



HMP/YOI ISIS

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD
JANUARY – DECEMBER 2013**

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1 Statutory Role of the IMB

- 1.1 The Prisons 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 is situated.
- 1.2 The Board is specifically charged to:
 - satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release,
 - inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has,
 - report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.
- 1.3 To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every offender and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

2 Description of the Prison

- 2.1 HMP/YOI Isis opened in July 2010. It is a public sector training prison for convicted young men, with a mix of young offenders between the ages of 18 and 21 with Category C adults up to the age of 25 (increased to 30 in early 2014). It is situated in Thamesmead in South-East London. The certified normal accommodation (CNA) is 478. The operational capacity (OP CAP) i.e. the maximum population it can safely and decently hold is 622.
- 2.2 Although sited within the original perimeter wall of HMP Belmarsh, HMP/YOI Isis is a completely separate prison.

3 Chair's Introduction

- 3.1 This is the third report of the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP/YOI Isis. The first, issued in April 2012, reported a message of 'so far so good' after the prison's opening year. The second, issued last April, talked of 'good work in progress with notes of caution'. This year's report, after three and a half years of operation, has to be referred to as the 'if only' year.
- 3.2 All organisations, especially those in the public sector, expect to be subject to regular scrutiny and cost-cutting to ensure best value for money, none more so than those in the prison service. In these times of austerity, those requirements are even more obvious and demanding. However, this last year has seen Isis subjected to measures so outside the prison's control that the very purpose of the prison as a modern training prison for sentenced young men has to be called into question and where a third of the offenders have reportedly felt unsafe. It is a tragedy that so many of the excellent facilities in the prison have been underused and that offenders are having their rehabilitation opportunities limited because of external factors. Hopefully, this report demonstrates the frustration felt by the Governor and his staff, the IMB and indeed by the offenders themselves. If only.....
- 3.3 I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Prisons Minister, Jeremy Wright, for personally intervening last year in the response to our Annual Report. The Board takes the production of Annual Reports extremely seriously and the first ministerial response last year was discourteous and patronising with few or no answers to the actual questions raised. His second response was detailed, relevant and helpful for which I am extremely grateful. It is understood that there is now a new and improved system in place for the production of responses to IMB Annual Reports. This is to be welcomed.
- 3.4 I would also like to thank the Governor and his senior team for continuing to welcome the Board's contribution to life in Isis. They rightly regard regular monitoring on a local day-to-day basis by independent eyes and ears as important for both offenders and staff alike. The Board is extremely well served by the prison in terms of office accommodation and administrative support and continues to have a strong and challenging relationship with the Governor. At a personal level, he is extremely open and candid and that is appreciated by all members of the Board.

David Pinchin

IMB Chair

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 HMP/YOI Isis is still a relatively new prison with excellent facilities, ideally suited to delivering its intended training role for sentenced young men. However, despite good leadership on the part of the Governor and a committed team of staff, major issues prevail around the continuing levels of violence and the inability to fully engage offenders in the learning and training opportunities available. This report does not attempt to cover all aspects of prison life; it is designed to raise matters that give the Board most concern but also to highlight examples of good work that should be commended and perhaps replicated elsewhere.
- 4.2 Undoubtedly the most significant management issue facing the prison during the year has been the lack of Prison Officers and other specialist posts adequately to staff the prison to agreed levels. This was due partly to local issues such as sickness, suspensions, restricted duties and temporary advancement but was most critically the result of a freeze on recruitment imposed by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in February 2013. This lasted for the best part of the year and was, in the Board's view, exceptionally damaging and contrary to the stated aims and objectives of Government to optimise work opportunities for offenders and to prepare them for release with a view to reducing reoffending.
- 4.3 Together with high levels of staff turnover, and a further stage of voluntary redundancy, the Governor had little choice but to keep adjusting the normal regime in order to maintain a secure environment. This culminated in September in a formal restricted regime being introduced which it now appears will continue until September 2014 at least, possibly indefinitely.
- 4.4 To make matters worse, the Education and Skills provider, A4e, found it difficult to recruit and retain staff and, therefore, to keep activity places open.
- 4.5 The result has been that the establishment is not fulfilling its designated role as a training prison. Offenders are behind their cell doors for far too much of the time, opportunities for learning and training are curtailed or lost, as are such basic entitlements as showers, phone calls, gym and association. Attendance at purposeful activity is inadequate across the prison.
- 4.6 It is to the credit of the Governor and his staff that the prison has survived such a turbulent and risky period where so much more has been expected of them for less resource. It is also to their credit that, despite all, some excellent results have been achieved.

- 4.7 Violence and bullying across the prison still remains a major issue and many offenders fear for their personal safety. Some of the violence can be attributed to frustration felt by the offenders about the restricted regime; much of it is gang-related. Perversely, the incidence of violence has fallen slightly with the introduction of the restricted regime, mainly because opportunities to meet with other offenders have been reduced. The prison has implemented a number of initiatives to address violence, including working with officers from the Metropolitan Police's Operation Trident Team aimed at a more intelligence-led approach to tackling London gang culture.
- 4.8 A further major issue is that a significant number of offenders arrive at Isis without an up-to-date OASys assessment and sentence plan. Such documentation should be completed by the sending prison. On average there have been over 250 offenders in the prison at any one time without a sentence plan. The Board has been appalled that this situation has been allowed to occur as without this assessment, progress towards rehabilitation is significantly compromised. There is little doubt that many offenders have not been properly supported due to this lack of risk management information. Furthermore, local attempts to address the backlog were thwarted when a specialist team, designated and funded to undertake this time-consuming work, was withdrawn at the last minute to attend another prison.
- 4.9 Other issues of concern referred to below include sentence-expired Foreign Nationals being held on IS91s, double cell toilet privacy, equalities management, communications issues in the HDC process, the personal officer scheme, cleanliness and hygiene, and meal supervision in the Houseblocks.

