Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP BELMARSH

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

The Board is pleased to present the annual report and would like to give thanks to the Governor and staff for their cooperation and openness in their relations with the Board. The Board is also pleased to report on the recruitment campaign that has been underway and its impact in addressing the critical staffing shortages.

The Board regrets the number of violent incidents that have occurred throughout the year resulting in injuries to staff and prisoners and commends staff for diligently performing their difficult role.

The Board is grateful for the work done by the Clerk with availability of 14 hours per week.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?
The Board believes that generally prisoners are treated fairly.

Are prisoners treated humanely?
The lack of adequate purposeful activity is considered inhumane. The situation is worse this year than the last with only sufficient places for a quarter of prisoners to attend activities at any one time and with there being high levels of non-attendance because the quality of the activity on offer is inadequate. (9, 10)

Throughout the majority of the year, there have been significant staff shortages resulting in frequent reductions in the basic regime. The Board is consequently very concerned about the safety of staff and prisoners where houseblocks have been managed with considerably reduced staffing levels. These shortages also impact on most areas of prison life such as access to property, attendance to activities, time spent in dealing with prisoners’ applications. It is hoped that following the recent massive recruitment campaign, the prison will now be able to move towards a full, reliable and predictable regime. (4.2, 4.10, 6.2, 6.6, 7.3, 9.5, 10.6)

The poor processes in place across the entire prison estate for the management of prisoners’ property remain a major issue, with an inconsistent approach across the estate. (7.11)

For much of the year, prisoners have been placed in three-person cells designed for two people and this has been the case for many years. However, these cells are now generally used just to house two prisoners in each cell and it is hoped that the triple occupancy will be permanently decommissioned. (7.2)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?
Staff from outside agencies work hard to provide support to prisoners prior to their release. This work is hampered by cuts to staffing and contracts and inadequate work facilities. (11.6)

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

1. Will the Minister intervene to examine the procedures followed for dealing with Counter Terrorism Clearance and ensure that these procedures are speeded up and made more efficient? (7.9, 10.1)
TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. Will the Prison Service review the space available across the high security estate for prisoners with specific accommodation needs so that they are not kept in Segregation for extended periods? (6.4)

2. Will the Prison Service improve the liaison between the prison and partner agencies (e.g. police, Counter Terrorism units) to reduce the delays in the approval of pin numbers, receiving/sending mail and arrangements for visits, for those in the HSU Segregation Unit? (6.13)

3. Will the Prison Service give consideration to permanently decommissioning the use of cells designed for two people being used for triple-occupancy? (7.2)

4. Will the Prison Service review the processes for the transfer of property between establishments? (7.11)

5. Will the Prison Service review the budget for Education to enable the prison to provide an adequate service? (9.4)

6. Will the Prison Service review the pay rates for workshop trainers to enable the prison to recruit appropriately-skilled staff into these roles? (10.1)

TO THE GOVERNOR

2. Will the Governor consider removing items from the canteen list which can easily be utilised as weapons by prisoners (such as metal tin lids)? (4.5)

3. Will the Governor improve the access to Listeners and/or Samaritans' phones, for prisoners in the High Security Unit and Segregation? There does not appear to be any progress in the provision of a Samaritans phone. (4.9, 6.8, 6.14)

4. Will the Governor direct the newly reinstated Equalities team to provide support to all minority groups within the prison? (5.2)

5. Will the Governor review what further can be done to improve purposeful activity for those in the Segregation and HSU Segregation Units? (Ref 6.3, 6.12)

6. Will the Governor review the arrangements for GOOD reviews in Segregation and HSU Segregation to ensure these are held on a regular basis, with the prisoner in attendance where possible, and with all the appropriate participants? (6.5)

7. Will the Governor ensure that the process for booking visits is overhauled and that sufficient staff are in place to manage this? (7.10)

8. Will the Governor review the reasons for the high levels of non-attendance to out-patient Healthcare appointments? (8.4)

