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INDEPENDENT MONITOR

THE ASSOCIATION OF MEMBERS OF INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS



Uncertain futures

Prison politics • The green paper

Nick Hardwick • Crispin Blunt • Vivien Stern

On 24 February there was a general election in Ireland. All the country's 4,500 prisoners have the right to vote – as they do in most European countries. Just 191 had registered for this snap election and they cast their votes by postal ballot for their home constituencies.

At Wheatfield prison in Dublin 64 prisoners used a polling station set up in one of the governor's interview rooms. Assistant chief prison officer Kevin O'Neill welcomed their involvement. 'We have posters up all over the prison telling prisoners it's their constitutional right to vote. There have been quite a few lively debates about politics. They watch the news and the political programmes, so they are very tuned in. I do think it's important for prisoners to vote. It gives them a sense of responsibility and ownership back into their lives. When the first fella had cast his vote, governor Daly congratulated him and you could see the glow in him. You'd hope that would tip them a bit into a sense of their own responsibility to their communities.'

Among those who voted last weekend was Peter, a 28-year-old from Cork, who is halfway through a six-year sentence. 'It was good to vote. I voted before I was in here all right.'

A fortnight earlier, in the mother of parliaments, just 22 Westminster MPs (24 including the tellers) voted against the government's attempt to continue denying our prisoners the vote. This is the roll of honour.

Conservative Peter Bottomley (Worthing West)

Green Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion)

Labour Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North), Barry Gardiner (Brent North), Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston), Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Kilburn), Andrew Love (Edmonton), Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East), John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington)

Lib Dem Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East), Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed), Tom Drake (Carshalton and Wallington), Lorely Burt (Solihull), Don Foster (Bath), Duncan Hames (Chippenham), Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark), Julian Huppert (Cambridge), Tessa Munt (Wells), Alan Reid (Argyll and Bute), Stephen Williams (Bristol West)

Plaid Cymru Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr), Elfyn Llwyd (Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Hywel Williams (Arfon)

Ulster Unionist Sylvia Hermon (North Down)

Shame on the rest.

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Membership of AMIMB is open to serving members of IMBs in prisons and immigration removal centres in England and Wales. AMIMB represents board members by presenting their views wherever they need to be known. AMIMB campaigns for change, both through its own efforts and by liaising with other groups, including via the Penal Affairs Consortium. Membership of AMIMB allows board members to have a say in the direction of boards and penal policy generally. Associate membership is open to anyone interested in penal affairs.

The annual subscription of £20 should be paid to the Treasurer.

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Prisons – out with the old, in with the new?

These are times of great change in prison policy. Even before the government's green paper consultation is over, certain decisions have been made, or will be within the next month.

The Labour government's prison building plans are pretty much a distant memory. Titan prisons were laughed out of court, and we've heard no more of the five 1,500-bed prisons that were the next idea. The construction of Maghull, a new private prison on Merseyside, was cancelled in December. But there is still plenty of good news for the commercial operators interested in running prisons.

Belmarsh West, a 900-place Cat B local is going ahead, to be run by Serco when it opens on spring 2012. Featherstone 2 is also being built and, when it opens fully in the summer of 2012, will house 1,600 Cat B&C prisoners (about as many as Wandsworth and Liverpool, this country's biggest). Who will run it is still up for grabs: the bidders are Noms, Sodexo, Serco and G4S.

Those four are also bidding to take on two currently public sector prisons – Birmingham and Buckley Hall. Wellingborough may also disappear from the public sector, though no details have been released about who's bidding. Nobody is bidding against Serco for the new contract to run Doncaster: they have been running it since it opened in 1994.

Some prisons are definitely closing –

Lancaster Castle (below) and Ashwell – or re-roling: Morton Hall will become an immigration removal centre.

Beyond that, who knows. It has been rumoured that Dartmoor, North Sea Camp, Shepton Mallet and Shrewsbury will close. The government has committed itself to reducing the prison population by 3,000. The official line goes something like this: 'We will look in detail over the coming months at the sentencing frameworks for adult and young offenders, as well as the full range of penalties available in the criminal

justice system. This means introducing more effective policies, as well as overhauling the system of rehabilitation to reduce reoffending. We will take time to get it right and will consult widely before bringing forward coherent plans for reform. Long-term decisions on prison capacity programmes will be taken in the light of these policy developments. We will ensure that we meet prison capacity requirements more efficiently to improve value for money for the taxpayer and contribute savings to help reduce the budget deficit.'



Women prisoners still neglected

Three years on from Baroness Corston's authoritative report on the treatment of women offenders, there are fears that progress, already only partial, will stall. The all-party parliamentary group on women in the penal system, chaired by Baroness Corston herself, has produced a report which demonstrates bipartisan support for the closure of women's prisons and calls funding cuts a 'challenge'.

Thanks largely to the rather unlikely support of one of Labour's many prison ministers, Maria Eagle, some of the original Corston recommendations were implemented. Labour committed £15.6m to invest in the provision of additional services for women at risk of offending. The money was aimed at creating centres providing one-stop-shop support services and developing bail support to meet the needs of women.

Since April 2010 Together Women projects have already supported 806 women in Yorkshire and Humberside and 83% of those women have achieved positive outcomes. The re-offending rate of women using Together Women support is just 7%, compared to a national average of 54%. Centres like these have no dedicated funding past March 2011 and the all-party group recommends that the progress they have achieved is sustained.

Baroness Corston worries about their future. 'If we are to rely on the one-stop-shop women's centres to play a key role in the diversion of women from custody and in giving women alternatives to reoffending, then these centres will need funding to continue.'

There are other worries. The Corston report's most significant recommendation was to shut down women's prisons and

replace them with a limited number of small, multi-functional custodial centres. This is yet to be resolved. The latest report is also concerned that there are still too many women in prison for non-violent offences, and too many women being remanded into custody.

Baroness Corston is concerned about what will happen next. 'There have been many considerable achievements that improve the penal system for women, such as abolishing mandatory strip searching, as well as setting up very successful centres that divert women from custody. While a great deal has been achieved, there is more to be done and the coalition government has a responsibility to continue to support women in the penal system.'

Women still account for 52% of self-harm incidents in prison although they are only 5% of the prison population.

Listeners in a local

Gordon Cropper of the Pentonville IMB explores the crucial world of the listener

The recent announcement that the number of apparently self-inflicted deaths in custody had fallen to 58 in 2010 – down from 95 in each of the years 2002 to 2004 – will have received a muted welcome. The reduction is an encouraging trend, but this melancholy statistic still means there is more than one self-inflicted death each week. Busy local prisons, with their daily intake of often traumatised, chaotic and emotionally disturbed individuals about whom little may be known, are more liable than most to suffer such incidents.

