



HMP BEDFORD

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT
2014 -2015

31st October, 2015

Section 1

CONTENTS

Section 1		
CONTENTS		2
Section 2		
THE ROLE OF THE IMB AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT		3
Section 3		
DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON		4
Section 4		
SUMMARY, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		6
Executive Summary		6
Points of Commendation and Concern		8
Questions to the Minister; to NOMS		11
Section 5		
PRINCIPAL FOCI OF MONITORING IN THE PRISON		12
5.1 Equality and Inclusion		12
5.2 Education, Learning and Skills, Library and Training Workshops		12
5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health		13
5.4 Purposeful Activity		14
5.5 Resettlement		15
5.6 Safer Custody		16
5.7 Segregation, Separation and Care, Close Supervision		17
5.8 Residential Services		19
Section 6		
OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON ABOUT WHICH THE BOARD WISHES TO MAKE REMARKS		20
Section 7		
WORK DONE BY THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD		26
Section 8		
GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED		28

Section 2

THE 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.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

HMP Bedford Independent Monitoring Board is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity that encompasses and promotes interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds, including race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age. The Board recognises that a fully inclusive approach to diversity must also respond to differences that cut across such social and cultural categories as, for example, do mental health and literacy.

The Board integrates this approach to diversity within its recruitment and development practices, to increase its repertoire of skills and to promote awareness among its members of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within the prison.

All members of the IMB at HMP Bedford endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is accessible to everyone within the establishment, regardless of their background or social situation. The Board monitors the experiences and interactions between staff, prisoners and visitors, to establish that these are appropriately fair and without prejudice.

REPORTING PERIOD

1st July 2014 to 30th June 2015

Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Bedford is a Category B Prison with an Operational Capacity¹ of 506, reduced from 514 last year when the prison was further temporarily over-crowded (324 being the Certified Normal Accommodation²). A busy 'local' (now Resettlement) prison HMP Bedford takes both sentenced and remanded prisoners, mainly from courts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The prison's Reception processed 3,357 new admissions during the year and the length of stay was consequently fairly short, averaging 39 days. The exceptions to this short-stay pattern are those who have specific needs and are therefore harder to place in 'training' prisons, notably life sentenced, vulnerable and disabled prisoners. There has been a prison on this town-centre site for more than 200 years, with additions and improvements over the years. The use to which the wings has been put has changed time and again. Regrettably, a much needed upgrading of the heating system and the windows has been deferred, also time and again.

Wings A/E, B and C radiate from a central hub and were largely built in the 1850s:

- A wing holds 146 prisoners (all in double cells built for one man, with the exception of 39 cells furnished as single cells for high risk prisoners and one larger 3-man cell);
- B wing holds 80 prisoners (doubled one-man cells and one 4-man cell). Above ground (B2 to B4) this wing accommodates 'enhanced' prisoners and kitchen workers as well as 'normal location'; underground, B1 is the Support and Separation Unit with 6 furnished and 2 unfurnished cells, a separate exercise yard, shower and adjudication room, also used for solitary confinement Reviews;
- C Wing has 107 places. Above ground, C2 and C3 constitute the First Night Centre consisting predominantly of doubled one-man cells, but including also two 4-man cells, one of which is used for vulnerable prisoners when the VP unit in F wing is full. Listeners have a dedicated cell on C2. C4 remains 'normal location'. Underground, C1 is the Resettlement Unit, accommodating what are effectively super-enhanced prisoners.
- E wing, with 41 beds, is the Drug Recovery and Support Unit, for prisoners who are intent on reducing their drug intake.

The following facilities are accommodated in separate buildings on the congested site, within a perimeter wall that is somewhat compromised by the proximity of buildings on the outside:

- F wing was built in the 1800s and houses a 30-place Vulnerable Prisoner Unit;
- D wing was built in 1992 and houses a 100-prisoner Drug Treatment wing;
- The Healthcare Centre, built in 1992, houses an Inpatient Unit on the first floor comprising nine cells, a 4-bedded dormitory, a gated cell, a 'safer cell' and an anti-ligature cell. Consulting rooms, treatment rooms and a pharmacy are on the ground floor;
- The gatehouse, built in 1992, houses some offices, a Visits Hall and the Reception suite;
- The Gym (ground floor) shares a building with Education and the Library (1st floor);
- Maintenance workshops;
- Kitchens;
- Administration and a large 'Multi-faith Hall in a re-worked old cell-block, with limited teaching workshops on the ground floor.

Definitions:

1. Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) 'represents the good, decent standard of accommodation that the Service aspires to provide all prisoners'
2. Operational Capacity (OpCap): 'the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold without serious risk to good order, security and the proper running of the planned regime'

Contractors and Agencies delivering services to the prison

Ark H Handling	Employability skills out in the community
Bedford College	NVQ Level 1 in Catering
BeNCH CRC	Case management for low-medium risk prisoners
Bold Moves	Support for veterans and perpetrators of domestic violence
Burner Systems Ltd	Contract for assembly of Gas hob components (Workshop 2)
Carrillion	Works Department
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureau - Finance and debt advice
CRSP	Community Resettlement Support Project - Befriending service for prisoners leaving custody
Glazparts LTD	Light packing workshop (F wing)
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Support Group	Support for travelling communities in custody release
Job Centre Plus	Benefits, job searches and the Work Programme
Langley House Trust	Housing advice service
Milton Keynes College	Library
National Careers Service	Assessment of educational skills and training
National Probation Service	Case management for high-risk prisoners
Ormiston Trust	Managing the Visitor Centre, Crèche in Visits Hall, Parenting Programme and Story Book Dads
People Plus	Education contractor
Philex Electronics	Light packing workshop (F wing)
Prison Fellowship	Bible classes, weekly workshop
Royal British Legion	Support for ex-servicemen and their families in custody and after release
St Giles Trust	Employment and training for prisoners on release, Resettlement support
Samaritans	Listeners selection and training
SEPT	South Essex Partnership Trust (Community Health Services Bedfordshire) – Health Care
SSAFA	Support for ex-servicemen and families
Westminster Drug Project	Drug Team

Section 4

SUMMARY, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board has observed the HMP Bedford prison population becoming increasingly volatile during the reporting period. There has been an alarming increase in the number of prisoners considered to be at risk of harming themselves, in the number of violent encounters between prisoners, and in the incidence of officers employing control and restraint techniques to deal with difficult prisoners. It is the Board's position that, despite being central aims of the prison, resettlement and rehabilitation have been comprehensively overshadowed by containment. Inadequate time and resources have been available for the kind of positive engagement with prisoners that can address offending behaviour.

Given this background, the Board has been impressed by the patience and compliance of most prisoners during a reporting period that has seen increasing pressure put on the support available to them. The Board commends the professional resilience of HMP Bedford staff, who could, if properly empowered and resourced, do so much more to engage with prisoners and so make our society safer and more inclusive.

