



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE & ASH HOUSE WOMEN'S

PRISON

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	3
Statement of Purpose	3
UK National Preventive Mechanism	4
Chairperson’s Introduction 2023/24	5
Executive Council Foreword	9
Overview of the Establishment	12
Summary of Monitoring Observations	13
Education & Purposeful Activity	15
Equality and Diversity	18
Healthcare & Mental Health	21
Safer Custody	24
Separation Units	29
Chaplaincy	33
List of IMB Members 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024	35

MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance the quality of prison life, by working to ensure fairness and accountability in prison.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) for Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison (HBW) are appointed by the Justice Minister under Section 3 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (NI) 1968 and under the Prison Act (NI) 1953.

The Board is required to:

- visit HBW regularly and report to the Justice Minister on the conditions of imprisonment and treatment of offenders;
- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005;
- report matters of concern to the Governor or, in serious cases, to the Justice Minister; and
- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005.

The Prison Rules further require the Board to satisfy itself as to:

- the treatment of prisoners including provision for their healthcare and other welfare while in prison;
- the facilities available to prisoners to allow them to make purposeful use of their time; and
- the cleanliness and adequacy of prison premises.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have free access at any time to all prisoners and to all parts of the prison to which they are

appointed. In exercising their rights under the Prison Rules, members shall take into consideration the matters referred to in Rule 124 (5) which state, in the exercise of any of its powers, the Board will not:

- undermine the security and good order of the prison;
- prejudice the efficient operation of the prison; or
- prevent the proper treatment of prisoners.

The Board shall also have reasonable access to any of the records of the prison, with the exception of medical records and matters of national security.

UK National Preventive Mechanism

The IMB is part of the United Kingdom National Preventive Mechanism (UK NPM) as required by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE & ASH HOUSE WOMEN'S PRISON

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

In the year 2023/24, I can report that IMB in HBW has continued to provide independent oversight as to the treatment of prisoners in the establishment. This report is a collation of the IMB's comments and observations of that monitoring under the key aspects of Safety, Humane treatment, Health and Well-being and Progression.

Doing justice to the role of maintaining a regular monitoring presence in HBW has been increasingly problematic for IMB, due to our extremely low number of members. In April 2023, the Board was pleased to welcome Christine Allister as a new member, bringing our complement to five. However, in mid- January 2024, Norman McKinley resigned, reducing our number to an alarmingly low four IMB members. In December, the Permanent Secretary, Richard Pengelly, offered Ann Adams (along with three members in Maghaberry and Magilligan) an extended tenure of two years. It was with great relief that Ann accepted that offer. As a stalwart of the HBW Board and as Vice-Chair, Ann's continuation has been extremely welcomed.

Given the complement of IMB members in HBW should be 14 members, four falls very far short of our requirement. The dearth of IMB members is across all three prison establishments in NI and recruitment has been a well-rehearsed conversation with the Sponsor Body in the Department of Justice (DOJ). In appreciating their efforts to recruit more members in the autumn of 2023, the result was wholly disappointing. It is acknowledged that the role has limited attraction to potential volunteers. It would be the view of this Board that until the Sponsor Body of the DOJ puts in place a robust campaign relevant to this particular volunteering role, the crisis will continue to deepen, compromising the ability of members to carry out their role to its full extent. Furthermore, if the tenure were lengthened in line with England &

Wales and Scotland, it would go some way to ease the pressure. Ad-hoc decisions offering one or two additional years to members is far from satisfactory.

Continuing on the theme of numbers, those in custody in HBW reached an all-time high within the year, due to an increase in the number of women prisoners. In the first six months of this year, the figure for the women was 90. Coinciding with the rise in the prison population in HBW was a staff shortage. This situation resulted in more lockdowns and other logistical problems, inevitably impacting on prisoners. The situation improved in year with new recruits taking up their posts, a welcome development.

As has been noted in last year's IMB report, the number of women prisoners in HBW with mental health issues continues to be a cause for concern for IMB members in HBW. Even though prison and healthcare staff do their best to manage the challenges of those with mental health issues, a prison environment is inappropriate for some of those women. The IMB is strongly of the view that from health, well-being and human rights' perspectives, alternative accommodation should be found.

Central to the role of the IMB, is to ensure that rules and processes are being carried out as they should be. As part of that, members have been pursuing current policies and procedures so that we can have clarity as to what prisoners can expect. We have been assured by the Director General that work is progressing to compile a register of policies, which would be most useful as it is fundamental to understanding whether or not those in custody are being treated according to procedures.

Legislation gives the IMB members unrestricted access to each establishment unless there are matters of national security. It was therefore somewhat concerning that during the year the IMB was refused sight of CCTV footage of an incident to assure ourselves that the treatment of the prisoner was appropriate. After we involved Prison Service Headquarters, the matter was eventually resolved, however it does

bring into focus the importance of IMB's role to be able to respectfully challenge, when their ability to monitor is thwarted or delayed.