Issues for the Minister

- 4.10 The Board urges the Minister to investigate the circumstances surrounding the recruitment freeze of 2013; to ensure that in future the effects of any such similar exercise are fully understood and properly planned in advance; and that adequate levels of staff are now made available so that offenders can feel safe and supported within the establishment and to enable the prison to fulfil its designated role as a training prison. (5.2 - 5.3, 9.3 – 9.4, 11.5, 13.2 – 13.4)
- 4.11 The Board again urges the Minister to reconsider the present policy of housing sentence-expired Foreign Nationals in inappropriate prison accommodation pending deportation. (6.5)
- 4.12 The Board seeks urgent clarification of the respective responsibilities of both private and public sector prisons, in regard to the completion of

OASys assessments and sentence plans; and asks the Minister to introduce a consistent funded policy across the prison estate. If private sector prisons are not to be required to undertake this work, additional resources must be made available to receiving prisons (10.6 – 10.8)

Issues for the Prison Service

- 4.13 To increase staffing levels urgently across the prison to enable an appropriate offender training regime to be operated. (9.3 – 9.5)
- 4.14 To provide additional resources to the prison to enable all outstanding OASys assessments to be completed as a matter of urgency. (10.6 – 10.8)
- 4.15 To ensure continuation of the Operation Trident gang initiative involving officers working inside the prison. This pilot project has been a great success and should be funded permanently. (11.3)
- 4.16 To consider again the Board's previous concerns, shared by HMIP, about the lack of toilet privacy in double cells. If solid partitions cannot be provided in Isis at this late stage, at very least any future planning should include them as a norm. (13.5)
- 4.17 To implement the delayed proposal to install in-cell telephones across the establishment. There is good evidence that this will reduce the incidence of self-harm and bullying. Running costs are self-funding and the systems are entirely secure with listening facilities. (13.7)
- 4.18 To give catering managers the authority to make local purchases, in exceptional circumstances, outside the national contract. (13.13)
- 4.19 To clarify prison policy regarding the transfer of offender property and to bring about consistency across all establishments and escort contractors. (14.4)

Issues for the Governor

- 4.20 To prioritise management of the Equalities process through strengthened leadership and the re-establishment of an Equalities Manager post, regular review meetings and the involvement of more offender representatives (6.2)
- 4.21 To ensure there is an appropriate forward looking staffing plan to meet fully the training aspirations of the prison, and to secure the appointment of sufficient staff in conjunction with NOMS and the Area Director so that the present restricted regime is withdrawn as soon as possible. (9.3 – 9.4)

- 4.22 To improve significantly attendance at education and skills by ensuring residential staff, in conjunction with A4e, encourage and motivate offenders to comply with their agreed compacts. (7.5, 9.2 - 9.4)
- 4.23 To facilitate improved access for drug workers to see their offender clients. (8.6)
- 4.24 Notwithstanding present staffing difficulties, to encourage local initiatives to increase the amount of purposeful activity available to offenders and to ensure that basic entitlements are delivered. (9.4)
- 4.25 To improve OMU feedback to offenders on the progress of HDC applications. (10.10)
- 4.26 To review the HDC process so that scarce resources in OMU and Probation are used appropriately, while protecting the offenders' opportunity to a fair review. (10.11)
- 4.27 To consider whether there are any further local initiatives that might be taken now to address the continuing problem of violence within the establishment. (11.3 – 11.8)
- 4.28 To review the protocols for referral to the External Adjudicator to ensure rigour around witness involvement and completeness of evidence. (12.9)
- 4.29 To ensure privacy curtains in double cells are routinely repaired or replaced as required. (13.5)
- 4.30 To review the poor practice of lunch behind cell doors. (13.9)
- 4.31 To develop further the Personal Officer scheme to improve offender staff relationships and to enable more offender concerns to be resolved locally.(13.10)
- 4.32 To improve supervision of the cleaning of trolleys and trays before they are returned to the kitchens from the Houseblocks, and to ensure the completion of temperature charts and comments books. (13.16)
- 4.33 To improve the standards of food delivery, hygiene and portion control at the serveries through better officer supervision. (13.17 – 13.18)
- 4.34 To encourage residential staff, particularly personal officers, to resolve offender concerns effectively and speedily to avoid escalation to the formal complaints process and unnecessary Applications to the Board. (14.2)

5 Equalities

- 5.1 The Isis population is approximately 86% British. 68% are from the black and minority ethnic communities (BME). The largest religious group of 34% is Muslim. The high BME population brings different issues from those encountered in other prisons including significant cultural, religious and dietary needs. However, other minority groups are also afforded close attention in the jail including, in Isis, the group of white offenders.
- 5.2 Although a robust process for the management of equality issues had been established in the previous reporting year, it is regretted that this process has not been rigorously pursued during this last year. The Equalities Manager post was lost, meetings have frequently been cancelled and attendance at meetings from all areas has been low including from the offender population. With poor attendance and a lack of consistency, matters of concern have not been followed through. Crucially, there appears to have been little work undertaken on the action plan started in the previous reporting year. The Board would welcome more proactive engagement in the Equalities process as it appears that this is currently low on the list of priorities for the senior management team.
- 5.3 Throughout the reporting year, impact assessments have been carried out in relation to Disability and Violence and a further one is due this year on IEP, following the introduction of the national changes to the IEP system.
- 5.4 The Board is pleased to report that complaints relating to Equalities and discrimination are well-managed in the prison. When the special tick boxes on 'complaint' forms are checked, these are routinely reviewed by Equalities staff and if considered appropriate, they are then managed in the same manner as DIRFs. Each DIRF is reviewed individually and checked by the Deputy Governor and an action plan devised. The Board receives few complaints of a racist or discriminatory nature. DIRFs are reviewed regularly by representatives from the Zahid Mubarek Trust.
- 5.5 The Board remains concerned about the number of FN ex-offenders still held in the prison using places purchased by the UKBA due to the shortage of spaces in the IRC estate. These are individuals who have served their time and for whom there are no further charges pending. If they cannot be deported immediately, they should be held in an IRC setting where the regime is entirely different. The Board still considers it unacceptable for prison places to have been purchased in this way in order to cope with deficiencies in the IRC estate and UKBA delays in the deportation of these ex-offenders.