The Board's most pressing concerns can be summarised as follows:

- i. **Chronic staff shortages** - The prison has suffered from chronic staff shortages due to an imposed recruitment freeze and its nationally chaotic aftermath. A (notionally emergency) restricted regime has been in operation which has resulted in prisoners being locked in their cells for longer periods than are considered appropriate, with little or nothing to do, which undoubtedly contributes to the increased volatility. The Board wishes to express its concern at the impact the stress resulting from continuous crisis management (high sick numbers, resignations, increased use of force) is causing the remaining staff complement, which it fears may well cause damage to individuals as well as leading to increasingly inhospitable environments in the prison.
- ii. **Overcrowding** - HMP Bedford has operated at close to its 'operational capacity' in terms of prisoner numbers throughout the reporting period, which is to say that it has been continuously overcrowded by a factor of more than 50% all this time. The Board wishes to express its extreme dissatisfaction at the unwillingness of government, if it insists on a sentencing framework which means that so many offenders are sentenced to custody, and for such long sentences, to resource the provision of space commensurate with its own definition of Certified Normal Accommodation (the good, decent standard of accommodation that the Prison Service aspires to provide all prisoners). The Board protests strongly against the normalisation of overcrowding, as lacking in decency and as detrimental to the rehabilitation of prisoners. The Board also has some concerns about the new policy of extended license periods for those with very short custodial sentences, which could exacerbate the problem of overcrowding during the next reporting period, if numbers of them end up being recalled.
- iii. **Provision for the most vulnerable** - There continues to be a lack of investment to improve key facilities that have a particular impact on the most vulnerable (First Night, Reception and Segregation) even to a modestly acceptable standard. Another group who are done a disservice by current arrangements are Sex Offenders, who occupy the only realistic location for a First Night Centre, but for whom there is an inadequate regime and treatment provision in Bedford. They are 'vulnerable' because they live under constant threat of violence from other prisoners; they should be held separately in prisons properly equipped to serve their needs.
- iv. **Insufficient focus on rehabilitation** - It is the belief of the Board that far from providing an environment conducive to positive life changes, the resources allocated are barely adequate to contain the prison population without serious, sustained and concerted disturbance. Overcrowding and understaffing conspire together, for example, to render the provision of purposeful-activity-for-all, next-to impossible.

- v. **Systematic erosion of local management authority** - The progressive removal of local management autonomy, primarily as a result of outsourcing, has meant that the Prison has often found itself unable to solve problems (such as maintenance, healthcare and CRC coordination) in meaningful ways that might otherwise be available to them. The Board believes that the negative impacts of these policies are growing in significance. The Board would like to see balanced and data-driven methods for assessing *prisoner outcomes* used more consistently in assessing the success or failure of cost efficiency initiatives and the efficacy of outsourced supplier and partner relationships.
- vi. **Infrastructure** - Despite the negative coverage currently given to 'Victorian prisons' and the prospect of their sale for housing and replacement by purpose-built new prisons, the Board find much advantage in the location for this 'local' and 'resettlement' prison (convenient and helpful for the stakeholders – prisoners and their families, staff), and little disadvantage in the ancient infrastructure itself, though it needs investment. Land values in Bedford are not as high as in many other cities. The infrastructure becomes inadequate because the prison is excessively overcrowded and is required to fulfill too many subsidiary roles (eg. housing sex-offenders for extended periods) for which it is ill suited.
- vii. **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)** - the prison has had to cope with the prevalence of dangerous, and dangerously variable new synthetic drugs, such as 'spice', which may be bought legally outside prison. It is likely that spice has added to the instability within the prison through its effects on the emotions and health of prisoners, alongside the bullying and intimidation associated with any trade in prohibited items.

These main areas of criticism are directed at NOMS and the Government for knowingly allocating resources that are incommensurate with the published aims of rehabilitation and resettlement, with a resulting unfair transfer of burden to both staff and powerless prisoners, which work directly against the achievement of those aims.

This Report also records some criticism of specific areas where, even within the available resources, a better job could be done. However the Board's overall evaluation of the staff response to some very difficult impositions, and to unsustainable levels of unremitting stress, is one of praise for their resilience, professionalism and essential decency.

4.2 Points of Commendation and Concern

The Board commends the management and staff on the following points:

Safer Custody

- a. Prisoners tend to rate Bedford as above average in regard to safety and support for those who self-harm. (33)
- b. Data analysis has been used by the Safer Custody team to investigate the reasons for self-harm. (42)

Residential Services

- c. The provision of food during Ramadan is well received by Muslim prisoners. (59)

Other Matters

- d. The Chaplaincy team provides high quality personalised support. (64)
- e. Many prisoners appreciate the gym provision and good quality courses have been offered there. (69)
- f. Commitment of the Governor to run a jail where prisoners can flourish. (77)
- g. The resilience, professionalism and essential decency of the staff in the face of difficulty and stress. (81)
- h. The Board applauds the OMU for their 'Wing Surgeries'. (80)

The Board raises the following points of concern:

Equality and Inclusion

- A. Incomplete understanding of how to manage prisoners with mental health problems, among some officers. (3)

Education

- B. Disappointing attendance record of prisoners in education programmes. (7)

Healthcare

- C. Too many medical appointments are missed without adequate explanation. (12)
- D. Healthcare spaces are often used to accommodate prisoners who don't have medical problems. (14)
- E. Severely mentally ill prisoners are inappropriately held in the prison and it takes too long for them to receive adequate treatment. (16)
- F. The Mental Health Team are under intense pressure due to the high numbers of prisoners considered to be at risk of self-harm and a more volatile prisoner population. (18)

Purposeful Activity

- G. There is a chronic shortage of purposeful activity. (19 - 21)

Resettlement

- H. Although government targets are being met, too many prisoners leave Bedford without accommodation. (26)
- I. More complete and reliable data analysis is needed of the efficacy of different post-release support interventions in assisting released prisoners to desist from criminal activity (28)
- J. An achievement target of 30% in Employment, Training and Education on release betokens a depressingly low ambition. (29)

- K. The inability of the Governor to exercise any meaningful leverage over the conduct of the CRC contract for resettlement, etc., services (30)

Safer Custody

- L. Prisoners considered to be at risk of self-harm and suicide have suffered delayed responses to their cell bells. (32)
- M. The prison still needs, after many years of our asking, a credible First Night Centre that offers succour to new prisoners. (35-37)
- N. The following self-harm risk factors are all currently depressingly and dangerously prevalent in HMP Bedford: limited time out of cell, limited staff contact, and lack of access to purposeful activity. (40)
- O. The training of staff in mental health first aid and the conduct of ACCT reviews have not kept pace with the number of prisoners at risk of harming themselves. (43-44)

Segregation

- P. The approach taken by Governors to GOOD reviews has been inconsistent. (49)
- Q. The segregation unit is too small, the quality of the environment is unacceptably poor, and the regime offered unacceptably vacuous. (52)
- R. Use of Force statistics are judged to be unreliable and are under-analysed. (54)

