



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP HEWELL GRANGE

for reporting Year

1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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1 STATUTORY ROLE

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 (IMB) at HMP Hewell Grange for the period October 2018 to September 2019. Evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, and prisoner applications. Due to the fact that the accommodation at Hewell Grange will shortly close, there are limited areas for development.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?

Board members have met with, and had correspondence from, prisoners who feel that they were unfairly treated when they were recategorised. However, this is a small minority of the prisoners encountered.

Are prisoners treated humanely?

The prison attempts to treat prisoners humanely. The state of the residential accommodation poses a challenge, which will be resolved by its closure.

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

The Board has limited evidence on which to judge this but is aware that prisoners report that they appreciate the training and workplace opportunities made available to them.

Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

The Board believes that, following the closure of Hewell Grange, additional category D places should be made available within the West Midlands region.

Improvements

During the reporting year, the dormitories were rewired, to give sufficient power points for the number of prisoners accommodated.

A new ramp, providing disabled access to the education department, was constructed.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

Hewell Grange Resettlement Unit is an adult male category D open prison, jointly managed with HMP Hewell, a local adult male category B prison (house blocks 1–6). It is located on adjoining property, and a single IMB monitors both prisons. Although they share almost all services, contracts and staff, The Grange and HMP Hewell operate as separate units and exist for two very different purposes.

Certified normal accommodation: 224

Operational capacity: 224

Physical health provider: Care UK

Mental health provider: Care UK

Substance use treatment provider: Care UK

Learning and skills provider: Novus

Library service: Worcestershire County Council

Community rehabilitation companies (CRCs): Staffordshire and West Midlands; Warwickshire and West Mercia

Careers information and advice: Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP)

Escort contractor: GEOAmey

Maintenance: Amey

Hewell Grange is a three-story Grade II listed country house, built in 1894. It held young offenders from 1946 until 1991, when it became an open prison for adult men. Accommodation in the main house is in dormitories, with shared toilets and showers. Additionally, there are two purpose-built hostels, with single-room accommodation, at the Harwood House and Plymouth annex.

The prison is set within a large area of pastureland and woodland. This supports a prison farm with a dairy, pig unit, market garden and farm shop. The gardens of the house and a large area of parkland are historically significant and are listed; part of the property is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In June 2018, it was announced that HMP Hewell would be subject to special measures, and in February 2019 there was a change of governor.

There was an unannounced inspection of HMP Hewell by HM Inspectorate of Prisons in June 2019. Inspectors reported that there had been a marked decline. At the Hewell Grange open site, the inspectors found that, ‘extraordinarily for an open prison, it was poor in both purposeful activity and rehabilitation and release planning’, and living conditions were the worst seen in this type of establishment. The Chief Inspector of Prisons gave serious consideration to issuing an ‘urgent notification’, requiring the Secretary of State to produce an action plan for improvement within 28 days. However, in light of the fact that there was a new Governor, who had produced a credible business plan to move the prison forward, the Chief Inspector decided to give the prison leadership and regional HM Prison and Probation Service leadership the opportunity to implement the business plan. This was on the basis that the new independent reviews of progress gave the Inspectorate the ability to return and assess progress much sooner than would have previously been the case.

On 16 October 2019, the Director General for Prisons, following his own visit to the establishment, announced that, ‘the open unit at HMP Hewell in Worcestershire, also known as Hewell Grange, is being withdrawn from use’, and that the site would close by the end of the financial year, with no prisoners accommodated on the site after this date.

B Evidence sections 4 - 11

4 SAFETY

The Board believes that The Grange is a safe prison. In conversation, prisoners never report feeling unsafe.

The prison did not open any assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents during the reporting year. Board members have seen no evidence of self-harm.

Evidence from the daily briefing confirms that some illicit items are detected after being smuggled into the prison. The Board has been told by aggrieved prisoners that the discovery of an illicit substance in a dormitory - or a similar infringement of the rules - can result in action being taken against every one of the room's residents. Such a response, in effect a group punishment, can lead to feelings of injustice. The Board has been unable to judge whether such feelings have been well-founded.

Prisoners who repeatedly demonstrate low levels of compliance or commit serious breaches are transferred back to closed conditions.

92 adjudications took place during the reporting year. 54 prisoners were returned to closed conditions.

There have been no deaths in custody at The Grange in the reporting year.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

Access for those using a wheelchair, and those with mobility issues, is non-existent in The Grange. There is, however, a new ramp, which provided disabled access to the education department.

Family visits are arranged six, occasionally seven, times a year, during the school holidays. There are about 20 places available for prisoners who are not imminently involved in home leave, and this is usually sufficient to meet the demand. They last for about five hours and are arranged by the YMCA team. When Board members have observed these, they are very impressed by the commitment of the team running them. For example, in one such visit, they had taken trouble to give the day a seasonal theme, and they were obviously concerned to make it enjoyable and worthwhile for the families and the prisoners.

