



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP Ashfield

for reporting Year
1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ashfield for the period 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018. Members of the IMB have visited the prison regularly (at least twice weekly) in order that they might monitor the accommodation and facilities, observe the full range of activities, talk informally to prisoners and staff, attend meetings, review relevant documentation, examine relevant data and both investigate and respond to prisoners' concerns and complaints. As this report is designed to be a short summary only, there is no requirement to mention in detail all aspects of the prison's work, and the focus is on those areas where standards are particularly high or where significant issues have arisen.

Main judgements

It is the judgement of the Board that HMP Ashfield continues to be a very well run prison which has in the twelve months since the last report continued to improve. Strong leadership and a culture of continuous improvement have resulted in a high performing prison where the prisoners' wellbeing and safety are very effectively managed.

Are prisoners treated fairly?

Prisoners at Ashfield do receive fair treatment overall. However, a number of prisoners still perceive that the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) warning system is applied for what they perceive to be minor infringements of petty rules. (See para 5.6 page 10)

Are prisoners treated humanely?

Ashfield continues to be a very safe and secure prison where prisoners are treated with respect, decency and humanity. (See paras 4.1 – 4.5 page 7)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

In fulfilling its role as a specialist training and treatment prison providing education, programmes, training and purposeful activity Ashfield performs very well. The challenge is the number of prisoners achieving cat D status unable to transfer to open conditions, due to lack of spaces for men convicted of sexual offences. A cat D regime is an important stage in preparing men for release. (See para 11.3, page 14)

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

1. The IMB welcomes the announcement of places for Category D prisoners convicted of sex offences at Hollesley Bay but the continuing shortage of places for such prisoners in the south and south west of England continues to be a major concern causing significant “waiting lists” (para 11.3, page 14) and is a major contributor to the number of prisoners released directly from HMP Ashfield. Are there any plans to increase the number of places in these areas of the country?

2. Are there any plans to expand the number of approved premises spaces? During the past 12 months there have been an increasing number of cases where an approved premises space was not confirmed until 24/48 hours before release (para 11.4, page 14). This is very stressful for the prisoners concerned and time consuming for an already hard pressed Offender Management Unit.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Transfer of property between prisons continues to be a major aggravation for both prisoners and the prison staff at Ashfield. Are there plans to address the issue? (para 7.7 page 11)

TO THE DIRECTOR

Can the Director provide assurances that the active monitoring of and reporting on the application of the IEP system including the issuing of warnings will continue in 2018-2019? Continuing disquiet albeit amongst a very small minority of prisoners over the application of the system (para 5.6 page 10) is more readily addressed through the evidence the monitoring provides.

Improvements

1. The Board is pleased to report that work to improve the condition of wing showers which included flooring being replaced and ceilings being repainted has been completed. Periodically there have been some issues with water temperature but progressively work has been undertaken to resolve these.

2. In the last report the aged IT network in the Education department and the non-functioning computer in the induction orderlies’ room were of concern to the Board but during the past 12 months the network has been upgraded and computer equipment including the induction computer has been replaced.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

3.1 HMP Ashfield is a contracted-out prison run by SERCO Ltd. located in the village of Pucklechurch in South Gloucestershire, around 9 to 10 miles from each of Bristol and Bath. It is a specialist training and treatment Category C adult male establishment exclusively for convicted prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences.

3.2 The prison has a baseline Certificate of Normal Accommodation (CNA) of 416, and an Operational Capacity (Op. Cap.) of 400 though, at the request of HMPPS, it expanded in late October 2017 to 412. Throughout the 12 months covered by this Annual Report, the prison operated with a monthly average of around 408 prisoners in residence.

3.3 Residential accommodation consists of 2 main house blocks, Avon and Severn, each with 4 wings accommodating between 40 and 60 men, and the Early Days Centre (formerly Brunel) which is a smaller 16 cell unit which acts as a first night and Induction centre. There are 252 single cells and 78 double cells, all with integral sanitation and there are 8 shower cubicles on each of the main wings. 7 of the single cells are ground floor cells purpose-built for prisoners with disabilities and there are 2 gated cells for prisoners requiring constant supervision. There is no separate Care and Separation Unit.

