



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

at

**HMP/YOI Rochester**

for Reporting Year

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*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A Sections 1 - 3

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### 1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

### **Main judgements**

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*Are prisoners being treated fairly?* This has been a challenging year for HMP Rochester: closure notice, closure postponed, recovery from closure, an HMIP Inspection and Report, Special Measures, Carillion receivership, the Governor retiring unexpectedly, the Deputy Governor taking over as Acting Governor and subsequent temporary postings for the senior management team and one death in custody. Throughout this disruption the prison has remained stable and performed its key role as a resettlement prison as effectively as resources allowed. In particular, the Board wishes to commend the performance of the Deputy Governor in becoming Acting Governor at such short notice, and in difficult circumstances. The Board's view is that the prison continues to be well run and prisoners are treated fairly. However, drug abuse at Rochester is extensive and a cause for concern because of the risks to stability it creates. The Board remains concerned that the inability to deliver sufficient occupation for the prisoners continues to be a contributory factor to the drugs problem at the prison. Rochester therefore remains a difficult and challenging prison environment.

*Are the prisoners treated humanely?* The Board considers a humane and rehabilitative regime is being delivered within the prison in spite of the deteriorating and dilapidated state of many of its buildings. In particular, many of the cells are in poor condition. Healthcare appointments are commensurate with those in normal NHS provision, arrangements for visitors have improved and there is good support from the Chaplaincy and other organisations at the prison.

*Are prisoners prepared well for their release?* The prison spent most of the year in recovery from the impact of closure announcement (and its cancellation) as it restarted work, education and rehabilitation activities which had been run down. It has been an extremely challenging year for this part of the prison with many shortages of tutors and trainers, but it is closing in a better position with more staff and some sound plans in place for the next 12 months.

### **Main Areas for Development**

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#### **TO THE MINISTER:**

- a) The future of HMP Rochester is still unclear, and the Minister is asked to clarify whether there are still plans to re-develop the prison in some way. In the Board's view, the ambiguity this has created remains unfair to all those working at Rochester. The Minister is asked to note that the Board at HMP Rochester will be diligent in monitoring to ensure that the same standard of care and rehabilitation is being provided at the prison, and there is no diminishing or lessening of input as plans develop. *Paragraph 4a refers.*
- b) The Board retains the view that to enable a better outcome for less future offending, greater resources should be targeted across the entire prison estate at drug-use by prisoners. This includes improvements in security technology and intervention programmes.
- c) Re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless there is suitable accommodation for all prisoners who have completed their sentence. In particular this is a severe problem in the South East, where resettlement accommodation is as a premium and too many prisoners are released to become homeless rough sleepers. There are recent initiatives

in this field, but can the Minister please raise the particular problems of the South East with colleagues. *Paragraph 11.10 refers*

## **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

- a) Property losses on transfer: Once again, there appears to have been no progress in resolving the problems which occur when a prisoner and their property are transferred from other establishments. Frustratingly items are still going missing and unnecessary delays occurring. Two years ago, the Board was informed that this issue was under review; however no further information has come forward. Can this be addressed please? *Paragraph 7.10.i refers*
- b) The time being taken to get clearance for non-prison officer staff working at the prison is unacceptable. For example, In Reach at Rochester have waited 9 months for clearances to come through and Thinking Skills over 6 months. There are similar circumstances for tutors and trainers and administrators. Individuals give up waiting and get a job elsewhere, wasting time, effort and money. Surely the recruitment cycle could work more speedily?

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- 1) The Board is concerned about the lack of wing reports at adjudications, both those with the Independent Adjudicator and the Duty Governor. It is unfair to the offender if information is not being correctly provided. We expect this to be managed more effectively with the introduction of OMIC later this year. *(see paragraph 6.6)*
- 2) At adjudication, an officer who made the report and subsequently is being called to give evidence should attend – both with the Independent Adjudicator and the Duty Governor. The Board notes that even where shift arrangements are made, there are too many occasions when the officer fails to attend. Can action please be taken to ensure this practice does not continue? *(see paragraph 6.6)*
- 3) Cell clearance checks are still haphazard and many are not conducted properly. Can this be addressed please? *(see paragraph 7.10.ii)*

## **Improvements**

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On confirmation that the prison was going to remain open, the first priority was to improve the Visitors Area, which was run down and uninviting. It has been completely refurbished and decorated into a pleasant meeting area. In addition more play facilities for children were added to the Visitors Reception (which is a separate building). *(See paragraph 11.12)*

The introduction of mobile phone detector poles has proved a useful tool in curtailing the use of mobile phones at the prison. *(See paragraph 4.10)*

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

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Rochester is a Category C Resettlement prison for both adult male and young offenders; it has Certified Normal Accommodation, with an Operational Capacity of 695. Prisoners are held in seven residential units: one is a dedicated drug reduction unit, six are general accommodation. There is a separate Segregation Unit. One wing has been allocated for first night accommodation and induction into the prison. Throughout the reporting period serious remedial maintenance on all wings has been required. C Wing closed in January due to its poor structure; prior to this closure the Operational Capacity had been 754.