The change of leadership during the reporting year and the introduction of the new release on temporary licence (ROTL) regulations caused problems at The Grange. Some prisoners informed Board members that they felt they were suddenly subject to more onerous ROTL restrictions. It appeared through conversations that the new regulations, allowing more flexibility, had not been implemented smoothly.

Chaplaincy is well represented at The Grange, with regular services for all faiths.

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

There is no Segregation Unit at Hewell Grange.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

Hewell Grange is an old listed building, which continues to create difficulties and challenges for maintenance. The prisoners live in dormitories spread around all three floors of the house. Within these dormitories, each prisoner has a wooden cubicle made of thin wood, about one and a half metres in height. The dormitories are crowded, and in many cases the cubicles are untidy, dirty, often with a great deal of food waste, dirty clothing and other rubbish. The windows are single glazed, so board members are regularly informed of cold dormitories.

As previously reported, toilets and showers are often found to be filthy; some have been out of use for many months, and others are poorly maintained and not well cleaned. The continual problems with the toilets and showers result in Board members being told about problems with them at almost every visit; these cannot be considered decent and dignified.

The Chief Inspector of Prisons stated, in the June 2019 inspection report, that: 'living conditions were the worst I have seen in this type of establishment', and: 'I can only describe it as squalid, demeaning and depressing'.

Prisoners are found to be courteous and helpful, with some speaking enthusiastically about their life at The Grange.

It is noteworthy that governors and staff have been observed to have a detailed knowledge of the prisoners in their care and are seen giving information in a friendly but authoritative style.

From our observations, the kitchen (run by Prison Service staff) is well run and organised and provides a good standard of food. It is well equipped. The prisoners working there seem to be well motivated, and to have positive relationships with the staff.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

Healthcare for outpatients is provided, in the first instance, through a short daily clinic, staffed by a nurse from the health centre at the closed prison. There are reported challenges of ensuring that sufficient resources are available to provide adequate provision at The Grange. Much depends on this member of staff being available punctually and arriving with all the treatments that are required. When that fails to happen – as has been the case during some of the Board’s visits – there is, at the very least, anxiety and an interruption to prisoners’ medication. Board members also understand that a lack of staff has been seen to result in delays to, for example, the distribution of medication.

During the middle part of the reporting year, some prisoners had difficulty in securing an appointment with a dentist. As there are no dental facilities on site, arrangements have to be made with a local practice. The Board was aware of some prisoners who were clearly in need of dental treatment experiencing unacceptable delays in securing an initial appointment. The problem was acknowledged by the healthcare provider, and latterly the situation improved.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The library has a good range of books, as well as newspapers, periodicals, DVDs, prison information, jigsaw puzzles and games, and public transport information (for ROTL and visits). Board members have found the library to be well used.

Gym facilities are good and well used. The gym provision includes several accredited training programmes.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The labour board meets each Friday morning. Current vacancies are assessed, and allocations made, taking account of prisoners' preferences wherever possible. After the initial allocation, no request for a change is considered until 28 days have elapsed.

The Board is aware of a continuing problem in recruiting sufficient prisoners to work at the farm. The early start to the working day – the first milking is at 6.30am – is unattractive to many, as are other aspects of the work with livestock. Several of the prisoners who do work there remain well beyond their assigned hours, in order to carry through essential tasks. They do this without financial reward.

Some of the work and training carried out on the site – and so readily accessible to the Board – is notable for the commitment and sense of purpose which it engenders. Both the Railtrack training course and the waste management unit are prominent in this respect.

Discussions with 'Insiders' suggest that, in their experience, the most common single group of problems concerned opportunities for work or training relevant to individual prisoner's own particular circumstances.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

During the reporting year, prisoners told Board members that they were frustrated and confused about the length of time it took to get ROTL. This worsened, despite the recent introduction of new national ROTL policy. The new policy removed the compulsory three-month waiting period, and many prisoners believed that they could now access ROTL immediately on arrival at the prison.

C Section – Work of the IMB

This has been the third consecutive difficult year for the Board. All four of the new members who started in 2017 stopped attending the prison. Both the deputy chair and Board development officer (BDO) resigned. A recruitment campaign resulted in five new members who are in probation and undertaking training. With a limited number of experienced members, training for new members has proved a challenge. The Board is grateful for the support from the BDO at HMP Oakwood in providing off-site training.

As in the previous two years, the Board prioritised its work, focusing on the closed prison, and its segregation unit, being present for Rule 45 reviews and dealing with applications. Board members have visited most areas of both sites during the reporting year, and these visits have provided enough evidence for judgements to be made. However, there still remain areas of the prison that the Board is unable to comment on. This is particularly the case with regard to the open site, which has not had the degree or frequency of Board oversight that we would have wished for.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended complement of Board members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period (active)	10 (7)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period (active)	10 (8)
Total number of visits to the establishment	15
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

D Section – Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions		
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions		
C	Equality		
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell		
E 1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions		
E 2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends		
F	Food and kitchens		
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	
H 1	Property within this establishment		
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	1	
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	
I	Sentence management including home detention curfew, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	1	
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying		
K	Transfers		
L	Miscellaneous		
	Total number of IMB applications	6	