



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP HEWELL

for reporting year

1 October 2016 - 30 September 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.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Hewell for the period October 2016 to September 2017. IMB evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff and prisoner applications.

Main judgements

The judgements below should be considered within the following context: HMP Hewell is an establishment which, in the reporting period had a change of senior management; has a complex population; is under-staffed and has, especially at the Grange, very inadequate fabric and facilities. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to presume that the hard work and goodwill of prison officers and managers, and the cooperation of the prisoners, will achieve the outcomes required.

However, most prison staff continue to develop and tackle the key issues of concern and the new senior management team has shown a clear determination and commitment to succeed in the complex and difficult challenge of making HMP Hewell a safe, secure environment for all.

As in the past two reports, the continued lack of prison staff numbers at HMP Hewell, in the view of the Board, is a major issue restricting and hampering the good function of the prison. With the lower number of prison officers per prisoner there is less possibility of preparing for life outside the prison environment. Less officers are available to interact with the prisoners on the wings. Inadequate staffing leads to increased opportunity for illegal activity. In the presence of increased (often drug-induced) violence, officers find their time increasingly occupied by mechanical security functions rather than being able to encourage the development of responsible behaviour among the prison population. The Board consider this matter an important issue requiring immediate action to prevent further deterioration in the safety of both prison officers and prisoners.

Are prisoners treated fairly?

The Board considers that the majority of prisoners are largely treated fairly. The control of prisoners' property continues to be a problem.

Are prisoners treated humanely?

The Board believe that prisoners overall are treated humanely, but changes to the daily management regime has impacted on time out of cells. The staffing levels required to run the regime are continually compromised by staff absence through sickness, unplanned escorts to local hospital and poor retention.

Although the closed prison was built under 25 years ago, disabled prisoners have problems accessing the showers, the state of which has been of continuing concern throughout the year. Wheelchair access is poor. Rubbish accumulating around the site or where it is dropped from the cell windows is of concern. The ageing fabric and condition of the Grange is deteriorating and does not lend itself to be a humane environment. Despite this, the officers and employees work hard to treat the prisoners humanely.

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

The closed prison environment, with a substantial "churn" of prisoners each month, results in many men not having a reasonable chance to look forward to and develop the skills needed for employment. It is difficult to make reasonable provision for rehabilitation when the remand population is so high. This has been exacerbated by the pressures on staff referred to above.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

How will the Minister take steps to ensure that HMP Hewell can provide a safe, and decent environment?

How will the Minister resolve the issue of IPP (imprisonment for public protection) prisoners who are held in custody, beyond their tariff and, apparently, indefinitely?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board does not believe that the expenditure on The Grange provides value for money.

The Board remains of the opinion that the system for moving prisoners' property from prison to prison is not fit for purpose.

Improvements

The Board welcomes the roll out of body worn video to all staff as a key tool in de-escalating confrontation.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Hewell is a Local Adult Male Category B Prison (House blocks 1-6) combined with an Adult Male Category D Open Prison (Hewell Grange). It has a Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) of 1173, with an operational capacity of 1261: 1074 at House blocks 1-6 and 187 at Hewell Grange.

Healthcare is provided by CareUK. Mental health services are provided by South Staffordshire Trust

Educational services are provided by Milton Keynes College. Careers information and advice is provided by the Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP), under the banner of the National Careers Service and/or by Outreach. The latter two groups are funded by the Learning and Skills Council, through OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills Service). The library service is operated by Worcestershire County Council.

Maintenance is undertaken by AMEY

House Blocks 1 to 6 are a purpose-built prison opened in 1993 with single and double cells and shared showers. Hewell Grange is a three-story Grade II listed country house built in 1894. It held young offenders from 1946 until 1991 when it became an adult male open prison. Accommodation is in dormitories with shared toilets and showers. There are 2 purpose-built hostels.

The prison is set within a large area of parkland with some parts being Grade II listed and containing a prison farm with a dairy, pig unit, market garden and farm shop.

