



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP &YOI Thorn Cross

for reporting year
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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

1.1 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.

1.2 The Board is specifically charged to:

- 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.
- Inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- 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

Main judgements

2.1 It is our belief as a Board that the prisoners at Thorn Cross are treated fairly and the governors and staff provide a fair and equitable environment for the prisoners. They continue to provide a positive and purposeful rehabilitative culture for the prisoners and should be congratulated for their continuing dedication and enthusiasm to making HMP Thorn Cross a continuing success, placing it at the top of open prisons.

2.2 The increasing availability of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the community has not been mirrored at Thorn Cross; however steroids have become a major illicit drug, the presence of which is increasing as we go to press. The gymnasium staff and security liaise well in relation to this problem, but despite warnings on induction the men continue to take the risks of usage. We would advocate a gym/security induction plus a drop-in session for all prisoners. A further worrying trend is the counterfeiting of tablets and capsules. Prisoners are led to believe that the substances are as stated and buy on that premise; however the drugs are rarely genuine and often contain harmful and addictive active substances and the risks are apparent, except to the men.

2.3 The transfer of prisoners and their property between establishments remains a problem. It has been disappointing to realise that some other custodial establishments seem unconcerned about the loss and/or return of prisoners' property, despite all means of contact with those establishments, and their IMBs to retrieve it.

Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

2.4 There is a significant disparity between in-cell and on-wing telephone charges within the Prison Service. We view this as totally unfair and are further told that as an open prison there are no immediate plans for in-cell telephony for Thorn Cross. We understand this, but do not understand the disparity. It is grossly unfair to the men, as keeping in touch with families

prior to release, particularly in open conditions, is a mainstay of the regime. It is out of kilter with modern standards and we urge the Minister to address this as an urgent issue, which is not complex and would have synergistic results.

2.5 Once again, the availability of mobile phones, SIM cards, and other devices having a high currency value within a prison needs addressing. The possession of these devices can lead to other problems such as bullying, harassment of family and friends and utilisation of social media whilst incarcerated plus the continuation of “business”. Perhaps a total rethink on this issue of mobile phones is now appropriate with restricted use of the prisoner’s own mobile for prescribed numbers, monitored conditions and being kept in secure storage. Some ‘Blue Sky’ thinking is much overdue in our opinion, we seem to be clinging onto a very outdated attitude.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

2.6 Education and training is pivotal to the rehabilitation of prisoners and it is imperative that the budget is sufficient to allow education in the basic skills , such as literacy and numeracy as well as more academic subjects. Attainment of qualifications will enhance the opportunity of employment on release.

The budget for this coming year will not sustain all the educational opportunities and a review of budgets is strongly recommended particularly for the open estate.

As a result of this year’s reduced budget there will be voluntary redundancies offered to the staff of the contract provider Novus and the loss of the Railtrack railway engineering course. The Board is disappointed at the loss of such a flagship course, which has been a beacon for Thorn Cross throughout the north west, providing an almost guaranteed and well-paid job on release. This strikes at the very basis of rehabilitation.

2.7 The parlous state of the offender management unit (OMU) building and the resultant overcrowding requires urgent remedial action. The proposed rebuilding has been projected for too many years, the staff have battled on with very little complaining and perhaps this has contributed to the lack of activity. In summer it is oven-like and in winter an igloo. The building is in a disgraceful state; coupled with archaic wiring it is not fit for purpose. In this reporting year the inclement weather resulted in roof leakage causing delays in parole meetings and other management meetings.

2.8 The removal of non-standard furniture with no immediate replacement of an affordable nature has caused totally unwarranted disruption. This removal, although necessary as regards fire safety standards, could have been handled in a more professional manner not the ‘pig in a poke’ attitude that all of the prisoners were subjected to. To this date the replacements have not arrived and it is not acceptable to expect men to sit on their beds in cells to eat meals etc.

TO THE GOVERNOR

2.9 The Governor and staff are to be congratulated on this establishment. We have had a change of Governing Governor during the year which has gone seamlessly. We thank the previous Governor for his diligence and enthusiasm and the fact that he listened and, when appropriate, acted. We wish him all success in the office of the PDG. We welcome our new Governor, who has arrived very mindful of the effect on staff and prisoners that a change in leadership may have. We wish him all success in continuing and advancing the excellence of Thorn Cross and are pleased to note his emphasis on and obvious feelings for the families of prisoners.