As a Resettlement prison, the regime is intended to give prisoners training through a structured sentence plan. Rochester actively engages with prisoners to address their offending behaviour and offers opportunities to engage in training, education and work linked to employment where possible. Increasing the links to real employment vacancies is a continuing aim. Significant work has been taking place in re-educating offenders, in particular highlighting the dangers of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). KSSCRC and Forward Trust provide services including drug-recovery programmes, housing, finance and mentoring. The physical well-being of prisoners is catered for through two well-run gymnasiums, offering competitive and recreational activities. Support for prisoners is available from the NHS/OXLEAS Healthcare team, In-reach and Chaplaincy, as well as community support from external organisations.

The prison has gone through major changes in recent years, but unfortunately has not made the progress hoped for. For the majority of the year the prison was placed in 'Special Measures', due to its poor performance on the Prison Reporting System. However, an improved report from the HMCIP took the prison out of Special Measures in early 2018. It is a prison not without advantages. For example, its open location gives plenty of opportunity for fresh air and outdoor activity. Importantly, there is a clear sense of purpose in serving as a resettlement prison to its local community.

The future of the prison remains uncertain. It is still scheduled for redevelopment but without any timescales attached.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 11**

### **4a Prison Redevelopment**

Between April 2017 and 19 July 2017, HMP Rochester was due to close at the end of 2017. This decision was then delayed without any specific timescale being given, but with an indicative date of 2019. The only working assumption possible is that the prison will not close, even for re-development in 2019. In August 2017 the Board wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice expressing its concern about how the situation had been handled by his department, and the impact it had had on the prison. Notably, many staff left because their future was unclear, including some who held key positions. For the majority of the year the prison has been in recovery mode, as it rebuilds meaningful activity in areas of work, education and training, to enable the rehabilitation of prisoners in a way which is appropriate for a resettlement prison.

The Board will remain diligent in monitoring that prisoners are receiving the same standard of care and rehabilitation right up to the moment they are transferred or released; and there should be no diminishing or lessening of input just because of the uncertainty which exists about the prison's future.

## 4 SAFETY

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### **Safety**

4.1 The availability of drugs, especially NPS, at Rochester continues to be the main issue for safety and security management at the prison. Drug-related debt, bullying and intimidation remain significant elements of life at HMP Rochester. For example, 568 additional days were added to sentences in March for drug-related offences – this is about average for each month.

4.2 In spite of this, in the Board's view, Rochester continues to feel a safe environment, a view borne out by the HMCIP report in November. It noted that in contrast to the last report, the prison was "calmer" with "anti-social behaviour being more robustly challenged" than previously. Safer Custody Officers at the prison are performing well. Information is timely, the Safer Custody meetings are thorough and held regularly, and ACCT reviews are, in the main, completed properly. There is Safety Forum documentation which is updated weekly and widely circulated. A VR (Violence Reduction) gym session for offenders is working effectively as a way to help re-integrate vulnerable prisoners. Conversations with prisoners enable us to conclude that the safer custody team is well-regarded and trusted.

4.3 There appears to be a slight decrease in the number of ACCTs opened compared with a similar period last year: Jan – March 2017: 106, 2018: 80. Self harming incidents remain at about 15 per month, although there was a significant spike to 34 in February 2018, which also appears on ACCT figures; it is unclear what caused this. The HMCIP Team reported that open ACCTs and incidences of self harm were slightly higher than at comparative prisons. The Board cannot comment on this, but notes the inspection team considers the outcomes for prisoners in this category are reasonably good against the healthy prison test.

4.4 Samaritan-trained Listeners are doing good work in identifying the most vulnerable prisoners when settling in, and support is increased as appropriate. The Samaritan leader has recently reported that the current team of 13 Listeners is the best he has seen at Rochester.

4.5 Unfortunately, figures for use of force at the prison are unavailable at time of writing. However the Board notes the inspection team reported that while there had been an increase in use of force, it was being used as a last resort and the supporting documentation had improved. Board members are alerted when a forced removal is about to or has taken place and during those incidents which have been observed, the use of force has been proportionate. The National Team was called to the prison on 5 occasions this year compared with 2 last year.