3.4 BME prisoners typically make up around 15%, foreign national prisoners 5% and those aged over 50, 42% at any one time.

3.4 Services run by organisations other than SERCO:

Healthcare is commissioned by NHS England: the contract in April 2016 was awarded to "Inspire Better Health", a collaboration between Bristol Community Health (nursing services), Hanham Healthcare (GP services) and AWP (Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust.) IBH are responsible for dispensing medication. "Time for Teeth" operates the contract for dentistry. In addition, prisoners can access a variety of specialist clinics.

Offender Management Unit: sub-contracted to Catch 22

Sex offender treatment programmes: originally sub-contracted to Turning Point but transferred to SERCO October 2017

Adult social care: South Gloucestershire Social Services.

Coaching: Coaching Inside and Out (CIAO)

Voluntary Services: Shannon Trust, Peace Education Programme (from the Prem Rawat Foundation), Faith volunteers, Mothers Union, Prison Visitors, Changing Tunes (from January 2018)

3.13 As a contracted-out prison, Ashfield has a Director and a NOMS/HMPPS Controller. The Director is Vicky Pails who has been in post since August 2016.

B Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

4.1 It is the view of the IMB that HMP Ashfield has continued to provide a safe, stable and supportive environment. It is a real credit to the SERCO staff that the stability of the prison was unaffected by the deployment of some officers and senior managers to other prisons both in the UK and British Overseas Territories.

4.2 Prisoners newly arrived at HMP Ashfield, on transfer from other prisons, have consistently, when asked by the IMB, reported having had very positive first impressions and have commented particularly on the respectful and dignified manner in which they have been treated in Reception and the Early Days Centre (EDC). Since the last report the Reception suite has been refurbished to render it more welcoming and make new prisoners feel less apprehensive. Assessment on arrival is thorough with full engagement from relevant departmental staff and the first night processes in the EDC are robust and effective. The EDC is both a First Night and Induction Centre for new prisoners which allows them to adjust for approximately 7 – 14 days prior to being allocated to one of the house block wings. Induction is comprehensive and managed by orderlies. A well laid out booklet outlining the facilities and services in the prison is issued to each new prisoner. The IMB is pleased to report that the room used for Induction sessions has in the reporting period been redecorated and a replacement computer connected to the Education network has been installed which has greatly facilitated the orderlies' work.

4.3 Generally the atmosphere in the prison is very orderly and relaxed and the relationship between prison staff and prisoners is generally respectful and courteous. Departure from this behaviour by prisoners will be dealt with quickly, usually through an IEP warning. In last year's report the Board noted that there was an increasing number of younger, rather more challenging and confrontational, prisoners arriving, whose conduct at their previous prisons had given serious cause for concern but who were nevertheless eligible for Cat. C conditions. This trend has continued but bullying and prisoner violence has remained very low compared to most prisons. In the reporting period there were only 3 proven prisoner on prisoner assaults. In the reporting period there were just 118 adjudications. Verbal bullying and abuse, when identified, is dealt with promptly and effectively.

4.4 Random cell searches, mail monitoring, visitor searches, the use of an on-site drugs dog and effective intelligence gathering have meant that mobile phones, tobacco and drugs have not been a problem at HMP Ashfield. There have been no proven incidents of the brewing of alcohol or the acquisition of inappropriate DVDs in this reporting period. Measures have also been effective in virtually eliminating the trade in prescription medicines.

4.5 The number of ACCTS open at any one time continues to be low, with some weeks there being no open ACCTS at all and the most recorded on a single day being 5 which was highly unusual. Members of the Board routinely review the ACCT documentation on rota visits and consistently report that this is comprehensive and thorough. There is a concerted effort by the prison to train anyone who comes into contact with prisoners (e.g. Shannon Trust, Faith volunteers, IMB), as well as prison staff, in Suicide Awareness and Self Harm (SASH). The Safer Custody team also regularly assures the quality of ACCT documentation. ACCT reviews attended by the IMB have been well managed and prisoners on ACCTs interviewed by members have consistently reported a caring and reassuring approach adopted by prison staff. The Safer Custody, Chaplaincy, Healthcare and wing staff work well together to support prisoners with issues and peer support is provided effectively through the "Hear to Hear" scheme staffed by prisoners. The Samaritans helpline is also available to all prisoners on their in cell telephony. There are a number of activities provided through the Safer Custody team

including art classes and Walk for Life sessions at weekends to support prisoners who find weekends and the lack of organised activities difficult. The Walk for Life sessions held on the Astroturf regularly attract 15 -20.