Why Listeners?

Listeners – prisoners trained by the Samaritans – are an important resource for the prison in discharging its duty of care towards all prisoners. The first Listener scheme in a British prison was piloted in 1991. Since then Listeners have been established in nearly all prisons in England and Wales, and are a recognised and accepted feature of the prison landscape.

Listeners are there to listen in confidence to any fellow prisoner who may be in distress or who has thoughts of self-harm. A prisoner can approach an officer and talk about his unhappiness, but there will be many who find it much easier to confide in another prisoner. Officers will often have other pressing duties to attend to, and will not be able to identify with problems in the same way that a fellow prisoner can. If follow up is needed, the prisoner will be on hand whereas the officer may or may not be on duty. Although prisons should have arrangements for a prisoner to make a telephone call to Samaritans, a face to face contact will usually be the preferred option.

Finding and keeping Listeners

There is usually an ample supply of prisoners who respond to an invitation to train as a Listener. But that pool of volunteers will be whittled down by the three-stage process leading to appointment. First there will be a security check. There are appreciable security sensitivities in the role of Listener, and anyone deemed by the prison to be an unacceptable risk will be prevented from

going any further in the process. The next stage is that the Samaritans will undertake an assessment of candidates to ensure that only those who are personally suitable will be appointed. Finally, those that remain will undergo a training course for the role – the same training as Samaritans, but adapted for prison conditions. The experience of training frequently results in more of the volunteers dropping out.

In a local prison it is almost always the case that Listeners will have to be recruited and trained from scratch. No ready-made recruits are transferred in. Further, the rapid turnover of prisoners in a local requires that, once appointed, a Listener must be put on hold, that is to say not allowed to transfer to another prison. Given the pressure to move sentenced prisoners, it is not easy for a local prison to build up a bank of experienced Listeners as so few remain for more than about six months.

Facilities

For any Listener scheme to be effective the prison must make certain resources available. Foremost among these is a support mechanism in the form of regular meetings with those members of the local Samaritan branch who liaise with the prison. In monitoring safer custody, it is important for IMBs to check that this support is not only in place, but that meetings are so arranged that all Listeners are usually able to attend. Support extends to allowing Listeners telephone access to Samaritans and to each other, and to permitting them to be accompanied by a Samaritan in the event of being interviewed by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman inquiring into a death, or having to attend an inquest.

As they often have to listen to fellow prisoners during night state, it is vital that Listeners have some form of suite for use whenever appropriate. But this suite may be required by prison staff for other purposes, for example for separating vulnerable prisoners from others during first night processes. This is a temptation that should be stoutly resisted as it not only leads to real practical difficulties, but it also tends to undermine the status of the Listeners.

Prisoners need to know about Listeners very quickly after their arrival, and information should be provided to them at an early stage during reception and induction. The ready identification of Listeners, both by prisoners and officers, will contribute to their better use. Orange t-shirts, with green badges, make them easily visible. A high profile is especially valuable in the first night centre. The first 48 hours in custody is the period when prisoners are generally at

highest risk of self-harm. If Listeners are prominent during reception and induction this can help to prevent the vulnerable resorting to self-harm.

The work and the problems

Listeners are trained by the Samaritans and will operate on the same principles as them. In particular they must agree to respect confidentiality, with a few exceptions. But they should be represented at safer custody team meetings (or at least that part of the meeting not dealing with any security matters), when they might well draw attention to any general points which would help guard against self-harm. They can also give voice to any obstacles to their work.

In theory the distribution of Listeners around the prison should not affect the manner and frequency of their use. In practice that may not be the case. Experience suggests that the presence, or absence, of a resident Listener in a particular area – especially those such as healthcare or a vulnerable prisoners' unit – has a marked impact on the number of requests for their services. If there is no Listener in a wing or unit, requests tend to fall significantly. Ideally, therefore, there ought to be at least one Listener resident in every part of the prison, but logically this can prove problematic. IMBs should be vigilant in monitoring the distribution of Listeners, and any arrangements to balance the absence of a resident Listener.

Unsurprisingly, the availability of Listeners is regularly abused. They talk of 'tobacco calls', where the true motive of the prisoner requesting to see them is to cadge some additional tobacco. Listeners seem to disapprove of these requests as much as the prison management would.

Security is an issue. For a scheme to



operate effectively, each Listener must be afforded relative freedom of movement around the prison. This carries with it security risks which can make officers suspicious of Listeners and possibly less co-operative with them. Any breach of trust by a Listener – involvement in dealing in drugs is a high risk – must result in the loss of his appointment. What must be monitored are the measures which the prison adopts to counteract staff reluctance to facilitate Listeners' legitimate activity. Listeners will be able to highlight any refusal to allow them to move between wings, but it is more difficult to detect failure by staff to pass on a request for a Listener. This will depend upon the prisoner in question communicating that failure, perhaps to a Listener, a more sympathetic officer or the IMB. The evidence, such as it is, suggests that obstructive behaviour by officers is limited. The training and information given to officers is crucial in this respect as it can undoubtedly influence positively the attitude of staff towards the scheme.

Difficulties can arise if a prisoner assessed as a high risk to others asks to see a Listener. Such a prisoner will be in a single cell, and could pose danger to a Listener on his own. The problem can usually be overcome by the provision of two Listeners.

Listeners in context

Self-harm in custody will not be prevented by any single measure, but the availability of Listeners is a significant element in prevention strategies. The Prison Service attaches high importance to the activity of Listeners and PSO 2700 details the arrangements which establishments should make in order to facilitate schemes. An exact measure of the benefit to prisoners and the prison is impossible, but those involved with Listener schemes know that they are an indispensable element in strategies to reduce self-harm.

The benefits of the scheme go further than reduction of self-harm. Listeners themselves will enhance their prison experience by their involvement. For some, completion of their training (for which they are given a certificate) represents a rare positive achievement in which they can justifiably take pride. For every one of them, their work will give them self-respect which can only augur well for successful resettlement upon eventual release.

For all the positive aspects of Listener schemes there remain many points at which their effectiveness can be diminished. It is incumbent upon IMBs to be alert to weaknesses in the application of these schemes and to ensure that they are drawn to the attention of prison management.

INSPECTIONS

HMIP reports

Summarised by Helen Banks, AMIMB associate member.