One major development at the start of this reporting year was the introduction of X-ray Body Scanners (XRBS) for males. Drugs and unauthorised products within the prison have been a long-standing issue. The introduction of the XRBS can act as a deterrent and as an asset to staff in managing the infiltration of drugs and other unauthorised products.

In the early months of 2024/25, IMB members will be undertaking familiarisation of the XRBS to increase our understanding of the decision-making process as this directly impacts on each individual prisoner. The IMB will be seeking information as to how decisions are made - both after the initial X-ray and subsequent scans - so that we are reassured that there is a consistent approach throughout. To further inform members, the IMB will be requesting regular monitoring data from the scanners, to satisfy ourselves that the process is carried out fairly and in accordance with the operational procedures.

During this year, the IMB was aware of rumours of prisoner-on-prisoner sexual activity within HBW. The allegations reached the press on more than one occasion. In February 2024, an incident was reported which warranted an investigation by Headquarters. The investigation produced recommendations which it is hoped, will put in place the necessary safeguards to avoid the potential for any inappropriate contact between male and female residents.

During this year, the long-awaited refurbishments to the ablutions in Ash House got underway. Now nearly completed, the upgrade has been well received by residents in Ash. The IMB commends the refurbishment work in Ash, Beech and Primrose Houses to make for cleaner, brighter environments - which helps with the general well-being of students and female prisoners.

During the year, the Board had useful meetings with some of the support agencies within HBW: NIACRO, Barnardos, Prison Fellowship NI and Start 360. The Board was impressed by their work in supporting the complexity of the needs of prisoners. The meetings enhanced members' knowledge of the agencies' functions and how they interact with the prison population.

The Board wishes to thank Governor Taylor, Governors and staff for giving their time to attend our monthly meetings - and for addressing throughout the year, issues which we have raised with them.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the IMB members in Hydebank Wood whose constancy of commitment has been well above what is expected of them. Their support and dedication to the role has been outstanding, particularly as it is on a voluntary basis. It is to be hoped that in the next year we will be able to welcome more members to our team.

Pip Jaffa

**Chairperson
Independent Monitoring Board
Hydebank Wood College and Ash House Women's Prison**

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOREWORD

The Executive Council for the Independent Monitoring Boards in Northern Ireland provides strategic direction and guidance for the IMBs at Maghaberry Prison, Magilligan Prison and Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison. The Executive Council is made up of three representatives from each of the IMB Boards. The Executive Council elects a Chair and Vice Chair and it has its own constitution.

From when the Executive Council was established in approximately 2004, no reports were compiled to record the strategic interactions, activities or engagement with other stakeholders.

The current Executive Council feel this has been an oversight by the previous Boards and that the valuable contribution made by the Council should be recorded.

The Executive Council engages at a strategic level with the Minister, the Justice Committee, the Director General of Prisons and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland; at that end, the Executive Council will now produce an annual Executive Council statement each year which will form part of the Annual Report for each of the Boards.

Since April 2023, the Executive Council has continued to press for a more formalised structure and protocol with the Sponsor Body. Since the 1952 Prisons Act when the Board of Visitors (original name for the IMB) was set up, there has been a notable absence of paperwork recognising the relationship between the IMB and the Department of Justice as an Arm's Length Body. The Executive Council have been of the opinion for some time that the uniqueness of what is required in relation to knowledge, experience, and sustainability of the IMB has been significantly underestimated. This has been further brought into focus by the lack of people who wish to give of their own time within this unique and challenging area of the voluntary sector.

Over the past year however, we have made significant progress around protocols and procedures in relation to the structure and recruitment processes. We have moved in a positive direction in relation to a partnership arrangement with the Sponsor Body however, there is still significant work to be done.

In the past year, we have monitored the introduction of XRBS in all three prison establishments and recognise there is a bedding-in period following the introduction of any new technology. Whilst we are fully supportive of everything that increases the safety of prisoners and staff, we need to balance that against the principles of fairness and reasonability. We have had a number of cases where we have not been fully convinced of the need for prisoners to be placed in a restricted regime. As we move forward into the 2024/25 reporting year, we hope that we can look at a more robust monitoring process that will provide confidence that correct interpretation of information is being applied.

The Executive Council has engaged with the Director General of Prisons in relation to the new X-Ray Body Scanner Policy and also raised concerns about prisoner involvement in television programmes.

The Executive Council have been heavily involved in recruitment campaigns for new IMB members. This has involved a revamp of each stage of the process, with members sitting on the interview panels and providing induction training for new members.

On a national level, we have been successful in re-establishing positive links between ourselves and other IMB Boards across England & Wales and Scotland. Whilst at present these have been small steps, we believe there is an opportunity for the sharing of good practice, experience and learning outcomes, supporting continuity across all devolved regions to strengthen the work carried out by the IMB.