6 Education, Learning and Skills

- 6.1 Classrooms and skills workshops are built to an exceptionally high standard giving offenders excellent learning and skills opportunities. However, the OLASS4 contract for Education and Skills awarded to A4e has suffered from staffing difficulties, poor attendance and predictable funding cuts, all of which have impacted negatively on attendance and the quality of service received by the offender population. Contract performance is now measured solely on payment by results with the intention of pressure being applied to the contractor to improve performance.
- 6.2 A comprehensive range of courses is available in the education academy including art, catering, accountancy, computing and IT, radio production, music technology, business enterprise, personal money management and functional skills in English and Maths – with this year the opportunity also to gain level 3 Maths. Learning support is also available to offenders having problems with dyslexia, reading and concentration.
- 6.3 Vocational skills are developed in the workshops and include classes in carpentry, plumbing, painting and decorating and barbering. Food preparation and cooking levels 1 and 2 are available in the kitchen and, most recently, NVQ qualifications and training in the “Quays” staff restaurant. A motor cycle workshop has now closed.
- 6.4 A workshop for cycle repairs exclusively for ‘safer custody’ offenders has opened. In addition, a “fitted interiors” workshop is planned which will offer offenders who have completed their City & Guilds level 1 qualification the opportunity of a 10 week level 2 course covering fitted units, worktops, toilets and plumbing.
- 6.5 The quality of the training and education is good as demonstrated by a 90% achievement rate, but low attendance continues to be a serious issue and of real concern to the Board. An average attendance for the year of only 65% against a target of 80% has been achieved. This target has been significantly affected by the current restricted regime along with A4e staffing difficulties including sickness and recruitment and retention problems. Also affecting this poor performance has been offender management activities and straightforward non-compliance. It is to be hoped that the revised IEP policy, together with better supervision, will encourage greater compliance in the future. In summary, the Board is disappointed with the overall picture of poor attendance and looks to the prison in conjunction with A4e to improve significantly performance in this area in the coming months.
- 6.6 On the plus side, the Board is pleased to report that the first national prison radio awards took place in December and the ISIS Broadcasting

radio production team won an award for 'Best Feature' for a song they wrote for Black History Month. The team also contributed to parts of another award that won 'Project of the Year', this being a major achievement as there were only 6 such awards presented throughout the prison estate.

- 6.7 The charity 'Create' ran a project called "Inside Stories", which was a creative writing illustrated project in which a group of 16 offenders worked in pairs for 12 weeks to create and illustrate a story for children in their lives. All the stories were then produced in a colourful book together with a CD recorded by the offenders bringing alive their voices and words for their children. The offenders were given the opportunity to promote their social skills, improve communication, and the encouragement of teamwork. The charity plan to run further courses in 2014.

7 Healthcare & Mental Health

- 7.1 Healthcare services are provided by outside provider CareUK (formerly HarmoniforHealth) commissioned for the NHS by Greenwich PCT. It is a primary care service with some outpatient, diagnostic and treatment facilities.
- 7.2 The general health of the offenders is good and Healthcare staff manage the workload without great difficulty. During the year, applications moved from paper-based to using the biometric terminals in each Houseblock. GPs attend at least twice a week and nurses attend treatment rooms in the Houseblocks daily to see offenders and to administer medications.
- 7.3 Attendance at Clinics continues to improve because both Healthcare and administrative staff visit the Houseblocks to bring offenders to keep their appointments.
- 7.4 Diagnostic facilities including x-ray and ultrasound reduce the need for outside visits to hospitals.
- 7.5 Mental Health services are also provided by CareUK with a consultant psychiatrist and psychologist attending weekly. The mental health caseload has been surprisingly small and appears to have been well managed. There are good links between the clinical team and Lifeline (formerly CARATs), also with the Safer Custody team, emphasis being placed on early identification of mental health issues. Offenders with acute mental health problems can be transferred to the inpatient unit at HMP/YOI Thameside.
- 7.6 Drug misuse remains low for a prison of this size, with the highest monthly rate of 4 positive drug tests being recorded in November. Many of the positive tests are in offenders who have recently entered the prison, particularly from HMP/YOI Thameside. Healthcare and Lifeline work together on drug awareness programmes including PUMA (Prisoners Understanding Marijuana and Alcohol) and offenders are helped on release by links with Drug Intervention Agencies in their respective boroughs. However, the restricted regime currently in place with only twice-weekly association does not allow enough time for drug workers to see their clients. The Board looks to the prison to improve access for this important work.
- 7.7 A research project with 2 years funding is being undertaken into Attendance Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) among all new offenders which is to be welcomed. There has been a reduction in cases of ADHD.

