Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP Northumberland
for reporting Year
(1 January to 31 December 2017)
Published
(May 2018)

Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introductory Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Statutory Role</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Description of Establishment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evidence Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Equality and Fairness</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Segregation/Care and Separation Unit</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Accommodation (including communication)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Healthcare (including mental health and social care)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Education and Other Activities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work, Vocational Training and Employment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Resettlement Preparation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Work of the IMB</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applications to the IMB</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 and every part of the prison and also to the prison’s records.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

4. This report reviews the year 1 January – 31 December 2017 at HMP Northumberland. It reflects IMB members’ findings in direct encounters with prisoners, inspecting residences and gathering information. It is informed by dealing with prisoners’ applications, talking to staff and observing relevant meetings.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly and humanely?

5. During the year a small proportion of the Applications received by the Board, or approaches to individual members, implied that the prisoner concerned was not being treated fairly or humanely. Invariably, further enquiries revealed that once the prison was aware of an issue, action was taken to resolve what was often a misunderstanding or a lack of communication. We are satisfied that prison staff did not knowingly treat anyone unfairly or inhumanely and the resolution to some issues did not fall within their jurisdiction.

6. The outstanding incident that attracted the Board’s interest, where the system seemed to fail the prisoner, concerned a man with complex needs who was held in segregation over more than five months. His treatment by the prison was compassionate and thorough, but the inability of the wider service to meet his needs was unacceptable. (Para 54)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

7. This is patchy. The continuum of sentence planning, fulfilment of it through education and/or work, and arrangements for release into the community, works well in some cases, less so in others. There is often no traceable development throughout the duration of a man’s sentence and a significant number of prisoners, when asked, claim not to be familiar with their sentence plan, or to have had contact about it. The CRC do not meet targets to review effectively residents at the 12 week stage prior to release. These issues are explored more fully in the sections on Education, Work, and Resettlement, and they are not solely the responsibility of this prison. There have been significant improvements in some aspects, notably the opening of Community Links and the introduction of ROTL, as well as the continuing success of the joint work with NEPACS, providing support to prisoners and their families around the time of release.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

8. In view of the experience of the prison in trying to secure an appropriate placement for a man with complex mental health needs, is the Minister content that the over-arching arrangements in place to facilitate speedy transfers in such circumstances are satisfactory? (Para 54)
9. In view of the changes in the configuration of prisons in the North East, is the Minister satisfied that resources are sufficient to enable HMP Northumberland to absorb the additional health (including mental health), resettlement and CRC Through the Gate workload generated by the increased churn resulting from this? (Paras 23, 63ff and 92ff)

10. Is the Minister content that local authorities are able to plan to meet the housing needs of men being released from prison in the North East? (Para 94ff)

11. Previous reports drew attention to the difficulties faced by families trying to visit prisoners from outside the local area. The Board often receives requests from men seeking transfers to prisons nearer home. We ask again if the Minister regards this situation as satisfactory, and that enough is being done to ensure that all prisoners are able to maintain family ties throughout their sentence? (Para 100)

**TO THE DIRECTOR**

12. Is the Director satisfied that the arrangements for sentence planning are sufficiently comprehensive, that sentence plans are robust and relevant, and that prisoners have enough contact and encouragement during their stay at HMP Northumberland to ensure that plans for their resettlement upon release are realistic? (Para 94ff)

13. The Board is aware of the priority the Director has given to improving the process, preparation of paperwork and evidence for adjudications. Is he satisfied that the levels of adjudications not proceeded with are acceptable? (Para 55)

14. The Board have concerns about poor/late attendance at both work and education: what action is the Director proposing to address these? (Paras 74, 90 and 91)

**Improvements**

15. The Board is generally satisfied with the level of investment and continuing improvements to the fabric of the estate, including window replacement. We welcome plans for a phased upgrading of several house blocks.

16. The number of older prisoners increased only marginally in 2017, and the provision within the establishment seems to be coping well, with additional plans for dedicated accommodation for older and less mobile prisoners being developed.
3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

17. The most northerly prison in England, HMP Northumberland sits between the A1 and the North Sea, on the remote site of a former airfield. It is a Male Adult Category C prison, classified as a Working Prison and Resettlement, with capacity (Certified Normal Accommodation) of 1,348. The average unlock for December 2017 was 1320. There are no remand prisoners.

18. Most of the men regard themselves as White British. 20% is made up of Gypsy or Irish Travellers and other minorities. There is a small number of foreign nationals, 58 (4%) in December.