He has established an immediate rapport with the Board, which we hope will be fruitful and long lasting on both sides. 2.10 The lifer and IPP (prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection) community have equal access to rehabilitation activities but the lack of a defined release date can be viewed as detrimental and their needs may be different to those prisoners with release dates who have access to release on temporary licence (ROTL). There have been several successful lifer days involving their families and group meetings, which should resolve some of their issues and establish a footprint for development.

2.11 It is hoped that the number of work-outs (opportunities for prisoners to undertake work placement opportunities outside the prison will increase as well as continuation of the good work relating to purposeful activity. There have been instances where prisoners have arranged their own work-outs, which have been successful but the converse has happened where they have attempted to arrange a work-out and security checks have resulted in it being denied. The prison has ownership of the work-outs but all take time to arrange and there are limited staff to deal with all the issues. If it is the intention to increase these opportunities there should be a review of staffing in activities.

2.12 The increasing amount of contraband entering the establishment is of concern. A review of the search process on return from work-outs, outside and before visits may result in minimising the amount entering the establishment. It is appreciated that it is difficult for an open estate to minimise the “drop” to the prison but extra grounds patrols may be a deterrent as will the increase in security lighting. During the reporting year additional lighting has been bought and installed at the rear of Goldfinch unit, together with closed circuit television (CCTV).

2.13 The encouragement of the mentor scheme should be applauded as the communication from prisoner to prisoner is much appreciated, e.g. inductions by the Shelter mentor and substance misuse mentor.

2.14 The Board is particularly pleased at the attention given to former members of the armed forces amongst the population and various events and evenings focussed on their specific needs.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

3.1 HMP &YOI Thorn Cross is situated on the outskirts of south Warrington in Appleton. It opened as a category D open prison for juvenile and young prisoners in 1985 on the site of a Royal Fleet Air Arm base HMS. Blackcap. In 2008 it became an establishment for 18- to 25-year-olds and in 2013 the age limit was removed and it now takes any prisoner over 18

3.2 The operational capacity is 381 in seven units for category D prisoners nearing the end of their sentence; this also includes lifers and IPP prisoners who are nearing parole. The objective is successful rehabilitation into the community and therefore reducing reoffending.

3.3 Should segregation be required there are four cells allocated on Fulmer unit where prisoners await transfer back to closed conditions. The aim is for immediate transfer but within at least 24 hours, often in as little as four. The remainder of the unit is utilised for prisoners new to open conditions for induction prior to transfer to one of the remaining six units. The Board has concerns about the size of these cells, relating to cell sharing, but the allocation of cells, it is appreciated, has to be balanced with the operational capacity.

3.4 The establishment has several workshops on site with opportunities for training and rehabilitation into a working life in the community. Outside agencies operate some of the workshops (Timpson, Max Spielmann, Recycling Lives, Remade with Hope) and have on occasions also created job opportunities for prisoners on release. The gym is the focus for leisure activities and the farms and gardens workshop keep the site attractive, tidy and colourful.

3.5 The educational element is provided by Manchester College under the guise of Novus. Training programmes have undergone change to reflect the changing age groups. Courses provided include numeracy and literacy as well as lifestyle courses.

3.6 Healthcare commissioned by NHS England is provided by Bridgewater Community Healthcare Foundation Trust and mental health services are provided by Greater Manchester West Mental Health Foundation Trust. The healthcare unit has undergone refurbishment to be more conducive to care that reflects that provided in the community. Extra dental care has been commissioned this year and the waiting period is now comparable to the services in the community.

3.7 Transport is provided by GEOAmev and is supplemented by the use of the prison's own vehicles for transfers between establishments and transporting prisoners to work placements, thus reducing travel costs. The costs of transporting prisoners to work-outs, often at considerable distance, is placing an inordinate strain on budgets.

4 SAFETY

4.1 Over the last five years the injury trend is recorded as moving in the right direction, with fewer injuries. We have discussed the rationale behind this with the prison health and safety (H&S) team and the reason could be that Thorn Cross has implemented better controls. We have seen injury investigations being completed within a reasonable time and numerous positive projects being progressed by the H&S team for example;

- No psychoactive substances events or second hand exposure reported and only one minor fire in a stores area.
- No outstanding Information Requests from HMPPS NW litigation team
- The prison supporting personal emergency evacuation plans (for prisoners with mobility problems) with wing fire safety champions
- Hygiene improvement plan
- Expansion of Remade with Hope Workshop
- Accident reduction and improved health and safety in Recycling Lives Workshop
- Complete refurbishment of the dental suite in healthcare ensuring compliance with infection control and Care Quality Commission standards.