This statement will hopefully give an indication of the significant strategic work the Executive Council is doing at both a local and national level. This is even more remarkable given that this is carried out by those who give freely of their time. We hope that moving forward this important work will be truly recognised by the Department of Justice in terms of meaningful engagement and appropriate support which will also hopefully help attract more people to come forward to carry out this challenging but rewarding role. Outside of these statutory bodies, the Council engage with counterparts in England & Wales and Scotland, as well as the National Preventative Mechanism (NPM) and other organisations such as the Human Rights Commission.

OVERVIEW OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

The campus of Hydebank Wood College and Ash House Women's Prison, (HBW) situated on the outskirts of Belfast, is a prison, which houses young male students from age 18-24, and women prisoners from 18 upwards. There is a combination of those who are sentenced and those who are on remand.

HBW is the only location for adult women prisoners in Northern Ireland and although they are housed separately, it is a shared campus with the young men.

While numbers fluctuate, there are approximately 55 males and 90 females accommodated in single cells. The female population has been increasing year on year. There is a strong focus on education, with a learning and skills programme delivered by Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) and others throughout the year and prisoners are encouraged to become engaged in learning and purposeful activity.

SUMMARY OF MONITORING OBSERVATIONS

1. The Board believes it would be beneficial if education and training for prisoners on short-term sentences could be continued when the prisoners are released.
2. The Board wishes to commend all those involved in the provision of the wide range of activities on offer for their enthusiasm and dedication.
3. The Board would like to see that strenuous efforts are made to ensure the availability and attendance of both male and female representatives at every Equality and Diversity meeting.
4. The Board would like to see continued efforts being made to extend the range of food items suited to the diets of foreign national students and female prisoners.
5. The Board is unable to find evidence of any training on Transgender Awareness having taken place during this period under review. The Board would like to see the implementation of Transgender Awareness training in 2024/25.
6. The Board supports and encourages the collaborative approach with those who require attention and assistance with their substance misuse/dependency and mental ill health. It asks that resources and support for this are continued, and where possible, increased.
7. The Board commends the initiatives being taken and encourages the continuation and expansion of progressive and therapeutic programmes that are specifically targeted and sensitive to the needs of its recipients – students and female prisoners.
8. The Board, as stated in our two previous annual reports, is very keen to have a Healthcare representative at each meeting, where possible.
9. The Board, as stated in 2022/23, would appreciate having a Healthcare organisational chart, to ease understanding and communication. (We are aware, with the changes in staffing that this will require regular updating)

10. The Board would like to see that staff nominated to attend the Safety and Support Steering Group meeting do their utmost attend, or at least send a report. This observation was stated in the 2022/23 annual report.
11. The Board would suggest that Healthcare should share any useful information about self-harm that would add to deepening the understanding of occurrences of self-harm.
12. The Board is requesting that a progress report on Towards Zero Suicide is made available to IMB.
13. The Board would like to see the implementation of an Anger Management programme.
14. The Board would like to see the revision of the Child Safeguarding Policy in place, with training for relevant staff.
15. The Board suggests that NIPS staff in the CSUs receive training on personality disorders.
16. The Board suggests Information sharing between Healthcare and NIPS staff, within the necessary parameters of patient confidentiality, needs to be prioritised.

EDUCATION AND PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

Many people enter prison with no formal qualifications or employment. Learning and Skills within HBW provides development opportunities focused on preparing individuals for release with the skills they need to make a positive contribution to society. The Board is pleased to note the number of new courses offered by Belfast Metropolitan College and NIPS officers in addition to those already in place.

The Board understands that courses that start out for example, with eight participants, are not refilled when there are 'drop outs'. In order to encourage attendance at courses, earnings may be deducted for non-attendance at classes.

Observation: The Board would request that residents are made aware that earnings will be deducted for non-attendance at classes.

Unfortunately, those remand and short-term prisoners - who are in prison for a short time, may not get the opportunity to complete courses they have started in HBW. The Board would consider that it would be beneficial to those particular prisoners, if upon release it could be determined whether or not they can continue their education.

Observation: The Board believes that it would be beneficial if education and training for prisoners on short-term sentences, could be continued when the prisoners are released.

A major achievement this year saw the mixed choir winning first place in the Hollywood Festival. The glass bowl trophy is on display in Learning and Skills. The choir has featured on Radio Ulster's John Toal Show.

Artwork produced by students named 'Reflections', was displayed in a well-attended exhibition in Belfast city centre.

Several events including Zumba, Reflexology and Counselling featured on International Women's Day. A number of these events were offered to - and accepted by female civil servants who attended on the day. Each female student was presented with a themed gift bag.

Volunteers from Mothers' Unions in the local area, visit the prison on Monday evenings providing instruction in a number of crafts including making cupcakes, jewellery, pyjama cases, bookmarks, valentine hearts, pancakes, Mother's Day cards, birdhouses, small cushions, St Patrick's Day jewellery, and Easter egg cup covers.