Snapshots from contemporary IMB annual reports are included where possible, for comparison

Ashfield (YOI)

Has long shaken off its early difficulties; this inspection showed even further progress, and some excellent and innovative practice, with demonstrable effect on the life chances of many of the young men there. But the establishment was barely half full, and operating at a capacity and size that was very beneficial to staff and young people. Ashfield was a much safer place than when last inspected.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT Late arrivals caused considerable concern last year and the Board was pleased to note a reduction in late arrivals over the last twelve months. However, this seems to have been due to the fall in the prison population, and it has been noted with alarm that since the roll at Ashfield has started to increase, the number of late arrivals has been on the increase. The Board will remain vigilant regarding this issue.

Blantyre House (Resettlement)

The Inspectorate has frequently reported in positive terms about the prison and this inspection confirmed that Blantyre remains an exceptional, specialist establishment undertaking an important role in the prison system.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT The IMB regards Blantyre House as a very successful prison, which has the support of the local community. Most of the challenges we have highlighted are due to factors outside the direct control of the management and staff.

Buckley Hall (Cat C)

The prison continues to improve. It has overcome some significant issues of order and control, particularly a serious problem with drug supply, but has done so in a proportionate way that has ensured safety without being oppressive. Staff and managers deserve considerable praise for what has been achieved.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT The new core day has reduced the time out of cell, and the

cohesion of the day. As a training prison, aiming to discharge prisoners who will be self sufficient, the requirement that they must move when reclassified to open conditions and are not allowed to stay to complete their course is a serious disadvantage.

Bullwood Hall (Foreign national prisoners)

An important, dedicated facility, still with commendable levels of safety, plus improved purposeful activity and the beginnings of better resettlement services. Less commendable were the continued lack of adequate night time sanitation and the lack of national guidance on what staff should be expected to provide, particularly in terms of resettlement to men returning overseas.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT The Board remains concerned that the number of sentence expired prisoners held by order of the UKBA continues to remain at an unacceptable level. It is distressing for prisoners who are expecting to be released or deported at the end of their sentence only to be informed, often at short notice, that they will continue to be detained. The Board questions whether every effort is made to ensure that a prisoner's immigration status is determined in good time and certainly well before his sentence expires.

Channings Wood (Cat C)

A reasonable training prison, providing a generally safe and purposeful environment, together with well managed resettlement arrangements. However, there remained a need for more activities to ensure that all prisoners are able to take part regularly in work or training, and there is a particular concern about one apparently unsettled wing, which was less safe and more squalid than other parts of the prison.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT It is a credit to the establishment that members of the Board

INSPECTIONS

continue to be made to feel welcome absolutely everywhere within the prison.

Forest Bank (Local, Calyx)

Mostly a safe prison, but a number of prisoners complained of sheeting – being tied inside a duvet cover and battered at night. Prison management had limited knowledge of it. In some cases prison officers on the wings had a passive attitude to bullying and unexplained injuries.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT The Board are only aware of one incident [of sheeting] over the reporting period and this was dealt with by the staff.

Gloucester (Local and YOI)

A prison that causes concern. It has deteriorated since the last inspection. It is a very poor physical environment and there is evidence of a downward drift in performance across a range of areas. It needs urgent attention.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT The Board is profoundly dismayed by the repeated failure, in times when the financial climate was considerably more favourable than at present, to deal adequately with the problems outlined in successive reports, both by the IMB and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP). Repeated acknowledgement has been made of the matters raised, but little has been done that addressed the basic issues. Worse, improvements were postponed because of replacement plans that never reached fruition (the Prisons Minister's letter of May 2009 illustrates such a stance).

Highpoint (Cat C)

Significant and commendable progress towards becoming a really effective training prison, providing a safe and mostly purposeful environment, with reasonable resettlement arrangements. There remained a need for more activities to ensure that all prisoners are able to take part regularly in work or training, and to achieve qualifications that will help them to gain employment after release. There is an urgent need to ensure that healthcare services are delivered to a safe and acceptable standard.

Holme House (Local)

Despite a number of concerns, Holme House delivered reasonably good outcomes in challenging circumstances for most prisoners. Most were kept safely and securely in decent conditions and

were helped to reduce their risk of reoffending. But a small minority of more vulnerable prisoners were not dealt with as positively, and the supply of illegal drugs in the prison is a threat.

Kingston (Cat B and C)

A testament to the benefits that can flow from having a small-scale niche prison, with a settled population. The inspection reaffirmed previous findings that Kingston is a safe and decent place, with purposeful regime and sound focus on addressing the risks posed by the very serious offenders in the prison's care.

Lewes (Local)

The prison remains commendably safe, with positive relationships and a much improved focus on resettlement, but with a need for more purposeful activity.

Leyhill (Open)

A number of improvements – for example, in safety arrangements. But there were still too many petty restrictions for the low-risk population, and aspects of resettlement remained under-developed, with the staff overstretched.

Lincoln (Local)

The most striking finding was the poor physical environment of the prison: external environment dirty and littered; graffiti in cells and many communal areas; one-man cells too small; toilets not always screened. The segregation unit was dirty and unbearably hot.

Nottingham (Local)

A major refurbishment and expansion programme aspires to make it a community prison. There is some way to go to achieve this, but the prison has the essentials in place in terms of a generally safe and respectful environment, together with an appropriate focus on resettlement.

Parc (Young People's Unit)

Young people felt safe and the unit provided a decent environment. Time out of cell had increased and there was a greater range of activities. There had been significant improvements in arrangements to resettle and reintegrate young people. – among the best in the prison system.

Shepton Mallet (Cat C lifers)

One of the oldest prisons in the country, with a restricted environment, but its

small size and dedicated function encouraged a safe and settled atmosphere, positive staff-prisoner relationships, a satisfactory range of purposeful activities and an appropriate focus on programmes to address the risk of reoffending. But recent proposals to increase the population by nearly 40% would put much of what had been achieved at risk.

Swinfen Hall (long-term YOI)

Good outcomes for prisoners in three of the four healthy prison tests. Ministers and Noms, however, attach the greatest importance to prisoners – and especially young prisoners – being purposefully occupied during the day and will be concerned to read this account of the failure to ensure that at Swinfen Hall. Inspectors will expect to see a convincing action plan setting out how they intend to address this weakness.

Usk/Prescoed (Cat C and D)

Levels of safety were impressive, and relationships between staff and prisoners excellent. Both sites offered plenty of purposeful activity. There was extensive use of release on temporary licence (ROTL) to support resettlement at Prescoed but at Usk significant weaknesses in resettlement needed to be addressed.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT Due to the economic climate the numbers of prisoners on Stage 2 paid resettlement work have decreased in this reporting period.

Wellingborough (Cat C)

The prison has had two years to make improvements since the last inspection, when significant concerns were expressed. There had been insufficient grip on what was required to improve the prison and deliver acceptable outcomes for prisoners and the wider public. The current tendering exercise is a big challenge for the prison but it should provide the impetus for change the prison obviously needs.