4.6 There was one death in custody between July 2017 and June 2018. The prisoner had a number of medical conditions and died in hospital having experienced complications following major emergency surgery. Contact with the family following the operation and the support offered to staff and prisoners following the death were sensitively managed.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 HMP Ashfield continues to be a model of good practice with regard to the management and promotion of equality and diversity. The calm, constructive and collaborative atmosphere in the prison is, to no small extent, due to the prison's active engagement with and encouragement of formally constituted and high profile groups representing the different "protected characteristics" (supplemented by a VIPA group for those who have served in the armed forces and emergency services) and who are able to present a joint approach to challenging any prejudice that is encountered and in fostering positive attitudes to diversity. Prisoners are themselves proactive in identifying unacceptable behaviour at an early stage and bringing it to the attention of wing managers so that it can be addressed more formally if necessary.

5.2 As a consequence, only 26 DIRFs were submitted in the course of the entire year which is a remarkably small number for any establishment. Half a dozen of these were about unacceptable remarks by just one prisoner who, after investigation, was subsequently transferred. The remainder of the DIRFs concerned individual issues and confirm the absence of any "organisational culture" of racism or other prejudice. Similarly there were only 3 applications submitted to the IMB that were categorised as involving diversity issues. Just occasionally the IMB picks up hints that a minority of prisoners convicted of sexual crimes against adults are prejudiced against those convicted of similar crimes against children but, in general, especially as prisoners are urged not to divulge the nature of their offences outside of supervised Horizon and Kaizen sessions, prisoners interact well and are appreciative of the fact that, housed all together, they do not have to endure the stigma and bullying many have encountered elsewhere prior to their arrival at Ashfield. They report that they feel safe and respected here.

5.3 Over the last 12 months, the forums established for each "protected characteristic" continued to remain very active and conduct themselves very professionally, meeting monthly and organising activities. IMB initial disquiet, generated by attending some meetings and reading the minutes of others, that they seemed to spend remarkably little time discussing complaints or worries, were subsequently allayed by discussions in which most indicated there were genuinely relatively few matters of real substance that they felt needed addressing and that these could be raised via their attendance at the quarterly DEAT meeting with senior management. This is refreshingly informal and issues-focused and does not allow itself to be diverted from its primary object of monitoring and fostering a constructive atmosphere by devoting excessive time to analysing and scrutinising statistical data which can be reserved for senior management meetings.

5.4 With a change in the management of the Department and some re-branding as "#Let's Start the Conversation", there has been a new focus, with a constructive emphasis on the role of these groups in providing education, advice and information both for their own clientele and also for the wider prison population in order to break down any misconceptions and prejudices and to bring the prison community together. Groups have also been encouraged to interact more. There is now, for example, greater collaboration between the Race Forum and

the Foreign National Forum, and the Age Forum has been developing activities that, whilst primarily concerned with the welfare of older prisoners, also encourage dialogue and interaction with younger prisoners. A further example is the decision towards the end of this reporting year to create a special forum for prisoners from the Roma and Traveller communities who had previously felt rather marginalised. The Forums have been running "drop in sessions" and have also been active in getting weekend activities launched which bring men of different age groups or protected characteristics together to help break down barriers, e.g. weekend pool and snooker championships, and they are currently seeking to develop these further.