A Befriender visits on Thursday evenings to help with Money Management and general Life Skills.

A female prisoner taught a number of girls the art of Quilling - which equips them with the skills to manufacture items, such as mini cards.

Practical Woodwork classes restarted for the male students.

A new initiative had students outreach to nearby Special Schools; this involved projects such as the planting of containers.

Polish classes took place for students and female prisoners and were delivered by prison officers.

Ten of our residents and two members of staff studied a 12-week programme in Criminology alongside a dozen students from Queen's University Belfast. UCAS points were awarded.

The White Ribbon Charity is sponsored by the Irish Independent Newspaper and involved students working to prepare a podcast and TV feature.

All our students have been involved in supporting HBW's main charity, the Air Ambulance Service, through a number of events including Tag Rugby, Colour Run and two sports days.

Relationships were developed with the OCN leading to qualifications in Fitness (4) and as Fitness Instructors (2).

Overnight expeditions were undertaken by students and female prisoners as part of the programme for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

The gym was used increasingly, featuring:

- IFA course for females
- 2 GAA courses
- Mountaineering for students and female prisoners
- Cross-fit Open – male and female
- CPR courses- weekly
- Nutrition

Congratulations go to gym instructor Paula Boyd who was awarded IFA Female Coach of the Year.

Several students and female prisoners continued to enjoy working in the gardens. Fruit and vegetables produced, featured in the kitchen menus, in appropriate seasons.

A number of students continued their interest in Animal Husbandry through caring for sheep and helping with lambing. Our sheep were exhibited at the Balmoral Show and attracted a Best in Show award.

Observation: The Board wishes to commend all those involved in the provision of the wide range of activities on offer for their enthusiasm and dedication.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The main forum for Equality and Diversity (E&D) is the E&D meeting, which is held monthly and normally chaired by the Deputy Governor. The agenda covers events and issues raised by student representatives, RAG reports, complaints, Protected Groups/Category, Foreign Nationals. Horizontal Data and Emerging Trends.

Extensive and detailed statistical reports are circulated in advance of the meeting in order to streamline the review process to ensure that there are no disparities in the treatment of groups across the Section 75 categories. The format of the meeting allows for a male student and female prisoner representatives to attend for part of the meeting to bring forward issues of concern. Issues raised are not generally E&D issues, rather they are general requests and complaints. Whilst the involvement is very welcome, attendance is not consistent due to the availability of representatives or absence of issues to be raised.

Following concerns from the female representative that messages from other prisoners were not being passed on to her, it was proposed that E&D drop boxes would be introduced in the Houses, emptied by Safer Custody and passed on to the representative.

Observation: The Board would like to see that strenuous efforts are made to ensure the availability and attendance of both male and female representatives at every E&D meeting.

There were a limited number of complaints during the period under review, with only a very small number relating to E&D/Section 75 and there were no reported concerns about how these were addressed. However, the IMB has had individual complaints about the process. We will continue to monitor the data provided and highlight any areas of concern.

There were a number of events during the year that were relevant to E&D. These included International Music Week, Men's Health Talk - about good relations, which was open to students and female prisoners - Pride event, International Women's Day and International Men's Day.

On committal, Literacy and Numeracy Assessments are undertaken with students and female prisoners. Both mainstream and ESOL assessments are offered to foreign national students and residents. Due to capacity issues, those ESOL students who are at different levels are taught by the tutor at the same time, which is not ideal.

Translation services are provided to foreign national students and residents through the use of tablets which are widely available, regularly updated and generally very successful. Due to the successful use of tablets, Language Line is rarely used.

There have been ongoing complaints regarding a shortage of non-English DVDs, CDs and books in languages such as Polish, but these issues are under review and being addressed.

There was an issue for a prolonged period, relating to availability of hairdressing services for those with Afro hairstyles. The Board is pleased to note that specialist hairdressing/barbering services have now been procured and the issue appears to be resolved.

There were requests over a prolonged period, from foreign nationals, regarding availability of foods suited to their diets. While some residents can avail of items from Asda World Food aisle, this option is not available to all. Some research took place as to the possibility of adding items to the Tuck Shop list, but this was deemed not to be feasible.

Observation: The Board would like to see continued efforts being made to extend the range of food items suited to the diets of foreign national students and female prisoners.

It is noted that Guidance on the Care and Management of Transgender Prisoners was introduced. However, the following two observations were made in the IMB Annual Report 2022/23,

- *'The E&D Committee pursues transgender awareness-raising, as part of its own learning and development in 2023/24'; and*
- *'Systematic adoption and implementation of NIPS Transgender policy through the 2023/24 HBW Annual Training Plan'.*

Observation: The Board is unable to find evidence of any training on Transgender Awareness having taken place during this period under review. The Board would like to see the implementation of Transgender Awareness training in 2024/25.