Residential Services

- S. Continuation of the lamentable series of delays to initiation of the long-promised heating and windows replacement project. (56)
- T. Shared cells designed 170 years ago for one man, with an unscreened WC, are still the norm at HMP Bedford. (57)

Other Matters

- U. The apparently deficient and random system by which prisoners' 'Applications' are handled and responded to. (63)
- V. The apparent ease with which prisoners and their associates outside seem capable of getting banned substances and articles past the prison's defenses, and the terrible consequences of these trades. (66)
- W. There is insufficient data published on the efficacy of drugs interventions generally, and specifically to justify use of a discrete unit in the prison as a 'Drug Recovery' wing. (67)
- X. The AstroTurf is rarely used by prisoners. (70)
- Y. The entry-level IEP grade has had no positive impact on the behaviour of newly convicted prisoners. (71)
- Z. Officer shortages have caused the Personal Officer scheme to be neglected. (79)
- AA. The role of the prison Officer is sufficiently subtle and complex to merit significantly more and deeper training. (82)
- BB. Too much prisoners' property goes missing during transfers between prisons; it is all-but impossible for a prisoner, without the assistance of others, to take full responsibility for the integrity of his own property. (83)
- CC. The Reception Facility needs a thorough facelift and rebranding. (84)
- DD. A restricted regime has been in place for the entire reporting period severely curtailing the time prisoners spend out of their cells. (91)
- EE. There is no recording of the amount of time prisoners spend out of their cells each day. (92)
- FF. Vulnerable prisoners have routinely been placed on the main wings. (97)

- GG. The requirement to accommodate sex-offenders in HMP Bedford, on an isolated wing, is arguably one of the subsidiary missions that hinder the prison from achieving excellent performance in its core purposes. (98)
- HH. The recent privatisation of the Works Department has introduced an unwelcome extra layer of bureaucracy, which has led to delays in repair work and projects being undertaken. (99)

4.3 Particular Issues requiring a response

Questions for the Ministers:

- I. The Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, has said many things in his speeches since his appointment to the Ministry of Justice that have been encouraging to those who have an interest in rehabilitation. Will he commit to *leading the promotion and proper resourcing of practical, evidence-based policies that deliver the socially beneficial outcomes he espouses and that are so badly needed*?
- II. Would the Minister for Prisons please explain how he intends to reduce HMP Bedford's prison population to comply with the Certified Normal Accommodation level?
- III. Would the Minister please ensure that all prisoners leaving HMP Bedford have accommodation on release, and that it is of a kind that supports them in turning their lives around?
- IV. Would the Minister please ensure that the vast majority of prisoners leaving HMP Bedford have employment, training or education ready for them on release?
- V. The Board again requests that the Minister remove the entry-level IEP grade, which places newly convicted prisoners at increased risk of exploitation.

Questions and Remarks for NOMS:

- VI. Will NOMS please assist the prison to adjust its portfolio of roles such that it can invest in and improve, by a significant margin, the prisoner experience in the Reception, Segregation and First Night facilities?
- VII. Will NOMS please make the many costly adjustments to resourcing and policies such that the delivery of purposeful activity for all prisoners becomes a realisable ambition, or cease to claim that this is a current performance aim?
- VIII. The Board recommend, given the ideal location of HMP Bedford for its users in this well-connected town, and the relatively low land values, that a Master Plan be commissioned for the progressive redevelopment and modernization of HMP Bedford as a resettlement prison on this site.

In a separate Annex to this report an analysis is given of the points the Board has made over the last few years; the official responses and an account of whether or not the issue was resolved. The analysis shows that very few indeed of the issues have been resolved.

Section 5

PRINCIPAL FOCI OF MONITORING IN THE PRISON

5.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION.

1. Almost no assistance is available on the wings for prisoners who have difficulty understanding written or spoken English.
2. There is a lack of special provision for Young Adult prisoners.
3. There appears to be an incomplete understanding of mental health among some officers. This manifests in language that describes those with mental health issues as 'other' (i.e. unlike 'the rest of us'). The Board is concerned that this lack of understanding may contribute to the unequal treatment of vulnerable prisoners who are already disadvantaged by their mental health conditions.
4. The Board acknowledges that its membership is not representative of the prison's typical social, ethnic and religious demography, which can lead to problems of perceived legitimacy and relevance.

5.2 EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS, WORKSHOPS AND LIBRARY

5. Education is currently provided by A4e Justice (recently acquired by Staffline Group Ltd). The company offers a range of courses under the City and Guilds and OCR awarding bodies. Learning and Skills courses constitute an element of the prison's resettlement agenda and a rudimentary source of limited 'purposeful activity' for prisoners.
6. There has been a shortfall in teaching provision during this period, reportedly because of the systemic difficulty of recruiting functional skills teachers under the prevailing terms of service.
7. Attendance numbers continue to fluctuate. The Board is concerned that the prison's educational provision is not sufficiently motivating to the prisoners it is designed to help, evidence for this being that an Activities Officer has been introduced to investigate reasons for absence and to issue warnings under the IEP system to prisoners for non-attendance. It is the Board's view that a review should be conducted of the educational offer, in the wider context of the ambient culture (ie, would prisoners say that the prevailing culture in Bedford empowers and motivates them to acquire new skills, self-esteem, and generally to develop, thrive and flourish?)
8. The Shannon Trust (formerly Toe-by-Toe) mentoring scheme has been restarted to help semi-literate prisoners. Unfortunately this effort has been hampered by operational constraints (shortage of discretionary officer time) that make it difficult to allow mentors and learners to spend 20 minutes per day together. The Education Department offers on-screen literacy games to encourage participation.

Library

9. Disappointingly, Bedford Borough Council withdrew its service from mid-August 2014 when the prison withdrew the officer assigned to supervise the prisoners during library visits. The

long-serving and well-respected librarian, who was justifiably uncomfortable with this change in arrangements, chose to retire. The library has nonetheless been creditably and enthusiastically managed on a day-to-day basis by an OSG. However, the withdrawal of the local authority service has had a detrimental effect on the library - for example no new books have been purchased since August – leading to a serious deprivation for many prisoners. There has been significant delay in finding an alternative provider, though a contract has now been signed with Milton Keynes College and the Board hopes to see some improvement during the next few months.