IMB ANNUAL REPORT There have been noticeable improvements at HMP Wellingborough. It is evident not only by better performance figures and improved processes. It is seen in the way in which staff have tackled the challenges of a changing regime and in the rigour of the management team who are quite evidently seeing things through and ensuring that what needs to happen – happens.

Safeguarding the vulnerable in police stations

A vital safeguard in the often unnecessary progress from police station to remand is the work of appropriate adults – volunteers who monitor police interviews of the young and vulnerable. Their work is highlighted in a recent report – and is soon to be featured in a tv film.

Lis Pritchard of NAAN reports

The National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) has published a report on the provision of appropriate adult services in England and Wales. It was commissioned by the Home Office and the Department of Health and is based on a survey of police forces around the country.

The total number of requests for appropriate adults across England and Wales remains unclear as many forces provided either partial or no information and only a few were able to provide data relating to both trained and untrained appropriate adults.

Young people

Juveniles are readily identified and there is an absolute statutory requirement for them to be provided with an appropriate adult. Just over half of police forces claimed to be generally satisfied with the professional appropriate adult services provided to juveniles. However, over 40% expressed frustration with out of hours services for them.

Vulnerable adults

The number of adults identified as vulnerable varied hugely across the country, and the evidence indicates a significant and concerning under-identification, particularly in areas where no dedicated appropriate adult service was available. Most forces recognised that the poor service provided to vulnerable adults was due to a lack of statutory responsibility for the provision of appropriate adult services to this group.

Nevertheless, half of respondents claimed to be satisfied with the professional services provided to vulnerable adults. The reasons for dissatisfaction ranged from inconsistency in service delivery to a lack of out of hours services. The over-reliance on increasingly hard pressed social services emergency duty teams to provide appropriate adults for vulnerable adults (and in some areas for juveniles) out of hours was concerning.

Most forces indicated that they would routinely request appropriate adults for identification procedures. It is unclear why

over 20% don't, as it is a requirement in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) Codes.

Similarly, it is unclear why just 20% of respondents do not request appropriate adults for charging procedures. Although it is not a strict requirement under the PACE Codes it is good practice for appropriate adults to be present during charge or other disposal to ensure the detainee understands what is happening and what, if any, requirements he or she has to meet in terms of bail conditions and so on.

A need for more organisation

Generally, the quality of data regarding the need for appropriate adults is poor across England and Wales. The majority of forces could not differentiate between requests for familial and professional appropriate adults. NAAN recommends that all forces need to review their data capture methods to include a method of tracking the need for appropriate adults in their area.

The appropriate adult role needs to be seen as a vital first step in the criminal justice system for vulnerable adults. If their use was recorded systematically, it could be used to identify the need for other services or interventions (eg diversion), both in the criminal justice system and for a referral to other services/agencies. The recent MoJ green paper stresses the importance of developing effective liaison and diversion services for adults with mental health problems, though it makes no reference at all to those with learning disabilities.

Further information:
www.appropriateadult.org.uk

Appropriate adult – the movie



Dominic West plays...



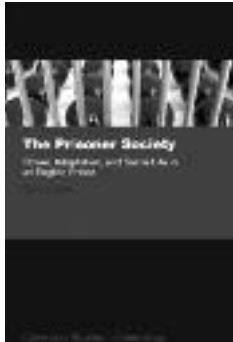
Fred West

A forthcoming tv film on the Fred and Rosemary West case, likely to be entitled *Appropriate Adult*, will focus on the role and perspective of Janet Leach who was the volunteer appropriate adult called in by the police to support Fred West during the investigation. The film will raise the profile of appropriate adults, and will certainly bring up questions of professionalism, accountability and boundaries. It is worth noting that NAAN did not exist in 1994, when Fred West was arrested, and there were no organised appropriate adult schemes operating. Many of the issues raised by the case have been addressed subsequently by NAAN and are dealt with in our national standards.

However it is still the case that no statutory body has the responsibility to ensure the provision of an appropriate adult service for vulnerable adults. This means that there is still nothing to stop the police pulling in someone from a local charity, church or even from the street to fulfil the appropriate adult role. We know that minicab drivers and even foreign tourists walking past police stations have been asked to act as appropriate adults. It will not be possible to ensure an effective and professional appropriate adult service for all vulnerable adults, whether provided by volunteers or paid workers, unless and until the issue of statutory responsibility is addressed.

Understanding prison

Christopher Padfield, a new recruit to the AMIMB executive committee from Bedford IMB, reviews a profound analysis of life in prison



For an IMB member this is a feast of a book, one that helps to provide a conceptual framework and a language for things that we otherwise see only through a glass darkly, just as a map opens up and explains wild countryside for the walker, and the best kind of audio-guide transforms the experience of a museum. The subject matter, a case-study of Cat C Wellingborough prison concluded in 2003, is central to the concerns of any IMB – going beyond what are prisons *for* to examine what are they actually *like*, and how this influences what they can achieve in terms of rehabilitation and redemption.

Ben Crewe is a criminologist of the sociological persuasion, but he is unlike many sociologists in that he does not seem to feel that the only way to persuade his reader that he is clever is through convoluted, impenetrable, jargon-laden prose. He was clearly energetic and resourceful in his fieldwork, and is widely read and penetrating in his analysis and his comment. The book is scholarly, with every assertion tested and referenced, but is at the same time well laid out, beautifully written and compellingly readable.

The subject of the book is how prisoners adapt to prison; how they respond to the enduring struggle between order and compliance on the one hand, and the desire to retain some personal autonomy, influence and self-assertion, on the other. Crewe is clear that rehabilitation – or, more ambitiously, redemption – is possible only if individuals can endure prison with self-respect. The book looks in detail at individual strategies (vertical strategies – those relating to the prisoner as an indi-

vidual) to cope with what he calls the ‘pains of imprisonment’. In later chapters he goes on to look at ‘horizontal’ aspects – how social structure and culture (hierarchy, social relations) develop in an establishment.

He reviews prisons policy over recent decades, deconstructing the implicit theory underlying each upheaval, characterising the current regime as neo-paternal (more paternal than maternal – more pushing than caring, more prescriptive than liberal). The regime emphasises, beyond the brutal realities of incarceration, that prisoners must find their own path towards release and rehabilitation. A prisoner experiences the managerial power exercised by the system in ways that go considerably deeper than in earlier incarnations of English prisons, through an emphasis on personal responsibility and relentless psychological appraisal.