19. One of the 15 house blocks was deemed unsafe and closed during the year. Consequently some cells on another were reclassified for double occupancy and another block opened with 20 places. Nine house blocks accommodate Mains prisoners, five house blocks hold Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs), and the Gateway Unit has 40 places for men on a recovery programme from drug and alcohol misuse.

20. The Prison continues to be run by Sodexo. There has been no change in the main providers of Healthcare (commissioned by NHS Cumbria and the North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit) and Education (NOVUS). Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company (Sodexo in partnership with NACRO) is still in place for commissioning services for prisoners due for release. NEPACS (The North East Prison After Care Society) continues to be a major provider of support to prisoners’ families through volunteers and paid staff.

21. A wide range of 20-30 local and national agencies provide invaluable support directly to prisoners, working independently or alongside prison staff. The principal ones are identified in the relevant Evidence Sections.

22. HMIP conducted an inspection in August 2017 and found the outcomes for prisoners to be not good enough in terms of safety, purposeful activity and resettlement, but reasonably good on respect.

23. 2017 saw significant change with Durham and Holme House being re-configured as part of the “Reform” agenda. The impact on HMP Northumberland was expected to be an increase in the numbers of prisoners serving shorter sentences arriving after a minimum stay elsewhere, possibly as little as ten days. This expected increase in churn has begun and is expected to continue in 2018. The initial signs of problems surround transport for transfers, pressure on healthcare services and on preparation for release.
4 SAFETY

24. Reception and Induction were not a monitoring priority in 2017, however, the Board notes the favourable comments of HMIP.

25. HMIP was critical of wider aspects of safety. Notably, its survey found 58% of prisoners felt unsafe at some time since arriving at HMP Northumberland. The Board is pleased to note efforts to reduce violence are now being made through a structured plan.

26. The Board is content that Use of Force is managed and recorded well. However, it is concerning that there was a 25% increase in incidents in 2017 compared with 2016. The overwhelming majority of cases were due to non-compliance. There was a reduction in the number of injuries sustained by both staff and prisoners from Use of Force.

27. The longstanding involvement of Samaritans in recruitment and training of Listeners is an invaluable contribution to supporting vulnerable prisoners. The Board is aware that there is less support of this nature across the mains estate, which we understand is partly attributable to the reluctance of mains prisoners to participate in joint training.

28. The Prison has focused on improving ACCT reporting through improved training and recruiting more ACCT assessors. However, appropriate disciplines have not always been present at what are multi-disciplinary reviews. It remains work in progress but there are signs of improvement, especially in ACCT reporting.

29. The Prison has created separate provision for Mains prisoners who try to isolate themselves behind their doors because they were afraid of violence. Setting aside a landing on one house block enables such men to feel safe and yet still access important elements of their daily routine, some work and education. Initiatives also include the appointment of four safer custody prisoner representatives, regularly reviewing complex cases and the most violent prisoners.

30. Like most prisons, HMP Northumberland faces a rise in use of illegal substances and the consequent potential for violence. To those unfamiliar with the prison it may appear that these can easily be dealt with, but regular visitors appreciate the scale of the attempts deliberately to undermine security and safety. We welcome the more structured approach introduced by the prison, which addresses the following four areas:

- the demand for drugs from prisoners who are desperate, disaffected or distressed. Initiatives include increased family engagement and a team approach to deployment of DART mentors. The team approach took some time to bed-in but it has improved access to mentors and increased the opportunity for mentors to influence their peers. Further development of approaches to demand reduction began towards the end of 2017.

- the supply of drugs through contacts and visitors, sometimes by methods which are hard to detect. Measures included increased searches, wider use of testing, more rapid response where there is suspicion, introducing drug dogs (to arrive in 2018) and greater consistency in the way that adjudications relating to substance misuse are handled, and continued scrutiny in visits, banning of visitors and the use of closed visits.

- the detection of the presence of drugs, other illegal substances, and other banned items.
• the treatment of those with addictions and dependence. HMIP described the range of services as ‘impressive’.

31. The Board has seen some notable individual achievements as a result of effective cooperation between operational, substance misuse and healthcare teams in 2017, so it is disappointing that their efforts have yet to result in a sustained improvement in the overall level of substance misuse measured by random testing. The number of emergency escorts to outside hospital that result from NPS has reduced compared to the previous year, but the health, security and safety risks associated with NPS remain a concern to the Board, the establishment and to many prisoners. The Board regularly monitors MDT rates.