4.6 There was one death in custody during the reporting period; the inquest is yet to take place. The correct procedures were followed, and liaison with the deceased family has been well managed. In addition, the Board would like it noted that commendable swift action by prison officers have on several occasions, prevented attempts by prisoners at self-inflicted death.

### **Security**

4.7 The openness of the Rochester site presents the greatest challenge for the security team in its effort to stop drugs and mobile phones coming into the prison – mainly via packages coming over the walls. Security is intelligence led and over the year has achieved some notable successes. However, additional security arrangements introduced last year have not resulted in a decrease in the amount of contraband arriving in the prison.

4.9 The Security Department estimates they are intercepting about 50% of all items thrown into the prison. The number of finds remains steady - mobile phones: 211 cf 217 last

year, illicit substances: 159 cf 161 last year. There is a significant increase in the number of weapons found: 85 cf 57 last year. While no drones have been caught, there is intelligence suggesting there have been four.

4.9 Mandatory drug testing is conducted correctly and in a considerate way. Results for the reporting period are as follows: random tests – 433, with 84 positive (cf last year 447 with 82 positive), suspicion tests – 269 with 168 positive (cf last year 298 with 99 positive). This indicates a success for intelligence-led testing.

4.10 Last year we highlighted two issues that would assist security at the prison greatly, and there has been some progress.

- *An ability to block or intercept calls to mobile phones would undoubtedly be effective in improving the security of the prison.* There are now three detector poles in place in Visits, Reception and Segregation which are proving successful in locating mobile phones secreted on a prisoner's body. For example a phone was found hidden within a prisoner's hair.
- *The introduction of circular cameras rather than fixed point ones. When an alarm goes off the prisoners know which direction the cameras will be looking in, thus providing opportunity for illicit activity.* Meetings are in progress with Kronas to improve cameras and remote TV at the prison.

4.11 Once again, it is the Board's view that too many prisoners appear to be wandering around the prison unchallenged during times when they should be either at activity or returning to a wing following a healthcare visit, etc. The prison's layout enables this to happen, but the Board believes more effective challenge is required.

## 5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

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5.1 The Equality Action Team (EAT) is combined with the Safer Custody Team. There are regular meetings, and effective partnerships between governors, officers and prisoners with open and constructive discussions. The Board tries to attend all equality meetings and maintains an effective relationship with the EAT.

5.2 Across the prison's population, white prisoners remain in the majority (approximately 71% with BME at 29%). For YO's the mix is slightly different with approximately 70% White and 30% BME. These figures represent no change from last year. Adult prisoners comprise approximately 90% of the prison's population – which is about the same as last year. The Board has monitored whether a higher proportion of BME prisoners appear at adjudication hearings, and from the prison statistics and our own observations, they do not.

5.3 There has been a significant increase in the number of Discrimination Incident Reports (DIRF) this year– 73, with 79% related to racism and 9% related to disability. The HMCIP report noted that the number of DIRFs received had risen, and was now typical of similar prisons. Data collection and analysis is much improved, and the Board notes that concerns are investigated thoroughly and many resolved. The Board has been unable to establish if prisoners and staff are less inclined to categorize an incident as racist. While we suspect this is the case, there is no supporting evidence either way from our Board applications or rota reports. The Board received 5 applications about equality this year, although several were from the same prisoner. This is an increase from 1 last year.

5.4 While the majority of prisoners are below the age of 39, at the end of March there were 153 over 40, with 2 over 70. These figures are indicative for the year. There has been some good work taken forward regarding disability, which has been given a higher focus in the prison, particularly regarding the placing of older prisoners. At present, 37% of

prisoners have a self-declared disability, including 55 with mental illness, and 122 with learning difficulties including dyslexia. The IMB attends meetings of the Disability Group.

5.5 During the year the number of prisoners designated as foreign nationals as at March 2018 is 36 (cf 21 last year) from 24 different countries (cf 13 last year). There are a significant number of prisoners from the Traveller community, who also have their own focus group.

## 6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

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6.1 At the beginning of 2018, C Wing (known as the Community Development Unit), a dedicated wing for prisoners who were feeling vulnerable due to debt and bullying issues, closed. This was due to the appalling state of the wing's structure, and to concerns that the Unit was not meeting its original aim. The closure was managed well, with some prisoners transferring to other prisons where necessary. The Board was concerned about this change but so far our fears appear to be unfounded. Some prisoners remain "behind their door", and the Board is monitoring their well-being in a similar way to those in the Segregation Unit. It has, however, meant that some prisoners are remaining in segregation for their own protection, whereas this did not happen in the previous reporting period. Increasingly the Segregation Unit is being regarded by some prisoners as an opportunity to escape from the drug culture of the prison; some prisoners commit an offence in order to gain access to segregation and then refuse to leave. This is not what the Segregation Unit is for – and is rather disturbing. The Board continues to monitor this closely.