Crewe contrasts English prisons favourably with those in the USA (and elsewhere), which are more restrictive and arbitrary in their use of coercion – and more devastatingly riven by projections, from the wider society, of racial, ethnic and religious divisions. The emphasis on decency, respect, due process, a reasonable regime and fairness constitute a ‘moral palette’ upon which it is possible, in principle, for prisoners and staff to agree, creating an environment where prisoners can grant the system legitimacy, however conditionally. Crewe argues, though, that the modern English system, being at so many points conditional, is harder for prisoners and staff to navigate.

Both categories of prisoner response (vertical and horizontal) are influenced by the cultures, pressures and preoccupations of the world outside and importantly by the prevailing policies of the state, projected through the complex and sophisticated exercise of power within the prison. Crewe also addresses what it is like to be a member of the governing class in a prison, whether as an officer, a psychologist or a governor. For them the change in the nature of power, and indeed the very exercise of power, can be irksome and unwelcome.

He found in Wellingborough very little evidence that officers ever surrendered power to influential prisoners, or to gangs; rather, where prisoners exerted power – as drug dealers undoubtedly do, for example – this ran alongside official projections of

power. Indeed, Crewe sees the horizontal elements of prisoner response to being in prison – the development of a prison society – as being less well developed than in earlier decades, so powerful has become the official emphasis on the individual. The prisoners have become more of an aggregate than a social group.

Crewe puts forward four paradigms of personal adaptation to the rigours of prison, and as the book develops, returns to this typology several times to demonstrate how different policy options would affect and be exploitable by each group of prisoners in their continual search for self-realisation, status and identity within the prison.

- Enthusiasts: committed compliance born of personal morality.
- Pragmatists and stoics: two forms of resigned pragmatic compliance based on different states of need and powerlessness.
- Retreatists: passive compliance founded on personal fatalism.
- Players: feigned compliance – or normative opposition – performed alongside (and as a form of) resistance.

Drugs run through this book like a leitmotif. They fuel crime on the outside; they meet an important need for relief from the ‘pains of imprisonment’ and they constitute the primary trade within the prison, dominating the social hierarchy and fuelling conflict. Big dealers wield significant power, but do not necessarily attract admiration.

Crewe found that unrefined aggression seemed to reap fewer benefits and accrue less respect in the prison he observed than shrewdness and stealth. Fighting seemed to be tightly controlled by prisoners, not least to avoid, so far as possible, the unwelcome



attention of staff. Fights were seen as essential, but were managed to ensure that they tested the relative placing of two individuals in the hierarchy only, without the risk of others joining in. Fights were concluded as quickly as possible, sometimes through the intervention of third parties, and usually before much injury had been caused.

He evidently sees prison to some extent as a component of government policy towards the urban poor, part of the continuum of measures to ensure social order within the underclass. He welcomes the current emphasis on achieving legitimacy, but is wary of the prevailing political rhetoric about a 'war on crime' with ever longer sentences. He notes that locking up a very large proportion of a social group, that has become irrelevant to the prevailing neo-liberal waged economy, is an unfortunate alternative to more constructive forms of investment in their future and wellbeing, as members of a common society.

At one point in his exploration of the nature of power, Crewe reflects on how the declining influence of the Prison Officers Association at Wellingborough has, counter-intuitively, increased the burden on governors. On many occasions a governor would use a challenge by an effective POA as cover to drive beneficial change that would otherwise be hard to negotiate with higher authority. IMBs do not get a mention in this fascinating book – what does that say? – but it could have been written with the IMB member's continuing professional development in mind. A wide-awake IMB that understands the dynamics of its prison, and has an interest in the maintenance of legitimacy and the rehabilitative mission, can of course play a similar constructive role, through carefully measured and targeted challenges to the system.

The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison by Ben Crewe, Oxford, Clarendon Studies in Criminology, 2009, 528pp, £62

Christopher Padfield has been an IMB member at Bedford since 2008; he has just become vice-chair. He lives (and still works a little) in Cambridge where he graduated in engineering and philosophy and took a PhD in geotechnics. He was director of the university's output of executive education. He is still an active Fellow of Trinity Hall as Tutor and Director of Studies in Engineering. He joined AMIMB's executive committee as a way of 'getting stuck in' and hopes that writing the odd review might make him read some of the books in his guilt pile.

Current concerns in the immigration estate

Margaret Johnson of the IMB at Brook House IRC

Just like the prison estate, immigration removal centres are a diverse bunch of establishments. What they have in common is that they are all answerable to UKBA (United Kingdom Border Agency). The prison estate manages three of the centres; the other seven are run by a number of different commercial companies. For IMBs this means that they sit in the middle of two sets of people with sometimes different priorities, which is an added complication. Staff who have previously worked for the prisons say it is a more difficult job, as the rules are less clear.

In effect all detainees are serving indeterminate sentences as they have no idea how long it will be before they are given asylum, leave to remain, temporary admission, removal or deportation. It is possible for a sentence-expired foreign national to be in a removal centre for longer than his prison sentence. The reasons for this are complex and not the focus of this article. There are a few countries to which it is not deemed safe for people to return. Should these individuals continue to be detained?

Who are detained?

The long overdue setting-up of three IMBs in short-term holding facilities is a further complexity. They are currently at Heathrow, Glasgow and Edinburgh and North and Midlands (Manchester and Birmingham). These newer boards may not have any office or place to meet. Their concerns, such as property and health issues, are similar to those of us in the IRCs but this is a very different and specialist area with no established guidelines.

The IRC estate holds male, female and – regrettably – until recently, children, as well as sentence-expired foreign nationals, overstayers and others whose detention is entirely an immigration matter. Different establish-

Although possibly issued as a threat 'If you send me back I will kill myself' must be taken seriously



ments will have different concerns. The size and security level varies but there are common concerns too.

The problems

The issues of property and mental health are shared by our colleagues in prisons but they will not have to deal with an issue such as dispute about age. In countries where there are people without birth certificates, judging the exact age of a young man is difficult. Although death in custody is rare, the suicide risk rises when people are given removal directions which must be recognised. Although possibly issued as a threat 'If you send me back I will kill myself' must be taken seriously.

Removal from Association and Temporary Confinement (Rules 40 and 42) carry mandatory requirement for an IMB visit within a specific time-frame. This can cause problems when detainees are there for only a few hours. There are currently no sanctions for bad behaviour; increasingly detainees are put in special accommodation only prior to removal because the centre management perceive a possible disturbance. The use of these rules varies greatly from centre to centre but the frequency of use in some centres make it impossible to apply the requirement to visit.

Finally immigration matters would probably come top of any list of concerns. Of course we as IMBs are rarely able to influence decisions, although there have been occasions when we have stopped something slipping through the net.

