



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP & YOI DONCASTER

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 OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the IMB at HMP YOI Doncaster for the period 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019. IMB evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff and prisoner applications. The IMB are aware of and have considered the outcomes of inspections, audits and assessments of the prison that have taken place during the year.

Our observations and the outcome of inspections indicated that Doncaster has improved as a prison over the past three years and performs strongly in a number of areas. The Board has observed a commitment to improvement within the prison, strong leadership by the Director and his Senior Management Team and positive actions and outcomes in key areas. The Board has seen evidence of measurable improvements reflected in the findings of external audits and inspections.

Although the recruitment of new officers has progressed, the loss of experienced staff to other careers means that the proportion of experienced to inexperienced staff remains a challenge. At the time of writing, there are currently 95 Prison Custody Officers with less than 2 years' experience.

The IMB at Doncaster remains below strength. This situation has been compounded by availability of Board members including a number in full-time employment.

Main Judgements

The Board considers that prisoners are treated reasonably fairly.

Some prisoners have raised concerns about changes to their Incentive and Earned Privileges (IEP) status and the Board has observed some variation between in the consistency of how IEP reviews are carried out by different managers.

The Board considers that prisoners are, generally, treated humanely and decently although there have been instances when this has not been the case, for example when some dietary needs have not been met, when prisoners have not been escorted to hospital for a planned appointment, when some basic cleanliness and hygiene issues have not been to the required standard, decency curtains not being in place in some cells and bedding exchanges not always taken place as scheduled.

Fair and humane treatment of prisoners depends substantially on the quality and number of staff, particularly Prison Custody Officers (PCOs). It is mainly through the daily interaction of prisoners and officers that the treatment of prisoners depends and whether that treatment is as good as it needs to be or begins to drift below standard. Prisoners describe to the Board that their positive experiences with confident experienced officers who are consistently deployed so as to build up knowledge of a wing and appropriate rapport with residents. Equally, prisoners tell us of their frustration when having to deal with frequently changing staff (e.g. having to tell the same thing over and again) and when the mix of newer and experienced staff is not right. The Board is concerned that some experienced officers have left the prison to work with the police and that there is a risk that a recruitment drive by the police in this and nearby counties could lead to the loss of experienced and able officers.

The Board has observed much positive practice. It is the Board's view that the transfer in of Offender Management Unit (OMU) staff from a contracted provider to Serco in this period is a positive one.

The Board has observed examples of “through the gate” care of men at high risk of drug use and other chaotic behaviours with workers waiting for them on release to take them to appointments with agencies and services that these men may not action themselves.

Two improvements were made in this period which help men being released. The practice of some men taking their personal possessions in a clear prison property bag has ceased and suitable sports bags are available. Men who need a warm coat on leaving are given one.

The Board are concerned that some prisoners are released with no accommodation. The Board understands the challenges that exist to find and sustain accommodation for some of these men but our view is that release to spending the next night on the street or in a tent is not acceptable.

Areas of concern for the Board include the high rate of self-harm and the self-inflicted deaths that have occurred in the reporting year. Early learning from these incidents shows that not all Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) processes were being followed as expected. There is an ACCT improvement plan in place and The Board has seen positive work and progress but this will remain an area to watch over the coming year for management, the HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) Controller and the IMB.

The Board has been concerned that some prisoners are released without accommodation. This situation has aspects that the prison can influence but also can reflect the lack of somewhere suitable for a prisoner to go to and/or the lack of provision to meet a prisoner’s needs and challenges in the community to which they are to be released.

The Board is concerned that not all mental health needs of prisoners (which are inevitably there in a high proportion of men, and often complex and overlapping with other health and behavioural issues such as substance misuse) are being met. It is the Board’s view that the number of mental health staff available to prisoners needs to be reviewed and increased.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

To work with ministerial colleagues to reduce the number of men discharged without identified accommodation with the objective of there being no prisoners discharged to the streets or a tent. Section 11 refers

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Examine and where practical improve the speed of transfer of prisoners in custody in Doncaster who require a move to another prison either for their own safety or to help maintain ties with family and friends. The Board has observed delays in finding accommodation in other appropriate prisons. In particular there should be quicker transfers to avoid unduly prolonged stay in Segregation. Section 11 refers

To monitor the officer staffing levels in prisons and the mix of experienced/less experienced staff.