Late in this period, a change in timetabling took place in the Learning and Skills Centre to ensure the separation of students and female residents. The literacy tutors are to be commended on the prompt and proactive manner in which they reacted to this change. To ensure that the larger number of female prisoners are not at a detriment compared to male students, the tutors, as well as operating in Learning and Skills, now also routinely go onto the female landings to teach the residents- in addition to coping with those for whom individual arrangements are required.

HEALTHCARE & MENTAL HEALTH

Healthcare within HBW continued to be a vital service to address and treat the many needs and demands of those who enter its gates. Whilst those who come into HBW are from our local communities, in general, they present with increased and often, more severe physical and mental ill health. Additionally, a significant number have emotional and behavioural difficulties, often undiagnosed and untreated.

Furthermore, over the past year, there has been a significant increase in the demands on healthcare, due to the sizeable rise, most particularly in the female population.

The Healthcare team is consequently under continuous pressure, and as with previous years, the past one saw the longstanding issue of understaffing. 'The RQIA Review of services for vulnerable persons detained in Northern Ireland Prisons (October 2022) highlighted a 50% underfunding of healthcare within Prison in Northern Ireland...' Whilst this inspection was conducted in Maghaberry Prison, it would appear to reasonably reflect the situation also in HBW and it is concerning at the apparent lack of additional funds being allocated to meet this riding need.

On a more positive note however, the Board has been pleased in this year to hear of the expansion of the healthcare team, to include a social worker. Although this is a pilot, part-time post, the work with the Prisoner Development Unit (PDU), assisting with discharge planning, most particularly with those who are on remand, would appear to have been very beneficial. It is hoped that this post will move to that of a permanent one, to enable future planning of services and to ensure that those leaving custody are given the best possible chance to avoid returning.

Likewise, it is encouraging to have noted the multidisciplinary nature of the team – nursing (primary and mental health), speech, language and communication therapy, occupational therapy, psychology, dental, general practice and psychiatry. Such

services are generally easily accessed by those in custody - often better than they are in the community.

This year saw the introduction of a new Forensic Psychiatrist to replace the one who had retired after many years of involvement with the prisons, being an addition to the psychiatrist who specialises in addictions. Similarly, this year saw the introduction of two new psychologists, who have been delivering a range of programmes and therapies designed to address the many complex needs of those incarcerated. It must be noted that a number of these allied health professionals are contracted to work across all three prisons.

Linking with this healthcare team is the staff of Start 360, a non-profit organisation, most particularly - AD:EPT (Alcohol and Drugs; Empowering People through Therapy.) AD:EPT provides assessment, casework and counselling. Group work is delivered via its Smart Recovery programme and in the past year, it has piloted a programme in HBW called Start Smart, which is peer-based and designed specifically for young men, using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

The Board was encouraged to be told at the September 2023 meeting that the issue widely reported by the media, regarding the prescription drug Pregabalin (often abused) was being appropriately addressed within the prison. Furthermore, we were advised that individuals are seen by healthcare prior to release and advised of potential dangers.

As is being experienced within the community, this past year has seen also, a continued rise in substance misuse and dependency of those being committed to Hydebank. Of the 410 female committals during this year, 34% presented with substance withdrawal, 59% had used substances immediately prior to custody, 76% reported being a drug user and 49% were receiving mental health services support. Of the 212 male committals, 19% presented in withdrawal, 61% had used substances

prior to committal, 90% reported being a drug user and 44% of being in receipt of mental health services in the community. There has also been an observed change in trends, with an increase in cocaine and crack, especially with the females and a continued concern regarding the severity of alcohol dependence in the more mature females.

The Board was encouraged at the interdisciplinary/agency work and services being delivered collaboratively, to address, treat and assist with the very significant and detrimental substance misuse and mental health experienced by those who enter HBW and we support and encourage its continuation and where possible, expansion.

Observation: The Board supports and encourages the collaborative approach with those who require attention and assistance with their substance misuse/dependency and mental ill health. We ask that resources and support for this are continued, and where possible, increased.

This year also saw the delivery of a Sleep Hygiene programme by the practice-based pharmacist and occupational therapist in mental health. We understand this was well received, in the promotion of better and healthier sleep patterns for those who struggle to do so without the use of drugs, both prescribed and otherwise. This, along with the other progressive and therapeutic programmes such as Positive Behavioural Support, Pain Management, and those that tackle the regular needs such as contraception awareness, smear testing, pelvic health, breast screening etc. -are all to be commended and encouraged.

Observation: The Board commends the initiatives being taken and encourages the continuation and expansion of progressive and therapeutic programmes that are specifically targeted and sensitive to the needs of its recipients – specifically young men and females.

Whilst we did not have a representative from Healthcare at each of our Board meetings (which was an observation from the IMB Annual Report 2022-23), we did appreciate having both the pharmacist and the psychologists attend a meeting each. This was useful in giving us increased knowledge of and insight to their work and plans going forward.