9. Will the Governor continue to strive to improve the quality and variety of education and work available to prisoners and the attendance of prisoners to activities? (9.1-9.5)

10. Will the Governor continue to strive to provide additional workshop facilities and courses to facilitate the provision of meaningful activities which will provide useful qualifications to prisoners for use on their release? (10.2 – 10.4)

11. Will the Governor advise if any progress has been made in the provision of a horticulture course? (10.5)
12. Will the Governor again consider whether a designated resettlement area can be made available for Community Rehabilitation Company and other agency staff to interview prisoners? Will the Governor additionally make provision for on-line access in the resettlement area to enable the agency staff to fulfil their duties more effectively? This will also be a requirement if the prison is to be used in a cross prison trial. (11.6, 11.7)

**Improvements**

1. A recruitment campaign has been underway throughout the year bringing in around 140 new staff. Although it is challenging for existing staff to manage this new intake, the Board welcomes the initiative and is beginning to observe improvements in all areas of the prison. (7.3)

2. The Board is pleased to note that the installation of new equipment (body scanner, itemiser) has helped considerably in the detection of illicit items being brought into the prison. (4.1)

3. All three inquests relating to deaths in custody were completed in a reasonable time and the Coroner had no critical comments to make to the prison in relation to these. (4.7)

4. The Board welcomes the reduction in the backlog of Use of Force documents. (4.8)

5. Body-worn cameras are being rolled out for use by prison staff and are a useful tool for gathering evidence. (4.8, 6.7, 7.6)
3  DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

Belmarsh opened in April 1991 at a cost of over £105m. It occupies some 60 acres on the old Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in South East London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall.

It is a core local prison within the high security estate. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and Magistrates' Courts in South East London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial. All category prisoners may be housed in Belmarsh.

The Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 760 and the Operational Capacity i.e. the maximum population it can hold is currently 906.

The main providers of contract services to the prison are:

Government Facilities Company – maintenance
Oxleas – Healthcare
Novus (Manchester College) - Education
4 SAFETY

1. **Overview:** The unannounced inspection 2018 findings were that “Security arrangements are robust”. A sophisticated body scanner now located in Reception is more efficiently detecting prisoners trying to enter the prison with illicit items. This is helping to reduce the number of items getting into the prison. Additionally there is a new itemiser machine in the Post Room which is helping to detect drugs being posted in. Despite these measures the Board has the concerns detailed below.

2. **Assaults:** The restricted regime on the houseblocks for the first two-thirds of the reporting year owing to lack of staff resulted in frustration among prisoners and unsafe conditions. Over the year the number of prisoner on prisoner assaults rose slightly. Prisoner assaults on staff for the first six months of 2018 were double those in the same period in 2017. Many of the assaults were carried out by Young Adults (age 18-20). There were 38 serious assaults, resulting in the hospitalisation of officers. The “One Postcode” scheme, which was initially set up to deal with gang activity, now trains prisoner mentors to mediate in conflicts between prisoners.

3. **Drugs and phones:** Drugs, including new psychoactive substances and mobile phones, continue to get into the prison despite the use of sniffer dogs, the new body scanner in Reception and the itemiser in the Post Room. This directly contributes to the levels of violent incidents, many of which are thought to be due to issues of debt and, in the case of YAs, gang affiliation.

4. **Gangs:** Prison staff confirm that the prison is under-prepared for escalating gang issues and that there needs to be a greater focus and a robust strategy for tackling this issue. The number of prisoners entering the prison who declare an affiliation with gangs has increased dramatically and it is almost impossible to ensure that gang members are kept apart. There is one specialist gang worker in the prison but on too many occasions during the year he has not been able to meet the groups of gang members who have indicated that they are ready to discuss their situation.

5. **Self-harm:** The incidents of self-harm during the first half of 2018 were higher than in the same period in 2017. Although the use of razor blades was banned in 2017, weapons from other sources such as bedding, plastic cutlery, metal and glass are still commonly used. The Board is concerned that sharp lids from tins ordered on the canteen and used in-cell can easily be turned into weapons.