8 Purposeful Activity

- 8.1 Purposeful activity at Isis includes education and skills programmes in classrooms, workshops and the library, physical education in the gymnasium, religious practice in the multi-faith zone, offender behaviour programmes, rehabilitation activities, special issue groups such as equalities or safer custody, and work in a variety of orderly positions across the prison.
- 8.2 The prison has tried hard to make staying in cell an unattractive option for offenders. In November, changes to the IEP system were introduced nationally. The revised policy, as well as making clear that offenders needed to take part in activities and courses if they wished to earn privileges, said that TV would not be available at times when offenders should be at work or in education. Additionally, extra gym time would only happen outside the working day. Locally, positive engagement with the regime and participation in activities are now considerations when deciding on HDC applications. Despite all these good efforts, however, offenders are still spending too long in their cells. This is partly due to the restricted regime introduced last September but also it would appear due to a lack of pressure being exerted by some residential staff to engage offenders in purposeful activity.
- 8.3 Under the current regime, the establishment unlocks only one houseblock for work each day. The other houseblock gains access to the gymnasium either in the morning or afternoon; and for the other half of the day, offenders receive association. The prison officer staffing complement reflects the numbers unlocked at any one time. The prison is locked down into 'patrol state' at 17.30 every day so there is now no evening association at all with offenders locked in their cells until the following morning. Those on the VM regime gain access to exercise and phone calls on the days their spur is scheduled for association. Social and legal visits have not been affected
- 8.4 The result of these changes to the regime, which is now scheduled to remain in place until at least September 2014, is that purposeful activity opportunities for the young men is decreased, significantly more time is spent locked in cells, and daily activities around being able to shower, attend gym, and make phone calls is limited. Out of the 600 or so offenders in the prison, it is estimated that only 300 are participating in purposeful activity each day which is extremely worrying. In the light of the present staffing situation and comments made by HMIP, the Board would encourage the Governor and his senior team to consider any local

initiatives from staff, or even from offenders, as to how the situation might be improved.

- 8.5 There are currently up to 200 positions for work available across the prison for orderlies, kitchen workers, gardening and recycling. There are also positions available as peer mentors in the classrooms and as equality and violence reduction representatives.
- 8.6 Outside employment clearly depends on license conditions but there are limited ROTL opportunities. The prison is also exploring possible opportunities with Bluewater and Switchback.
- 8.7 The prison library is run by Greenwich Leisure Ltd on behalf of Greenwich Council. It is open 5 days per week and run by 2 library assistants. The library has been without a full-time librarian since June 2013 and is at present overseen by the librarian based at HMP Belmarsh.
- 8.8 The library is well stocked with fiction and information books which include biographies, careers, education and healthy eating reference books. Legal books and foreign language books are also available. Offenders may borrow up to 4 books for a period of 2 weeks. Braille resources for visually impaired offenders are not available at the prison.
- 8.9 Attendance at the library has generally improved following introduction of the revised IEP scheme. Offenders attending education and skills classes, also kitchen workers, have a 30 minute library session every week. However the Board is concerned that very little opportunity has been given to safer custody offenders and the other offenders confined to the houseblocks including orderlies. Facilities are available for books to be delivered upon request to the houseblocks, however, and the safer custody spur is visited by a library assistant each week.
- 8.10 Recent publicity suggesting offenders do not have access to books following restrictions on items being able to be handed in or sent into prison, is unjustified and misleading.

9 Resettlement

- 9.1 There are 7 resettlement pathways identified by the 'Reducing Re-offending: National Action Plan'. The pathways include initiatives to address offending behaviours; education, training and preparation for employment; health and mental health issues; preserving family links; accommodation and help with financial problems.

- 9.2 The aim is to provide a holistic and integrated service both before and after release. The voluntary agencies working within the prison are part of wider community networks. Their work is effectively coordinated by the prison's Head of Reducing Reoffending.
- 9.3 Although there has been significant effort to maximise the opportunities for offenders prior to release, there are reports of significant problems for the organisations concerned. Some have only one or two members of staff, unable to cope with heavy caseloads and increased bureaucracy; others are curtailed by the number of paid visits prescribed by contract. There are also long waiting lists for important therapeutic interventions such as 'thinking skills' and 'identity matters' with reports of obstacles to one to one contact with offenders, particularly outside periods of association.
- 9.4 The emphasis on rehabilitation and resettlement is inevitably focussed on the period leading up to the end of an offender's sentence and in terms of arranging accommodation, training and employment, the prison has been meeting its targets. During 2013, 95% of offenders were released into accommodation, 43% into employment and 28% into education. That has to be a success story. However, despite all this good work, unless offenders are signed up to a working links programme, there is limited information available post-release to see if they are actually attending their work or training placements.
- 9.5 The Offender Management Unit in the prison has been well-managed and generally all the necessary processes are carried out efficiently and pro-actively, although staff shortages, sickness and re-deployment have resulted in delays to sentence planning, HDC applications, ROTL and Re-categorisation. Redeployment in particular has been especially disruptive. During the year 100% of the Offender Supervisors were new to their role.
- 9.6 The most serious problem for OMU is that many offenders continue to arrive at Isis without a completed OASys report. It is quite clear that it is the responsibility of sending prisons to complete these but there is little pressure on them to do so as offenders arriving without them cannot be returned. Isis has never been funded or staffed to complete these reports and has no routine means of doing so; yet without them individual sentence planning is severely compromised. On average during 2013 there were over 250 offenders in the prison without a completed OASys report and up-to-date sentence plan. By early 2014 that figure had climbed to over 300. A further complicating factor is that, whereas public sector prisons are supposedly obliged to complete OASys reports before sending offenders to other jails, private sector prisons are not. As many new YO's have come from HMP/YOI Thameside, a private prison run by SERCO, none has arrived with a completed report.