4.2 The Board would like to think that the positives of the good health and safety culture combined with having adopted good safety controls has resulted in fewer accidents. The average number of injuries have fallen from 25 in 2014 to 14 in 2018. The number of assaults

(prisoner on prisoner) remains low and stable with no assaults on staff in the reporting year. The establishment is safe.

4.4 Healthcare staffing has been maintained. They still share specialist staff across other establishments, mainly HMP Risley and HMP Hindley. The healthcare staff have been supporting a prisoner with a complaint about a secondary care provider in Liverpool. The vaccination figures continue to show a year-on-year improvement. The healthcare staff occasionally experience some disrespect when matters cannot be dealt with immediately. When this does happen, the staff respond appropriately.

4.5 The state of the OMU building means that it is not a pleasant environment in which to work. The removal of the chairs from prisoners' cells has resulted in inadequate furnishing and has resulted in them having nowhere to sit.

4.6 The experience of the IMB members is that the majority of prisoners feel safe within the establishment and there is limited evidence of bullying or intimidation between prisoners. If and when there are occurrences, the officers deal with the incident in a timely and appropriate manner using the correct reporting channels. Based on previous history and/or intelligence, prisoners who are deemed at risk of perpetrating bullying or potentially of being a victim of bullying are closely monitored by staff. The establishment of the Cardinal health and wellbeing unit has provided the appropriate environment and activities for vulnerable prisoners.

4.6 The Sycamore Tree programme, organised by the chaplaincy six times a year, continues to be successful and popular. The course reflects on the feelings of the victims of crime and how that impacts on the prisoner's thoughts and behaviour. It is sometimes a condition of the prisoner's sentence plan to attend the Sycamore Tree course. It has, where appropriate, involved the victims and their families to relate the impact of the crime to their lives. The chaplaincy is looking to develop further victim impact events to include knife crime and counter terrorism.

4.7 The number of assessment, care and custody teamwork (ACCT) documents opened is extremely low but when opened they are managed appropriately and reviewed by the correctly designated staff. The establishment has trained and maintained adequate numbers of ACCT assessors during the year. The changing age groups have seen the use of ACCTs improve and any open ACCTs are reviewed at the monthly integrated risk management team (IRMT) meetings. The ACCT assessors on duty are displayed on a daily basis at the main gate.

4.8 The changing age range has reduced the incidence of bullying and there were only five applications received by the Board in year specifically related to perceived verbal bullying / victimisation. If and when bullying is suspected close monitoring is undertaken and staff are fully aware and support the victim. Moves to alternative units or workplaces are offered and on occasions are accepted.

4.9 The peer mentor scheme continues to provide excellent support and advice to new prisoners to the establishment. The peer mentors associated with substance misuse, Listeners and Shelter conduct the induction sessions twice weekly, and offer an open door to anyone feeling vulnerable. The mentors have an office on the main concourse in the education block where prisoners can drop in for advice and support on any prison-related issue. They also have a drop-in facility in the Pathways office for substance misuse problems. The Board is involved in the induction process and is currently talking to the peer mentors' lead and the drug/alcohol team leader as to how we may improve the induction presentations.

4.10 Members of the IMB attend the security meetings, Pathfinder meetings and IRMT meetings monthly, reporting back to the remainder of the Board on issues concerning the prison and individual prisoners. Any gang-related issues are closely monitored and historical relationships are discouraged by all means available.

4.11 The Board has entirely revamped the format of its rota visits which now follow HMIP's Expectations headings and monitoring protocols. Each unit also now has a designated IMB member who is available to lend assistance and help, attend the cell welfare inspections and ensures a constant contact with the supervising officers and custody managers for their unit. It is too soon to assess but first results are most favourable and rota visits have taken on a more structured and meaningful approach for staff and prisoners alike.

5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 The diversity and equality action team (DEAT) have identified a lead for each of the protected characteristics and meet bi-monthly to monitor progress towards achieving compliance in relation to the characteristics. There is a senior officer designated as the DEAT lead. The team includes prisoners of all ages with special interest in one of the characteristics. The work of the team includes the prisoners, staff and visitors to the establishment.

5.2 The team and their photographs are displayed across the establishment and units to raise awareness of the identified leads. A prisoner member of the group has responsibility for producing a DEAT newsletter on the current developments of the team.

5.3 The disability strand of the characteristics liaises with external agencies to ensure there are no barriers to accepting a physically disabled prisoner and all new reception prisoners are asked to identify if they have a physical or learning disability, which is entered in the records.