Rising from the ashes of the BoV

by Noel 'Razor' Smith

In today's prisons we have Independent Monitoring Boards that the majority of prisoners really do see as independent and are not afraid to approach for help. Unfortunately this hasn't always been the case. Like a lot of people who have served long prison sentences, I have bad memories of the old Board of Visitors, the predecessors of the modern IMB. Anyone who served a prison sentence before 2003 will have mixed feelings about the BoV. Prisoners felt that, on the whole, the BoV were a bit too cosy with prison management and the Home Office. Whether this feeling was justified or not, there was still the fact that, going even further back, the BoV could sit in judgement on prisoners at adjudication if it was felt that the charge was too serious for a governor to deal with. They could also authorise confinement for good order and discipline and sign off on keeping a prisoner in a strip-cell or strongbox, sometimes for weeks. So

we had a body that was supposed to be, among other things, making sure that prisoners were treated fairly, and yet the BoV had the power to award a sentence of 'unlimited loss of remission' to any prisoner found guilty by them of committing specified offences against prison rules. This was a tricky balancing act, one they invariably seemed to get wrong.

My own experiences

In 1977 I appeared before the BoV at Rochester borstal, accused of attempted escape and 'causing gross personal violence to a prison officer'. It took them around six minutes to find me guilty on both charges and I was sentenced to solitary confinement for an unspecified period, to be reviewed monthly, and the loss of two parole dates (I was serving a section 53 sentence and had no remission to lose). In effect I was being

For a lot of prisoners, myself included, the BoV at Wormwood Scrubs did a lot to redeem their reputation in 1997, when they were instrumental in exposing the brutal behaviour of prison staff in the segregation unit

sentenced to a further year in prison, most of it spent in an underground cell with minimum human contact. I was 16 years old.

The second time I came in front of the BoV for trial was at Wandsworth prison in 1990, when I was accused of assaulting two prison officers and inciting others to commit 'indiscipline' (riot). I was now older and a little bit wiser and requested legal representation for the hearing. I found out that less than 1% of prisoners appearing before the BoV for trial were ever granted legal representation. The BoV, after a letter from my solicitor, granted me legal representation on the grounds that as the incitement charge was so serious, I would be facing a 'significant loss of remission' if found guilty. I have to say that the board treated me very fairly and I was found not guilty of the incitement charge, but sentenced to 48 days loss of remission for the assaults. I still believe that had my solicitor not been allowed to represent me the board would have had no hesitation in finding me guilty. They always seemed just that little bit too eager to please prison governors and staff.

So the BoV were mainly viewed with suspicion and cynicism by the majority of prisoners. This is not to say that all boards were bad, but that the overall impression of them as a body was bad. For a lot of prisoners, myself included, the BoV at Wormwood Scrubs did a lot to redeem their reputation in 1997, when they were instrumental in exposing the brutal behaviour of prison staff in the segregation unit. The resulting publicity led to the suspension of 27 prison officers for assault and sexual assault on prisoners. Three prison officers were eventually convicted and jailed.

In my experience, at first the IMB suffered from a bit of bad press among prisoners due to their perceived association with the BoV. But that seems to be dissipating with every year that passes. I hope the IMB goes from strength to strength as they are needed now more than ever.

Noel Smith is 50 and has 58 criminal convictions. He served almost 33 years in jail on various sentences, usually for bank robbery and firearms. While inside, he started to write and became a regular contributor to Inside Time, the national prisoners newspaper. He has written four books, including A Few Kind Words and A Loaded Gun – the autobiography of a career criminal (Penguin), which has become required reading for 1st year criminology students, and A Rusty Gun (Penguin). He was paroled from a 2-strike life sentence in May 2010. He now works as commissioning editor at Inside Time,



The green paper

Jon Collins, Director of the Criminal Justice Alliance of which AMIMB is a member

'Pathetically soft', 'fatally flawed', a 'criminals' charter and 'the government's surrender to lawlessness' were just some of the descriptions used by the newspapers in response to the publication in December of *Breaking the cycle: Effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders*, the government's green paper on criminal justice reform. The reality, predictably, is somewhat different. Despite the fuss in the tabloids, the proposals, once implemented, are expected to reduce the prison population by only about 3,000, a modest reduction given the enormous growth in the number of people in prison in the last two decades. And, while elements of the green paper are genuinely innovative, it is predominantly a conservatively sensible, if broadly progressive package of proposals.

On sentencing, it proposes tidying up and consolidating many of the legislative anomalies caused by hyperactive law-making in recent years. This is to be welcomed, as is the proposal to reduce the unnecessary overuse of remand. It also proposes significantly limiting the use of indeterminate sentences for public protection and looks to facilitate the release of the many prisoners who are unnecessarily still in custody despite having completed their minimum tariff. This will address one of the most significant injustices of the current system, which has seen a huge increase in the number of people serving indeterminate sentences in recent years.

Murder and rehabilitation

Much of the media furore focused on the length of sentences given to murderers, claiming that minimum prison terms for murder would be significantly reduced. It led to Justice Secretary Ken Clarke being accused by the *Sun* of 'molly-coddling murderers with liberal clap-trap'. This conveniently ignored the fact that the green paper clearly states that the government has 'no intention of abolishing the mandatory life sentence or of prompting any general reduction in minimum terms imposed for murder'. What it does propose is tidying up

schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which is an overly complex and prescriptive set of measures that can prevent judges ensuring that murder sentences are appropriate and proportionate.

On rehabilitation, better treatment for people with mental health and drug problems, with a focus on diversion into appropriate services, is sensible and necessary. Efforts to make community penalties more effective are welcome, as is the enthusiasm shown for restorative justice. Reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is essential and long overdue.

More controversial is the introduction of payment-by-results to fund improvements in rehabilitation, which is as yet untested. While the shift in focus from processes to outcomes that drives this proposal is the right one, there are concerns about how payment-by-results can operate in practice, and about its impact on small, specialist organisations that do essential work in local communities.

Sentencing

Also likely to be controversial is the proposal to increase the sentence discount given for an early guilty plea from the current maximum of a third to as much as a half. While this would theoretically reduce the number of defendants who plead guilty at the last minute – expensive for the justice system and tough on victims and witnesses – it may also put undue pressure on defendants to plead guilty, especially given the cuts that are being made to legal aid. There is also a risk that if sentencers do not support this proposal (and there is already evidence that they do not) they will simply give longer sentences to compensate.