6. **ACCTs:** Approximately 25 ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody, Teamwork) documents a month were opened during the year to manage prisoners who were at risk of self-harm or suicide, and staff held regular reviews. Board members quality checked entries on a random basis and mostly found them acceptable.

7. **Deaths in custody:** There were three deaths in custody during the reporting year. None was self-inflicted. All three inquests were completed within a reasonable time. The Coroner expressed no concerns and made no recommendations or criticisms of the prison.
8. **Use of Force:** Use of Force incidents have, for the most part, declined over the reporting year. The collection of reports relating to incidents has been a problem for some years. At the beginning of the year there were 500 missing statements from officers, but that number has since been reduced to approximately 100. Body-worn cameras are now used by every member of the team and footage is reviewed regularly.

9. **Listeners:** As of June 2018 there were 34 Listeners available on the houseblocks, in Reception and Healthcare, but none in Segregation. A Listener training programme will start in July 2018. There are Samaritan phones on each of the houseblocks, but they are sometimes not in working order. There are still no Listeners, nor access to Listeners, on the HSU (High Security Unit). In addition, there are no Samaritan phones on the Unit and none can be installed owing to the fabric of the walls. The Board remains concerned that HSU prisoners are not getting the same provision with regard to access to Listeners and Samaritan phones as they would have in normal location.

10. **Safer Custody team:** Members of the four-strong team of officers are often deployed to other jobs in the prison. The team is stretched and would benefit from increased staffing to undertake tasks that have so far been neglected, such as more equalities work on the houseblocks, working with managers, and training. Monthly team meetings now include the escort provider Serco Wincanton.

11. **Challenge Support Intervention Plan (CSIP):** The Violence Reduction Policy has recently been replaced by the new Challenge Support Intervention Plan. The Board hopes this will result in all officers becoming better informed and able not only to challenge poor behaviour but also to work with prisoners to help them change their behaviour.
1. **Equality Diversity Action Team (EDAT):** Management of equalities has been lacking for some time, owing to budgetary restraints leading to a lack of leadership. No Equalities Consultation meetings had been held since January 2016 and little work had been done to embed processes for the management of equalities. A change of policy in late 2017 has led to the setting up of the Equality Diversity Action Team, the first meeting of which was held in June 2018 to agree terms of reference and aims of the committee. Future EDAT meetings are scheduled to be held every two months. The Board will follow the progress of EDAT with interest.

2. **Protected Characteristics:** Some prisoners who have identified as having protected characteristics (disability, race including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality, sex and sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) have not been given full support by the prison. The exception to this is PRIDE, a forum for gay and transgender prisoners, which has been meeting since 2016. The two transgender prisoners currently in the prison report that they have been well supported by this forum. There are no such forums available for black and minority ethnic groups, for prisoners with disabilities or for elderly prisoners. In addition there are no age-related activities for elderly prisoners, who make up 14% of the Belmarsh population.

3. **Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs):** DIRF forms are available throughout the prison. Ninety-two DIRF forms were submitted between July 2017 and June 2018. Nine were from staff. Many purported to be complaining about racial abuse but in fact concerned other matters, for example property issues. At the time of writing, investigation into all DIRFs is up-to-date and has been signed off by the Deputy Governor. The Board will scrutinise the forms going forward.

4. **Complaints:** Complaints to the prison have risen marginally over the year. Most prisoners are satisfied with the response they get and accordingly not many appeals are lodged. Most complaints are replied to within five days and managers are providing fuller responses. Delays in replying are often caused by complaints sent to other jails not being answered promptly. Ten percent of responses are randomly checked. There have been very few cases sent to the Ombudsman. The Board has noticed a slight decrease in the number of complaints it receives from prisoners over the past few months.
SEGREGATION AND HIGH SECURITY UNIT

SEGREGATION UNIT

1. The Segregation Unit was full to capacity with 15 to 16 occupants for most of the reporting year. At one point an overflow of segregated prisoners had to be housed in the High Security Segregation Unit. Prisoners are visited on a daily basis by a Governor, Chaplaincy staff and health care and mental health staff. The Board visits once or twice a week.