5.4 The Board has monitored visits and family days, which are extremely popular amongst the men. The visits hall has a play area attached with toys for younger children. This area is supervised by suitably trained staff. Refreshments are available from the Blackcap Café (see paragraph 7.5).

5.5 There are a number of faiths represented by the prison population. The chaplaincy arranges a number of festivals and celebrations to reflect this, in partnership with a number of organisations and individuals. The kitchen provides meals that ensure the religious and other dietary needs of the prisoners are met.

6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

6.1 Thorn Cross does not have a segregation/care and separation unit like other establishments but has four allocated holding cells on Fulmer unit should a prisoner require isolation following an incident and prior to transfer back to a closed establishment. A member of the IMB is notified of the transfers and will visit the prisoner where possible but the transfer is actioned speedily, which does not always allow for the visit to take place. Prisoners are only in the holding cells for a very short period of time.

6.2 Fulmer unit is staffed sufficiently to deal with the prisoners there and any prisoner allocated to the holding cells. There are always extra staff on the unit to action the transfer

and facilitate the transport of the prisoner to the identified receiving establishment. A full and comprehensive record of all occupancy of the holding cells and transfers to other establishments is maintained on the unit. The unit also has the facilities to hold adjudication meetings in complete privacy along with staff who are fully cognisant of the procedure and paperwork. The unit is a good example of excellent team work when the situation arises.

6.3 All Board members are able to speak freely to any prisoner on the unit whether in the holding cells or in the normal cellular accommodation. The unit is visited on every rota visit and included on every rota report.

6.4 Adjudications take place on Fulmer unit in a designated room and where possible are observed by a member of the IMB to ensure they are conducted fairly with fair and appropriate resolutions agreed. The prisoner is given time to prepare himself and given every opportunity to speak at the hearing. Thorn Cross does have a low tolerance policy and adjudications for significant offences usually result in transfers back to closed conditions. As in many other establishments, Thorn Cross encounters many offences relating to the possession of mobile phones and SIM cards, addictive substances and resulting failed drug and alcohol tests. A thematic review of adjudications was undertaken by a Board member during the year and no significant problems were identified. There were no inconsistencies between different adjudicators; however the same adjudicator would sometimes deliver a different judgement to that which he had awarded to a previous and similar charge. There may be valid reasons for this as each adjudication is unique and weight is given to the individual circumstances and record of each prisoner. Although this may be the case, the recording of decisions made does not always make clear why a particular conclusion has been reached.

6.5 As a result of the low tolerance, adjudications are opened, but before the investigations are completed the prisoner may have been transferred to another establishment and it becomes incumbent on the receiving establishment to complete the process. This often results in the adjudication becoming barren and thus no penalty is involved. The Board would like to see the completion of all adjudications at Thorn Cross.

6.6 Contraband entering the establishment continues to be problematic. In the reporting year there have been incidences of mobile phones, SIM cards, phone chargers and even fresh meat and alcohol. Despite excellent use of intelligence available to the discipline staff, it remains a problem. Items found through searches and cell searches are high value currency items and it is important that detection on entering the establishment is made paramount and use and uptake of the contraband made much more difficult.

7. ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

7.1 The prisoners' accommodation is provided in seven units across the estate. On the rota visits conducted by the IMB, the cleanliness, safety and tidiness of all areas on the units is monitored and any issues reported. Since the outsourcing of estate maintenance there have been issues of reporting and timeliness of repairs and general maintenance issues. In particular, there have been issues on Goldfinch unit (7) with the washroom facilities. At the time of writing this report the shower cubicles are being refurbished, which will make a dramatic improvement to the environment.

7.2 There have been innovative changes within catering such as "theme nights" and revision of the menus based on preferences identified from a questionnaire. The new menus contain

five options, including vegetarian, and the menus change on a four-week cycle. A Food Focus group has been established and is well represented by the prisoners to discuss issues and suggestions with the catering team. A separate boiler and preparation area has recently been installed for halal cuisine. There have not been any applications to the Board concerning food during the year.

7.3 Each unit is equipped with toasters, fridges, microwaves and kettles in a designated kitchen area enabling the prisoners to cater for snacks in association time. These areas are monitored by the IMB member during the rota visits. Food items from the staff mess can be purchased during visits for children and family members, which is popular, and from the canteen list for the prisoner's personal use. Also, the Level 2 catering course participants hold a "Baker Boys" service three days per week where the prisoners can buy food prepared by those on the course. This has proved extremely popular.