- 9.7 Without a sentence plan based on an OASys risk assessment, attendance at activities, courses and interventions, HDC and recategorisation eligibility cannot be addressed. OMU staff try to help out but limited resources are available and the backlog is increasing.
- 9.8 It had been understood that an external specialist team would be parachuted into the prison to clear the backlog, but after just one day at Isis late in the year the team was redeployed elsewhere in the prison estate. This situation has still not been resolved and is a matter of extreme concern to the Board.
- 9.9 The Board is pleased to note that HDC boards are now held on a regular weekly basis and also that the relevant offenders are now invited to attend. Board members attend whenever possible. The Board continues to receive a relatively high level of Applications about HDC, a total of 40 in 2013.
- 9.10 Communication with offenders concerning HDC and recategorisation is a problem area, as although processes may be underway and reports being compiled, offenders have no way of knowing the progress that is being made. The Board would like to see offenders receiving better and more regular feedback from their offender supervisors about these issues.
- 9.11 The expectations of offenders in obtaining early release through HDC are frequently unrealistic. For example, many offenders have antecedents prior to entering the prison around breaches of bail, community orders and suspended sentence orders making HDC applications unlikely to be successful. As a significant amount of work goes into preparing HDC reports, both within the prison and by outside Probation Services, it would seem appropriate to streamline the current process, while ensuring the rights of the offender to a fair HDC review are maintained.

10 Safer Custody

- 10.1 Keeping offenders safe is one of the four key tests for a healthy prison and staff at Isis do take this matter extremely seriously. However, violence within the establishment continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing the management of the prison. With an average role of 578 offenders during the year, there were 254 (up 32% from 2012) recorded incidents of violence between offenders, and although recorded assaults on staff were down from 54 in 2012 to 34 in 2013, this is still an on-going serious problem for the prison. 12 serious assaults required hospitalisation with some involving life-threatening or life-changing injuries. The attentiveness of prison officers and healthcare staff saved a number of these situations from having tragic consequences. Their professionalism and determination, sometimes well beyond the call of duty, is to be commended.

- 10.2 Perversely, violence dropped after the restricted regime was introduced in September 2013. The monthly average number of incidents involving violence between offenders dropped from 23 to 17. This can be attributed to the fact that opportunities to meet other offenders have been reduced. Assaults on officers also fell but still average over 3 per month.
- 10.3 Three other factors have also contributed to the reduction in violence; namely a pilot partnership with the Metropolitan Police 'Operation Trident' around London gangs; engagement with the CPS and police to pursue criminal charges for the more serious assaults occurring in the jail; and prison regime changes to deter violence. All these initiatives were personally led and introduced by the Governor. The police partnership, with a small team of Trident officers resident in the prison as a pilot project, is to be commended and it is strongly recommended that this be continued and funded permanently.
- 10.4 The prison has a small Safer Custody team (a Custodial Manager, two officers and one administrator) which is responsible for monitoring violence and incidents of self-harm within the establishment. The team is well organised and produces helpful information on a monthly basis by means of a Safer Custody report which is routinely shared with the IMB. Safer Custody meetings are held monthly and involve Listeners and Violence Reduction representatives, as well as prison management, Samaritans and the IMB. Unfortunately, an average of 25% to 30% of the officer hours available in Safer Custody are cross deployed to assist in the general running of the prison.
- 10.5 With regard to violence and bullying within the prison, the main catalysts appear to be gangland feuds and rivalries. With such a widespread gang culture, it is a continuing challenge for staff to manage the location of individual gang members, particularly those who feel threatened and who fear for their own safety, given that there are only two houseblocks and eight spurs. Offenders are relocated to different spurs wherever possible but as a last resort in genuine cases, relocation to the Segregation Unit is the only option. A recent survey of offenders indicated that approximately one third felt unsafe in the prison. That is a worrying statistic and only serves to highlight the risks of operating the prison with reduced staffing levels where more work is expected for less resource.
- 10.6 The reasons for the high level of violence and the underlying gang culture in Isis are complex and numerous, and our report last year identified our concern that the initial decision by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to establish Isis as a training prison for London area young men between the ages of 18 and 25 was fundamentally flawed. Not only were the Cat C 21 to 25 year olds very similar in maturity and behaviour to their younger counterparts, but reuniting them all together close to the very environment from which they had emerged in the first place only served to produce a

toxic and inflammatory mix. It is encouraging to note that efforts are currently underway to change the population mix (currently down to approximately 30% Young Offenders) and increase the upper age limit (initially to 30), such that there are additional older offenders in the population mix. It is noted that there are proposals currently being considered for a complete integration of the young offender population into the adult prison estate.

- 10.7 An active violence management regime exists across the prison, but much of the violence is perpetrated with a worrying 'don't care' attitude by the offenders involved. Changes have been made in the punishments resulting from violence, including placing some of the instigators of violence on closed visits for 42 days. Early indications are that this move has been effective.
- 10.8 The changes to the population mix during 2014 will need to be closely monitored by the prison and NOMS. While reduction in violence across Isis and the prison estate is clearly the main objective, other effects of the change on areas such as Education and Training, Healthcare, Chaplaincy, and Kitchens will have to be taken into account. The allocation of offenders to Isis will still need to be managed in a much more intelligence-led way to avoid the present gang-related confrontations, regardless of the age profile of the offenders.
- 10.9 With regard to self-harm, the prison has established a robust process for ACCT management and while there have been 88 incidents of self harm during the year (up from 74 in 2012), they have all been handled appropriately and effectively. 129 ACCTs were opened during the year (up from 91 in 2012). Open ACCTs are considered monthly at the Safer Custody meeting, together with overall statistics and trends. There has been no death in custody during 2013.