TO THE DIRECTOR

To identify learning from the events of serious self-harm and particularly from self-inflicted deaths and to take action from that learning that will help reduce risk for the future. Section 4 refers

To continue and conclude work to ensure that the ACCT processes within the prison are operated consistently to the standards required. Section 4 refers

To work with agencies and services in the region to avoid the discharge of prisoners to no accommodation. Section 11 refers

To work with NHS commissioners and the contracted healthcare provider to improve scale of resource for mental health services in the prison.

To maintain the senior manager focus on delivery of a good standard of basic decency in residential areas.

Improvements

The Board did not publish a report for the years 2016/17 or 2017/18 so no comment about action on recommendations in previous Board reports can be made.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP & YOI Doncaster is operated by private sector contractor Serco Limited. The establishment opened June 1994 and underwent extensive security upgrading as per the Woodcock recommendations in March 1999. The prison downgraded to a local Category B establishment in May 2003 following operational changes within the Prison Service's High Security Estate.

The prison's operation is defined by a contract agreed between the Contractor (Serco) and the Ministry of Justice. In March 2011 Serco was awarded a 15year contract to operate the prison, with a contract start date of 1 October 2011.

The Prison's Role

The prison has custodial responsibility to detain people remanded into custody by the local courts and also to detain convicted and sentenced prisoners. Doncaster is now a local Category B resettlement prison working in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service providers to deliver resettlement support through the gates into the local communities.

Management

The management and control arrangement at the establishment is governed by Prison Service Instructions as in the public sector prisons; however there are some services which are unique to a private prison such as the role of the Controller/Controller's Team to monitor the contract.

The Director

The Governing Governor of the establishment is referred to as a Director in the private sector and is appointed under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, subject to certification as a Prisoner Custody Officer under Sections 85 and 89, and Schedule 10 to the Act.

The Controller

Observation of the day-to-day running of the establishment and close monitoring of the operating contract is undertaken by a Crown Servant appointed by HM Prison and Probation Service known as the Controller.

Population

The prison has a CNA of 738, revised in November 2013. However owing to the pressure on prison places across the prison estate its official operational capacity is 1145. In 2016 the prison received a number of prisoners convicted of sexual offences; Houseblock One is dedicated to hold 390 prisoners who fall into this category and other vulnerable prisoners whose safety would be at risk within the prison's general population.

Accommodation and Facilities

There are three Houseblocks each with four residential wings. There is a Segregation unit. Prisoners requiring a high level of support for mental health conditions or learning disabilities have separate accommodation in "the Loft" and prisoners needing social care reside in the Social Care Unit.

The prison has a well-used gym and an artificial surfaced full size football pitch.

There is a Chapel and rooms within the chaplaincy area for groups to study or meet.

There is a kitchen, Reception & Discharge area, visits hall.

The prison gardens are attractive and have been recognised for their quality. Work done to assist with the improvement of the area's hedgehog population has been very successful and recognised within the prison and outside.

Serco work with the following partners within the prison:

- NOVUS - for education, learning and skills
- Care UK - for provision of healthcare services
- GEOAmey - transfers for prisoners to and from Court and between prisons
- Catch22 - specialist gang related offender management

HMIP Inspection

There was an unannounced inspection of the prison by HM Inspectorate of Prisons on 9-20 September 2019. The IMB were interviewed as part of the inspection and initial and draft report findings have been shared with the Chair of the IMB. The Report of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons has been published.

B Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

Observations

At every visit to the prison, IMB members speak to prisoners and seek to obtain feedback on their own experiences and their observations on safety.

There were 35 written applications to the IMB from prisoners needing to raise their concerns (including bullying). This was 18% of the total written applications.

Board members have spoken to prisoners who have self-harmed including some prisoners who have self-harmed seriously and/or repeatedly. Board members have observed ACCT reviews and Segregation reviews where prisoner safety has been at the core concern. During the reporting period 1401 ACCTs were opened.

Some prisoners described being fearful of other prisoners within the prison. Where men go on to detail their reason(s) for being fearful, the Board are told of issues of debt (often related to purchase of prohibited items e.g. drugs), gang related conflicts, conflicts arising prisoner to prisoner during their current period in the prison or from previous stays and locality and regional differences (e.g. rivalries between neighborhoods and towns).

There is physical separation of residence between vulnerable prisoners and those on general accommodation. Contact between these groups in common areas is managed by timing of the regime (e.g. different gym times, different visits times, separate work programmes). Board members have observed verbal abuse of vulnerable prisoners and have had concerns raised by vulnerable prisoners who have been subject to verbal abuse.