5.5 There have been some tensions, however. Attendance at forum meetings by members of the Senior Management Team has remained inconsistent, with some ensuring that they attend regularly and others less so. Organising events or coming up with new initiatives, in the physical absence of an SMT "champion" at times, has required members to navigate a seemingly complicated and fairly opaque system for obtaining permission from different departments and individuals, and some proposed events came unstuck precisely because the applicant was unaware of the order in which key SERCO staff needed to be approached for permission. SMT non-attendance at some meetings also meant forum members were unsure how to draw attention to the small number of matters that are of concern which they have been unable to resolve themselves without establishment assistance, such as health and safety issues highlighted on various occasions by the Disability Forum or concern about access to minutes of forum meetings stored on computer when the chairs and secretaries of these forums inevitably change as prisoners are released or transferred. In some cases it was unclear whether such matters would have been more speedily addressed via the PIAC system instead but, in fairness, eventually most of the problems identified were resolved by the establishment (though this often took upwards of six months to a year) or there were good reasons why they could not be addressed (e.g. advice from the Fire Brigade that a request for rails down to steps in the exercise yards would slow down evacuation in the case of fire.) The Kitchen goes to considerable trouble to take account of key cultural and religious festivals and dates and modifies menus accordingly. Special provision is made for catering for the needs of Muslims during Ramadan. Overall, the prison is to be applauded on the effectiveness of its management and promotion of diversity issues and any unresolved problems on site are minor when placed in the broader context of the wider prison estate.

5.6 In comparison with most prisons, Ashfield has a significantly higher percentage of prisoners aged 50 or more. With regard to the needs of older or more infirm prisoners, the IMB can report that the "buddy" system continues to work well and there is effective engagement with South Gloucestershire in the provision of adult care. In last year's Annual Report the IMB commented on the lack of specialist training for officers in responding to the specific challenges posed by severely disabled prisoners or those presenting with symptoms of dementia and is pleased that Ashfield has sought to address this. In addition, the IMB also highlighted the need for a dedicated national facility to which such prisoners could be transferred and their particular needs more effectively addressed. It is very encouraging that Ashfield is currently exploring options in this regard with the HMPPS Commissioners.

5.6 As stated in para. 4.3, incidences of verbal abuse or physical violence at HMP Ashfield are very low in number. Almost all prisoners therefore enjoy Enhanced or Standard status and there are rarely more than one or two on Basic regime. In previous years the IMB has, nevertheless, remarked on complaints by a minority of prisoners about what they perceived as inconsistent use of IEP warnings, especially if they triggered an IEP review, with some officers identified by prisoners as more ready to issue these than others. In response to the IMB raising this matter of fairness (or perceived lack of fairness), from early 2016 the prison's senior management has been systematically monitoring and recording all IEP warnings by location and by member of staff. As a consequence of sharing the results of this monitoring

with members, the IMB is satisfied that prisoner concerns appear largely groundless. The number of complaints to the IMB about this matter has reduced this year and only 6 were received. There is, however, a lingering perception amongst some prisoners that IEP warnings can be issued unnecessarily for petty infringements of rules. Adjudications are very small in number compared with most prisons (just 118 in 2017-18) and suggest that IEP warnings (combined with DIRF investigations and the prison's anti-bullying strategy) are broadly effective in preventing any escalation of negative or antisocial behaviour and ensure that the overwhelming majority of prisoners are treated fairly.

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

6.1 HMP Ashfield continues to have very few prisoners on GOOD or Cellular Confinement at any one time. Many weeks there are none at all and at the most there have been two in a week. HMP Ashfield does not have a separate Care and Separation Unit and in the event of the need to segregate a prisoner he is normally confined to his own cell unless there is a need to separate prisoners out from others on their wing when they are either allocated to a different house block or in certain circumstances to the EDC.