7.4 The catering facilities within the establishment are maintained in clean, tidy and workable conditions. Trolleys are adequate and identified for specific use, such as halal. Portion sizes can be difficult to control but main courses are delivered in foil containers to ensure adequacy and fairness at the serveries but officers are present and oversee the serving of meals. Each unit has a food comment book where staff and prisoners are encouraged to comment on the food, but there needs to be consistency across the establishment about where such books are kept so that they are readily available to ensure maximum use of reporting issues. The IMB do regular out of hours visits to ensure the cooked evening meal is monitored and where there are issues, these are reported to catering team and the Governor.

7.5 The staff mess (Blackcap café) is a training unit managed by a staff member from NOVUS, the education provider. There is a varied menu of snacks and light lunches available during the working week provided in conducive surroundings. There has been a very noticeable improvement in quality and variety of the dishes on offer during the year. The mess also caters for conferences, prison visits, family days and training events. The staff mess has recently been refurbished with new furniture and decoration.

7.6 There have been constant issues with prisoner property in the reporting year in that it does not always follow the prisoner between transfers, is lost or mislaid in transit and the fact that some prisons allow items of property that are then not allowed at Thorn Cross. Applications received relating to this issue were 28, and this relies on other establishments to investigate and respond. Response from other establishments has been mixed at best. This issue is not always controllable due to outsourced transport limiting transferring property, which leads to the potential compensation claims across the system.

7.7 Staff/prisoner relationships are good with the ethos on rehabilitation into the community. Officers have a good working knowledge of individual prisoners and ensure that the prison regime is appropriately and effectively managed. Prisoner representatives are encouraged to participate in meetings, in particular the prisoner representative committee, to ensure all accommodation and communication issues are discussed and actioned. A member of the IMB is a member of the committee at all times.

8. HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

8.1 Healthcare commissioned by NHS England is provided by Bridgewater Community Healthcare Foundation Trust for the primary care services and Greater Manchester West Mental Health Care Foundation Trust for mental health care. There are no inpatient facilities

in the prison so prisoners requiring hospitalisation are cared for at the local or specialist hospital. Where possible, prisoners who are eligible for release on temporary licence (ROTL) are enabled to attend a hospital appointment without escort, thus reducing any incurred costs to the prison.

8.2 The healthcare facility utilises the SystemOne computer system which enables electronic transfer of medical records across establishments and has made full use of the electronic prescribing element of the system.

8.3 The dental suite has been fully refurbished and is now fit for purpose and compliant with infection control and Care Quality Commission guidance. The service is comparable with community services. There was an issue with appointments but with the recruitment of more staff the appointments are now within acceptable timescales.

8.4 There were no major staffing issues within the reporting year and the prison has been recruiting more administrative staff. The staff still experience some attitude and disrespect issues, but these are manageable and seen as part of the job, as with other frontline NHS staff.

8.5 Staff continue to work closely with the discipline staff on the health and wellbeing unit, Cardinal, to ensure disabilities and special needs are catered for and have been instrumental in alternative therapies such as yoga, mindfulness and weight management. They are closely involved in assessing prisoners for cell sharing as well as fit for work notices when a prisoner feels health reasons prevent him from working. They are also involved in assessing for specialist mattresses and work footwear.

8.6 All routine specialist clinics, health promotion and screening programmes continue and vaccinations programmes have seen a continued increase in uptake.

8.7 The Change Grow Live (CGL) service ensures the rehabilitation of those with substance and alcohol misuse problems and works with the service in the community to ensure continuity of care on release. The mentors in the service attend the induction programme for new prisoners and offer a drop-in service for individuals who may be experiencing difficulties. Some of the mentors have worked in the service's community setting.

9. EDUCATION AND OTHER PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES.

9.1 The education provision was graded as outstanding by OFSTED in 2016 and it continues to perform well, meeting the needs of most prisoners. Ninety percent of learners achieved success in their course in 2017-18.

9.2 There is a wide variety of courses available with an emphasis being placed on the acquisition of functional skills in English and mathematics. Even though prisoners arrive here from another prison a significant minority do so without having achieved Level 1 in English and/or mathematics. Some only have small gaps in their learning, for others the gaps are more pronounced. This impacts on their ability to gain from the many training and work opportunities here and lessens their employability upon release. It also means that they may leave the prison less prepared for a successful reintegration into society than their peers as they lack some essential life skills.

9.3 Although all prisoners are assessed on their arrival, currently some do not access the provision available alongside work. The prison would benefit from implementing measures to

ensure that no one misses out. A new strategy for the provision of functional skills is currently being prepared, which will hopefully address this.