6.2 The standard of management of the Unit, as reported last year, is extremely good. Communication between the Unit and the IMB is good, with the Board being informed within 24 hours of new arrivals.

6.3 **Accommodation:** Unfortunately, many of the Segregation Unit cells have been out of action due to damage by occupants or poor condition of their structure. For example, currently there are 14 cells out of action. New stronger sinks are being purchased, hopefully with more resilience to damage. The lack of cell space is, in the Board's view, seriously impacting on the Segregation Unit's ability to function fully.

6.4 During the year, there have been several prisoners in the Segregation Unit who have proved exceptionally difficult to manage. Having a more settled cadre of officers working in the Unit has enabled a skilled and experienced approach in dealing with them. The Board commends their professionalism and patience.

6.5 The Board visits the Unit several times a week, regularly attending Governors' and Independent Adjudications, and Good Order and Discipline reviews. With few exceptions, all reviews and adjudications attended are dealt with carefully, fairly and appropriately. Nine adult and one YOI prisoners exceeded the time limit of 42 days in the Unit, and the Board monitored that the correct procedures were undertaken. All cases were considered regularly by the Board and members were content that the retention of these prisoners in the Unit was appropriate. The Board has noted that, on occasions, a longer stay in the Segregation Unit with regular interaction from the experienced staff there has significantly benefited a prisoner who is close to release.

6.6 The Board has two specific concerns about adjudications:

- There is a continuing lack of wing reports for adjudications. We have referred this issue to the Governor. It is unfair to the prisoner attending an adjudication (either with the Independent Adjudicator or with a Duty Governor) if the wing report is

missing. We expect this to be managed more effectively with the introduction of Offender Management in Custody (OMIC) later this year, and will monitor this closely.

- The Board has noted that on many occasions officers who have made reports do not attend to present their evidence to the Independent Adjudicator. In some cases, even when it is pre-arranged for the officer to attend, they have not. Consequently cases are dismissed. This is an obvious waste of resources and time. The issue has been raised with Governors, but so far with little sign of improvement. The Board is expecting to see a significant improvement next year.

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

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7.1 The decision to completely rebuild Rochester was unanimously supported by the Rochester Board, primarily because of the deteriorating state of the buildings. The Board remains disappointed that this is not being undertaken, a view shared by the HMIP Inspectors, who described much of the prison as “decrepit”. The decision to close C Wing because of its dilapidated structure is welcomed – its cells were inhumane.

7.2 Our view is that over the year it has become a challenge to give prisoners a humane, clean and safe environment to live in, mainly due to the age of the prison buildings. At the end of the reporting year 31 bed spaces were classed as “out of action”, of which 11 were in the Segregation Unit. Many cells across the prison are very old and much of the flooring needs replacement.

7.3 Problems relating to ventilation, heating and water supply across all the wings remain. Shower blocks on most wings have delayed repairs and repairs to cell toilets feature frequently. The newer wings have tin roofs, creating acute heat problems during hot weather, and lack of warmth in the winter. Fortunately, on-going issues with washing machines and tumble driers across most wings are being addressed although not complete yet, but there is less clothing being hung up to dry across banisters, etc, as reported last year. As one prisoner reported to us “*it is easier to buy drugs in Rochester than get your clothes dry.*” A painting programme is in place across all wings.

7.4 Significantly, however, the Board notes an improvement in many accommodation issues since February 2018. The Acting Governor has made strenuous efforts to improve repair levels etc and has developed an effective working relationship with the ex-Carillion managers. This meant the prison coped well with the Carillion receivership. Under the new system, repairs appear to be happening more speedily. However, given the age of the buildings and their general poor state of repair, maintenance at Rochester continues to be a never-ending task. The IMB is receiving regular updates on each wing’s repair list, and monitors outcomes.

7.5 General cleanliness is good, as is the actual site itself – where the grounds are well maintained and cared for. Prisoners have timely and ready access to telephones.

7.6 Segregation Unit Accommodation: *See paragraphs 6.3.*

7.7 **Catering:** Meals are served on time, and are fit for consumption, although appropriate portion control is not always in place. Even though the quality of the food is criticised by prisoners (and this is reflected in the HMCIP report), in the Board’s view it is perfectly adequate. Worthy of special mention are the efforts made by the Catering Manager to continue to keep the kitchen open and producing hot food during the spell of severe weather in February.