6.2 Throughout the past 12 months the Board has been notified within 24 hours of prisoners being confined and a member will check on any prisoners on GOOD or CC during their rota visits. Members are always given the opportunity to speak freely with the prisoner. Of the prisoners checked, members report that generally the individual is in acceptance of their confinement and the regime that accompanies it. They report being well treated and in receipt of their entitlements. In the reporting period the Board has seen more purposeful activity during confinement than previously but there is still in the Board's opinion room for improvement. Where possible Board members have attended GOOD reviews and of those monitored they have had full attendance and been both well managed and fair.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

7.1 The standard of accommodation at Ashfield is in the Board's view very good indeed and does significantly exceed that found in many other prisons. The wings are well lit, well maintained and very clean and all of the communal areas are kept tidy. Any area requiring redecoration gets added to the work schedule of the in house painters and decorators, comprising prisoners learning their trade. This has meant that both cells and communal areas are regularly refreshed. The serveries are also well maintained and kept scrupulously clean. There are two toasters and two microwaves on each wing, one each for halal and non halal, to allow prisoners to make their own snacks. However, one wing in particular suffers from short outs when too many items of electrical equipment are used at one time. Electrical equipment is regularly PAT tested by trained prisoners from the electrical workshops.

7.2 During a spell of severe snow a number of wings did have water dripping in through the ceiling on to the area where the pool and snooker tables are located, caused by melting snow lying on the rooves. No serious damage was sustained. There are plans to refurbish in due course but as yet unscheduled.

7.3 The onsite facilities department run by SERCO is very responsive to reported issues and consistently hit their targets for scheduled task completion ensuring the prison is well maintained. Blocked sinks used to be a recurring problem for the maintenance team but this has significantly reduced following the introduction of sealable waste bins, as the most common cause of blockage was food being washed down the sinks.

7.4 During the course of the reporting period the refurbishment of the showers has been completed thus addressing one of the issues highlighted in last year's report. Floors have

been re-covered, drainage improved and ceilings repainted with non-peeling paint. This has made a significant improvement to the wing facilities as it was a regular cause of prisoners' complaints. There have been some continuing issues with water temperature on the wings but replacement boilers, new pumps and pipework have now been installed. Whilst the problems were on-going prisoners were advised to try and stagger showers as much as possible to alleviate pressures on the hot water system.

7.5 In the previous annual report the Board reported problems with the newly opened house block laundries, in particular, inadequate ventilation and the lack of hand washing facilities. The ventilation has now been improved but the laundries still have no washbasins which would allow the prisoners in the laundries to wash their hands after handling both detergents and dirty clothes. There can also be a long lead time for the repair of washing machines and tumble dryers as spare parts are not always readily available for the on-site prisoner electrical workshop to repair faulty machines. As the house block laundries are operating at maximum capacity the loss of a machine impacts on the laundry service significantly and often leads to a resurgence of complaints of damp clothes.

7.6 There were major issues with the mains electricity supply to the prison (also experienced in the local area) in the early part of the reporting period resulting in a number of power interruptions with a power outage in September lasting just under an hour. Two standby generators brought in were in operation for a number of weeks whilst remedial work was underway. The impact of all of this on the prisoners' regular activities was minimal, the kitchen in particular coped well, and credit is due to the prison for very successfully managing this.

7.7 Prisoners' property issues at Ashfield have been confined generally to problems of property not always having followed the prisoner when he has transferred into Ashfield from another prison. The complaints department has had to pursue a number of time consuming cases of missing property with other establishments and prisoners often have to refer their cases to the PPO to try and progress investigations. Property complaints form the third highest category of complaints (65).

7.8 The catering at Ashfield in the Board's view continues to be of a high standard and generally prisoners comment on how much better it is than at previous establishments. This is supported by the fact there were very few formal complaints (7) and no applications to the IMB. Comments are submitted via the ATM and the comments books on the wings and then monthly, wing reps attend a catering meeting to discuss any issues that arise. There were approximately 83 negative comments about the food submitted in the past 12 months, a third of which were about portion size or more commonly the lack of sufficient filling for sandwiches/baguettes. The various dietary requirements of prisoners are well catered for and stringent measures are in place to keep food preparation separate where necessary. A number of prisoners have elected in this period to go vegan and as such have been reminded that shop purchases will be monitored to ensure adherence. There remains an issue, however, in that vegans and diabetics have a significantly reduced range of options that they can purchase from the shop. Given the high percentage of diabetics in the prison the IMB would repeat its request that this matter be explored further.