32. The Board had some concern about the effectiveness of MAPPA arrangements within the Prison. This was predominantly due to a backlog of work, for example, censors were working three weeks behind and there were delays in updating Public Protection Interception Risk Assessments. However, overtime and a new member of staff being appointed are resolving the problem.

33. In 2017, there were five deaths in custody, of which two have so far been formally attributed to natural causes. The Board welcomed improvements in the way next of kin are notified. PPO reports into Deaths in Custody were acted upon, notably in respect of improving ACCT procedures.
In December, 1122 (c. 80%) of residents at the prison reported themselves as White British. This marks a reduction from 87% last year. This was counterbalanced by a commensurate growth in the number identifying as Gypsy or Irish Travellers. The minority of Asian and Black British residents has remained fairly constant.

The age profile of the prison population has remained broadly the same during the year with 61% between the ages of 25-45. The number of those over 50 years of age has increased slightly and the work which has been carried out to engage with this older age group has continued to improve. HMIP gave particular praise to the prison’s efforts with respect to meeting the needs of older prisoners.

The number of residents recorded as having a disability has increased during the year and currently stands at 32% of the prisoner population (cf. 25% in 2016).

Four prisoners are undergoing gender reassignment. They are being regularly consulted. The Board has received good feedback regarding their treatment by other prisoners and staff.

The prison averages five Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRF) reports per month, a slight increase upon last year. Prison staff have worked hard this year to process complaints quickly and reduce the backlog significantly and by Q3 DIRFs were being investigated and addressed satisfactorily.

A lot of work has been and continues to be undertaken by the Diversity and Inclusion Action Team (DIAT) of residents and prison staff. Activity is progressing well and being monitored regularly. An LGBT group has been formed. Surveys have been conducted by residents into older prisoners’ requirements and also access for the disabled.

Although there are few BAME residents, a focus on their particular needs is beginning.

Faith facilities on the Vulnerable Prison estate are being upgraded to enable Muslims to pray while in the Education block.

Religious events are observed and details publicised across the prison. In addition to their role in the spiritual life of the prison, the multi-faith chaplaincy team provides a breadth of pastoral duties and support to individuals, often with the involvement of Third Sector partners.

The number of complaints received during the year has been fairly constant but the prison staff have improved their diligence in responding within required timescales. The level of Applications to the IMB compared to complaints is around 10% (down from 12% in 2016).

The Board has a concern that VPs are more affected by regime restrictions than are Mains, borne out by the evidence we have seen from Daily Reports and from dialogue with residents on VP house blocks. One reason is VP house blocks tend to be smaller, so restrictions impact on fewer prisoners, albeit repeatedly. Advance notification of regime restrictions in the latter half of the year helped to ease the tension within the VP units.

During the year, the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme was reviewed. The proportion of residents on standard level fell from 68%-61% with the proportion on enhanced growing from 26%-30% and the number on basic increasing from 5% - 8%. The Board believes that the prison staff seem to be using the scheme appropriately from the evidence we have seen during our monitoring visits.
46. The Care and Separation Unit (CSU) continues to run at or close to its maximum occupancy of 18. The demands this has placed on its poor infrastructure have presented some cause for concern. However, it has been managed well despite these pressures, to the credit of its staff.

47. The cells remain unacceptably cold in winter (especially at night) and hot in summer, with poor ventilation. Staff have arranged for additional blankets but the cold remains a persistent topic of complaint.

48. Pleasingly, the shower has now been replaced and is now acceptable. There are now two showers and it is planned that a prisoner is offered a shower every other day. Additionally, some cells have been redecorated and efforts have been made (since the HMIP Report) to supply furniture of the same standard as house blocks.

49. Only 16 prisoners can take 30 minutes solitary exercise within the eight-hour core day. Staff manage this by doubling up lower risk prisoners in the exercise yard. The option of dividing the exercise yard into two separate areas was explored and discounted by the prison during the year.

50. While the above solutions are sub-optimal, it is illustrative of the staff in CSU that they have managed to maintain a humane and safe environment despite the infrastructure challenges. Moreover, it has frequently been noted by Board members that relations in CSU between staff and prisoners are conspicuously positive and caring; this is especially noteworthy given the nature of the unit. The Board was surprised that the HMIP survey found just 13% of segregated prisoners considered themselves to have been treated well by staff; such a low proportion is not the Board’s experience.