7.8 **Communication:** There has been some improvement in the maintenance of notice boards, although many still contain out of date information. More generally, information is passed in a timely way to prisoners, although they often lose or misplace documents. Induction briefings to new-entrant prisoners are effective and given in a positive way.

7.9 **IMB Communication with new prison officers:** As recruitment has restarted (because the prison is no longer closing), the Board is speaking to all new entrant prison officers about our role, its work and how we are organised. Importantly we are addressing misconstrued views that we are there solely to “sort out prisoners’ problems” or are just a “bunch of interfering do-gooders. “

7.10 **Property:** The Board is pleased to note that the improvement in the consistency of the manning of the Rochester Property Office has been sustained.

There are two key issues to be addressed:

- i) Once again we are raising the fact that many transferring prisoners arrive without their clothing, shoes and family photographs (the loss of which are detrimental to their well-being) and it takes an unacceptable length of time for these to arrive and often many items go missing. It is a source of needless frustration for prisoners and hard-pressed wing staff are left to deal with the consequences. The reply from HMPSS to our 2016-17 report stated that a revised policy was to be issued in 2016/17. The Board is not aware of any such revision. The lack of a facility to include property on the prison transport vehicles is a major flaw in the transportation of prisoners.
- ii) The Board last year raised the fact that the loss of property within the prison usually arises from the lack of a cell check following a disciplinary incident, and the individual’s removal to the Segregation Unit. The possessions belonging to the prisoner who is being removed become 'available' to other prisoners, and there is some evidence of a lack of care around securing them. A new system was introduced to mitigate this problem. However, we have seen no evidence of any improvement. The Board would like to see more effective control in this area on all wings.

7.11 **Complaints:** The system is now working effectively. There were 1250 complaints handled by the complaints unit this year. Of these 84% were replied to within the required time period. Once again, many complaints were generated by property going missing following cell removal or a transfer (see paragraph 7.10 above). Complaints about healthcare are not included in these figures. IMB applications about healthcare issues show a small decrease – 55 this year compared with 59.

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

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8.1 There have been staffing problems throughout the year since the announcement of closure/non-closure and it has taken a considerable time to rebuild the workforce. This has not been helped by the amount of time it has taken for newly appointed staff to obtain security clearance.

8.2 Over the past year relations between the healthcare provider and the prison have at times been strained, in the main regarding the issues of communication and safety. There has, however, been a recent reported improvement in this partnership, aided by the appointment of a Custodial Manager with the specific remit of liaising with healthcare.

8.3 Prisoners are screened within 48 hours of arriving at the prison, to gather information, for example, on any disabilities, any medication they are taking and any chronic illnesses they are suffering from. On rare occasions the target of 100% screening is not achieved - this is generally due to healthcare not being informed of the prisoner's arrival within the 48 hour period.

8.4 There is an 11 day wait for routine non-urgent appointments. GPs see 13 routine appointments each weekday, with two slots allocated for emergency appointments. The rate of 'no shows' is running at around 20%, a slight improvement on the previous year. 'No shows' are re-booked if there is a valid reason for the appointment not being kept. There are still occasions when wing officers fail to deliver appointment slips to prisoners until it is too late to attend. Each day a GP visits prisoners in the segregation unit - during the year there have been occasions when these routine visits have not taken place but lately there has been a notable improvement.

8.5 On average there are 200 medication appointments per day - an increase of about 20 a day since last year. Figures for the last quarter show that around 20 to 25 per cent of prisoners did not collect their medication. Prisoners found to be concealing medication are referred to the GP for review as are those who fail to collect regularly or are found to be non-compliant as a result of wing-based medication checks. Every 4 weeks healthcare works in conjunction with the Drug Strategy Team or security to target a wing to check medication.

8.6 For the period January to March this year there were an average of 31 outpatient appointments per month. Of these, 18 per cent were cancelled by the prisoner, 12 per cent by the prison because it could not provide an escort, and about the same percentage were cancelled by the hospital. While the delay caused by lack of escorts is unsatisfactory, healthcare staff report that they feel the prison makes every effort to ensure prisoners who require urgent treatment are able to attend their appointment. The issue of NPS remains a significant one in the prison, and its effects are the cause of a significant proportion of the emergency A & E call-outs.

8.7 While the general content of complaints received by healthcare has seen little change, with the subject of medication being to the fore, numbers have risen. This rise, however, is mainly due to two recent occasions when the prison passed bulk bundles of complaints which had not previously been forwarded to healthcare as they should have been. The number of complaints regarding healthcare received by the IMB has remained fairly consistent - around 55. These relate to various issues and are generally resolved.