5.3 HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

10. The healthcare service delivered by the South Essex Partnership Trust (Community Health Services Bedfordshire) appears to be of a good standard and to adapt to shifts in prison demography. The Board continues to receive a high level of complaints from prisoners about the quality and promptness of healthcare provided, however these complaints tend to come from a vocal minority of prisoners. The Board accepts the need to prioritise provision according to need, and considers this to have been appropriately handled during the reporting period.
11. A new 'Complex Pain Clinic' addresses the needs of the shocking number of prisoners addicted to medication. It aims to achieve a safe reduction of pain medication supported by psychological counselling and remedial gym sessions designed to aid health recovery. The effectiveness and safety of acupuncture as a complementary therapy is currently being assessed.
12. The Appointments System has been overhauled, but the Board still receives many reports of prisoners being late for, or entirely missing, their appointments. There is no tracking or recording system for late or missed appointments so it is difficult for anyone (management or monitors) to identify the failings in the system. These are in every sense expensive failings.
13. The Board is pleased to note the introduction of an extra GP clinic on Friday afternoons, when the prison has otherwise all-but closed down until Monday morning.
14. Extremely tight allocations of staff, staff vacancies and prison overcrowding have also impacted Healthcare:
 - In times when the SSU is overwhelmed, 'spare' beds in Healthcare have been commandeered for temporary housing of extremely problematic prisoners, with devastating effects upon the unit's capability to operate effectively.
 - With only one uniformed officer on duty at a time, prisoners who do not wish for or cannot enjoy exercise have to be locked up while others exercise.
 - In times of particular pressure, the officer is called away to fill in elsewhere, resulting in further loss of association.
15. A high proportion of the healthcare-related complaints the Board receives concern the prescription of medication. When Board Members follow such applications up with the general practitioners, they have generally been reassured that all relevant considerations have been taken into account in decisions that diverge from a prisoner's preference. The Board therefore has currently no inclination to doubt that the mental health team, supported by Healthcare and the GPs, prescribe appropriate medication.

Mental Health

16. The Board continues to deplore the fact that prisoners with serious mental health issues are imprisoned. This unfortunate situation seems to be perpetuated, in part, by a fundamental difference in the legislation governing prisons and specialised mental health institutions that

could provide a more proportionate level of care: while prisons are obliged to take everyone given a custodial sentence, mental health institutions only accept admission if they have a bed available.

17. Picking up a point made under *Equality and Inclusion*, concerning 'othering', prisoners with mental health difficulties, may, in the careless jargon of prison, be referred to as 'poor-copers'. This kind of label fails to recognise that such mentally troubled individuals are typically operating in prison at the extremes of their safe envelope. Labelling prisoners as 'at risk of self-harm' can be just as unhelpful, as the category covers anything from attention-seeking to desperately intent suicide. Those with real suicidal intent merit a different level of attention and care to divert them.
18. The Board is concerned that the mental health in-reach team is under-resourced, and that they, as with other categories of staff in the prison, are consequently operating at a level of stress that may be unsafe for them and counter-effective operationally.

5.4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

Purposeful Activity

19. The Board is concerned that the prison has found it virtually impossible, for a host of reasons, over and above the internal constraints arising from extremely tight allocations of staff, staff vacancies and prison overcrowding, to sustain the contracts with outside companies that provide work for prisoners. The work provided so far has anyway mostly only been:
 - mundane in quality, and unlikely to stimulate much in the way of personal development or rehabilitation;
 - only sufficient in quantity to occupy a small proportion of the prisoner population for a few hours a week.
20. Nonetheless:
 - The BICS workshop for industrial cleaning training is functioning well;
 - The Painting and Decorating workshop has been revived;
 - The Laundry is flourishing under a new manager;
 - The prison has implemented a potentially valuable 'Employment Passport' scheme, which evidences prisoner's employability skills.
21. The Board regard the limitations (especially overcrowding, and a level of resource that is inadequate to deliver the core of the institution's mission) imposed upon HMP Bedford's ability to deliver a quantity and quality of purposeful activity that is developmentally beneficial in terms of rehabilitation, as cynical evidence of the extent to which successive British governments have failed to espouse, lead and project a humane agenda that focuses on working with convicted criminals as redeemable human beings.

5.5 RESETTLEMENT

22. Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) took control of Resettlement on 1st May 2015. Bedford's resettlement area is known as BeNCH, and covers Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, combining four probation trusts into one project. HMP Peterborough and HMP The Mount are the other prisons included in this area. Sodexo in

partnership with Nacro won the contract to run this CRC. They have subsequently sub-contracted much resettlement work to the charities St Giles Trust and Langley House Trust.

23. At present the privately managed resettlement provision looks remarkably similar to that which was offered previously, though with new risks (inexperienced 'providers', lack of control by the Governor, ...) and additional layers of management.
24. The lead Governor and her team showed considerable initiative and energy, gathering and disseminating information about the emerging Transforming Rehabilitation agenda. Contracts with the CRC were only signed in December, giving a 5-month launch period. Since then, there has been little actionable information emerging from the CRC and some key components of the service are clearly still being designed. The Board is concerned that the slow and uncertain emergence of a programme of activity is evidence that the new approach has been implemented with insufficient preparation.

Accommodation

25. St. Mungos was replaced as the housing advice service by Langley House Trust in May. However, St. Mungos continues to provide weekly unfunded advice for prisoners who are released to Hertfordshire.
26. Accommodation on release has exceeded the 85% target during the year. However the Board would recommend that the target to be much higher - it is surprising that it is deemed acceptable for any prisoner to be released without accommodation.
27. In the Board's judgement, support services for offenders who want to change their lifestyle are deficient outside prison, as well as in. There is a widespread perception that hostels represent undesirable accommodation for those seeking to turn their lives around, due perhaps to the high numbers of drug and alcohol users they tend to accommodate. The Board accept that there are many difficulties here, not least that in order to obtain housing in the private-rented sector, even prospective tenants without a criminal record need to be able to demonstrate regular employment. But the fundamental point is that the entire in-prison effort at preparing prisoners for release is forfeit unless they (those of them at least who are determined to desist from criminality) can escape their old associates and start afresh.
28. The tracking of prisoners on release is poor. Robust and reliable information is very limited. This makes it impossible to assess the success or failure of different interventions. The Board considers this to be a serious deficit, which must be rectified.

Employment, Training and Education

29. The prison statistics show that Employment, Training and Education on release have exceeded the 30% target for the reporting year. As with accommodation, this target is a disappointingly low bar that reveals much about the Prison Service's interest in the sustainability of prisoners' lives after release. Given the importance of Employment, Training and Education to rehabilitation, the Board would like to see a more challenging target set.
30. It is not clear whom the Board should hold accountable for Resettlement following the privatisation of much of this function. The Board has yet to meet anyone employed directly by Sodexo; it deeply regrets the omission in the design of this new arrangement, to give the Governor of the prison some meaningful leverage in the way the services are provided.

Basic Custody Screening Tool

31. Implementation of the Basic Custody Screening Tool has been successful with close to 100% completed within 72 hours. This process flags up issues specific to each prisoner on induction and starts the preparation for their release.

5.6 SAFER CUSTODY

32. Monitoring of cell bell response times has shown that relatively high numbers of priority calls take more than 10 minutes to be answered. One or two priority calls each month take around an hour to be answered. Worryingly, prisoners on open ACCTs have also suffered from delayed responses to their priority calls.
33. Exit surveys indicate how safe prisoners feel, during their time at HMP Bedford, in relation to bullying and support for those who self-harm. Generally they have shown that those prisoners who complete the surveys rate HMP Bedford above average with regard to Safer Custody. However, surveys are typically only completed by a small number of prisoners each month so these results have to be interpreted with caution.
34. Complex Needs meetings are held weekly, and are attended by all relevant departments. These meetings help staff identify and support prisoners who are deemed at risk, or who are difficult to manage. Unfortunately the time spent on each case is sometimes very limited due to the increasing numbers of prisoners who need to be discussed.