2. The regime for most of the year has been restricted owing to lack of staff. Prisoners should be offered a shower, exercise, and a phone call daily, but all these basic entitlements, irrespective of a prisoner’s behaviour, are impossible in the core day without sufficient staffing. High multi-lock prisoners are especially affected by staffing shortages since at least seven members of staff are needed to unlock them. Prisoners who refuse to return to the houseblocks because they want to stay in Segregation are put on a refusal regime and allowed only three showers a week, plus daily exercise and a phone call. The advent of new staff from May 2018 has eased the staffing problem elsewhere in the prison but Segregation staff are still redeployed, sometimes on a daily basis, causing staff shortages in the unit.

3. Staff work towards the reintegration and rehabilitation of prisoners in the unit and do their best to engage willing prisoners in some kind of purposeful activity, even though that activity is restricted. Prisoners whose behaviour is not threatening may attend the small gym within the unit, and there are opportunities to do work such as preparing poppy collection tins, painting cells and cleaning showers. In-cell education is provided once a week by the Education Department, but consists of printed handouts delivered through the door. Suitable prisoners subject to risk assessment may be allowed to attend workshop sessions, but at the time of writing few if any workshops were functioning. The Psychology team provide support to staff in understanding the behaviour of the more challenging and dangerous prisoners.

4. Several prisoners have spent extended periods in the unit, one for over 240 days. A few are currently waiting to be sent to other prisons in the high security estate but places in the segregation units of those prisons are scarce and often prisoners are swapped between prisons, so the unit population remains high. Other prisoners are housed in the unit awaiting trial, and are sometimes there for three or more months.

5. Good Order and Discipline (GOOD) Reviews are held weekly to consider the progress a prisoner has made toward a return to normal location. The reviews are attended by Healthcare, Psychology, Probation, the IMB and the Segregation governor. Reviews were sometimes cancelled or moved to another day at short notice which meant not all participants whose presence was mandatory could attend. Healthcare attendance has improved over the year.

6. Adjudications are held daily through the week, either by a Governor or by an Independent Adjudicator. Staff shortages have meant reporting officers have not attended the adjudications in person but have been linked to the proceedings by telephone.

7. After a slow start body-worn cameras are now used routinely in Segregation for the protection of both staff and prisoners.

8. There is currently no Listener in the Segregation Unit.
HIGH SECURITY UNIT (HSU)

9. The development of the HSU and change of function are still in the planning stage.

10. The HSU has a basic standard of accommodation. The regime (as in the main prison) has fluctuated throughout the year. Staffing has improved recently and a more predictable regime has been re-established.

11. It is good that the garden was reinstated in late Spring.

12. Provision of activities, beyond sessions in the dedicated Gym and de-radicalisation for Muslims, is poor. For part of the year the single hour for Education for all prisoners was spasmodic due to staffing problems. The Board is pleased to note that this has now been rectified but still consider the time allowed to be inadequate.

13. Prisoners can experience very long delays in getting telephone numbers agreed, in receiving/sending out mail and in their visitors being allowed access to the prison for normal as opposed to closed visits.

14. There has been no progress towards providing a Samaritans’ telephone service/Listeners’ scheme. Safer Custody is still considering a suitable scheme to adopt.
7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

1. Belmarsh has a capacity for 906 prisoners. The houseblocks contain 281 single person cells, 67 dual-occupancy cells and 147 triple-occupancy cells.

2. The Board recognises that towards the end of the reporting year there has been a reduction in the use of triple-occupancy cells but continues to have concerns about cell sharing, in particular about triple-occupancy cells, originally designed for two people. As noted in several previous reports, the Board considers that over-crowded cells are not decent. It is hoped that the reduction in the use of triple occupancy cells will be permanent.