8.8 The healthcare team continues to provide a range of services in the area of health promotion. Nurse-led clinics are run regularly, for example in asthma, diabetes, sexual health, NHS Well Man checks and for Hepatitis B vaccination. One member of staff is currently being trained to deal specifically with diabetic patients and there are plans to train some healthcare staff and a member of the prison staff as social care assessors, which means prisoners will not have to wait for an assessment by an external occupational therapist.

8.9 The numbers attending the smoking cessation clinics have remained high, with a slight increase since the introduction of the no-smoking policy throughout the prison. Two members of staff administer this service, seeing 45 to 50 prisoners a day once a week for 10 weeks. They are able to give out vaping equipment and nicotine patches. This service is actively promoted through the reception process and affords early access to those who wish to purchase a vape. This provision has been recognised and given an award by Medway Council.

8.10 There is presently a 6 week wait for a dental appointment, although the prison dentist will see very urgent appointments on the day. He sees about 100 patients each month,

carrying out treatments in the morning and check-ups in the afternoon. The average wait to see the optician is around 6 weeks, which the Board continues to regard as too long.

## **DRUG RECOVERY**

8.11 There was some confusion following the closure/non-closure announcement, and the position of the contract to provide drug recovery services. Fortunately the position settled down well, with the contract moving from RAPt to Forward Trust in September.

8.12 In October, a Governor was appointed as Head of Drug Strategy and Substance Misuse, and has a coordinating role across the prison together with the Custodial Manager of A Wing, and Forward Trust. One initiative is that when an offender returns a positive MDT test he is offered "Diversionary Adjudications" if this is his first offence in 6 months. Basically this is group therapy – lasting around 4 weeks. So far it appears to be working well.

8.13 Forward Trust (FT) is currently supporting 223 prisoners in structured programmes, and a further 45 are given unstructured support (decrease from 260 and 130 last year). The 'Bridge Programme' has replaced the 12 step programme. This and the 'See Life More Clearly' programme support 12 prisoners in 6-week programmes (finishing rate for both is c50%). 'See Life More Clearly' is run in partnership with the prison. Prisoners do not have to be engaging with FT to take part but FT oversees the programme. Its remit is to improve physical and mental health and it involves contributions from external tutors and sessions such as gym and acupuncture. FT also run a 'Stepping Stones' programme, an accredited 4-week course (prisoners are referred to this via their key worker). Prisoners do not have to be abstinent to attend this - its aim is to reduce dependency. FT is closely linked to A wing (the dedicated drug recovery wing) and senior wing staff have attended training at FT head office.

8.14 The Board notes there is a positive overall relationship between the prison and FT staff, which works for the benefit of the prisoners.

8.15 *Mental Health:* There are many prisoners at Rochester with mental health needs. Support for mental health problems is provided by In Reach, which is staffed by 4 full-time and two half-time professionals, plus part-time administrative support, and there are vacancies waiting to be filled. In Reach staff are also deployed to other prisons to cover absences. The introduction of mental health peer workers proved a useful new addition to the service. If necessary, prisoners are referred to the inpatient service at Elmley. The current case load is 42 with 98 referrals. There are also 2 counsellors.

8.16 The Bradley Therapy Centre supports a significant number of prisoners who have specific mental health problems. They are referred by In Reach to access the BTC services which are based on a three-tiered approach, including self-help involving in-cell activities; workshops and longer courses on issues such as sleep difficulties, mindfulness, managing and dealing with trauma, and coping with bereavement. Plans are in place to offer two new courses - 'seeking safety', and 'voice hearing' - by the end of July 2018. The centre also provides one-to-one support, including counselling. During the year there have been problems with the attendance of prisoners at the centre, due to lack of communication between the prison and the centre.

## **9. EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

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9.1 Education and other activities at the prison were severely affected by the proposed closure and then non-closure of the prison. There were already vacancies in many areas, and this problem was exacerbated as staff left to find more job security. Both education and training are yet to recover fully from this change, and the slowness of the clearance process

for replacement tutors and trainers is hampering this. In turn it left many prisoners without the resettlement activity they should be engaging in. More recently there were structural building issues in the education block, including the removal of asbestos and repairing a leaking roof.

9.2 Education services are provided by NOVUS. Changes proposed by the previous Education Manager were unable to come to fruition because of the closure issue; this area is being revisited by the new manager, who is attempting to bring services back to standard. While there is an opportunity to provide a range of classroom-based activity, the lack of tutors and accommodation issues has impacted on delivery. Although there was an unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection during the past year, the lessons the Board has recently monitored are carried out well, with engagement from prisoners. progress. Unfortunately, some prisoners do not feel the need to become literate, which in turn prevents them from taking up other activities. In-cell study is supported, and those in the Segregation Unit are always offered this facility.