Positives

Board members have observed application of policies, systems, management direction and staff efforts to maintain and improve prisoner safety. The Board has seen patient, thoughtful and sustained work with prisoners requiring high levels of staff support and have witnessed very positive progress of prisoners who have been unsafe because of the action of others and/or their own self-harm.

The introduction of the Key Worker (OMiC – Offender Management in Custody) programme has been, largely, positive and The Board has seen evidence of Key Worker sessions and have had some positive feedback from prisoners about the benefit they find from a regular conversation with their Key Worker.

Concerns

The Board has been concerned about some risks of harm to prisoners that are not, as yet, as well controlled as the Board would wish. These risks are well known to the prison and are both subject to very active work by the prison to reduce risk and enhance safety.

The areas are:

- Response to cell call bells has not always been as required.
- Access to mental health care is not always as timely as required.
- Deployment of less experienced, less confident officers and deployment of officers to wings where they do not know prisoners is a cause of frustration among some prisoners and is likely to be a contributory factor where violent incidents (prisoner on prisoner & prisoner on staff) have occurred.

- ACCT processes not always being followed as required with the risk of under-managed distress and/or self-harm risk.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

During the period of this report, Board members observed positive efforts to ensure equality and fairness towards all prisoners.

For examples:

- Work of Equality and Foreign National Officer.
- Attention to religious needs of prisoners such as enabling Muslim prisoners to observe the requirements of Ramadan.
- Attention to and follow up of DIRFs.

The Board's monitoring of the processes for access to Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRF) and the prison's processes for consideration of DIRFs gives the Board confidence that forms are accessible, forms can be completed in confidence and forms are considered appropriately. The Board does see a risk that the low rate of DIRF issues being upheld (even though we observe no unfairness) does risk a perception among prisoners that submitting a DIRF is not worthwhile.

The prison monitors appropriately by protected characteristic and has established consultation forums with prisoners by protected characteristic as well as the whole population consultation that takes place. These forums are chaired by an Assistant Director and are active meetings.

In terms of written applications to the Board, there were 9 of 157 (approx. 4%) related to equality, diversity including religion.

From reading written applications and, more effectively, from talking to prisoners there is often a thread of concern about fairness that runs through them. These concerns are not, in our observation generally related to a protected characteristic, but are more often related to that individual prisoner and his relationship with the officers and other staff that he encounters. There is no doubt that unfairness is perceived by some prisoners and is part of

their real experience. When Board members find issues that need to be put right there has been no indication of an underlying unfairness towards an individual. If there had been identified unfairness of treatment it would have raised this with the Director and in 2018/19 the Board did not do so.

One equality issue that is worthy of note is the work done in the prison in respect of meeting the needs of prisoners who are transgender (Trans). The prison is aware of and follows the requirements of the guidance regarding Trans prisoners. Members have observed improved awareness among officers and other staff of Trans equality, for example proper attention to use of preferred pro-nouns. Although improved, there is still some observable lack of full confidence among some staff when talking about work with Trans prisoners.

The relatively low numbers of Trans prisoners also suggests that refresher training on best practice in their care would be wise to ensure knowledge and confidence levels are right.

6 SEGREGATION UNIT

The Board has prioritised attention to the Segregation Unit with visits to prisoners in Segregation and observation of Segregation Reviews. The Board has given positive feedback to the manager of the Segregation Unit and to the Director on a number of occasions where staff in the unit have been observed to work with a high level of care and professionalism to manage issues related to very challenging prisoners.

Segregation Reviews are carried out fairly and with a clear, strong focus on managing a safe and effective return to general accommodation

In the earlier period of the reporting year, the Board had and raised concerns about the quality of accommodation in Segregation (cleanliness, graffiti, and temperature in some cells) and overall quality of the environment. The Unit has since been re-painted and the accommodation has improved. There do remain issues of some cells and showers being put out of action for periods by vandalism by prisoners

The Board has monitored a sample of Adjudications and have considered the prison's own monitoring of the adjudication processes. This monitoring indicates that processes are followed appropriately and proportionately. Monitoring of Segregation Reviews (NB not punitive) indicates fairness and proportionality of outcomes although The Board has two concerns which are outlined below regarding transfers from the prison.