Observation: The Board as stated in our two previous Annual Reports, is very keen to have a Healthcare representative at each meeting, where possible.

Observation: The Board, as stated in 2022/23, would appreciate having a Healthcare organisational chart, to ease understanding and communication. (We are aware, with the changes in staffing that this will require regular updating.)

SAFER CUSTODY

The purpose of Safety and Support is to promote and provide a healthy and safe environment for all people who live and work in Hydebank Wood. This includes collaboration across all departments, which include external agencies, to achieve the best outcomes for those in custody. The Safety and Support team consists of a Governor, two Senior Officers and two officers.

The IMB was impressed by the obvious commitment and resourcefulness of those attending the monthly Steering group meeting. During discussions, attendees demonstrated genuine caring about the well-being of the vulnerable prisoners, even though they faced multiple and complex challenges in doing so.

The remit of the team places an importance on the representatives from NIPS and agencies attending the monthly steering group meetings. Unfortunately, this year full attendance at the Safety and Support Steering Group meetings has not always been achieved. In acknowledging that staffing levels have been below par, the IMB would be of the view that this area of work within the prison needs to be given the utmost

priority. Missing representatives dilutes the richness of the discussion and information sharing.

Observation: The Board would like to see that the staff nominated to attend the Safety and Support Steering Group meeting should do their utmost attend, or at least send a report. This observation was stated in the 2022/23 Annual Report.

Items considered at the Safety and Support Steering Group meetings are Statistical Reports including: Security, SPAR Evolution Care Plans, Self-harm, use of Observation Rooms, Substance Misuse, Anti-ligature Clothing, Violence Reduction, Anti-Social Behaviour, Care and Supervision Units - including, Rule 32, Rule 35(4), CC/CTR and Exit Surveys, First night vulnerabilities, Child Protection Reports by PDU, Healthcare overview, including Towards Zero Suicide, Samaritans Report, Drug Testing, Training and Significant events, including Quick Time Learning Reviews.

The wealth of statistical information presented at the meetings was considerable and extremely useful in gauging trends and patterns. For example, the statistics inform discussions as to the possible reasons for certain increases and what steps can be taken to make improvements.

In respect of self-harm, statistics showed an increase in the number of incidents. While it was speculated as to the reasons, it was reported that statistics indicated that there appears to be no recurring reasons between events and the incidents of self-harm. It was suggested at a Safety and Support Steering Group meeting that Healthcare could look at some themes or trends from their perspective and communicate any information they have to shed further light on the issue.

The SPAR Evolution approach is embedded in Hydebank Wood. Any concerns about a person in prison, including after a self-harm incident, are formally raised and a risk assessment completed. Where a person is determined to be at risk of suicide or

serious self-harm, a care plan is put in place to support the student or female prisoner in a way that meets their needs. Cell searches for any implements are carried out. A Self Harm Intervention Programme (SHIP) was discussed in year, but no contract was drawn up with the South Eastern Trust (the Trust) to implement it. However, the Board understands that there are plans for 'Storm' - which is training for safety planning, to be facilitated in the next reporting year.

Comparisons show an increase in self-harm this year of 72% for female prisoners and 42% for students, although the number of individuals self-harming is low. It is understood that there are plans to provide in-house training on Toward Zero Suicide, which would be welcomed. An observation in the 2022/23 Annual Report suggested that it would be helpful to have a report on Toward Zero Suicide to monitor progress and impact. As yet, the IMB has not seen any such report.

Observation: The Board would suggest that Healthcare should share any useful information about self-harm, which would add to deepening the understanding of occurrences of self-harm.

Observation: The Board is requesting a progress report on Towards Zero Suicide is made available to the IMB.

In year, it was also suggested that an Anger Management programme could contribute to the reduction in self-harm, an initiative that the IMB would fully support.

Observation: The Board would like to see the implementation of an Anger Management programme.

The number of anti-social behaviour incidents fluctuated during the year, however in March 2024, the last six-month comparison with the same time the previous year shows that the number of anti-social behaviour incidents increased by 24% for females (up from 42 to 52) and decreased by 8% for males (down from 65 to 60).

These figures are interesting as it might be assumed that there would be a greater number of anti-social behaviour incidents by males. This is one of the values of having statistical evidence.

The first night vulnerabilities continued to reflect the complexity of needs of those entering custody in HBW. For example, in January 2024, 53% of female committals declared a history of self-harm - 75% being drug users and 43% receiving mental health support. For males in the same month, 53% of committals declared a history of self-harm – 82% being a drug user and 35% receiving mental health support.

While monthly figures may fluctuate, these stark statistics highlighted the challenges for staff in managing those in HBW. As this is the context in which staff are working, IMB would continue to emphasise the need for on-going training for staff to enable them to protect those in custody in HBW and to keep themselves safe.