11 Segregation Unit

- 11.1 The Segregation Unit provides a clean and safe environment for offenders under punishment or held under Rule 45/49.
- 11.2 In this Unit, there are 15 standard segregation cells, 2 special cells completely unfurnished and 2 dirty protest cells; the latter have floor level hatches so that officers can deliver food and other necessary items without exposure. The Unit has full constant observation facilities in the 2 special cells but any offender needing constant observation, but not warranting a special cell, would be accommodated on the Houseblock at the direction of the duty Governor.

- 11.3 As Isis was commissioned merely three and a half years ago, the Board is satisfied with the quality of the relatively new cells and showers. Radios and in-cell television can be provided for suitable offenders in the Unit.
- 11.4 The Board is satisfied that the segregation of offenders continues to be enforced for lawful purposes only and that offenders receive their entitlements whilst held in the Unit. Each offender is offered a shower, exercise and a phone call on a daily basis. However, the delivery of these services is more difficult when the Unit has a high occupancy. Adequate provision is made for in-cell education and access to library books. Members of the Board statutorily visited offenders on a weekly basis throughout the year. During the visits relevant files, care plans, ACCT documents, authorisations and algorithms were examined. The Board is satisfied that the statutory requirements for visits by the Governor, Healthcare and Chaplain have been met, as have the statutory requirements for mechanical restraints.
- 11.5 A regular time for GOOD reviews has facilitated attendance by Board members. The Supervising Officers make every effort to ensure a member of the Board attends by notifying any changes. In addition, Board members have attended adjudication hearings conducted by the Governors and also by the Independent Adjudicator. The Board is satisfied that these are conducted fairly. The requisite specialists attend and the offender is given the opportunity to make representations in person, in accordance with the rules.
- 11.6 During the reporting year, there have been a small minority of offenders held for protracted periods in the Segregation Unit. For instance, there was a concerted indiscipline incident in June 2013 when four offenders accessed the netting. This appeared to be a deliberate effort by the offenders to be moved to the unit with the hope of a move to another establishment. It was important that the Isis population should not perceive indiscipline as the route to change prison and as a consequence these four offenders spent some 5 months in the Unit, including several adjudications and awards of added days. After a period of unceasing effort on the part of the staff of the unit, the Board is pleased to report that all four offenders were returned to normal location. The Board hopes that this will be a deterrent to other offenders seeking a prison move to use violence and indiscipline as a strategy.
- 11.7 SMARG meetings have been held regularly but have been subject to last-minute change of dates which has made attendance by the Board more difficult. Concern has been expressed during the reporting year that there has been a higher proportion of BME offenders in the unit compared to other parts of the prison and also to units in comparative prisons. Staff are continually trying to understand why the BME percentages of offenders in the unit are high but this is a difficult task.

- 11.8 It has been noticeable from the morning meeting notes during the reporting year that the majority of violent incidents have been successfully de-escalated without recourse to removal to the Segregation Unit. That is to be commended and perhaps reflects the increasing levels of experience and confidence of staff on the houseblocks and also the use of the IEP system to better effect. The Board is pleased to see that removal to the Unit is only undertaken as a last resort.
- 11.9 The external adjudicator attends once a month necessitating a great deal of preparation on the part of unit staff, in particular the senior officers who have the onerous responsibility of ensuring everything is in order for the visiting judge. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that much of the time taken to undertake this work is wasted because for one reason or another, including the non-attendance of witnesses, the cases are dismissed, not proceeded with or not proven, thus casting doubt on the accuracy or presentation of the evidence or the decisions to proceed in the first place. The Board recommends that the protocols for referral to the External Adjudicator be revised so that they are more rigorous and that the non-attendance of witnesses should be addressed by the SMT as a matter of urgency.
- 11.10 The Segregation Unit provides a clean and safe environment for offenders under punishment or held under Rule 45/49 and the Board commends the Unit staff of all ranks for the work undertaken in this difficult area.

12 Residential Services

Residences

- 12.1 There are two similar residential blocks, Thames and Meridian, each consisting of four spurs at three levels radiating from a central hub providing accommodation for approximately 80 offenders per spur in a mixture of single and double occupancy cells. There are a few fully-equipped cells for offenders with disabilities. Thames 'G' spur is designated for the induction of recently arrived offenders. In Meridian, Safer Custody offenders are accommodated on 'C' spur, with D Category and some Enhanced offenders on 'D' spur.
- 12.2 The full implementation of 'Fair & Sustainable' from April 2013, a freeze on recruitment from February 2013, the continuing high level of sickness and a 46% turnover of officer grades all contributed to a serious reduction in the operational regime. Officer numbers reduced from January 2013 to January 2014 from 119 to 86 while OSG numbers fell from 34 to 22 during the same period. Many of the officers on the Houseblocks are relatively inexperienced.