Concerns

The Board have had and raised some concerns about Segregation; these are:

- Length of time of stay in Segregation when a prisoner cannot be returned to general accommodation in Doncaster and is awaiting a transfer to another prison.
- Length of time in Segregation where prisoners are being or have been assessed to require a move to more suitable accommodation due to significant mental health condition. Some of our positive comments about Segregation staff have related to prisoners in this situation but despite care and attention by prison and healthcare staff this accommodation is not suitable for them or likely to help meet their needs.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

In the reporting year, there were observable improvements in accommodation and in communal areas. The prison looks brighter and better following extensive repainting. The main kitchen has been refurbished. Attention to issues within cells such as damage by previous occupant; graffiti etc. is usually prompt and effective.

As a Board, there were several concerns about accommodation:

- As a consequence of the rise of prisoner numbers the standard for accommodation is that cells are shared by two men. There is single cell accommodation for prisoners where a risk assessment outcome indicates that a single cell is needed. Although cell sharing is “the norm” and many prisoners accept it as a foreseeable consequence of being in custody the Board believes that two prisoners sharing, including sharing a toilet with only a decency curtain to allow for any privacy, risks a loss of dignity.
- Showers on some residential wings have been unreliable during the reporting year and the Board has received complaints of showers on some wings at sometimes being too cold.
- Response to cell bell calls not always being within time with the risk that a prisoner being in distress would not be seen as required.

The Board’s view is that communication within the prison is good. The ATMs on each wing enable prisoners to access information and access services without the need for paper forms and feedback from most prisoners about the ATMs is positive. The Board has raised with the Director an observation that there are some prisoners (perhaps with hidden disabilities) who struggle to use the ATM and who either rely on a fellow prisoner’s help or can miss out.

Complaints by prisoners using the prison’s complaints system (Comp 1, Comp 1A or Confidential Access form) are well managed. Collection of complaint forms from secure boxes is regular, forms are logged and accounted for, replies are monitored and chased if necessary and the quality of replies is sample checked and any replies that are not to standard are followed-up.

The Board monitors the quality of food served to prisoners. There is care about the safety of food, food hygiene and temperature (food arriving on wings hot). The dietary needs of faith groups is understood and acted upon. The needs of vegetarians and vegans is understood and acted upon. Care for the need to manage these issues will continue to require management focus as there has been some inconsistent performance.

Supervision of serveries is essential. The Board has had complaints from prisoners saying that they have not received their proper meal due to bullying (some prisoners getting more than their own meal).

Where the Board has received complaints from prisoners about food (for example an individual special diet not being received reliably) those complaints have been listened to and acted upon by the Catering Manager.

The Board has observed some inconsistent practice at wing serveries i.e. the place on the wing where food from the kitchen is taken from the hot trolley and served on plates to prisoners. There have been times when care for food hygiene, portion control and general food handling have not been as required. Suitable cleaning of servery areas and the hot trolleys used to move food from the kitchen to residential wings has not always been to standard with the resultant risk to food safety and the decency of serving food to prisoners when hygiene is not to standard.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

The Board has observed commitment to high standards of patient/client care and actions by Care UK managers and clinical staff that are high quality.

Obviously, the need for patient privacy and confidentiality means that most interactions between Healthcare staff and prisoners is not directly observable but observed, good examples include:

- Mental Health nurse input at Segregation Reviews.
- Work by the Learning Disability Nurse on issues of hidden disabilities such as autism.
- Urgent/emergency response following an incident.

In this reporting period, The Board has established good communications with senior healthcare staff and where issues have needed to be raised they have been and have been responded to appropriately.

Although The Board has observed professionalism and commitment by healthcare staff at the prison there appears to the Board to be some difficulties in all prisoners wanting/needing to access mental health services to see a practitioner as quickly as would be beneficial.

There are some concerns, including:

- The Board question whether the provision of mental health staff (i.e. the numbers) is sufficient to meet the needs of prisoners in a timely fashion.
- Written complaints to the Board in this reporting period about healthcare totalled 39 of 193 (20%).
- Some prisoners not being escorted to external medical appointments due to there being staff pressures that do not enable prisoners to be escorted.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Board has observed commitment to and action to deliver educational activities to men within the prison. Due to the small number of Board members within this reporting year, in person observations were low.

In 2018/19 there was a change within the prison following observation that numbers of prisoners not attending scheduled educational activities were often below what was scheduled. The change involved “switching” the day so that vulnerable prisoners now attend classes in the morning and prisoners on general accommodation attend in the afternoon. This change has been positive in that some of the issues of getting general prisoners ready and off their wing to attend have been improved by this action.