9.4 Currently there are daily English and mathematics lessons for 90 or 105 minutes. This allows the prisoners to take other courses or engage in other activities. For some, functional skills are woven into their work placement. On completion of their English or mathematics qualification, prisoners are now entitled to a £10 bonus for any level of achievement. This is a welcome development and will provide some incentive; however, it falls short of the wages they can earn elsewhere.

9.5 The prison should look at ways of incentivising the prisoners further so as to encourage self-improvement.

9.6 There are a number of construction courses: bricklaying, plastering (including dry lining), painting and decorating. Industry-recognised qualifications are available and instructors keep themselves up-to-date so as to provide experiences that mirror the work environment. 100% of the prisoners who took the essential CSCS card test were successful. Houses are built, rooms plastered and papered. Prisoners following these courses are put to good use by decorating some of the units, for example.

9.7 Those prisoners who follow the horticulture course and who work in that area keep the prison estate bright and cheerful with well-maintained lawns and flower beds. The prison was once again successful in winning trophies at the Southport flower show.

9.8 The catering and hospitality courses are popular with 'Baker Boys', who prepare and sell food, being extremely popular with the prison population as a whole. The art course produces many pieces of inspirational art work that brighten the prison environment. Further opportunities to provide art work throughout the estate should be sought. Art work has been displayed at Chester Cathedral and the Tate in Liverpool. Some art and design students have achieved Level 3.

9.10 Many prisoners participate in customer-facing courses and more could be done to ensure that an adequate level of customer service skills is acquired.

9.10 The IT and business studies courses remain popular with some prisoners having obtained Level 3 qualifications. There is scope for developing the offer of digital courses. The IT course provided would benefit from updated hardware and software so that prisoners are able to use those they will meet in everyday life and in the workplace e.g. tablets/iPads. This requires the planned upgrading of the IT systems to take place. A new VLE (Virtual Learning) will aid the IT provision. The use of the Virtual Campus remains high.

9.11 The Railtrack railway engineering course, now abandoned, also continued to be popular and provided meaningful 'through the gate' opportunities. This is a marked loss to the establishment and we hope that there may be a means of financing from other sources.

9.12 Employment opportunities are enhanced by the work of the employment support worker who provides impartial advice on a daily drop-in basis and on one evening per week. Paid work placements have been arranged both for ROTL and upon release.

There are 15 prisoners currently following college courses at Warrington College, Trafford College or Liverpool Community College. Four are following university courses.

9.13 An exciting opportunity is starting with Greene King, the catering empire, who are to take six prisoners on work-outs. This would enable tutors from Thorn Cross to work in tandem

with the work- based training provided so as to ensure that the training provided here complements that provided externally. This could provide a model for partnership working.

The staff are to be congratulated on the successful education provision at Thorn Cross. The variety of the courses provided and the bespoke nature of the provision means that there is something for everyone.

There are currently twelve teaching staff with support staff and the management team. The classrooms are bright and airy and along with the other teaching areas are fit for purpose.

10. INDUSTRY

10.1 HMP Thorn Cross runs a variety of training courses and workshops run by NOVUS, the Prison Service and private providers. Qualifications can be obtained to help secure jobs when out on licence or released. All prisoners receive a payment for their work.

10.2 The three building-related courses (brick laying, plastering and painting/decorating) are a good opportunity for the prisoners to gain a general skill base, which will help them find employment upon release.

Bricklaying workshop

This is a well-subscribed course. The prisoners learn a variety of bricklaying skills from laying out to a high standard of intricate patterns. They obtain a Level 2 qualification in bricklaying. The course length is sixteen weeks. The standard of bricklaying observed appears first class.

Plastering workshop

Here prisoners learn the various skills to plaster and render to a competent level. They also learn how to make plaster mouldings and architrave. The course is 12 weeks long and the offenders obtain a Level 2 qualification in plastering. The course is always popular. The finished walls are of a good standard.

Painting and decorating workshop

All the relevant skills for painting and decorating to Level 2 standard are learnt. Unfortunately, they are unable to obtain Level 3 standard due to Health and Safety requirements. The course is a rolling 12 weeks. As someone finishes the course, someone else starts, which results in the prisoners being at different stages during the course. The standard of paper hanging is very good.

Recycling Lives

This is a recycling and waste management company, which has a workshop at Thorn Cross. TVs and monitors are dismantled into component parts for recycling. The workshop employs 17 prisoners. This workshop is a popular choice for prisoners. They earn above average wages and are encouraged to save some of their wages for use upon their release. They can also obtain a fork lift truck licence. At the time of writing five prisoners had obtained them. The offenders are given daily targets, which if achieved earns them a bonus.