51. The Board is aware of a persistent minority (typically two or three) of prisoners in CSU who are on ACCTs, but data is not currently available. The Board accepts that sometimes segregation is the only course of action available to the prison.

52. Although CSU staff have struggled to inform IMB of all arrivals within 24 hours, such omissions were invariably due to administrative failings and the Board had no reason to suppose any was deliberate.

53. Those Segregation Reviews observed by IMB members were conducted fairly and sensitively. Healthcare provided advice on each prisoner but, more often than not, was absent from the review due to other commitments.

54. The Board was particularly unhappy about the length of one prisoner's stay in CSU – over five months - which it considered to be excessive. The prisoner had been reclassified Category B and had complex mental health needs. Although satisfied that HMP Northumberland did everything possible both to care for him and secure a more appropriate place to address his needs, the wider HMPPS and NHS system failed a troubled individual who needed specialist care. The Board was clear that he could not return to a house block and CSU was the best option open to the prison. The prisoner repeatedly expressed his thanks to members (he spoke to several of us) for the standard of treatment he received in CSU. He has now been moved to another, more appropriate, establishment.

55. Members have often noted that adjudications were not taken forward because of shortcomings in the paperwork, but we were unaware of the extent of this until the Director identified an unacceptable level. Commendable efforts have been made by the prison to
reduce the number of adjudications not proceeded with, and their statistics show a reduction from 20% (Q1 2017) to around 12% (Q3 of 2017), ahead of the national average.
7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

56. Whilst the function of most of the house blocks changed less than we had anticipated in 2017, the closure of one had a knock-on effect elsewhere. In July HB6 (40 men) was deemed unsafe due to a total power loss and was promptly closed, generating a need to accommodate men elsewhere. As a result another house block, after some modifications, has 20 double cells. It is to the credit of prison staff that this was handled carefully and we have not received any complaints about cell-sharing, new to Northumberland. Our understanding is that the main attraction of this wing (individual showers in each cell) outweighs the less appealing prospect of cell-sharing; staff have introduced an informal system whereby newcomers move in with an existing resident, and those who have been sharing the longest are first in the queue when other cells become vacant.

57. Some creative thinking, however, on which prison management are to be congratulated, saw the opening in October of HB16, known as Community Links, offering up to 20 places for mains prisoners nearing the end of their sentence, most of whom are working towards their Cat D status and are in trusted Red Band jobs. They enjoy greater freedom and less supervision. This was part of the springboard for ROTL, a major achievement in our view. Several men worked as part of the grounds maintenance team, and their efforts resulted in notable improvements to the areas outside the perimeter fence.

58. Alongside this the Board welcomed the continuing investment in improving the fabric of the establishment, notably, the replacement of all windows on four house blocks and improvements to external lighting. Our understanding is that the shower blocks on those same wings are scheduled for upgrading in 2018. The implementation of in-cell telephony is a priority, and much of the preparation was undertaken during the second half of the year, with the expectation that it would be in place on two wings early in 2018, with the roll-out continuing during the year.

59. Serving a prison sentence is a challenge for many residents, and it is a time when the details of daily living can assume a greater significance. The Board monitored two elements of this during 2017:

60. In our last Report we noted that the preparation and quality of food was reasonable, but the problem of prisoners returning late from work or education not receiving what they had ordered persisted. The Board’s observations of mealtimes revealed some good practice; elsewhere it was poor, for instance, limited protective clothing and meals being served in a disorderly fashion. However, we concluded that the problems identified could be avoided through the combination of training and better supervision. On a more positive note, the Board welcomed the careful attention given to ensuring that anyone observing Ramadan received a suitable hot meal each evening when the fast period ended.

61. Another issue of some concern was a persistent shortage of clean bed linen on VP House Blocks. The Board was pleased to receive an assurance from the Senior Manager concerned that procedures had been altered, and that bed linen could be topped up when necessary.

62. Missing property continues to present a challenge, although the downward trend in Applications to the Board about property elsewhere continued (17, 19 in 2016). There was a slight increase (39, 37 in 2016) in the number relating to property within the prison. Anecdotally, a number of prisoners complained that their property disappeared when they were moved without notice either to another wing or to CSU. All allegations were followed up but the Board did not find evidence to uphold these assertions.
63. Healthcare is commissioned by NHS Cumbria and the North East. The principal providers are: G4S, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, Spectrum, CGL and Burgess & Hyder Dental Group. The current consortium took over the healthcare contract in April 2015, but governance arrangements remain complex and challenging. However, the improved cooperation between providers and the establishment we reported in 2016 has continued, with benefits to prisoners. Different teams worked particularly well together during an outbreak of ‘flu at the start of 2017. The Health Protection Agency was complimentary about the way the outbreak was handled and contained.