There was an announced Inspection by HMIP from 22 August to 9 September 2016 and the report was published during the reporting year. It found that the closed site, "remained a prison with many challenges and areas of serious concern". However, they also found "some notable improvements and it was striking how very good and poor outcomes existed side by side." The inspection of health services was jointly undertaken by the Care Quality Commission. A number of areas were identified that required improvement, with subsequent notices issued by the CQC

The deputy governor was in temporary charge and the prison was awaiting the arrival of a new governor until March 2017. The new governor has appointed a largely new senior management team and initiated a process to rectify the failings at the prison.

B Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

During the reporting period Board members have, in unprompted conversations with both prisoners and staff, been told that the prison is not safe, and individuals do not feel safe. Assaults, prisoner on prisoner, are regularly reported in the daily briefing. Less frequent, though still significant, are reports of assaults on staff members. During the year there was an assault on a Board member and another on a Governor in the Segregation Unit, though this is now a significantly calmer environment (see Section 6 Segregation).

In July there was an act of concerted indiscipline, during which an officer was injured, which is subject to a separate investigation and report.

There was also an incident when a group of prisoners assaulted a prisoner who they claimed, with credibility, was bullying and that they had no faith that reporting the issue would result in the bully being dealt with.

Incidents involving new psychoactive substances (NPS) are regularly reported in the daily briefing and, as in the previous report, the ready availability of such illicit drugs puts prisoners and staff at risk. The attendant problems of debt, bullying, intimidation and violence are evident across the prison service. The availability of illicit mobile phones makes the management of these problems even harder. NPS incidents also add to the demand for emergency services.

The Board believes that staffing levels have been insufficient to meet the needs of the prison, especially when conflicting priorities and unpredicted events arise. These events are now more frequent, and safety is compromised at these times due to a need to move staff. Such events include “blue light” emergencies, attendance at NPS incidents, constant watches and bed watches, all diverting staff from normal duties. The deployment of staff to these events is often at the expense of essential tasks. Moreover, this will result in officers in prisoner areas with little or no knowledge of specific prisoners, and therefore, less likely to recognise dangerous patterns of behavior. This compromises the ability to intervene and de-escalate situations where needed. High levels of staff sickness, along with vacancies, exacerbate staffing difficulties.

ACCT (assessment care in custody teamwork) documents are regularly inspected by Board members and are considered completed satisfactorily.

The Board was concerned that prisoners occupied constant watch cells for long periods with no apparent strategy for the prisoner to reintegrate into a normal regime. This situation now appears resolved.

There were 4 deaths in custody, 3 of which were of natural causes in an outside hospital, while one was of a suspected heroin overdose.

Looking forward, the Board is pleased to note the new Governor’s commitment to combat the issues that result in prisoners and staff feeling unsafe.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

The 'Equality' message is clearly displayed on notice boards throughout the prison, and information is readily available to prisoners wishing to raise any issue of discrimination or inequality. The Board is satisfied that prisoners are aware of procedures for lodging complaints.

The Board remains concerned that there are a number of IPP (imprisonment for public protection) prisoners, whose tariffs have expired and who were still being held in Hewell Prison. For many of these prisoners a Cat B local prison does not provide the environment for them to be able to prove to the satisfaction of the Parole Board that they are no longer a threat to society. For example, an IPP prisoner who claimed to have severe Autism was held in the Segregation Unit because his frustration over continued imprisonment was expressed by disruptive behavior, sometimes violent.

Access is poor in the Category B Prison and none existent in the Category D prison for wheelchair-users, and those with mobility issues,

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

The Board is pleased to report that the operation of the Segregation Unit has improved over the reporting period. The situation in the unit whereby:

- staff and prisoners were assaulted;
- prisoners regularly damaged their cells;
- there was an unacceptable level of noise;
- there was no exit plan for many prisoners, so segregation continued for lengthy periods, occasionally a period of GOod (good order or discipline) would be followed by a period of Cellular Confinement, followed by a period of GOod;
- prisoners saw that bad behaviour resulting in segregation was a guaranteed route to a transfer to another jail;
- there were, on occasions, a number of prisoners on ACCT forms;
- there were up to 50% of the 28 cells unavailable due to vandalism.
- the unit was full with all usable cells in use;

was discussed at length with the governor and changes have been made. The length of time prisoners now spend in segregation has reduced and an exit plan for all prisoners is speedily created and implemented. The unit is far calmer.