Remade with Hope

This is a private company, which recycles returned/unsold clothes and household goods from a major UK retailer. They employ 30 prisoners. The workshop has a turnover of 20000 items

per week. The returned goods have their labels destroyed and then they are sorted, packaged and sent to various outlets. These include charities and market traders in a number of countries for resale. The wages are above average and bonuses can be obtained if targets are met. No formal qualifications are obtained, but help can be given to revalidate Fork Lift Truck licences. In the future they are looking to provide an NVQ in warehouse operations if funding and or sponsorship can be obtained.

Timpson

There are two workshops in operation, where prisoners learn shoe mending skills, timekeeping and workshop skills. They do not obtain any formal qualifications but do have the experience of working in a busy workplace where standards of work have to be maintained. The staff are helpful, and the prisoners appear to enjoy the work. Prisoners who apply to work in a Timpson shop on release are guaranteed an interview.

Max Spielmann

This unit usually has 18 prisoners working in it. They generally stay here once placed. The unit transfers VHS recording to CD. No formal qualifications are obtained but the prisoners are exposed to a working environment where timekeeping and a work ethic are important.

Railtrack

This course was a popular course with almost guaranteed employment after completion and obtaining a personal track safety certificate and a Sentinel smartcard. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, this course has been withdrawn. This is a great loss.

Kitchen

The kitchen cooks all the meals for Thorn Cross and provides for a variety of dietary and religious needs. The prisoners here learn to cook mass produced meals. They all obtain food hygiene certificates. Unfortunately, this only allows limited access to catering (typically function catering) upon release.

Blackcap Café

This is a fully functioning café. It employs five prisoners who, after training for six months (500 hours) and passing the examination, receive an NVQ Level 2 qualification in catering. This is a rolling course where the trainees are at different levels of ability. On obtaining the NVQ the prisoners can go into catering when on ROTL. The unit is run by NOVUS.

Baker Boys

This catering facility runs a 12-week course and has ten prisoners in training. Once trained they obtain an NVQ Level 2 qualification, which allows them to work in catering once they are released. This course is run by Novus.

Land based activities

This is the in-house grounds department. It is responsible for maintaining the gardens, grounds and smallholdings. There are various greenhouses and poly-tunnels growing a variety of plants, some from seeds or brought in. The department had supplied produce to a farm shop, which has recently closed, resulting in the loss of a valuable work opportunity for the prisoners as well as a shop front to the local community. The unit normally has 12 prisoners working for it, but at the present time it has 24. Currently the department are

gearing up for the annual Windlesham Trophy competition, which they last won in 2016. The department had a good year in 2018 at the Southport flower show, winning the Best Public Garden, the Lady Pilkington Trophy for the garden which best depicts the theme of the show and the Large Gold Medal for the creativity on display. It is a pity that because of staff shortages through ill health they will not be displaying this year. The offenders can obtain an NPTC (now City & Guilds Land Based Services) qualification in safe use of machinery.

11. REHABILITATION AND RELEASE PLANNING

11.1 A homework club is run every Thursday. Mothers bring their children to visit their fathers who begin by doing some cooking then eating together. The fathers then help the children with their homework. This enables contact with parents and allows the children to follow age-appropriate activities. Library books are available to borrow. (The library has supplied books for the children – World Book Day titles for different ages.)

11.2 The allocation of work placements, training opportunities and employment or purposeful activity are normally sufficient to provide places for the maximum capacity of the establishment for at least part of the working day. There is a demand for outside work placements rather than internal work opportunities. The prison is continually striving to identify work opportunities both within the establishment and with outside employers. Prisoners' wages/payments remain an issue, as there is disparity on what is paid per area or work-out. This can cause concerns when trying to save money for release.

11.3 The governor who is allocated responsibility for education and training chairs regular meetings with the providers and discipline staff to ensure issues are resolved and action plans implemented where necessary.

11.4 The labour allocations board ensures that all prisoners are allocated to appropriate activities and they are where they should be at the right time. There have been issues where prisoners leave their place of employment for an appointment and return to their units rather than their place of work. As a result there is now a lock out period where, once all the prisoners have left the units, the doors are locked and only reopened for breaks and meal times till the working day has finished.

11.5 The number of work-outs has increased to 70 during the year, much appreciated by the men and reflected by the lack of applications to the Board. The prison continues to encourage work-outs where possible and some prisoners have successfully secured their own workout following health and safety and appropriate security checks.