7.9 Generally communication with prisoners is good. Much information is disseminated via the ATMs and prisoners who have difficulty using them can call upon their "buddy" if they have one or wing staff to help. The PIAC (Prisoner Information Advice and Consultation) which meets monthly is well attended by senior management and representatives from the wings and is effectively utilised for airing concerns and suggesting improvements. In the previous annual report the Board expressed concern about the quality of some of the written responses delivered via the ATM and in answer to complaints. The Board has noted a definite

improvement in the responses reviewed and particularly welcomes the initiative taken by some staff, if time allows, to see an individual prisoner face to face as well as responding in writing. The Board also commends the senior management for two initiatives namely "Back to the Floor" and the Duty Director's surgeries at the weekend. The former saw senior managers for example spend half a day as officers on the wing.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

8.1 During the course of the reporting period healthcare services underwent a significant change to align more closely with the level of services available in the community and be more needs focused rather than demand led. The revised service went live in April 2018 amidst concerns by the prison's senior management, the IMB and some prisoners about what the impact might be. The Board is pleased to report that the change in services has been implemented well and to date, from what has been observed and by talking to prisoners, has not had an adverse impact.

8.2 The most significant changes in service were in GP attendance and AWP mental health services. Access to a GP was previously five days a week and this has been reduced to three. The system does allow for some flexibility, however, and a GP will attend if there is an emergency. This reduction is counterbalanced by the provision of triage nurses. Waiting time to see a doctor for non-emergency matters is now between two to three weeks which is comparable with what can be expected in the community.

8.3 In the period leading up to the finalisation of the service there was a degree of uncertainty arising from contradictory or confusing advice given to prisoners as to what services the AWP mental health team were proposing to deliver. Both PALS and Healthcare's own complaints system dealt with a significantly increased number of complaints at this time. Communication during this period could have been better managed but it was good to see that Safer Custody supported AWP in ensuring, once the change to services was clarified, that prisoners received a consistent message. In fact the delivery of 1-1 treatment has continued but only for those with diagnosable mental conditions. Currently the AWP team leader estimates one in four prisoners have a mental health issue but only a very small percentage actually suffers from a diagnosable mental illness. At Ashfield of the 26 prisoners assessed only nine meet the criteria for 1-1 intervention. The remainder will engage in accredited group programmes. Group sessions tackling specific mental health issues, along with substance misuse, self-esteem and anger management are now offered. Waiting time for groups is about three to four weeks. Any urgent needs are met in advance of that, following initial assessment. Safer Custody has been working with AWP to identify any prisoners who no longer qualify for the revised services or are now receiving group therapies rather than 1-1 to support them through transition and signpost them to supplementary support (additional peer support, help from personal officers, PIP scheme etc.) as appropriate.

8.4 In early April 2018 there was the risk of a 'flu epidemic so contingency plans were developed. Vaccination was actively pursued and voluntary isolation was practised and as a result the outbreak was satisfactorily contained.

8.5 The Board welcomes the establishment of a Health Improvement Group to improve both physical and mental health as a very positive initiative. Six prisoner representatives have been appointed to the Group.

8.6 Cancelled hospital appointments average about four a month. Generally cancellations are by the hospital and only occasionally caused by the prison when there is insufficient staff to cover the escorts. The number of hospitals Healthcare can access for X-rays has been extended in the past 12 months.

8.7 The Board received only three applications on healthcare, the Health Department's own "Listening to You" system only received 20 and the prison's complaints system did not receive any. Given that the service underwent a significant change this is a remarkably low number of complaints in total. In the Board's view the healthcare at HMP Ashfield compares very favourably with that delivered to the general public and in one particular regard, that of mental health, in fact it outstrips what is available in the community both in terms of access to expertise and waiting times.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

9.1 Overall, the Board has observed sustained and positive development of education and related activities. Available classes include English, Maths, Life Skills and Business Skills; attendance in lessons is good with the average monthly attendance across classes exceeding 98. OFSTED have visited twice within the last few months and the feedback from these visits has been positive with regards to progress made over the last year.