Missing issues

There are also some issues that are not given sufficient attention in *Breaking the Cycle*. For example, there is almost no mention of prisoners' families, yet prisoners who receive visits from family members are less likely to reoffend, and maintaining appropriate family ties can be an important part of resettlement. The section on women offenders is also limited; little attention is given to young adult offenders or to the issue of race and the criminal justice system; the issues faced by offenders with learning problems are not

addressed. The green paper also fails to make any mention of prison overcrowding, despite the fact that *Prisons with a Purpose*, the Conservative Party's 2008 criminal justice policy document, stated that 'overcrowding is the key cause of failure in the current prison system. By overburdening the prison estate, it inhibits the process of rehabilitation and attempts to reduce reoffending.'

A cautious welcome

Overall, however, the package of proposals is positive and importantly there appears to be enough support across the government to make it work. The Department of Health has committed money to developing mental health liaison and diversion schemes, while progress seems to be being made with the Department of Work and Pensions in addressing the long-running issue of the problems faced by prisoners in accessing benefits on leaving prison. Labour has also been sensible so far in its response to the green paper, questioning how resources will be found to implement the proposals but not attacking the underlying approach.

Since the publication of *Breaking the Cycle*, however, the issue of prisoners' voting rights, sensibly not covered in the green paper, has re-emerged, with the government's announcement before Christmas that they intend to legislate to allow prisoners sentenced to less than four years to vote. This has fired up the debate around law and order, turning the former Home and Justice Secretary Jack Straw and the civil liberties campaigner and former Shadow Home Secretary David Davis into unlikely allies leading a backbench revolt. What is not yet clear is whether this will act as a lightning-rod, diverting attention away from the government's planned reforms, or if it will be the first in a series of battles for the government in pursuing reform of the criminal justice system.

There is clearly much at stake. Nobody can dispute that implementing significant changes to the criminal justice system at a time when funding is being cut substantially will be a challenge. It is also clear that much of the detail around payment-by-results still needs to be worked out. Yet there is a great deal in here that is sensible and positive and the focus throughout is very much on reform and rehabilitation, emphasising the need to support offenders in turning their lives around. This is a huge step forward, and a crucial first step towards developing a more effective criminal justice system. The government should be supported in ensuring that this programme of reform is delivered in practice.

Barbed wire

There's a lot of talk currently about prisoners having gainful employment. Before we get too excited, Frances Crook from the Howard League looks at one of the first initiatives of this sort

In 2005 the Howard League for Penal Reform set up the first-ever real business based inside a prison – a graphic design studio which we called Barbed. Based in Cat C industrial prison Coldingley, it recruited prisoners competitively, trained them intensively and set them to work in the business of designing leaflets, posters and materials. Barbed competed directly with outside graphic designers.

For three years Barbed ran as a proper business. All Barbed employees were employed on the same contract as other Howard League staff and for much of the project the prisoners paid income tax and national insurance. To mimic payment for utilities, transport, food, rent or mortgage, prisoners contributed 30% of their wages into a separate fund that made charitable contributions. All employees also made voluntary donations to Victim Support. At its height, when two jobs were advertised, there were 350 applicants from a total prison population of 420.

The Ministry of Justice and Revenue and

Customs later decided that prisoners could not pay tax, and refunded some £17,000 to the charity, which was the tax the prisoners had paid. We closed the business as the charity did not want to run a 'project': we wanted to show how real businesses could work inside prisons.

Was it a success?

The Howard League has just published a report into Barbed, based on what happened to the prisoners who were employed there. The report reveals that the opportunity to engage in a real work environment supported positive change in both behaviour and attitudes in prison and on release. Not least, it instilled a work ethos and demonstrated the possibility of a future without crime. Barbed was a small prototype with great successes.

The experiment into real work in prison grew from research that exposed the dire state of work in prisons. Work is mostly used to support the institution and is desultory, low paid and dull and seems designed to prove that crime is more exciting and lucrative. No prisoner pays tax or NI: instead, the Prison Service emulates the informal economy – paying cash in hand, thereby reinforcing the view that it is ok to avoid tax.

As the coalition government seeks to introduce real work in prison, this report lights the way to radical reform that will help prisoners prepare for a productive and crime free life on release. As a former employee said: 'Barbed gave me a way to provide for my family and contribute in their lives positively. I was able to help pay bills, provide in new ways and support myself.'

More information: www.howardleague.org/barbed-what-happened-next/



Prison futures

The January *Prison Service Journal* was devoted to interviews on the theme of *Where does the prison system go from here, faced with a cut in the MoJ budget of 23% over four years. The Monitor is grateful for permission to quote extracts*

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive, Noms

We forget that ten, fifteen years ago it wasn't normal to have Job Centre Plus or third sector providers supporting offenders on drugs, or to have health services coming into the prison from outside. Can we expand it further? Yes, we can and it's really important that prisons are seen as part of the community and not separate from them. That approach has helped us to embed the decency agenda...

I'm absolutely certain that with fewer resources we will have to stop doing some things. We will have to be careful about how to manage the reduction in resource to maintain the safe, decent, ordered prisons that we have achieved over the last ten to fifteen years, whilst also maintaining and increasing the focus on rehabilitation. In terms of purposeful activity, the aim will be to make better use of the activity and the space that we have got. I accept that there is not sufficient purposeful activity across prisons. We are trying to ensure that what activity space there is, is fully utilised and I am always frustrated if I go to prisons and there are activity places not being used, whether they be in workshops or in education or on programmes...

The reality is that the private sector does have a role. Can they deliver good prisons? Yes, they can, as evidenced by the inspection reports on places such as Altcourse or Lowdham Grange. The reality is that in the future there will be an increasingly mixed provision of public, private and third sector delivering services to offenders in both custody and community...

I think it is essential that we do not end up with governors and prison staff becoming marginalised and effectively dealing only with security and residential care. Governors and the majority of prison staff did not join the Prison Service just to be involved in locking people up.

Crispin Blunt MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Prisons and Youth Justice

We need to get much cleverer about how we deliver our services as a government. That is principally through locally delivered services and locally delivered interventions to offenders. It is about getting all services, whether that be local authorities or health services, delivered more effectively. They need to be more co-ordinated and delivered together. We as the state need to do what we do better. There are some good examples to build upon such as what has taken place in Manchester where local authorities have got out of their silos in order to look at the overall objective. The second element is that there is a large capacity in this country of groups and individuals who think it is the right thing to do to help rehabilitate offenders.

Rachel Halford, Director, Women in Prison

We need gender specific services. We need risk assessment tools and programmes which have been designed for women specifically. The only current example of this is the CARE programme which has recently been accredited for women. This works using narrative therapy...