11.6 The employment support worker has a daily drop-in session to give advice and guidance on employability as well as supporting the prisoners in finding employment.

11.7 Some prisoners are employed as prison van drivers and take the work-out prisoners to their place of employment within an acceptable distance that has been approved by the prison. The cost of this transportation is high as the distances involved are quite significant and perhaps a more realistic approach is needed, involving public transport, better mirroring the conditions that the men will meet in outside employment.

11.7 There have been some delays experienced by some of the prisoners in the arranging of their work-outs, currently running at 70 for the establishment, and on some occasions there has been a backlog. When reported this is raised with the Governor and it is mainly a workforce issue caused by the limited number of staff available within the department.

12. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

12.1 The Offender Management Unit (OMU) achieved a rating of “good” in the HMPPS security audit, which looked at ROTL in relation to the relevant Prison Service Instruction. The success of ROTL, at 98% and home detention curfew (HDC) applications are more than comparable with any other open prison in England. HMIP inspectors noted that processes were in line with policy and that prisoners were given fair access to ROTL.

12.2 A new HDC policy has been introduced at the beginning of the year, which does not alter the criteria for the prisoners but alters the way in which the paperwork is processed. This was implemented on 28 March 2019 and incorporates the new GPS tagging, with four members of the OMU team having taken part in the test trial. The GPS tagging will apply to lifers, IPPs and HDCs if required.

12.3 The team are still based in a Portakabin which is overcrowded, only allows for limited privacy in the consulting rooms and is not conducive to a good working environment for the staff based there. The cabin has been given a provisional date of late 2019, early 2020 for replacement. The roof continues to leak during inclement weather and is patched by Amey whenever possible.

12.4 The offending behaviour programmes are expected to be completed by prisoners at the closed establishments prior to transfer to a category D prison such as Thorn Cross. However, if it is deemed that a prisoner would benefit from a programme this can be arranged through the ROTL process. There is cohesive work with CGL Pathways regarding drug and alcohol and prisoners are referred accordingly by their offender supervisor.

12.5 Enhanced behaviour monitoring (EBM) is well embedded, with seven prisoners undertaking the process. However, the OMU team would wish to see a more robust response from more departments and outside agencies.

12.6 Due to the nature of the OMU department, there is a dedicated team of offender supervisors who enable sentence plans, initial interviews and OASys updates to be completed to timescales. All sentence plans are completed within the first eight weeks of arrival at Thorn Cross. The OMU holds regular meetings with all partner agencies to ensure and enable closer and better working communications.

12.7 The OMU also operates an open house every Friday afternoon where offender supervisors are available to discuss prisoners’ concerns or issues in relation to ROTL and HDC.

12.8 There is a well-established integrated risk management team (IRMT) chaired by the head of OMU who meet monthly to review statistics and discuss any issues relating to prisoners who are of concern or are high risk. These meetings are well attended by relevant parties and agencies and a member of the IMB. The case conference process has been updated and issued to all involved. They are now called risk management meetings (RMM).

12.9 The relationship with NACRO regarding the HDC accommodation is consistently strong. There were three placements during the year with a 100% success rate and one still outstanding.

12.10 VISOR (the police database) is accessed via two case administrators in the OMU, the security intelligence analyst, and quality assured by one probation officer. VISOR numbers have grown significantly due to certain police areas now including prisoners with serious crime prevention orders into VISOR.

12.11 The Quantum computer system is giving concerns to this department and others as regards speed and dropouts, despite repeated referrals to the help desk. HDC and ROTL databases are entirely electronic, therefore there is great dependence on an efficient and robust system. The OMU has referred these problems up to operations manager level but they persist in this and other departments resulting even in the total loss of emails and synchronisation of departments.

12.12 OASys continues to be updated for each prisoner upon arrival into open conditions. All men regardless of whether they are in scope or not receive an OASys update.

12.13 The activities hub continues to work closely with the OMU team, Shelter CRC, Job Centre and Achieve. This is wisely located within the same building, which allows for the easy sharing of information.

Section – Work of Board

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the Establishment	318
Total number of segregation reviews attended (no segregation unit)	0

Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	14
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality	2	1
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	3	5
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	8	2
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	6	13
F	Food and kitchens	0	6
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	0	8
H 1	Property within this establishment	5	9
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	11	28
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	2	2
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	27	49
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying/complaints	4	1
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	10	8
C/A	Confidential Access	14	12
	Total number of IMB applications	93	160