In year, there was little reporting at the Safety and Support Steering Group meetings on Child Protection, a cause for concern for IMB. As the population in HBW includes those who have committed offences against children and young people, the IMB considers that the monitoring of those who may cause a threat, particularly at visits or on zoom, needs to be robust. While measures may have been taken throughout the year to restrict those students and female prisoners who may have posed a threat to children or young people, details of such actions were absent from the meetings.

It also became known this year that the Child Protection Policy had not been reviewed since 2012, a considerable oversight considering there was a child living in the prison with its mother for 3 years and in the past year, two pregnant women. However, the Board was pleased that the monthly Child Protection meeting was reinstated in January of this year and IMB understands that the Mother and Baby

policy is being progressed. Of prime importance, is the need to have a current Child Protection Policy, which is reviewed regularly in line with best practice and legislation.

Observation: The Board would like to see an updated Child Protection Policy in place, with training for relevant staff.

One of the IMB observations in the Annual Report 2022/23, was the need for prisoners to have access to the Samaritan Freephone. Following technical issues, it is pleasing that this issue has been resolved. As a further safety precaution, a health check is carried out as a follow up with those prisoners who have used the phone to ensure their safety.

In March, a Substance Misuse Forum was set up which will take place every four months. The purpose of the committee is to launch an Action Plan in respect of reducing supply and demand. The staff should be commended for this initiative and IMB will look forward to seeing the Action Plan and its implementation.

Safety and Support staff attend all SPAR Evo care plan reviews and in the March meeting, it was reported the decrease in Care Plans for females, down 64% and up 40% for males. It was suggested that this increase could be due to prisoners being overwhelmed on their first night in custody. For many of the committals, it is their first experience in prison. The main reason for Care Plans being put in place was self-harm. It is noted that while it is the responsibility of a Senior Officer to complete a concern form about self-harm in reception, it is for staff to complete, requiring them to make an assessment. This procedure is being checked and if tightened should result in a more consistent approach.

IMB recognises that managing the complexities and unpredictability of the safety and support needs of those in custody in HBW, is constantly challenging for staff in this aspect of their duty of care.

SEPARATION UNITS

The Care and Supervision Unit (CSU) Operational Framework (2022) states that the vision is:

'To create a person-centred CSU environment where people in our care are supported and encouraged to change. In practice this means a personalised response to anyone relocated to the CSU taking into account why they are there, the risk they pose, what they can access while there, what they needed to do to move back to their usual residential area and what supports are available to facilitate that return in as short a time as possible.'

Students and female prisoners are segregated in two separate CSUs - away from the general population for their own safety or the safety of others, for breaking prison rules or because they are suspected of having drugs or other illicit items in their possession. When this happens, they are placed on a Rule 32 (R32), which must be reviewed within 72 hours, and thereafter as agreed and approved.

The CSUs provide an important means of de-escalation for male students and female prisoners alike. The Board has observed that the CSUs were kept in good order throughout the year and reinstated when damages occurred. The staff team assigned to these units are specifically trained for their role in these facilities, which has the advantage for all prisoners that the staff are familiar with their specific needs and how to respond to them to reduce tension or stress.

The IMB has a mandatory requirement to attend R32 reviews and during the year, members made it a priority to be present. However, some circumstances mitigated against our full attendance. One was the rise in the number of male students sent to

CSU because of a positive X-ray body scan, together with the increase in females, often with extreme mental ill health and/or behavioural issues, needing to be segregated. Our availability to attend R32s was also exacerbated by the low number of IMB members in HBW

In September 2023, the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) issued 'A Review into the Care and Supervision Units in Northern Ireland Prison Service, a follow up Review of Recommendation Implementation.' In that report, 'Inspectors observed good staff and prisoner relationships and a person centred approach underpinned engagement.' The IMB would fully endorse this finding, which is to be especially commended, as members repeatedly observed and noted that staff had to deal with some very challenging and distressing behaviours. It is the understanding of IMB that most of the CSU staff have had trauma-informed training this year however, the CJINI report stated:

'None of the NIPS staff working in the CSUs had received any training to support them with the management of personality disorders, such as Knowledge and Understanding Framework.'

IMB would take the view that such training would not only better equip the staff but more importantly, would enhance the management of those in the CSUs, who have personality disorders.

Observation: The Board suggests that NIPS staff in the CSUs should receive training on personality disorders.

When in the CSU, each prisoner should have two hours outside their cell each day. Whilst not all take up this offer, for those that do, it is sometimes possible for staff to allow more than the stipulated time.

Tablets held by staff record all prisoner movements out of cells. This includes when the student or female prisoner takes a shower, when they use the phone, see the

chaplancy, or go to visits. As regards Learning and Skills, teachers will supply work for those in the CSU who are involved in education and will check in with them, to support their learning needs. There is a weekly set timetable for those in the CSU, which includes contact with the Speech and Language therapist, use of the gym and access to library facilities. In addition, representatives from Alternatives NI (Restorative Justice) go in weekly to help those in CSU reflect on the actions that brought them there, the impact they had on others and how they could make different choices in the future. This system was praised in the Criminal Justice Report referred to above:

‘Although the system continued to be refined Inspectors were assured that a robust mechanism was in place to evidence time out of cell and engagement in purposeful activity.’