First Night Centre

35. If there is space, new prisoners spend their first nights on the ground floor of C wing. Although this is adjacent to the hub office, these men are effectively housed on a main wing of the prison and are surrounded at meal times and association by seasoned prisoners. When there is no space there, as is frequently the case, first-nighters have to be accommodated on other main wings. Given the statistics for self-inflicted deaths in custody, which show this category to be clearly at the highest risk. They imperatively need adequate support, and the current haphazard system is profoundly unsatisfactory.
36. The use of the smaller F Wing, currently used for VPs would, in the Board's view, be a much more suitable area for inducting new prisoners.
37. The Board has been assured many times over several years, that a credible solution would be found, but no effort whatever seems to have been invested in creating the conditions for a respectful and safe First Night Centre. The Board is appalled that the First Night arrangements for prisoners at the prison remain so inadequate, and has pointed out the woefully inadequate provision made for them in HMP Bedford in all of its recent reports, without the slightest hint of progress towards a satisfactory outcome. It is high time that purposeful action be taken.

Deaths in Custody

38. There was one death in custody this year, determined to be by natural causes after the prisoner concerned was admitted to hospital. Staff members were praised at the inquest for their considerate approach to bereaved family members.
39. There have been 3 occasions recorded in this reporting year (all in May) when prisoners sustained life-threatening injuries. These were either self-inflicted or the result of an assault by another prisoner.

Self-harm

40. During this reporting period 396 ACCTs were opened on prisoners considered to be at risk of self-harm and/or suicide, compared to 265 last year, an increase of almost 50%. The Board notes that research shows that decreased time out of cell, reduced staff contact, and lack of access to purposeful activity, are all associated with increased self-harm. These deficits are all currently depressingly and dangerously prevalent in HMP Bedford.
41. The location of the Samaritans telephone in SSU, which is underground, has poor reception. The Board understands that this technical difficulty has been resolved.
42. Data have been analysed and used to good effect by the Safer Custody Team to ascertain the triggers for self-harm.

43. There has been a need for more training in the completion of ACCT documents, especially for Healthcare staff, who have had trouble attending this training in the past due to the heavy demands on their time elsewhere. The lack of ACCT assessors has been of some concern but training has been undertaken to increase the number of staff able to do ACCT reviews.
44. The Board understands, however, that self-harm is a broad category, and that cutting can be regarded as a mechanism for the relief of emotional pain, and thus a prophylactic against suicide. These are such difficult and important matters that a deficit in training cannot be tolerated.

Listeners

45. There has been some success in retaining trained Listeners. This may get more difficult as the prison settles into its new role as a Resettlement prison as there will be fewer long-term prisoners to train as Listeners. Listener Representatives attend the monthly Safer Custody meetings and have been proactive in collecting data and designing advertisements.

Violence reduction

46. There were 441 incidents involving prisoner-on-prisoner bullying, violence, threats or weapons in the reporting year (cf. 530 in the previous year). The Board is researching the background to this still shockingly high figure and will report on its findings, initially to the Governor.

5.7 SEGREGATION, SEPARATION AND CARE, CLOSE SUPERVISION

47. The Segregation unit is used to retain and constrain prisoners who either represent a difficult-to-manage risk to other prisoners' safety, or who are believed to be under similar levels of threat from other prisoners on the main wings. Its basic facilities were listed at the front of this report. Located underground, the facility is dark, low-ceilinged and profoundly oppressive (there is no natural light, apart from steeply slanting light in the cells themselves). The shower is poor and badly screened. The exercise yard is extremely austere, the walls covered in graffiti. Because the cells are often 'trashed' by their occupants, the furniture is poor. It is not surprising that many prisoners find that a spell in solitary confinement in this facility triggers mental instability and terrible thoughts. The task of running the SSU demands the highest possible skill set, and so only very capable officers are assigned here, and they can often, but not always, bring very disturbed prisoners down from their agitated state (extreme violence, dirty protests, etc.) to calm and compliance. The stakes are so high that Board Members pay a particular attention to prisoner wellbeing in the segregation unit. If positive outcomes for prisoners are important, then it is important that prisoners be processed back onto 'normal location' as felicitously as possible.
48. As detailed every year in the Board's reports, the SSU is undersized – there is often an overspill of prisoners held in punitive solitary confinement on the main wings and even in Healthcare, where they can communicate easily with other prisoners. Prisoners are left in their solitary cells for hours on end with absolutely nothing to do. They are offered limited educational provision; radios are in short supply due to vandalism and prisoners taking them when they are transferred; televisions are never issued and smoking is prohibited on health and safety grounds.
49. There is only one room (apart from the cluttered tiny office for the staff) that must serve for both Adjudications (punitive) and Reviews (intended to be more informal and to engage the prisoner's collaborative participation). The furniture is fixed to the floor and is arranged in a layout that works for Adjudications but is far too oppositional for Reviews. It is not always clear if the individual being reviewed, or indeed at times the Governor presiding, understands that it is a review, and not an adjudication. Some officers also seem unclear about the difference between GOOD reviews and adjudications. Each Governor has their own

approach to reviews, which has led to a lack of consistency, and consequential distress for the prisoners affected. Governors have sometimes commenced reviews with little prior knowledge of the prisoner and no plan for the likely outcome of the review.

50. A recent 'dirty protest' had as an unlikely result that the office and adjudication/ review room were redecorated and upgraded. This has resulted in a rather better working environment for officers and for adjudication staff.
51. The total number of prisoners located in SSU in the reporting period was 331 with an average number of prisoners located each week of approximately 7. The average length of stay was just under 6 days, which is similar to last year's average. No prisoner was held continuously for more than a month. 65 prisoners on an open ACCT were segregated despite HMCIP criticising the routine segregation of prisoners at risk of suicidal ideation. The percentage of ethnic minority prisoners located in the SSU averages around 35%, which is similar to the proportion of such prisoners in the establishment as a whole. Adjudications were up on last year from an average of 85 to just over 103 per month, which reflects the more difficult prisoner population. There were 8 incidents of dirty protest compared to 4 in the previous reporting period
52. On no reasonable analysis could segregation under these conditions be called fair and reasonable humane treatment, and nor could it be thought to encourage decent respectful behaviour, or rehabilitation. The Board protests as loudly as it can that the SSU is so badly out of line, so inhumane, that every effort should be made to build an alternative.