64. Inspectors assessed the overall quality of Health services as reasonable, but raised some concerns about medicine management. Plans are in place to address these.

65. Waits for urgent care in 2017 have not been an issue but waiting times for routine care have fluctuated. Measures were introduced at the end of 2016 to address long-standing concerns over waiting times for routine GP appointments, and these measures proved effective: GP waiting times improved almost immediately, and that improvement has been sustained. However, by the middle of 2017 dentist waiting times had deteriorated, and waits for other services, such as podiatry, varied. Following the inspection visit, an action plan was put in place to address dentist waiting times, but the effects of this will not be apparent until early 2018. During 2017 we have been impressed by a rapid and thorough response to incidents that raised concerns about patient safety, so it was disappointing that known deterioration in routine waiting times could not be addressed more promptly.

66. Changes in the roles of different prisons in the region have resulted in a higher turnover of prisoners. New arrivals spend less time than previously in a local prison before they arrive at HMP Northumberland, increasing the volume of initial healthcare assessments in Reception. This was not fully anticipated, and extra provision had to be made to ensure its completion before the first night at HMP Northumberland. Late arrivals, especially on a Friday, can still put pressure on healthcare staff to complete the screening, but we are not aware of any specific issues arising from this.

67. The reconfiguration has also meant more prisoners being discharged after a short stay in HMP Northumberland, and a challenge in maintaining an effective hand-over to community services on release. However, the Board is not aware of any problems that have arisen as a result. Community and family liaison links are in place to support prisoners with health needs on release, and continuation of drug and alcohol support is seen as an area of strength.

68. Referral rates for Social Care are low, but this was expected as most care needs inside the establishment are addressed through peer support.

69. Efforts continue to improve take-up of health promotion and screening, which are often disappointing. Initiatives in 2018 involved cooperation across teams, such as with the gym on well-being and remedial PE, and changes to the procedures during induction. Some promotions, such as a “hot chocolate” offer to encourage screening for shingles, bowel cancer and chlamydia have proved particularly effective, with 100% take-up in the case of shingles. Smoke-Free will be introduced in January 2018, and the extensive preparation has involved a high degree of cooperation across the establishment. Smoking cessation programmes are well-established.

70. An increase in mental health staffing has helped the secondary care team to deal with the increased volume and complexity of the caseload that resulted from configuration changes at
regional level. The system for escorting prisoners to internal healthcare appointments was improved in 2016. Now, we periodically see isolated problems with attendance that result from a regime restriction, or a misunderstanding between prisoner, wing staff, and healthcare. So levels of attendance have fluctuated, and maintaining the overall improvement has required constant attention across healthcare and operational staff.

71. Anecdotal feedback from prisoners suggests that the patient experience has improved this year. Prisoner perceptions are systematically monitored by healthcare and surveys of prisoner satisfaction remain positive – particularly with regard to nursing staff. Some aspects of communication could be improved. For example, we find a proportion of healthcare complaints and IMB applications are in the nature of a request for information, rather than a complaint. Following changes to the in-possession policy, and tighter control over prescribing of tradeable medication, IMB members saw an increase in complaints from prisoners who were no longer able to obtain their preferred medication, or perceived a general policy change as a sanction against them individually. This also coincided with a period of time when we heard increased reports of a deterioration in the behaviour of prisoners towards nurses on the wings, so the policy changes could, perhaps, have been better communicated.

72. Periodic checks on the wings by IMB members have not identified any issues with prisoner awareness of the healthcare complaints system, but healthcare continues to be the subject of more IMB applications than any other category. In 2017 we received 46 IMB applications relating to healthcare: a 10% increase over the previous year. These cover a range of topics, but issues with appointments have been the most common. The healthcare booking system has been changed to allow all appointments to be handled through the kiosks and most prisoners are now given scheduled appointments.
73. NOVUS has the contract for education across all prisons in the North-East. Delegation of responsibility for the contract has created opportunities to develop a more responsive system, better aligned to local employment opportunities, with more continuity for prisoners who transfer within the region. The overall approach has gained widespread support across the establishment and the first steps have been implemented successfully. However, the scope of this programme is ambitious and involves widespread change. The full benefit will not be realised for some time.