9.2 The outdated computer system available to the education department, highlighted in last year's report, was upgraded early in 2018 and Board members have had much positive feedback on the effect this has had throughout classroom activities, both as a tool for current lessons and, longer term, in allowing the ability to offer more advanced qualifications. An ongoing concern in education has been a lack of cover for staff absences necessitating excessive cancellation of classes both in the short-term (e.g. because of staff sickness) and long-term (e.g. Life Skills had a gap of three months with no tutor available following staff departure). In this context the Board is pleased to note that two appointments have been made for cover purposes with the staff concerned due to start in September 2018. Complaints concerning education, both to the prison and IMB, continue to be very low (33 formal complaints and only one IMB application)

9.3 Other associated areas continue to perform well and provide a varied and imaginative selection of activities. The gym is a popular destination for many prisoners and, as well as its wide-ranging physical exercise options, has sought to include groups who might not ordinarily frequent it such as the older men. Numerous special activities have also been held alongside, for example, the World Cup.

9.4 The library has received a dedicated budget and now provides a wide range of books, journals and DVDs appropriate for the current prisoner demographic. Attendance, however, is still affected by the movement time changes of two years ago with a minimum session time of 90 minutes being over-long for many library visits. An assisted reading scheme and visits from the Shannon Trust are among initiatives promoting reading. The library is also proactive in widening its range of activities; for example an Arts Festival is to be held in Autumn 2018 over two days which will involve external speakers and cover a number of areas including art, poetry, crafts and creative writing.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

10.1 This area of the prison continues to operate at a commendable level. As with Education, the basic ethos is to provide activity with the opportunity to gain appropriate qualifications wherever possible and the range and level of qualification continues to expand; for example the laundry will shortly be introducing an AQA qualification.

10.2 Employment levels across the establishment continue to be high and a good monitoring system is in place to ensure an appropriate spread across departments by age and ethnicity.

The updated computer system, noted in the previous education section, has also had a significant impact on most vocational training areas although Horticulture has had to delay plans for a level 2 NVQ until computer access can be extended outside the core education and training block.

10.3 One of the issues limiting vocational training development is the size of the rooms in which departments are located and the non-availability of alternatives although, space apart, there is generally a good level of resource provided by the prison. The Board is impressed with how various tutors have adapted within these constraints to provide imaginative and enthusiastically driven programmes.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 A primary focus at Ashfield is the provision of treatment programmes as part of prisoners' sentence plans so that they may then be moved on through Cat D establishments towards resettlement in the community. The prison is now offering treatment on both the new Horizon and Kaizen programmes with SERCO having successfully taken over the responsibility for their delivery in October from Turning Point. Targets for the delivery of programmes have all been achieved.

11.2 The Offender Management Unit provides a consistently good service. 100% of parole dossiers and paperwork for categorisations boards (average 50 per month) were completed on time. A survey conducted canvassing prisoners' views of OMU in April had a 57% return rate and 80% of respondents stated their experience of the OMU at Ashfield was good or better than previous establishments. Only 28 formal complaints and four applications to the IMB were submitted by prisoners.

11.3 A serious concern for the Board is the lack of cat D spaces in the prison estate for men convicted of sexual offences, particularly in the south and southwest, the regions with which most Ashfield residents identify. At any one time there are on average 71 cat D prisoners with 63 on the waiting list with the majority (45) wanting to transfer to Leyhill in South Gloucestershire and 18 electing to go to North Sea Camp in Lincolnshire. Prisoners having gained a cat D status do occasionally complain to the Board that they resent the lack of personal responsibility and accountability the Ashfield regime affords them. It is very encouraging that Ashfield are looking to establish a progression wing next year which would address many of these concerns. The lack of opportunity to transfer is also having a knock on effect of limiting the number of prisoners who can transfer in and importantly fulfil their sentence plan requirements for the programmes that Ashfield offer.

11.4 The other area of major concern is the difficulty in the timely securing of a place in approved premises which the majority of the 73 prisoners released from Ashfield in the past 12 months require. There have been a number of incidences of a place in an approved premises only being confirmed in the 24/48 hours before release. This is frankly unacceptable.

