearings are usually attended by an IMB member.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

7.1 As we have regularly reported, much of the overall estate is run down and requires significant and costly maintenance and repair. The IMB is disappointed to note that following reassurances received from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice in a letter to us dated 3rd March 2017 that “plans are now in place to recommence the billet refurbishment programme and materials and equipment to support its delivery have been procured”, the refurbishment undertaken has been patchy and mostly amounting to little more than a lick of paint and the replacement of some kitchen equipment. Work has also been inhibited by demands on space within the prison estate which has not allowed billets to be vacated for refurbishment to take place.

7.2 On rare occasions when parts of the heating system have broken down and offenders have complained of being cold, we were told that the prison could not provide more blankets as there was an overall shortage within the prison system. We consider this to be unacceptable. We are also concerned by leaking plumbing in the billets and the very long delays in making repairs, partly caused by the Prison Service’s troubled maintenance contract with Carillion.

7.3 The Board welcomed plans by the Governor to create an Independent Living Unit for prisoners working on day release outside the prison, to attune them to being self-supporting once their sentences have ended, but was disappointed that Prison Service budgetary constraints prevented it being established this year.

Kitchen

7.4 Equipment in the kitchen breaks down more often as it ages. There appears to be no regular process for maintenance so that failures can be anticipated. The cumbersome service contract with Carillion has slowed down the replacement of important items. One vital piece took five months to be delivered.

7.5 The IMB has received no formal complaints about food this year. In general the kitchen staff make efforts to cater for all diets and the demand for ‘cook packs’ for prisoners who want to prepare meals within the billets has risen.

7.6 Kitchens in the residential wings still only contain microwaves however, and, as we reported last year, in much of the accommodation there are no sinks for washing up. The Board considers that men having to use the shower rooms to clean dishes and cutlery falls below acceptable standards of decency.

7.7 The Board notes the significant steps taken to kill rats and rabbits across the prison grounds in recent months. This has seen an overall improvement in vermin control, but the sprawling nature of the estate means that continuing vigilance will be needed. In general terms there has been greater attention to keeping the prison clean this year.

Communication and Consultation

7.8 Despite efforts to improve the flow of information to prisoners through more, better-placed notice boards and using the back of the weekly menu sheet to advertise jobs and events, the effect has been diminished by poor ‘housekeeping’. On the notice boards in the accommodation blocks, superseded notices have been left in place, causing confusion for prisoners. In one case we drew the Governor’s attention to a prisoner being put on a charge for adhering to an outdated notice and not being aware that a rule on bringing money into the prison had changed.

7.9 Leadership of the Offender Consultative Committee (OCC) representing prisoners' interests has had a high turnover in the past year, resulting in a less effective committee.

7.10 The five day rolling programme of inductions for newcomers which includes input by IMB members is very well thought out, the Board believes.

7.11 It is disappointing that offenders are still arriving from sending prisons with a false idea of what to expect in terms of ROTL availability and the standards of accommodation and pay at Ford which are often inferior to what they experienced in previous establishments. We commend the Governor's efforts to educate the sending prisons about the regime at Ford.

Property

7.12 The mishandling of prisoners' property remains a major issue throughout the prison estate. Property is frequently left behind when prisoners transfer between prisons and is sometimes mislaid or lost. 23% of prisoner applications to the IMB at Ford are concerned with property. The issue can be exacerbated at Ford by men who've spent many years in prison and have accumulated large amounts of property. Some complaints have taken over 9 months to settle, resulting in several cases of prisoners leaving the prison system without all their possessions.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

8.1 The department provides around 16,000 prisoner appointments a year, which is an increase over the previous 12 months, partly reflecting the increased prison roll. 10% of these are with the Mental Health team. The service also provides weekly dental clinics and monthly podiatry, optician and sexual health appointments.

8.2 Ford has a relatively low number of "Did Not Attends" – 8% which we understand is lower than the general prison estate. Complaints occur on average once per month and are dealt with by the prison in a timely manner.

8.3 All prisoners arriving at Ford receive a health check and a second one within 5 days. The department is seeing an increase in the number of prisoners with long term conditions.

8.4 There has been an increase in the number of prisoners with significant health support needs this year. Facilities for wheelchair users and those with chronic conditions requiring extended care in their rooms are very restricted.

8.5 The use of illicit steroids at Ford continues to be of concern and active measures to promote awareness of the health issues associated with their use have been undertaken.

8.6 The Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Team (DART) believes the use of new psychoactive substances such as 'Spice' appears to have declined over the past year, whereas use of other drugs like cocaine is on the rise. The DART service continues to receive excellent user feedback.

8.7 After many delays, dental services finally had their facilities updated to become compliant with national standards but at the end of our reporting year there was one outstanding item on the snagging list.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

9.1 Offenders' needs are assessed on arrival. 20% of new arrivals are found to have difficulty with numeracy and literacy. NOVUS provides a wide range of courses in-house, including basic skills, English and Maths. In one week in October, 27 prisoners were accessing education outside the prison, either at college or university.