74. Most arrivals now have an initial assessment of their educational needs and aspirations completed before transfer to HMP Northumberland and have already begun to develop an education and training portfolio. According to their preferences they are allocated to one of five “academies”, aligned with local employment opportunities, (Facilities management, Construction, Manufacturing, Enterprise, and Catering / Hospitality). Despite some pressures arising from increased throughput during induction, we have not heard of any significant problems with assessments on transfer from a local prison, although some gaps and inconsistences in the assessment still need to be addressed locally. Men can access Student Support Workers and Education Support Workers (peer mentors) for guidance and support in making appropriate choices.

75. Prisoners who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills are fast-tracked to a basic skills course and thereafter Maths and English remain part of the core curriculum for all prisoners, aiming for NVQ level 2. Those starting from a very low baseline are offered a ‘skills for life’ course as an entry into the educational process and there is a creativity course for those who are a poor fit with conventional courses. Provision is made for those with learning difficulties and there is a variety of options for those wanting help with literacy. Preparatory work was completed in 2017 to increase the number of Shannon Trust Mentors, with five additional mentors on the mains estate.

76. There are currently no standard NVQ-3 courses, but Distance Learning and Open University courses are supported, with around 12 students taking advantage of facilitation and support through the National Careers Service and Novus, including use of Virtual Campus resources.

77. The majority of men who are self-isolating for their own protection are now located on a dedicated OP house block. They now have weekly access to the library and some work and education opportunities are offered, although the choice is limited. The small number of self-isolating prisoners who cannot be located on the dedicated OP house block are still effectively excluded from work and education. Additionally, there are currently about 200 prisoners who do not engage with education / employment.

78. At the recent HMIP inspection the education and vocational training provision was rated as good. However, it is recognized that alignment between need and provision can be improved in a number of areas, and work on these is currently under way. Vocational courses are being aligned with the five academy streams, with the aim of improving alignment between skills development and local employment opportunities. As a result, some vocational courses have already been dropped (e.g. vehicle repair and horticulture). There are waiting lists for the more popular courses (catering / hospitality and construction). Some of these are not available to the whole population, but the possibility of introducing construction multi-skills for the VP estate is being explored. Discussions are also under way regarding the introduction of Engineering level 3, Fitted Interiors, and Waste Management courses.
79. We have no reason for concern over the speed or fairness of allocation but HMIP identified room for improvement in the way allocations procedures reflect prisoners’ sentence plans and resettlement goals. It is too early to assess whether additional support and recent changes to improve information sharing and collaboration between different service providers will assist here.

80. Levels remain disappointing at around 70% overall, worse on the mains estate. Unauthorised absence is subject to an IEP penalty and three consecutive defaults result in removal from the course. A new process to track and follow-up absence appears to be encouraging greater willingness to challenge unauthorised absence. Changes to the pay system in the second half of the year did not appear to have an adverse effect on engagement in education.

81. Although men generally report that lessons start and finish at the specified times, HMIP found room for improvement and members have observed that it is not unusual for classes to start around 15 minutes late. There are particular issues with arrivals from one of the most distant house blocks, where the delays can be considerably longer. This mainly affects those on a clinical drug treatment programme, although poor punctuality also disrupts education for others and has wider implications. For example a course can sometimes need to be extended so that students are able to complete the required number of hours. The issue is recognized across the establishment, but proper resolution is likely to depend on wider regime changes that are not expected to be completed until later in 2018.

82. All men have scheduled access to the gym and in 2017 there have been a number of initiatives to broaden take-up. A project with Age UK to develop the health and wellbeing of older prisoners on the VP estate has been particularly successful, with weekly attendance of 30-40. There was no equivalent service for older prisoners on the mains estate in 2017, but this will be introduced in 2018. Special arrangements have also been put in place to ensure that men who work off the wing are able to attend gym sessions. Attendance data is now being captured and analysed to identify and encourage other non-attenders. There has also been effective collaboration between the gym and health care on health promotion, including smoking cessation. The preparatory work was completed in 2017 to offer an NVQ-2 for Gym Instructors, so this will be offered in early 2018, initially for gym orderlies.

83. Timetabling of library access was changed in the first part of the year, the number of cancellations decreased in the second half of the year and we understand that punctuality has improved. However, the numbers of men using the library vary across house blocks. The reasons for this are not fully understood, but there is work under way to identify and address the causes.