3. A major concern has been the restricted and inconsistent regime due to inadequate staffing. This leads to greater tension amongst prisoners and staff. In recent weeks, following a major recruitment programme, there have been additional officers available and this has enabled a more predictable and varied regime.

4. It is hoped that with the additional officers there will be more time available to develop better relationships with prisoners. The prison has had a focus on “Every Contact Matters” including training staff to be more aware of the positive impact they can have on prisoner behaviour. It would be useful if officers could have more time to develop further this basic good practice to gain a better understanding of the reasons for violent behaviour. Hopefully this will result in a greater emphasis on working towards implementing strategies to defuse potentially volatile situations.

5. There are many excellent, professional officers in Belmarsh and some very positive interactions with prisoners have been observed during the year. It is hoped that this will be the standard for all staff engaged with prisoners in the future.

6. Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) have been introduced during the year although some officers were initially reluctant to wear them. They can be a useful tool to promote safer interactions with prisoners by recording behaviour and providing evidence where necessary. The prison is aware of concerns that officers had when they were introduced and are working towards wearing a camera becoming the norm.

7. The Board is concerned that there were incidents of bullying/violence towards some of the prisoners housed on the overflow Vulnerable Prisoner spur. Reasons for this varied and included lack of communication particularly with new inexperienced staff or officers on temporary deployment from other prisons. Managers have put in place strategies to try to ensure that prisoners on all locations are safe. The Board will continue to watch this difficult area.

8. Additional areas highlighted in the Board’s rota reports which are of concern are:

   • Prisoners’ applications to the prison are not always dealt with helpfully, in a timely way or with much compassion;

   • There is a concern about how the needs of Young Adults are met.

9. A further impact on staffing is the poor management of the Counter Terrorism Clearance process and the excessive amount of time for clearance to be processed by Shared Services in the MOJ.
10. The Board is disappointed that, after significant improvements were introduced in the process for booking and managing visits, this has now slipped back. On one occasion an elderly woman, who had travelled from Southend, missed her appointment by 5 minutes and was turned away. Visitors are again experiencing difficulties trying to book visits by phone. This is because there are only two phone lines for the entire prison and too few people working on answering them. Phone booking takes priority over email booking with the result that there are often no visits left for people using the email system.

11. Management of property remains an issue and especially the transfer of property into the prison from other establishments.

12. The Kitchen is well managed, with a limited budget of £2.02 per head, and provides a nutritious diet. Prisoners are now given the opportunity to develop the menu as part of the Prisoner Consultation process.
8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care) (HCC)

GENERAL:
1. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has been the provider for healthcare services since 1st April 2015 operating an out-patient clinic and an in-patient facility. The Board continues to have a good working relationship with the Head of Healthcare.

IN-PATIENTS:
2. Of concern for the Board remains the high volume of mental health in-patients, multi-unlock and constant watch patients. By way of example, each constant watch patient requires one dedicated member of staff to watch them. The additional care these patients require affects the regime of those in Healthcare and other areas of the prison when staff have to be mobilised there to provide support.

3. The Board is concerned that Healthcare has to deal with some very challenging individuals and commends the sensitive manner in which prison staff manage them.

OUT-PATIENTS
4. A significant area of concern remains non-attendance to out-patient appointments, as observed and recorded in our weekly visits. On occasion only around a third of prisoners attend their appointments and this can be for a variety of reasons.
9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. It has been a disappointing year for the provision of purposeful activity and the reasons are largely beyond the scope of the prison staff. There was almost no purposeful activity throughout November and December and this prompted the Board to write, in January, to the Secretary of State for Justice expressing their concerns about the staff shortages and their impact on all areas throughout the prison.

2. Attendance at Education and Workshops continues to cause concern. Full capacity is rarely attained and it is apparent that the poor attendance is generally due to the provision of purposeful activity not meeting the needs of prisoners.

3. There are sufficient places to enable only a quarter of prisoners to be in education, workshops or attend the gym at any given time.