9.3 Attendance levels are at 72% which is below the target of 80%, and down on last year. Significant work is being undertaken with wing officers to increase attendance.

9.4 The Library is well-used and offers books for all levels of literacy. There are computing opportunities which are taken up especially by those working on Open University studies.

9.5 There are opportunities for prisoners to be involved in creative activities including music, media and film. Most noteworthy are:

- In House Records: which gives prisoners the opportunity to create and write music and stage showcases for their work, including poetry and words. It works with National Prison Radio and in future is looking to give prisoners experience of management, recording and production. In House and its creator, Judah Armani, also work with prisoners on release.
- Rochester Film and Media group: run by Tim Cronin with a group of 4-6 learners being set practical tasks of creating and editing recorded material and photography. Three learners have gained employment in the media industry on release. The group recently won a Koestler award for the video of an offender who performed poetry.

9.6 The provision of physical activity at Rochester is extremely good. The two gymnasiums are well-equipped, and run efficiently with suitably qualified staff. There is facility for indoor sports, such as badminton, indoor tennis, etc. Football sessions are popular. In addition, the open and large estate at Rochester means there is plenty of opportunity for fresh air exercise when walking between wings and activity (which in turn has its downside in providing opportunities for the passing of contraband).

## **10. WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT**

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10.1 As with education, vocational training has suffered from lack of tutors to deliver the range of qualifications that was available last year. In theory training is provided in construction skills, industrial cleaning, rail track and catering. During the year training in fork-lift truck training, rail track, welding and bricklaying was given, but discontinued due to lack of tutors. Tutors are being sought for all these activities, and most training courses will hopefully be resuming in 2018. However, the time taken for clearances to come through creates on-going problems in staffing levels.

10.2 Back again this year is plumbing with the appointment of a proactive trainer, who provides training up to Level 1 NVQ, and plans to introduce Level 2. Stonemasonry is also

back, with some exceptional work being undertaken by a talented tutor. The tutor is currently provided through Construct a Future. For painting and decorating the tutor is currently on sick leave, but should return soon, and the situation for carpentry is similar.

10.3 Work provision includes a cycle repair workshop, Floplast plastic workshop, the production of MOD camouflage netting, waste disposal, and market gardens.

10.4 As with education, the provision of training and work at the prison is still in recovery after the disruption of the closure plans, and unfortunately is not able to deliver sufficient occupation for the prisoners. There is no doubt that this is a contributory factor to the drugs problem at the prison.

## **11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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11.1 Resettlement is an important element of the regime at Rochester. The Reducing Re-Offending Strategy produced for 2017 is being revised and updated for 2018. This will once again clearly set out its purpose, objectives and principles.

11.2 **Offender Management:** Once again those working in the Rochester Offender Management Unit (OMU) are to be commended for their efficiency and effectiveness. The position on OASys completion is much improved, and is now virtually up to date. This is being achieved in spite of 50 new prisoners arriving per month without an assessment. The unit is now fully staffed, albeit that there have been changes in personnel leading to experience gaps. Removals and transfers are handled effectively with individual prisoners' requests to be located closer to family taken forward where this is possible.

11.3 Meeting the requirements for implementing the new process for release on Home Detention Curfew (HDC) created a challenge for the team, but it met all the targets set for reporting back to HMPPS centre and for releasing prisoners within the new process. OMU are now looking up to 3 months ahead for those eligible for HDC and working with the CRC about their release.

11.4 All Category D referrals are also considered on time and ROTL is dealt with as cases arise. When the Board looked into applications about categorisation, it found good practice and an understanding of risk management. The appeals process works well, and targets set for requirements for the Parole Board are being met.

11.5 The Board is indebted to OMU for the assistance they give us in addressing prisoner questions and for showing a willingness to re-address queries when new information comes to light.

11.6 **Offending Behaviour Programmes:** Unfortunately Thinking Skills and Resolve courses were affected by staff shortages and closure issues. The unit carried out 3 Thinking Skills programmes and 2 Resolve. More staff are about to join the team, as it rebuilds, and it aims to meet the target number of courses for 2018/19. The Board attends as many of the completion ceremonies as it can, and commends the level of care and achievement by those involved in delivering this training.

11.7 **Chaplaincy:** There have been staffing changes within the Chaplaincy team, but it continues to deliver a high level of pastoral and spiritual care. All men are seen on induction, and we have good reports of the support being given following any event in their lives. Unfortunately the main tutor for the Sycamore Tree restorative justice programme left Rochester so courses have not taken place for a while, but one of the Chaplains is currently being trained as a Sycamore Tree facilitator.