- 12.3 As referenced in Sections 9.3 and 9.4, the Houseblock work day regime has been curtailed since September 2013 limiting access to activity to approximately 50% of offenders at any one time, association to 3 times per week, and placing the prison in 'patrol state' with offenders locked in their cells every day from 17.30 each evening until the following morning. On average each offender is out of his cell for 6 hours on 3 days of the week and only 1½ hours on the other 4 days.
- 12.4 The Board remains extremely concerned that this restricted regime – implemented as a temporary measure in September - is to continue, possibly indefinitely. The Board sympathises with the Governor for the staffing situation, not of his making, which triggered his decision but regards the current situation as unacceptable and potentially dangerous. However, it is true to say that, despite severe unhappiness on the part of offenders for being locked up for so long with little opportunity for purposeful activity, at least the current regime is consistent and not subject to regular change.
- 12.5 The Board continues to maintain that common decency standards are not being met in dual occupancy cells all of which have a flimsy curtain separating the bed and toilet by no more than a few inches. The Board has expressed serious concerns about this in both previous Annual Reports but has received a barely civil response that the present facilities 'meet the NOMS standard'. HMIP has expressed similar concerns and has received the same reply. We are both of the view that the NOMS standard is unacceptable. The situation is made worse by the fact that the curtains are frequently damaged beyond repair so that there is no screen at all between the toilet and the bed.
- 12.6 During the year, the Board raised concerns that cell call bells were not being answered within appropriate timescales, thereby putting offenders at risk. As a result, a design fault was identified which had linked all spurs together and this has now been rectified, greatly improving response times. The system is fully checked on a weekly basis.
- 12.7 Despite promises to the contrary, a pilot in-cell telephone system was not implemented after all in 2013, much to the disappointment of the Board. As mentioned in last year's Annual Report, such a system is known to have major benefits including a reduction in violence, bullying and self-harm. It is also mainly self-funding after the initial investment. The Board strongly urges NOMS to implement such a system without any further delay.
- 12.8 Cleanliness of spur landings, showers and meal servery areas improved considerably during the latter part of the year but standards are still inconsistent and are largely dependent on individual members of staff taking personal responsibility for the work of the orderlies. Board members

routinely have to bring hygiene and cleanliness issues to the attention of the Governor.

- 12.9 The lunchtime cold meal is served at the cell door, while for the evening hot meal, offenders are first locked back into their cell and then one landing at a time is reopened to enable collection. While designed to reduce bullying and to make best use of the limited staffing available, this is not the accepted norm for similar establishments.
- 12.10 A Personal Officer scheme is theoretically in place but few offenders claim that it works effectively due to continuing staff turnover and regular redeployment. Individual officers do their best but it is clear that offenders resort to utilising the complaints system and applications to the Board for matters that should be resolved locally. The Board looks to the prison to develop further the Personal Officer scheme to become more embedded in the ethos of the prison and for it to be managed more effectively.

Catering and Kitchens

- 12.11 The catering service contract hand-over from Aramark to Mitie took place in May 2013 without any major problems, although the horse-meat scandal put particular pressure on staff at that difficult time with the need to reorganise menus at short notice. The choice of food continues to be varied and nutritious meeting dietary and religious needs and is well cooked, appetising and of acceptable flavour and texture. Suggestions and comments from the offenders are taken on board and reflected in the menus offered. A Menu Planning and Meal Provision Assessment took place in December 2013 covering processes and practices such as menu construction, maintaining and developing a well balanced diet and consumer surveys. The outcome was good with all areas receiving a green star.
- 12.12 There were only 6 Applications to the Board concerning food in 2013 (down from 10 in 2012). This reflects well on the overall standard of catering within the establishment. The HMP Inspection of the kitchens resulted in new stainless steel shelving being provided for the storage of food. The Inspection Report was pleasing with another set of green stars.
- 12.13 All food is purchased through the national contract with '3663'. The Board still feels that local purchases should be allowed by kitchen managers if deemed appropriate in exceptional circumstances.
- 12.14 During the month of Ramadan when Muslim offenders fast from dawn to sundown, Rieber Thermoport insulated containers were used to provide a hot meal. These containers keep food hot for more than four hours, saving time and labour. Despite an initial problem of cleaning the containers,

resolved with the help of the Imam, the kitchen dealt well with Ramadan. The menu has already been agreed for 2014.

- 12.15 The Kitchen Manager now carries out inspections of cleanliness, food temperature records and books available for complaints at all spur serveries on a fortnightly basis, also taking the opportunity to talk directly with both server workers and offenders on the spurs.
- 12.16 The cleanliness of trolleys and trays remains a problem with procedures not being consistently followed. They leave the kitchen clean and are often returned dirty from some spurs. This inconsistency needs to be addressed, as does the completion of temperature charts and comments books.
- 12.17 The use of PPE (personal protective equipment) has improved considerably with the input of the catering manager and residential managers. However, standards remain inconsistent and these need to be supervised more closely during the service of food.
- 12.18 Supervision of the serveries continues to be a challenge with queue jumping and favouritism still presenting difficulties. There needs to be more robust officer supervision of the server workers on some spurs. A competition has been organised by the kitchen manager for the cleanest servery. This takes place every two weeks and the reward is a choice of a favourite item of food which the workers can choose as an enhancement to their meal. Whilst pride is taken in keeping the serveries clean in some spurs this competition is still in the early stages and has yet to engage the attention of all spurs.
- 12.19 The training kitchen has been re-located to the Quays staff restaurant which has been refurbished to become a self sufficient bistro-style cafe that will enable offenders to gain qualifications and have real work experience within the catering industry. The offenders complete an induction period within the main kitchens before being selected to undertake NVQ courses. Attendance, time-keeping, work skills, attitude and the ability to progress are all monitored. This is an excellent initiative.
- 12.20 Feedback from the Switchback scheme which works closely with the Skylight cafe, a training kitchen in London, has also been very positive. One former offender joined the Jamie Oliver Foundation and was awarded 'apprentice of the month' for two consecutive months. Another has gone on to undertake a Level 3 NVQ qualification and another is now a chef with a large London hotel chain. Five others have also been employed within the catering industry in various capacities in London.
- 12.21 The Board commends the prison for both past and present efforts to equip offenders with catering qualifications and to provide relevant experience

for them while in custody but feels that greater recognition should be afforded to their achievement in order for others to see the benefits of acquiring skills and qualifications for life after release.