84. The established Storybook Dads has been extended and enabled the first two prisoners to send videos of themselves reading stories to their families before Christmas.
85. Sourcing more work opportunities across a wider range continued in 2017. However, contract work sourced nationally is not always a good match to local employment opportunities, and there is now an emphasis on achieving a better match between work opportunities and the local job market. A new regional “Academy” model is being introduced across education and vocational training. The number of IMB applications relating to education and vocational training fell in 2016, and has fallen again in 2017.

86. Not all types of work and vocational training are available to all prisoners. For example, the provision of Construction Multi-Skills on the VP estate would require both reconfiguration and regime changes.

87. Members dealt with several IMB applications, and some direct approaches from prisoners relating to the allocation of work, but none of these raised cause for concern about the fairness of the system. Efforts have been made to accelerate the allocation process and where there are no security issues this is now completed without delay. The current allocation system places responsibility on prisoners to make appropriate requests, though they have access to some guidance from Education Support Workers and Student Support Workers as well as wing staff. It is too early to assess the results of improved information sharing and collaboration between the different teams involved in allocation and sentence planning.

88. Work generally starts and finishes at the published times, and attendance is fairly consistent at around 80%. In education there are significant differences in attendance between the mains and VP estate, but that is not the case with work. On a large site, returning to work after an authorized appointment (e.g. with healthcare) can be challenging, but the IEP policy is used as a sanction for any unjustified absence.

89. At present around 60 prisoners are in part-time employment, and the number is expected to increase to around 100. Part-time employment has slightly increased the number of jobs available, but it also allows more flexibility in allocation and movements. It is hoped that offering some progression from part-time to full-time work will contribute to improved attendance.

90. The relatively remote location will always present challenges in building close relationships with suitable local employers, but alignment with local employment markets has helped to strengthen relationships with industries that have a local presence. By the end of 2017 agreements were in place, and placements starting to be made, with organisations such as Oswin Trust, Fishers Laundry, Premier Waste Management and the Nissan Automotive Supply Chain. Initiatives at an earlier stage of development include exploring opportunities in local Facility Management contracts, and other links through CRC partners.

91. Our greatest concern, however, is that while the number and quality of work opportunities have continued to improve, there are still not enough work opportunities for all prisoners. In November 2017 there were 165 prisoners unemployed out of an average unlock of 1315. There are 21 OAPs and 13 medically unable, so the unemployment rate among those capable of work is 13%. Although numbers unemployed, and numbers refusing work both improved towards the end of the year, this remains a worry in a prison with a focus on work and resettlement.
92. Changes in the designation of two north east prisons in 2017 suggested that men would arrive at HMP Northumberland earlier in their sentence, which in itself could be shorter, leading to a higher turnover and pressure on both sentence planning and the fulfilment of sentence plans. There were problems when prisoners arrived from Durham without their OASys updated, a factor noted by HMIP. But staff worked overtime to clear the backlog, with help from the CRC.

93. During the year, organisations under contract with Northumbria CRC struggled to make contact with prisoners whose release was imminent at the 12-week stage as programmed. One of them, APM, gave notice, on the grounds that the contract was unworkable, and so responsibility, along with three staff members, reverted to Sodexo. Securing employment remains a significant challenge.

94. Shelter achieved some good outcomes, with 76% of those leaving prison having accommodation, although at one point they were arranging this at two weeks’ notice. Their efforts were constrained by the ability of local authorities to respond. Informal surveys carried out at the resettlement days held in April and October revealed a high level of anxiety amongst men within six months of their release date, particularly about accommodation. Over half of those who participated claimed not to have had any contact with their Offender Supervisor or Probation Officer during their sentence. The Board welcome the initiative taken by the prison-based Probation Officer to conduct monthly sessions on the VP Estate to answer general queries about preparation for release. We would like to see an increase in the level of contact as we are concerned at the potential negative impact on prisoners left wondering what is to happen. We anticipate that as the Key Worker role is introduced across the prison during 2018, the increased level of contact and encouragement will ensure prisoners are better informed about the detail of their sentence plans and are keener to work on them.

95. It is some years since Release on Temporary License (ROTL) was put in place, and the Board welcomes the significant strides made in 2017 to encourage men to apply. The opening of Community Links (HB16) facilitated this development, the first participants starting work in November 2017.