11.8 **Preparation for Release:** All men at Rochester receive Through the Gate support, which is working well. The careers service is provided by CXK, and prisoners are offered one to one sessions. The initial session is used to allocate men to particular training and work opportunities available at the prison. During the year the Activities Unit once again held several Job Fairs – with employers in the area coming into the prison. These proved extremely successful, with a significant number of prisoners getting jobs on release.

11.9 **Probation:** Several changes of personnel working in Probation have led to an unsettled period. The Board has seen some excellent work by prison-based probation officers this year, but hears many complaints from prisoners about probation officers working in the community. However, it could be argued that this is to be expected.

11.10 **Comment:** The key difficulty remains that too many prisoners are leaving prison without anywhere to live. Finding suitable accommodation is a very difficult task, especially when trying to link this up to a job opportunity. The prison and CRC work with NACRO over accommodation, but given accommodation in the South East is at a premium, the frustrations felt by the Rehabilitation Team are considerable. HMCIP noted that around 15% of those prisoners leaving Rochester have no address. The Board retains the view that re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless there is suitable accommodation and support for all prisoners who have finished their sentence.

## **VISITS AND VISITOR CENTRE**

11.11 The Family Days which are held in the Gym during school holidays and some weekends are excellent. They allow prisoners to interact with their children with games, physical activities and just behave like a normal family. They are divided by children's ages to enable suitable activities to be available. Family Days are always well-supervised and a welcome innovation. The booking process for Family Days works effectively and is used as an incentive to prisoners.

11.12 In last year's report, we referred to the criticism of the Visitors Centre and the reception waiting area, particularly through a video made to record a child's experience of visiting Rochester prison. It is pleasing to report that as the prison did not close, the prison's management team responded quickly to the criticisms with the renovation of the Visitors Centre and improvements in the Reception area. More improvements are planned for 2018.

## **B Section – Work of Board**

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The Board continues to enjoy a constructive working relationship with the management of Rochester prison. During this year we have mentored three new Board members, who are about to complete their training. One long-standing and experienced member retired. A new member started in March and another is due to start training in June.

The former Governor or the Acting Governor attended all Board meetings this year. Action points are regularly followed up. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the SMT team and all the Staff at Rochester for their openness and willing support to the Board during the year. In particular, the Board wishes to note how well the Deputy Governor rose to the challenge of becoming Acting Governor at such short notice, and commends her performance in difficult circumstances.

In response to the announcement that the prison was to close and then to remain open, the Board wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice to express its view that the way these decisions were handled was unfair and unreasonable for all those working at the prison. The disruption and chaos the original decision caused, and then its subsequent iterations of delay and change made Rochester a less safe and humane environment. The decision to write to the Secretary of State about this was not made lightly but was agreed unanimously by the Board.

All statutory visits and visits relating to individual members' Areas of Special Interest in the prison have been undertaken. The Board regularly attends adjudications and has a close working relationship with the Segregation Unit staff. There is a regular training session held before our monthly meeting, with speakers from all areas of the prison. The Monitoring Framework is used as the basis for how the Board conducts its work.

| <b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>                                      |     |
|--|-----|
| 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   | 13  |
| Total number of visits to the Establishment                  | 514 |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended                 | 195 |

## **C Section - Applications**

The number of applications has fallen by 30% during the year. However, those received are complex and often require detailed investigation. There is a decrease in the number of applications classified as Miscellaneous due to the Board members giving more consideration as to how they classify applications. There is a notable decrease in the number of applications relating to Discipline – 8 compared with 35 last year. We will investigate the reasons for this further.

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Subject</b>                                       | <b>Current reporting year</b> | <b>Previous reporting year</b> |
|-------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A           | Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions | 9                             | 11                             |
| B           | Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions   | 8                             | 35                             |
| C           | Equality   | 5                             | 1                              |

|     |  |                   |                   |
|-----|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| D   | Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell | 9                 | 8                 |
| E 1 | Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions                                    | 22                | 36                |
| E 2 | Finance including pay, private monies, spends  | Included in above | Included in above |
| F   | Food and kitchens  | 1                 | 3                 |
| G   | Health including physical, mental, social care   | 40                | 59                |
| H 1 | Property within this establishment   | 51                | 73                |
| H 2 | Property during transfer or in another establishment or location                           | Included in H1    | Included in H1    |
| H 3 | Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)   | Included in H1    | Included in H1    |
| I   | Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation          | 51                | 67                |
| J   | Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying   | 10                | 7                 |
| K   | Transfers  | 12                | 12                |
| L   | Miscellaneous  | 24                | 60                |
|     | <b>Total number of IMB applications</b>  | <b>257</b>        | <b>372</b>        |