Chaplaincy

- 12.22 The Chaplaincy team play a very important role within the establishment providing much needed support and guidance to the offenders. It is extremely well run and now has full-time Anglican, Catholic and Muslim Chaplains together with part-time Chaplains covering Free Church, Sikh, Hindu & Buddhist religions.
- 12.23 Offenders are able to practice their religion in the fully functional Multi-faith area which is well equipped, clean and has an inviting environment. A biometric system has been installed which enables offenders to book places at all services.
- 12.24 Friday prayers and Sunday worship are well attended; Ramadan is successfully observed and the Festival of Eid celebrated; and an annual Carol Concert, which resulted last year in 63 offenders attending, takes place each Christmas.
- 12.25 Various faith classes and study groups are held weekly and special attention is paid to offenders with Safer Custody issues. Valuable support is given by Chaplains of all faiths to offenders suffering from family bereavements. This has been of real importance for those not permitted to attend funerals.

13 Board Applications, Attendance and Training

- 13.1 Board membership stabilised during the year with eleven active members. The Board now operates two weekly rotas, one for the monitoring rota visit and one for Applications. Having sufficient members to operate two rotas means that a comprehensive weekly rota report on monitoring standards within the prison can be produced and most Applications are now heard and completed within the week they are received. Individual members have developed familiarity with their areas of special interest including attending relevant prison meetings as observers and provided contributions for this Annual Report.
- 13.2 A recruitment round was commenced in September 2013 in conjunction with HMP Belmarsh and HMP/YOI Thameside. Three additional new members are about to be appointed to the Isis Board. As an aside, although the recruitment process was well managed, both locally and nationally, it has been an extremely time-consuming and long process. The reality is that from start to finish it now takes between 6 and 8 months to appoint IMB members.

13.3 The following is a table of categories of Applications received by the Board during 2013. The total was slightly down on the 684 received in 2012. The issues complained about most were property, regime issues and HDC.

Category	Total in year
Accommodation	15
Adjudications	11
Alleged assaults	4
Attendance to activities	24
Bullying	9
Canteen	15
Category and sentence plan	23
Complaints about staff	19
IEP and Discipline issues	39
Drugs/DST	0
Foreign Nationals issues	1
Healthcare	21
Home detention curfew	40
Kitchen/food	6
Licence recall	0
Mail	14
Parole	9
Payments for activities	14
Personal finance	11
Pins/telephone access	11
Property	140
Racism/discrimination	13
Regime issues	43
Transfers	3
Visits (including legal visits)	37
Others	59
Resolved before visit	28
Total	642

13.4 Rules for receiving property through visits and the post were changed during the year resulting in uncertainty for both offenders and staff and the high number of property Applications to the Board. Although prison staff

have tried to be helpful in accommodating individual requests, implementation of the new system has been haphazard to say the least. Mislaid property arising from transfers from other prisons has also been a matter of continuing serious concern. Rules appear to be different for different establishments and also for different transport contractors about what can and cannot be permitted. There is an urgent need for clarification and better control nationally over prisoner property policy.

- 13.5 Locally, Board members have found it particularly difficult to deal with property matters as reception staff, who are responsible for property, are routinely redeployed to other areas other than when new arrivals are due. The result is that property matters take an unnecessarily long time to resolve.
- 13.6 The restricted regime referred to several times earlier resulted in a high number of related Applications, as did HDC issues which mainly concerned a lack of communication as referred to in 10.10.
- 13.7 The Board remains concerned at the number of Applications received on a weekly basis, especially as it appears to be significantly higher than in other similar establishments. It is recognised that the young men in Isis do comprise a volatile population but the Board would expect more of their concerns to be handled locally by uniform staff through the prison application and complaints system without recourse to the IMB. It is to be hoped that if the Personal Officer scheme is allowed to work, relationships between staff and offenders will improve and that Applications to the Board will reduce. The Board will continue to monitor this situation closely.
- 13.8 Attendance at Board meetings has been good with no member having missed more than two of the twelve meetings. The Governor or his deputy has attended every meeting and provided the Board with a comprehensive report on each occasion. Information received from the prison via CJSM on a regular basis by way of NTOs, NTSs and daily morning meeting notes has been of real help in keeping members informed about prison life.
- 13.9 Each meeting has been preceded by a 30 minute training session delivered by members of prison staff on a wide variety of subjects arranged by the BDO in conjunction with the Governor.
- 13.10 A training Awayday for members was held on site in October 2013 facilitated by one of the National Trainers and attended by the National Training Coordinator and the Boards clerk. The Annual Team Performance review was conducted and a future Action Plan agreed.

14 Glossary of Abbreviations

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody Teamwork
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BDO	Board Development Officer
CARAT	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare
CJSM	Criminal Justice Secure Mail
CNA	Certified Normal Accommodation
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DIRF	Discrimination Incident Report Form
FN	Foreign Nationals
GOOD	Good Order or Discipline
HDC	Home Detention Curfew
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IEP	Incentive and Earned Privileges
IRC	Immigration Removal Centre
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NTO	Notice to Offenders
NTS	Notice to Staff
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OLASS	Offender Learning and Skills Service
OMU	Offender Management Unit
OP CAP	Operational Capacity
PCT	Primary Care Trust
ROTL	Release on Temporary Licence
SMT	Senior Management Team
SMARG	Segregation Management and Review Group
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
VM	Violence Management
YOI	Young Offenders Institution