9.2 The Prison Information and Communications Technology Academy (PICTA) has places for 24 prisoners. Ford can provide continuity of education, prisoners transferring their courses from a previous prison. Some go on to study for HND level qualifications at an external college. Evening and weekend access is provided.

9.3 During the reporting year, control over the budget for education reverted to the prison from NOVUS. This has resulted in a change of emphasis towards vocational courses such as HGV, fork-lift truck driving, gas fitting, dry-lining and railway maintenance.

9.4 The prison library is a good source of information for prisoners and is visited around 1,400 times per month (an increase from 600, 18 months ago). The IMB sees this as a significant success.

9.5 Prisoners have access to the Gym for 7 sessions per week, average use is 3 sessions. 68% of the prison population use the Gym.

9.6 During the reporting year, one of the Novus instructors won a Butler Trust Award. Also, the Learning and Skills Manager and his team won the national 'Brilliant Civil Service Award' for improved outcomes due to the rise in the number of prisoners placed in educational courses externally.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

10.1 All offenders deemed fit for work and below retirement age are involved in some kind of purposeful activity. The intention is to mirror a typical working day, and to get as many out into the community as possible, following rigorous risk assessment.

10.2 Workshops in the prison where offenders can learn skills and gain industry-recognized qualifications potentially useful on release include metalwork, carpentry, painting and decorating, horticulture, farm shop, and food preparation. Some offenders have been working alongside Carillion doing maintenance in the prison, with the expectation that they could be offered employment by the company on release.

10.3 Some workshops however merely offer a means of keeping offenders occupied without any real post-release benefit. Laundry, injection moulding and the making of camouflage nets for the MoD are examples. The Board is pleased that some of this work is being phased out, to seek a greater emphasis on vocational training in the prison and to find more training and employment for offenders on day release. It should also be noted that time and money was spent establishing a tool-packing workshop for the MoD, but the project was poorly supported by the MoD and very little work materialised, resulting in a waste of resources.

10.4 There has been an increase in engagement with local employers and of work placements in the community thanks to the appointment of a Business Community Engagement Manager. The following snapshot shows the increase in work experience and employment and the decrease in less career-focused community service posts at the end of this reporting year.

	October 2016	October 2017
Offenders on community service	40	28
Offenders in work experience or employment	24	49

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 The Board believes the prison has firm plans to improve resettlement preparation, as detailed above, but considers the privatisation of the Probation Service and the splitting of it into Probation for serious offenders and Community Resettlement Companies for the less serious has been damaging to prisoners' resettlement prospects.

11.2 The Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Resettlement Company Seetec, responsible for supporting the lower risk offenders nearing the end of their sentences, gives the IMB great cause for concern. They are supposed to see all such offenders 12 weeks before their release but the Board fears several are slipping through the net. Some prisoners do not wish to engage but we are aware of others who have asked the IMB to help them get an appointment. Statistics from the CRC dated August 2017 show that 10% of prisoners left Ford with No Fixed Abode. This may well be an underestimate as there is no information for 18% of the total released. We note that prisoners dealt with by the Probation Service receive more assistance, although the service is chronically overstretched and prisoners often find it hard to contact their outside probation officer, particularly in the London region.

11.3 With over 100 offenders going out on Release On Temporary License (ROTL) most days there is a large workload for the Offender Management Unit (OMU), processing applications for regular work, education, day release and home visits. This is in addition to holding boards for HDC (release on electronic tag) and parole boards for lifers and Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners. The Board commends the OMU for the way it manages these tasks and keeps the prisoners informed as to progress. The IMB received 20 Applications this year in relation to sentence management compared with 50 two years previously.

11.4 The maintenance of family links is strongly encouraged at Ford. In addition to offenders approved for ROTL able to make home visits, the visits hall at Ford is open 3 times per week. Visits are well and sympathetically run by the staff and the hall provides a welcoming environment. Family days are held periodically with entertainment for children and these are well received. The prison also takes part in schemes such as encouraging offenders to record bedtime stories.

B Section – Work of Board

The Board's relationship with staff and prisoners remains good. The Governor is very supportive of our work. Each week two members of the board visit the prison on rota and circulate their reports to other board members and to the Governor, who responds promptly to concerns raised.

Applications to the IMB from prisoners for assistance are heard twice a week.

BOARD STATISTICS	2015/16	2016/17 (current year)
Recommended Complement of Board Members	14	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14	13
Total number of visits to the Establishment	598	538
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a	n/a

C Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	3	0
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	4	0
C	Equality	2	1
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	2
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	2	1
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	2	2
F	Food and kitchens	0	2
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	6	2
H 1	Property within this establishment	2	3
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	13	19
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	1
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	20	27
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	3	0
K	Transfers	2	2
	Total number of IMB applications	66	67