The Board has had queries from prisoners about the limited range of vocational courses available in Doncaster, for example prisoners asking us why they cannot learn or improve practical skills such as vehicle repair & maintenance and/or construction skills. These prisoners have been those with either existing well-developed basic maths/English & IT skills or men expressing a strong preference for a more practical educational activity. The Board agree with the prison’s current assessment that the limitations of space on site mean that the type of workshop often found in other establishments is not practical here. A number of those men raising this query would have planned progress moves to another prison where a wider range of facilities and vocational courses are available.

The Board has also been approached by a few prisoners who recall previous periods in custody (here or elsewhere) when more arts activities were available. This has been followed that up with the prison and have to agree that the educational activities offered are correctly prioritised.

Gym and physical activity are important to prisoners within all establishments and Doncaster is no exception. The Board has observed some particularly good practice such as the active partnership between the prison and the local professional football team Doncaster Rovers, and attention being given to exercise for men who are older and/or less physically fit such as walking football sessions.

There is a concern that there are times when, due to staffing shortages, a full regime including access to the gym and sports hall does not take place. As mentioned, many prisoners highly value the chance to be off their wing and to be active and when that opportunity does not take place it is immediately missed.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

The limited space on the prison site for workshops means that the work activities are also limited. None of the men here work outside the prison.

Board visits to work areas such as the print shop have allowed observation of good quality work and interest and application by the men working in those areas. The Board has been impressed by the pride that men take in the printing work that is clear when they talk to us about what they do.

Members do speak to prisoners who describe being demotivated to take up some of the jobs available (e.g. cleaning and painting) and who say that something more challenging and more likely to be of value to an outside employer would encourage them to engage.

There has been further good work in the gardening/grounds maintenance with recognition for the achievement of the men who do that work and the team who supervise them for both the quality of the gardens and the important focus on the positive environmental impact for example; the thriving Hedgehog Sanctuary.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

In 2018/19 our monitoring has been concentrated on visits and on the maintenance of good ties with children and families. The Board has observed strong efforts and positive outcomes in terms of keeping and building upon ties between fathers here and their children and families. Prisoners seen have spoken highly of the importance and value of initiatives through Families First and being able to spend time with their children.

The Board see the commitment to and action to enable positive contact with families as important to help fathers maintain strong bonds with their children with the related motivation to avoid reoffending and return to custody.

The Board sees the Families and Friends at the Centre of Throughcare (FACT) and the chance for families to have contact with prisoners' key worker as positive. This is a further indicator of the value of Key Workers and the need to ensure that the scheme works thoroughly and well within the prison.

The prison has, as part of its safer custody work, a process to identify prisoners who are becoming isolated and one risk indicator is that of someone not receiving visits.

On days when the visits area has been observed, it has been well controlled and a safe suitable space for prisoners and their families and friends to have contact. A local baker, Cooplands, run the food concession in the visits area and this is well used by visitors with the food and drinks on offer being similar to that found in the firm's shops in Doncaster and nearby towns.

In 2018/19 when the Board were asked by individual prisoners to look into restrictions on visits (e.g. a move from open to closed visits), the decision to impose that restriction was properly considered, fair and appropriately time-bound.

Due to the low number of Board members in 2018/2019 other aspects of offender management, rehabilitation or public protection in terms of active monitoring were not possible. There have been applications from some prisoners related to these issues and these have been followed up but those "snap-shots" do not give a holistic picture.

The Board has concerns following observation of difficulties faced by the prison to transfer prisoners to another prison that include men from out of this area finding difficulty to maintain appropriate contact with family and friends due to the travel distance for visitors.

As mentioned previous, the Board has concerns that some prisoners are released without accommodation. This situation has aspects that the prison can influence but also can reflect the lack of somewhere suitable for a prisoner to go to and/or the lack of provision to meet a prisoner's needs and challenges in the community to which they are to be released.

C Section – Work of Board

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period <i>Includes 1 member on sabbatical</i>	6
Total number of visits to the Establishment	142
Total number of segregation reviews attended <i>Data for period 29 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 (5 months)</i>	29

D Section - Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year 2018/19	Previous reporting year 2017/18
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	12	11
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	12	6
C	Equality	3	6
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	9	4
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	4	11
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	2	3
F	Food and kitchens	5	2
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	39	22
H 1	Property within this establishment	29	22
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	9	13
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	6	4
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	19	9
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	35	19
K	Transfers	9	7
	Total number of IMB applications	193	+ 21 unallocated 136