Use of Force

53. The Board has observed an increasing use of control and restraint by officers. Control and restraint appears to be used on an almost daily basis imposing stress on prisoners and officers alike. Incidents when Board Members have been present have generally been appropriately managed, though the previous Governor felt that the force used on a couple of occasions during the year was excessive. These incidents were referred to the police.
54. Use of Force statistics are judged by prison senior managers themselves to be unreliable and as likely to under-state the true numbers. However records show that control and restraint techniques were employed by officers 182 times compared to 142 last year. The monthly SMARG (see Glossary) meeting has not always been rigorous in analysing this data.
55. The Board has always shown an interest in the use of force statistics, in the context of decency and the more general issues of the quality of engagement and relationship between officers and prisoners, which are so important for rehabilitation. It has consistently supported the incumbent governor in his or her efforts to maintain a culture where to the greatest extent possible inflammatory situations are de-escalated without the use or threat of force.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Accommodation

56. Two cells on E wing were judged to be uninhabitable during the coldest periods last winter. Cold also affects cells on the perimeter side of A wing obliging prisoners to wear multiple layers of clothing and sleep under piles of blankets, if they can get them. It looks now as though the long-promised upgrade to the heating system and replacement windows will not be delivered before the cold sets in again. Conversely much of the prison becomes very hot during the hottest summer weather as there is inadequate ventilation, and drugs continue to be delivered over the wall through the old, poorly-defended, windows.
57. Most prisoners are required to share cells, many of which were originally designed for single-occupancy. They are required to eat their main meal in close proximity to the in-cell WC, which is often poorly screened. Such conditions cannot be regarded as decent.

Catering

58. Prisoners remain unhappy at being given an 'evening' meal in late/middle afternoon of a baguette or baked potato while their main hot meal is served at lunchtime. They tend to eat their breakfast pack in the evening as a top-up thereby going without breakfast.
59. The quality of the main meal at lunchtime has improved following an increase in the food budget to help compensate for the reduced regime. The Board would like to credit the provision of food during Ramadan, which was well received.

Telephones

60. The Board receives regular complaints about the lack of access to phones on the wings. On investigation the reason reported is prisoner vandalism, and although the prison has the phones repaired reasonably promptly, this is likely to be a continuing problem. Telephones are so important to prisoners, that it would preferable to double the number available.

Section 6

OTHER ISSUES UPON WHICH THE BOARD WISHES TO REMARK

Applications and Complaints

61. The prison's complaints system seems to work well and with integrity. Not so the Applications process, according to many accounts by both prisoners and officers. Applications are forms that have to be submitted for almost any request by a prisoner of the system, from a request for a new lavatory roll, through to an application for a visit or to be considered for a vacant job in the prison (cleaning, etc.).
62. There is a widespread perception that many applications end up in the bin. Prisoners report submitting multiple applications without receiving any response.
63. Systems in the prison are highly bureaucratic and cumbersome, particularly for the prisoner population of HMP Bedford, many of whom have limited literary or numeracy skills. Most of these forms and most of the systems seem, to the Board, to be designed more for the convenience of the staff than that of the users. The prisoners deserve more, in the Board's view, in the way of traditional 'customer care'.

Chaplaincy

64. Mention should be made of the excellent work done by the chaplaincy team including the work on bereavement counselling.

Drugs

65. The emergence of legal highs such as 'Spice' has promoted disruptive behaviour that has, in episodes, significantly compromised the stability of the prison. Prisoners have reportedly been presenting themselves for medication already intoxicated.
66. The Board notes that responsibility for controlling the flow of banned substances and articles into the prison, whether in packages thrown or flown over the wall, through the Visits Hall or through either of the main gates, falls to the Security function in the prison. It notes further that the deleterious effects go far deeper than simply endangering the health of individual users – the trade generates and feeds hierarchies of coercion and bullying that work strongly against a culture of rehabilitation. These matters are certain to become more pointed with the forthcoming ban on smoking in the prison, and they need constant close attention. They are, in the Board's view, also serious enough to merit further investment in technology, to extend the reach of the officers and the dogs.
67. The Board finds it very difficult indeed to reach conclusions about the workings of either of the two drug-specialist residential wings – the large, relatively modern D-Wing, where prisoners are 'maintained' on relatively high twice-daily doses of extremely addictive synthetic heroin substitutes, and the Drug Recovery (E) Wing. The utility of this latter experiment, as a call on precious space, has always baffled the Board. There seem simply to be too few men with the appropriate readiness to take proper advantage of the facility and they stay for too short a time. Very little seems to be collected in the way of statistics that could be analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of different policies or types of intervention. There is no evidence, as far as the Board can discover, to demonstrate that any of the E-Wing residents leave prison any safer or better able to support themselves legally than when they came in. The Board regard the "Drug Recovery" facility as a subsidiary mission (along with the requirement

on the prison to house sex-offenders) that contributes to an overall under-performance against the core missions of a resettlement prison.

Gymnasium

68. The gym (along with the kitchens) is one of the few institutions within the prison that arouses serious interest among the prisoner population. Having so very little to look forward to each day, the gym represents a high point for many, allowing them to express themselves physically and escape for a short interlude being locked in their cells with the same cell-mate day after day with little to do. Experts on self-inflicted deaths in prison observe that the statistics of such dreadful incidents include very few prisoners who use the gym. The Board wonders whether it might be worthwhile experimenting with the introduction of less 'macho' forms of exercise (yoga, pilates, etc.) that might make the gym more inclusively attractive to less self-confidently 'physical' prisoners.
69. Regrettably, the gym has run on a restricted regime for much of the reporting year because of a shortfall in specialised staffing after the dismissal of two PE Instructors for professional malpractice. The remaining vacancy has only recently been filled. Nonetheless, the gym facilities have seen a reasonable occupancy-rate, for physical exercise of various forms, and for a variety of other events that require a large internal space. Board members were impressed for example by a (regrettably restricted-access) course/performance provided by 'Reactivate' helping prisoners with employability and self esteem. This would appear to be an excellent use of gym space as prisoners can find the surroundings more sympathetic than the classroom.
70. It is disappointing that the Astroturf, which forms by far the largest exercise space, is very rarely seen to be used, as it has been allocated to the gym, which rarely has the staffing necessary to use it, and does not seem to be able to show the necessary flexibility to make it available for general exercise in the (vast majority of) times when its use for football, etc., cannot be programmed. The Board finds this incomprehensible, in a prison that is so desperately short of secure open-sky space. It notes that once the heating and windows upgrade gets underway the Astroturf will be entirely out of use for approximately 6 months. Perversely, it will hardly be missed, so little use does it get.

Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme

71. The Entry-Level of the IEP scheme marks out newly convicted prisoners due to the requirement for them to wear prison-issue clothing. This measure increases their risk of exploitation, as do the limits on spending money, which make entry-level prisoners, particularly smokers, more likely to incur debts. It has had no measurable positive impact on the behaviour of newly convicted prisoners. It does not allow officers to reward prisoners who have previously complied with the regime or who have shown active engagement. The Board calls on the Minister to remove the entry-Level IEP grade.
72. IEP downgrades are routinely used as a disciplinary measure immediately following a violent incident. The Board is cautious of this kind of instant-judgement process, fearing that its implementation will be highly subjective and hard to account for. It also challenges the idea in the Prison Rule that serves as the legislative authority for the IEP system, that IEP levels reward consistent patterns of behaviour by prisoners over a period of time. The benefits offered by 'enhanced' IEP status are regarded by prisoners as limited, and hard to achieve.