96. The positive steps taken in 2016 towards easing the transition from prison life to living outside have continued, with two resettlement days offering several hundred offenders the chance to talk to the agencies involved and pick up information relevant to their release planning. The quarterly ISP Days and other developments, such as Resident Recognition Events, have proved a welcome addition to the measures in place to increase opportunities for contact with families, sharing success in gaining certificates.

97. Building on the success of the Departure Lounge, which opened in September 2016 in the Visitors’ Centre, the Board is pleased to see that during 2017 ex-offenders were making good use of the centre on the day of their release. The Family Support Worker, funded by Sodexo and based in the Centre, has run a series of workshops to help families support a recently released relative and ease relationships, offering one to one work with prisoners.

98. The number of Applications to the Board (13) relating to visits during the year, was a further reduction on 2016 (17), maintaining the significant reduction on previous years (36 in 2015 and 53 in 2014). But there was a slight increase (38 compared with 36 in 2016) in Applications relating to transfers.
C Section – Work of Board

99. During 2017 five new members were recruited. Five resigned, including one who took up employment in the prison service and two with health problems. Throughout the year the Board operated at between 50 and 75% of its complement. Although we try to recruit widely, in practice the response is from a narrow range of the population, middle-aged or above (one member is under 30) and mainly retired from full-time paid employment. At the year-end, membership comprised five women and nine men. Restoring a reasonable working complement is difficult in such an unpopulated area. HMP Northumberland sits in the bottom 10 prisons nationally for population density.

Statistics 2017

100. The following statistics were recorded:

- Recommended Complement of Board Members: 20
- Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period: 14
- Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period: 14
- Total number of visits to the prison: 589

101. On average, there were 23 segregation reviews per month (of which, 11 were continuation reviews). A board member attended, on average, 11 per month – a 48% sample.

102. Visits to prison and direct contact with its residents include the following:

a. Weekly Rotas for specific duties, mainly, observation of R45 Reviews and Adjudications, and speaking to every available prisoner in CSU; Applications Panel.

b. Regular visits to House Blocks to inspect cells and facilities, gather information, for instance about mentors, or monitor the quality and serving of food, and talk to prisoners.

c. Seeking prisoners’ views, with the occasional use of questionnaires, at special events such as ISP and Resettlement Days.

d. Observing meetings on priority areas in line with the monitoring programme; examples include Healthcare, Reducing Reoffending and Diversity.

103. All visits are reported, as are discussions with appropriate departments. Reports are shared with senior managers to ask about points raised by residents and improve members’ understanding. Broad issues and particular concerns are pursued with the Director at the Board’s monthly meetings.

104. For their own development the Board have used the hour before their meetings for presentations by invited speakers, for instance about the Key Worker project. Other slots have been used for improving how we function, for instance, in pursuing an issue once raised, or
responding to prisoner applications. To broaden understanding of the overall system several members visited Forest Bank prison which is comparatively modern and purpose-built.

105. The Board’s Service Level Agreement with the prison to provide administrative support has again worked well and we appreciate the willingness with which this is carried out.

106. Although this report is under my name, it reflects the efforts of Board Members during 2017. Some of them have left us, but thanks are due to everyone who contributed for their tireless monitoring in the interests of prisoners.

Sue Baines-MacNeill, Chair

March 2018
D  Section - Applications

Monthly trends
We saw a total of 289 IMB applications in 2017, compared to 335 in 2016 (a reduction of 16%). There was an increase in December.

![IMB Applications by Month](chart)

Category

The three highest categories were:

1.1.1  Health related

1.1.2  Property (local)

1.1.3  Transfers
We saw slight increases in health-related applications, and local property. A substantial reduction in sentence-related applications and a reduction in the number of applications related to staff / prisoner relations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Adjudications</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Equality &amp; Diversity (inc. Religion)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Education/Employment/Training (inc. IEPs)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Family/Visits (inc. Mail/Phone)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Finance/Pay</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Food/Kitchen related</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Health Related</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Property (in HMP Northumberland)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Property (other establishment)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Canteen facilities, catalogue shopping Argos</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Sentence Related</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Staff/Prisoner concerns</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Location**

The highest rates at which applications are submitted are from CASU, HB2, and HB9. Some changes can probably be explained by changes in role (increase on HB2 / dedicated OP), or individual transfers (persistent complainer on HB14 in 2016).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Prisoners</th>
<th>2016 total</th>
<th>2017 total</th>
<th>2016 apps per month Per 100 prisoners</th>
<th>2017 apps per month per 100 prisoners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB5</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB7</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB9</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB11</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB12</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB13</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB14</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>