Relationships between officers and prisoners in the segregation unit are considered reasonable and board members have seen examples of staff engaging positively with prisoners.

The Board remains satisfied that Rule 45 Reviews are well conducted with prisoners having all procedures explained to them. The prisoners have ample opportunity to speak and are encouraged to do so and ask questions of all agencies present, including the IMB.

As in the previous year, all documentation is accessible to Board members who inspect regularly and sign the visits file to confirm attendance following a visit to each segregation cell. Board members have carried out a full Segregation Unit review most weeks, at which prisoners have the opportunity to speak to a member of the Board in confidence.

In the last report the Board noted that up to 10 cells at a time had been uninhabitable because of vandalism. The board is pleased to report that major repair work has now been undertaken so fewer cells are uninhabitable at any one time. However, the Board is concerned that tables are not provided in any cell.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

Overall both prisons give the impression of being uncared for, with noticeably variable levels of cleanliness and maintenance.

House blocks 1-6

The general cleanliness of HMP Hewell is variable with areas regularly littered and dirty. Litter outside the house blocks has, as last year, remained a problem throughout the reporting year.

Prisoners regularly complain of the condition of the shared showers and it is not possible to say that shower access is decent and dignified.

Prisoners, supported by staff, have on occasion complained about food being delivered to serveries un-cooked. Servery staff have been observed not wearing proper attire.

Hewell Grange

Hewell Grange is an old building, which continues to create difficulties and challenges for maintenance. Whilst the dormitories remain shabby, they are kept reasonably clean and tidy.

As reported last year there have been continual problems with the toilet and shower provisions which are substandard and frankly deplorable.

Damage and Repairs

Board member have observed a continual cycle of damage and repair to the fabric of the prison and its utilities. Repairs do not keep pace with damage. To some extent this reflects the very transient population, who as they do not stay for long, have no incentive to care for their surroundings. Much more investment is needed to ensure timely repairs and updates to the fabric of the buildings. For example, many cell windows have no glass or only damaged Perspex observation panels.

Property

There remain constant problems with prisoners' property evidenced by applications to the Board and the Prison Service's complaints procedure. This is despite the best efforts of the prison staff to reunite prisoners with property from their former prison and often many other prisons.

Communication

The new Governor has worked hard to communicate his vision for improving the prison to staff through full staff meetings and written briefings. However, it is still possible to meet staff and prisoners who claim to have no knowledge of developments within the jail.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

The Board regularly visited Healthcare and observed appropriate interaction between staff and prisoners. The Board is not aware of any prisoner being denied escort to or bed watch at outside hospital.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Board is unable to comment on the provision of education and other services except to say that the library in both prisons is inviting with friendly supportive staff, however during the year there have been ongoing issues with the computers.

During the year incidents, lockdown searches and staff shortages have curtailed time out of cell.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

There are a varied and interesting range of vocational training activities across both prisons that are well thought of by prisoners, however discussions with both staff and prisoners indicate that they are not viewed as a pathway to employment on release in all cases.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

The Board has insufficient evidence to come to a judgement regarding resettlement preparation.

C Section – Work of Board

For this reporting period Board membership was seriously depleted.

The Board prioritised its work focusing on the Segregation Unit, being present for Rule 45 reviews and dealing with applications. Board members have visited most areas of both prisons during the reporting year, however these visits have not provided sufficient evidence for judgements to be made. There are therefore areas of the prison that the Board is unable to comment upon.

A recruitment campaign was started in April, however by the end of the reporting year no new members had been appointed.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period (active)	8 (5)
Total number of visits to the Establishment	352
Total number of segregation reviews attended	114

D Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	2
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	2	
C	Equality	1	2
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	2	7
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	2	
F	Food and kitchens	4	2
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	8	17
H 1	Property within this establishment	19	12
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	11	10
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	5	2
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	3	3
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	6	1
K	Transfers	5	2
L	Miscellaneous	14	16
	Total number of IMB applications	93	68