11.5 A number of well-attended workshops have been held in the past 12 months to support prisoners approaching significant events during their time at Ashfield. These included re-categorisation (2), parole (1), approved premises (2) and open prisons (1) with, additionally, North Sea Camp staff attending the Well Being day. In the last 12 months Catch 22 have also arranged for 4 courses run by the Peace Education Programme of 10 weeks each which have been well received by prisoners attending them. Prisoners on release are given details of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation 'Stop It Now' helpline.

11.6 The Board has welcomed the initiatives to enhance family engagement. The additional member of the Chaplaincy, 40% of whose role is assigned to Family Links Co-ordinator, has

made a significant contribution. There have been four family days in the past 12 months and an additional afternoon has been added to the existing visitors' days. Earlier this year the 'Story Book Dads' scheme was started under which prisoners allowed contact with their children are recorded reading stories.

C Section – Work of Board

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the Establishment	224
Total number of segregation reviews attended	4

Members of the Board have typically been on site around 20 times each month (including attendance at the monthly Board meeting).

The weekly rota visit has routinely included visiting all accommodation blocks, the Kitchen/Bistro, and the Healthcare department. In addition to this, prison functions, services and departments are divided for practical monitoring purposes into seven themed areas (Safer Custody/pastoral care; Sentence Management and Resettlement; Prisoner Employment and Vocational Training; Prisoner Education; Prisoner Services and Facilities; Dynamic Security; Central Services) to ensure that each theme is monitored in depth approximately 8 times each year (and at regular intervals between if there are pressing or emerging issues that would benefit from further scrutiny.)

In addition to the weekly rota visit, one member a week attends to collect and respond to all applications from prisoners. Wherever possible a rota or applications visit is combined with attendance at a prison meeting (such as the Interdepartmental Risk Management meeting or PIAC an Adjudication, a GOOD review or an ACCT review, but the scheduling of these often necessitates a separate visit. A night-state visit took place in the autumn.

A national recruitment campaign in the autumn of 2017 resulted in the appointment of one new member from December 2017, but unfortunately the new member resigned due to work pressures in May 2018. Another campaign was conducted in January 2018 which resulted in two new members being appointed. One of these withdrew, however, as he was going to be relocating to another part of the country.

The Board will be seeking to expand its numbers again with a further recruitment campaign in the autumn in order to facilitate greater in-depth monitoring of some aspects of the prison and to observe a greater number of prisoner consultation forums and prison management meetings. One member is leaving in July having completed 15 years as a member of an IMB.

A new Chair, Vice Chair and Board Developmental Officer were elected in October. As both the Chair and BDO were new to holding an IMB office they each attended the relevant IMB training course.

Board members have continued to attend SERCO-run training sessions within the prison and one attended the National Conference. Additionally training sessions have been provided at monthly Board meetings. Both the previous and current Chair have attended South West Chairs' meetings as well as being a member of, and attending the meetings of the Sex Offenders' Working Group.

The Board does very much appreciate the most constructive and co-operative attitude taken by both SERCO staff and other providers towards its own members. Always helpful and receptive to our findings, the good working relationship greatly facilitates the Board's monitoring role to the benefit of the prisoners. Additionally staff very willingly respond to requests for briefings on developments both at Ashfield and in the wider prison estate as well as the regular monthly senior management update.

D Section - Applications

The continued decrease in the number of applications received by the Board is a strong indicator of the level of satisfaction of the prisoners at HMP Ashfield.

The trend in numbers of applications received has continued downwards. Since 2013 the figures are (2013-14 = 189; 2014-15 = 125; 2015-16 = 83; 2016-17= 77, 2017-18=37). The highest number in any one category this year is 6 with only two categories B discipline, IEPs etc. and E1 Letters, visits, public protection accounting for 6 each.

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	18
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	6	14
C	Equality	3	1
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	1
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	6	15
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	3	1
F	Food and kitchens	0	1
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	4	8
H 1	Property within this establishment	0	1
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	1	2
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	0
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	4	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	2	8
K	Transfers	2	1
	Total number of IMB applications	37 inc. 1 Confidential App.	77 inc. 4 Confidential Apps