Infrastructure and Location

73. At several points in this report, the Board has criticised the inadequacy of the infrastructure to deliver the (unreasonably) diverse subsidiary missions currently required of the prison; deficiencies that lead cumulatively (in the context of overcrowding and understaffing) to the substantial failure of the prison, in the Board's view, to deliver against one of its principal core missions – to provide a culture and an environment in which rehabilitation becomes a possibility.

74. Counter-intuitively, perhaps, the Board wishes to stress that it does not criticise the infrastructure for its antiquity, though it is shabby and badly in need of investment. Members of the Board have visited several newly constructed prisons, and note that while some constructed a few decades ago might be hoped to give a design life of up to 100 years, the newer ones seem likely to be short-lived and very expensive to keep up to standard. Intelligently handled, much of the ancient infrastructure at Bedford could serve many further years, and in the process could deliver an economic and a sustainable option. It is sufficiently solid that it can accommodate many further rounds of redesign and reconfiguration. There is land immediately adjacent to the prison this is currently undeveloped, and/or occupied by semi-derelict stock. Land values in Bedford are not as high as elsewhere in the Region.
75. The winning, and hugely important feature of HMP Bedford, in the Board's view, is its location, just where a resettlement prison should be – maximally convenient for its 'users'. In that context the Board recommend that NOMS commission a master plan for the progressive redevelopment and modernisation of HMP Bedford as a resettlement prison on this site.

Laundry

76. When the laundry manager is absent, there are quickly shortages of prison issue clothing and bedding throughout the prison.

Leadership and Management

77. The prison lost No 1 Governor Ian Blakeman to HMP Bullingdon and gained Mary Bemment from HMP Wayland. The Board thanks Ian Blakeman for the quality of his engagement with the Board and for his championship of decency in all its dimensions within the prison. It welcomes Mary Bemment's commitment to trying to run a prison that is focused primarily on prisoner outcomes and outcomes for society. It welcomes the evidence there has already been of her readiness proactively to seek multi-professional input to the resolution of institutionally constrained problems. It hopes that these well-directed efforts are able to bear sustainable fruit.

Overcrowding

78. As has remarked at several points in this report, the Board is convinced that HMP Bedford has become too overcrowded, in relation to its physical size and its available facilities and staffing, to deliver its core mission. It does not have the physical space or facilities to deliver all of: a safe and decent First-Night provision, a humane Segregation Unit, a Drug Recovery Unit, and a Vulnerable Prisoners Wing, as well as 'normal location' for a diverse population of remand and newly-sentenced prisoners, many of whom have serious drug dependency issues. Consequently the prison largely fails, in the Board's view, to deliver on one of its foremost missions: to offer an environment that encourages prisoners towards desistance, and thereby rehabilitation. Many aspects of the prison's culture serve as evidence for this conclusion, as does the virtual absence of purposeful activity.

Personal Officer Scheme

79. Whilst the churn at HMP Bedford and the current shortage of staff make a Personal Officer scheme difficult to maintain, the Board would argue that it is neither humane nor practical to run a prison without one. Currently at Bedford, a prisoner can be effectively certain that those entrusted with his care know next to nothing that is important, about him. Further, to be seen as having legitimacy, the prison's management and staff need to be seen to have accurate and effective knowledge of prisoners' details and circumstances. The Board believes that it is a fundamental duty of a prison to keep prisoners informed of their circumstances and to help them engage with and progress through their sentence plan.
80. The Board applauds the OMU for having had the stamina to keep their 'Wing Surgeries' going for a sustained period, and it hopes that this will remain a permanent feature, so well appreciated is it by prisoners. This willingness to go onto the wings and answer prisoners' concerns directly has considerable impact for prisoners, assuaging the pains of imprisonment

by giving them accurate information about their progress through the system, and giving them a flicker of a sense that they might still have some residual autonomy.

Prison Officers (uniformed staff)

81. The Board has remarked every year on the difficult changes Prison Officers have had to navigate, and the pace of that change. A good prison officer is capable of running a secure wing while doing so much more when the occasion arises, to defuse threatening situations or to respond with consideration to the concerns of a disturbed prisoner. The Board has observed examples of superb 'jailcraft' even as the prison has become tenser and the number of incidents has mounted. The Board's overall evaluation of the staff response to some very difficult impositions, and increasingly to unsustainable levels of unremitting stress, is one of praise for their resilience and professionalism. The Board has remarked elsewhere in this report on the serious impacts understaffing and overcrowding have on the prisoner experience. Above all inadequate time and resources have been available for, or allocated to, the kind of positive engagement with prisoners that can address offending behaviour. In these matters consistently determined leadership and followup from the top, count for a great deal.
82. The Board is disappointed at the shallowness and brevity of the training offered to new recruits, who seem to learn very little about the softer skills, such as positive engagement with prisoners, necessary to be a 'good officer', in the training. It notes with concern the high incidence of new trainees leaving in their early weeks on the job, and wonders whether understaffing and the new work-patterns have made the crucial job of providing them with suitable and sufficient support from experienced staff, even more difficult.

Property

83. Property difficulties are the bane of many prisoners' lives, in particular because the prison requires them to be responsible for their own property, while running a system within which it is systematically impossible for the prisoners to exercise that responsibility. The reasons why it is impossible for prisoners properly to exercise their responsibility are legion, but all have a common feature. Prisoners have virtually no autonomy whatever and are expected to obey every instruction directed at them, however conflicted or counter-indicated. Thus for example they may be ordered out of their cell for some reason, whereafter they can have no control over whether the door is left open, and their property plundered. The prison could improve the general perception of its legitimacy, and reduce the rod that property represents for its own back, while at the same time doing a great deal to lighten the careless burden of risk and uncertainty borne by prisoners, if it were to:
- decide to get property matters 'right first time and every time'; and
 - conduct cell clearances responsibly, according to regulations, respectfully, and in a timely manner.

Reception

84. The Board has remarked over the years upon the mess, clutter and disrepair of the reception area, which can give new prisoners (by far the most vulnerable group) the impression that their wellbeing is not valued at HMP Bedford. But, regrettably, nothing has happened. For the safety of vulnerable first-nighters particularly, this area needs a complete overhaul to create a very much less threatening and austere impression.
85. New prisoners have too often been placed in dirty cells with insufficient bedding.

Risk of surrender of power from officers to prisoners

86. There have been concerns that some officers were not intervening when groups of prisoners appeared to be behaving suspiciously. Vigilance is necessary, with the introduction of a number of inexperienced officers accompanied by the loss of many experienced officers. Officers on detached duty also lack familiarity with the establishment.

Security

87. The prison was lively enough for a few weeks in May for the Governor to raise the prison's stability categorisation from low to medium. This was largely due to the behaviour of a few prisoners transferred in after disturbances at HMP Stocken and HMP Wandsworth. In this period they caused significant stress and damage in the SSU, and serious disturbance to other, more peaceable, prisoners.
88. Security concerns were raised in the short article on *Drugs* above in this Section.