There is an Exit Survey in place to capture the experiences of those who have been in CSU. It gives the students and female prisoners the opportunity to record their views, such as how they were treated, if they felt safe or not, if they felt supported and if they found the CSU activities were helpful. The information from both the tablets and the surveys is analysed, giving staff and management the opportunity to reflect on practice.

Generally, the IMB has found that Governors, who chair the R32 reviews, were thorough in their approach, took time to ensure that the prisoner was aware of why they were in CSU, talked through what change was expected from them and what support could be given, to avoid them returning to the CSU.

At the R32 reviews, the number of days recommended by a HBW Governor for a prisoner to spend in CSU, both at initial reviews and at subsequent reviews, is subject to being confirmed or changed by a Headquarters Governor. In order for the IMB to have a deeper understanding of that process, Governor McCutcheon from

Headquarters, was invited to an IMB Board monthly meeting. The Board acknowledged that by Headquarters carrying out monitoring of all recommendations made by an establishment Governor, along with dip sampling 10% of recommendations, there is a system in place to protect students and female prisoners from unfair decisions. In fact, throughout the year, the IMB generally agreed with the recommendation made by HBW Governors at R32 reviews.

When a student or female prisoner has been sent to CSU due to their behaviour - which seems to stem from an issue relating to their mental/emotional health - it can be very problematic for staff to respond appropriately. The IMB believes that when Healthcare states that the individual has a personality disorder or that they have behavioural issues, guidance from Healthcare as to how to manage that person would seem to be very beneficial both for the staff and the prisoner. This was an issue throughout the year and IMB completely concur with the following statement in the CJNI report;

‘It was important that appropriate information, with the patient’s consent, was shared with prison staff to support them to manage the needs of people in their care.’

Observation: The Board suggests that information sharing between Healthcare and prison staff, within the necessary parameters of patient confidentiality, needs to be prioritised.

The weekly Oversight meetings - chaired by a Governor, are a further mechanism to discuss the health and well-being of males and females who are in segregation and how they are coping with the restrictions. It considers reports from safer custody, security, healthcare and support agencies, most especially Start 360, and provides a forum for planning any additional support needs required to help the well-being of those in segregation. At some meetings this year, there was an absence of reports from Healthcare. The IMB would take the view that with the lack of full information,

it was not possible to get a complete picture of how the prisoner was coping and behaving in the CSU - consequently, impacting on making recommendations for managing their support needs.

Furthermore, it would be useful at the start of each meeting, to have a summary of the progress or implementation of the recommendations made at the previous meeting. While this information may be recorded elsewhere, updates would provide the attendees at the Oversight meeting with continuity and some sense of the effectiveness of the recommendations.

CHAPLAINCY

The IMB asked the lead Chaplain, Father Stephen McBrearty, to provide a report of the activity of the Chaplaincy, for inclusion in this annual report.

'The Chaplains' Department has gone through some personnel changes. We have welcomed two new Chaplains into our fold: Reverend Tanita Lee as representative to the Methodist Community and Reverend Mark Lennox representing the Church of Ireland. Sister Oonah and I represent the Catholic residents and Reverend Rodney Cameron represents the Presbyterian community; this completes the Chaplaincy Department.

Dr Anwar, our Muslim Imam, covers all three establishments for the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

It is the role of the Lead Chaplain to make sure that students and prisoners from all faiths - and none, are cared for.

This past year has been full of challenges. As a Chaplaincy Department, we have engaged with all who are sent to HBW, be they of faith or not and we maintain a presence throughout the estate, dealing with the pastoral and spiritual needs of our residents and staff.

On behalf of all chaplains, we would raise the issue of a 'just wage' for all who reside and participate in 'work' in HBW. To my knowledge, the wages for the work carried out on the estate by residents participating, has not increased in the past 10 years, while prices for all goods supplied through our Tuck Shop have increased, in some cases as much as 400% over the same 10 year period.

I sit on the Equality and Diversity committee as well as the Safer Custody Forum. Most of our Chaplains are part time and are limited to a certain number of hours. As Lead Chaplain, I am the only full part-time Chaplain. Through the appointment by the Catholic Bishops, I am responsible for the care of all Catholic Chaplains throughout the three establishments. In this role, I get to understand the many difficulties that can arise and the many different circumstances that can exist in both Maghaberry and Magilligan establishments, as well as in HBW. Fundamentally many problems are the same.' *[Fr. SMcB.]*

LIST OF HBW IMB MEMBERS 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

Pip Jaffa - Chair

Anne Adams – Vice-Chair

Yvonne Adair

Christine Allister

Michael O'Hara – Resigned 30/05/23

Norman McKinley – Resigned 14/01/24