4. The provision of places in Education is limited as there remains inadequate funding to enable appropriate education courses to be made available. The Board has previously drawn attention to the discrepancy of funding in the prison compared to other London Institutions.

5. A lack of discipline staff to run a full regime has led to cancellation of classes over the reporting year. For the first half of 2018 there were 21 half days with no activities and 19 full days when education and workshops were closed.

6. The Board is pleased that staff have remained committed and have not become discouraged despite the difficulties.

7. The Board is pleased to note that Education has now reached its full staffing levels and consequently the situation should now improve.
10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

1. The provision of work facilities is inadequate and worse than the previous year. One reason is the continued difficulty in recruiting workshop trainers due to the low salary offered. Furthermore the slow processing of CTC applications has a significant impact on recruitment. There are currently eight vacancies for workshop trainers (against a full capacity of 17).

2. The Painting and Decorating course, the cookery course and the two workshops involving cleaning (the Yard team and the BICS Industrial Cleaning) are popular and useful for resettlement, but have too few places.

3. The workshop used for both the preparation of breakfast packs and electrical work had to be closed leaving only 36 places for the preparation of breakfast packs.

4. The prison has difficulty in attracting businesses into the prison and in finalising new contracts for workshops and has lost some provision resulting in a reduction in activities available.

5. The Board would again like to request that provision is considered to allow Category C prisoners to be able to work in the gardens and be able to attend a horticulture course.

6. A general shortage of discipline staff has led to cancellation of work over the reporting year, where there were no officers available to escort prisoners to activities. With the appointment of new staff this situation is expected to improve.
11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

1. The recent HMIP report drew attention to the excellent service being offered by the National Careers Service. The Board regrets that the contract for this was not renewed in April and at the end of the reporting year no adequate alternative has been provided. There appears no prospect of this being remedied until at least the next financial year – ten months into our next reporting year.

2. The Draft Strategy Document for Reducing Reoffending 2018/19 was made available towards the end of our reporting year. Notwithstanding that it is still in draft, it is ambitious and very encouraging. The Board hopes the prison will be provided with the resources it needs to fulfil its ambitions.

3. The Board is pleased to report that NACRO provides support to prisoners with mental health issues prior to leaving prison and follows up for a further three months following their release.

4. Similarly Pathways support prisoners with substance misuse issues prior to leaving prison and for a further three months following their release.

5. Staff from St Mungo’s, the DWP and CRC work together to provide assistance to prisoners in their preparations for release, although the CRC has lost some staff and is now quite limited in the support they can give:
   - seeking housing upon release;
   - setting up bank accounts;
   - support when applying for Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance including gaining access to all the information required such as birth certificates.

6. It would be more effective if these staff could be provided with a dedicated space, enabling them to work, as a team, with groups of prisoners. Currently it is necessary to go to the houseblocks to see each prisoner individually. Similarly their work is restricted as there is no on-line access. Ideally they should be able to access Virtual Campus to facilitate their work and to enable easier access to social workers in the community.

7. The DWP is in talks with the MOJ about using the prison in a trial, alongside other prisons, to see how the Virtual Campus system could work for many more prisoners. On-line access and a dedicated work space would be essential for this trial.
B  **Section – Work of Board**

1. The Board has 14 members as at the end of the reporting year, with four of these being recently appointed.

2. A training day was held in October when the process for dealing with HCC complaints was examined. This included a questionnaire to all prisoners using the HCC complaints system and the useful analysis of the findings enabled the Board to make some further recommendations to HCC.

3. The extensive delays in the CTC process are continuing to have an impact on enabling newly appointed members to start work on the Board. Additionally this affects existing members when it is necessary for them to renew their clearances.

4. The Board is assisted by a clerk 14 hours per week.

**BOARD STATISTICS**

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# Applications 2017-2018

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<td>J</td>
<td>Staff/prisoner concerns inc. bullying</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Totals for the Year ended June 2018</strong></td>
<td><strong>706</strong></td>
</tr>
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