Serious Incidents

89. Board members attended seven Serious Incidents during the reporting year. Most of the incidents were incidents at height where prisoners went onto the netting or beams in protest at perceived mistreatment.
90. The Board is concerned that the IMB have typically been contacted only at the end of an incident rather than when the Command Suite is opened, as expected.

Time out of cell

91. {See also *Purposeful Activity*} The prison has operated a restricted regime throughout the year due to chronic staff shortages. There is no evening association and prisoners spend long periods locked up with nothing to do. At times it has been a struggle to fulfill even the reduced regime. Prisoners and officers alike report that prisoners on E wing, F wing and Healthcare are the first to be locked up when there are staff shortages.
92. There is no recording of the amount of time prisoners spend out of their cells each day. The Board would expect a key performance indicator such as this to be monitored and evidenced regularly by wing staff.

Transfers

93. Prisoners continue to resist transfers to prisons they regard as unsafe, often because of concerns about rival gangs. Young prisoners are particularly resistant to moves to HMPYOI Glen Parva. On occasion, prisoners have been placed on prison vans in a highly distressed state. The Board considers young prisoners to be vulnerable in many ways – adolescents are famously prone to be commanded by their emotions, and male adolescents are instinctively challenge boundaries and seek adventure. Research data also seems increasingly clearly to be showing that engagement with the criminal justice system, and very especially incarceration, limits their life chances significantly. The Board asks that the prison carefully consider the suitability/readiness of prisoners for transfer.

Visits and links with the outside

94. Visits are essential both to the wellbeing and to the rehabilitation of prisoners. Appropriately the prison works hard to offer a positive visit experience. Improvements have been made in time keeping (thus ensuring that prisoners get their full allocation of time with their visitors) by bringing prisoners early to the Centre, and handling the changeover, between the first and the second session, with care. There are occasions when regular visitors have been denied access because they do not have the right documentation. A common sense attitude needs to prevail and a consistent approach enforced. Responding to a consistent sequence of complaints, the prison has introduced a new way of booking visits. There are still problems for some visitors who cannot access email.
95. Ormiston's parenting course continues to be well received and efforts are made to ensure that prisoners stay in Bedford to complete the six-week course.
96. Complaints have been received about the toilets and nappy changing room in the Visitors' Centre, which has no ventilation. The Visitors Centre currently does not represent a suitable or hospitable environment for families to wait for their visits.

Vulnerable prisoners

97. This is a broad category, and the term features at many points in this report. Here it codes for sex offenders, who, when they have the misfortune to arrive at the prison when F Wing is already full, have been routinely placed on the main wings, usually C wing. A few prisoners have found this to be a source of great distress. Sex offenders who decide against using Rule 45 on reception at the prison are often quickly uncovered by other prisoners on the main wings.
98. If it is indeed true that sex offenders cannot safely be managed on normal location, and have to be physically completely isolated (in HMP Bedford this means F-Wing), then the Board conclude that HMP Bedford cannot both house them and achieve its core purposes of providing a safe and decent environment for the majority of prisoners. Sex offenders should be located uniquely where their specific needs (for protection as well as for treatment) can be assured. A similar, but less acute, argument applies to the 'drug recovery' function, covered elsewhere in this report.

Works Department

99. The recent privatisation of the Works Department has introduced an unwelcome extra layer of bureaucracy, which has led to delays in repair work and projects being undertaken.

Section 7

SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE BY THE IMB

7.1 APPLICATIONS FROM PRISONERS

Code	Subject	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	Change
A	Accommodation	16	6	13	13	10
B	Adjudications	9	11	9	8	-2
C	Equality & Diversity (incl. religion)	4	10	3	17	-6
D	Education/employment/training incl. IEP	19	52	28	30	-33
E 1	Family/visits incl. mail & phone	33	82	41	40	-49
E 2	Finance/pay	4				4
F	Food/kitchen related	8	16	4	5	-8
G	Health related	71	77	56	67	-6
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	38	37	28	16	1
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	40	27	23	39	13
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	2	9	4	8	-7
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)	41	44	34	34	-3
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns incl. bullying	23	28	30	48	-5
K	Transfers	20	12	23	14	8
L	Miscellaneous	30	26	26	90	4
	Total number of IMB applications	358	437	322	429	-79

Trends

100. There has been a surge in the number of applications regarding property lost during transfer between prisons this year. Prisoners frequently arrive at HMP Bedford without their property, often following a security transfer. Such applications are very difficult to resolve satisfactorily due to inadequate recording of property in the prisoner's possession and cell clearances being undertaken in the prisoner's absence.
101. There have been notable declines in the numbers of applications relating to mail and PIN phones this year, perhaps reflecting better management in these areas. Applications relating to activities have also declined although this may reflect a lack of the provision of purposeful activity for prisoners.
102. Accommodation (cell allocation) applications have increased. The provision of decent accommodation to prisoners has been a struggle at times due to the high numbers of prisoners, shortage of staff and inadequate heating system. There has been increased frustration among prisoners at the time taken to process transfer requests.
103. Applications from prisoners concerned about their treatment by officers have continued to decline from an unacceptably high peak 3 years ago.

7.2 Board Statistics

BOARD STATISTICS 2014 - 2015	
Recommended complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	1
Number of members leaving within reporting period	2
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the Establishment	210
Total number of segregation reviews held	146
Total number of segregation reviews attended	89*
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	11/6/2015

* This is the number of attendances recorded in the remaining record books. One book went missing in the SSU in the last quarter of the reporting period. Number of attendances is certainly higher than the figure given.

104. The Board has been forced to halve the number of rota visits undertaken during the reporting year due to the low number of trained members. This is a result of changes to the recruitment process implemented across the Civil Service, including a ban on newspaper advertisements. Board members have prioritised attending GOOD reviews twice each week and processing applications from prisoners.

Section 8**GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED**

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork – replacement for F2052SH
BEAT	Bedford Equality Action Team
CNA	Certified Normal Accommodation – the number of prisoners who can be accommodated without overcrowding
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
IAG*	Information and Guidance
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges – Prisoners can be on Basic, Standard or Enhanced
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IRC	Immigrant Removal Centre
ISP	Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners
MALRAP	Multi Agency Lifer Risk Assessment Panel
MQPL	Measuring the Quality of Prison Life
NOMS	National Offender Manager Service – amalgamation of the Prison & Probation Services
OMU	Offender Management Unit
OpCap	Operational Capacity - the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold without serious risk to good order, security and the proper running of the planned regime
PEEP	Prisoner Emergency Evacuation Plan
PER	Prisoner Escort Record
ROTL	Release on Temporary License
SIR	Security Information Report
SMARG	Segregation Monitoring And Review Group
SORTT	Supporting Offenders in Recovery and Treatment Team – drug & alcohol team
SSU	Separation and Support Unit
VPU	Vulnerable Prisoner Unit
VR	Violence Reduction