The fact that women are still there when they don't need to be there – that is the biggest problem. If we accept that these women are there, on a day to day basis it is the lack of resources and the fact that there are still male prison officers working in women's prisons. If you look at recent prison reports, for example the Holloway report, there are still numerous women reporting that they have been sexually advanced or assaulted. There needs to be recognition that women's needs are different. This needs to be fed through, so all women's prisons are staffed by women...

Cameron says it's a big society and we should work together, but if we consider the cuts which will affect young people, and those on low income, does he really think that we will all be happy volunteering together? Personally, I think the vision is a bit of a cop out.

Richard Garside, Director, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

Broadly speaking more unequal societies tend to have higher prison populations than more equal societies, and societies who invest more in their welfare and social support mechanisms generally have lower prison populations than those who invest less. Now we are going into a period where we are probably going to see growth in the rate of inequality, and also an ongoing disinvestment in social safety-nets, so it would be strange if, as a result of those quite big social processes, we saw a fall in the prison population. There is no iron law here, of course, and it would be possible for a government to preside over these policies whilst also seeing a drop in the prison population. It just doesn't strike me as being very likely...

As somebody who has worked in a number of organisations over the years, including those who have delivered front-line services, I have real concerns about the future of charitable independence, especially those who become so dependent on government for the delivery of their charitable objectives through commissioning and contestability...

I am not in favour of private prisons. If I were Minister of Justice, I would close all private prisons. In my view it is very clear that the only social body that should be responsible for the prison system is the state. I suppose where it has fundamentally altered the terrain is that it is only because of the injection of private capital into the prison system that we have been able to have the increase in prison population that we have had, because it is only through private finance that has allowed the government to keep all of this additional capital expenditure off the balance sheet. So, in that sense, the involvement of the private sector has been an entirely negative one...

It is a disgrace that people in prison have so little voice and so little power to express their desires, and their needs and their wants. But how you achieve that I don't know, because I think it would require such a change in the way that prisons operated that they would not be recognisable as prisons anymore.

Eoin McLennan-Murray, President, Prison Governors Association

I think the government's idea of the 'rehabilitation revolution' is to pay organisations to reduce re-offending. They will be paid by results and I suppose this means that they take the risk. If they

fail to deliver the required outcome then they are not paid. I am concerned that organisations will simply cherry pick offenders who are more likely to succeed and leave those that are not...

The rise in managerialism has led to an organisation that is risk averse and hamstrung. This is holding back prison governors who have a reform agenda or who want to make a difference. Combined with the overuse of custody and shrinking budgets the system is under real pressure and ultimately this may result in the progress we have made in recent years being lost...

In the event of one of the public sector prisons being lost in the current round of commercial competition, the POA have said that they will take industrial action. Our position will not change and even though our members are also affected, we will have to work through this and cooperate with the private sector to achieve this.

John Bowers, former commissioning editor, Inside Time

I think the POA must still live in the dark ages and they use any opportunity to advance the cause of their members. In my role on *Inside Time*, I have personally asked them over the years to clarify statements or to comment on issues and have not even been given the courtesy of a response. It's almost as if they have got a sort of arrogance about them that says we are not going to answer that question because it is beneath us to talk to a prisoners' newspaper.



Prisons in the news

Helen Boothman of the Littlehey IMB (and chair of AMIMB) on a little local disturbance

Littlehey, a young offenders institution located in the Cambridgeshire countryside, hit the headlines in January this year when prisoner assaults on two prison officers led to the staff withdrawing from two spurs of a wing. This meant that 41 prisoners were on the loose in the wing and as the pin phones

were not turned off immediately (or was it a mobile?) a prisoner called Sky News and the media frenzy began. The IMB were notified as the Command suite opened up and we monitored the whole incident from the command suite and from the wing.

The majority of the wing locked themselves behind their doors and it was six men who continued to cause trouble. Chairs and the pool table were broken. The national C&R teams arrived and resolution soon followed.

We ask ourselves: why did it happen and why did the media run with it? There does not appear to be one answer to the first question. It is likely the incident started due to one disgruntled prisoner, and it came soon after Christmas and the New year and on a weekend – so boredom may have been a factor. As the YOI has been open for only a

year some staff have limited experience.

As for the media: there is the conspiracy theory that the media is keen to knock Ken Clarke's prison agenda as it is seen as being too lenient. Also the Prison Officers Association seemed to feed into the media and used the glare of being in the spotlight to open up talks with the governor and area manager about changes to the regime. This has resulted in only 50% of the prisoners being on association at any one time.

The final question is what lesson have Noms learned from this? I ask what is their policy in dealing with 18-21-year-olds? Is it to lock them up together with limited extra resources or is it to integrate them into the adult estate? At the moment they appear to be the forgotten generation and it is the staff as well as prisoners who are suffering the consequences.

The riot at Ford open prison in the same month was a much more serious affair. The IMB there, perhaps understandably, did not respond to the Monitor's invitation to write about it. To their credit, it was widely reported that the IMB annual report had warned about the dangers of under-staffing. The Prison Officers Association claim that on the night of the riot and subsequent fires only two prison officers were on duty. And of course it is widely known that overcrowding has resulted in the use of open prisons for more volatile short-term prisoners – rather than longer-term prisoners near the end of their sentences, which is what open prisons are designed for.



MENTAL HEALTH

Michael Sheldon, an ex-psychologist on the Norwich IMB, on a recent study that reveals some surprising facts about the links between prison and mental illness

We know that levels of mental illness in the prison population are high. But how far do the fact and circumstances of imprisonment cause or exacerbate mental illness? The question is not easy to answer, as there are different sorts of prisoner, different kinds of prison, and different forms of mental illness. But a recent research study published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* makes an interesting start and tells us something about the course of mental health, at least during the early days in prison.

Over 3000 prisoners – men and women, adults and young offenders – had a mental health screen at their first reception into prison. Following an extensive diagnostic interview, samples drawn from those screening both positive and negative completed symptom measures three times: within a week of reception, a month later and two months later.

Mental illness levels in all groups of prisoner were high at reception, but in no group and for no diagnostic category did levels increase during these two months. In detail the findings raise interesting questions. Symptom levels overall were higher in remand than

in convicted prisoners (Do the uncertainties associated with remand pose special problems?) Convicted men but not women improved reliably over the first two months (Is prison a more challenging experience for women?)

Considering thoughts of suicide separately, there was a decline (from an initially higher level) for men but not for women, and, generally speaking, levels were higher for remand prisoners.

Short sentences and frequent prisoner movements were major constraints on the researchers and prevented them from looking beyond the first two months of life in prison.

The Centre for Mental Health had this to say about the study

It is well established that levels of mental distress are often at their highest among people on remand or in the early stages of imprisonment. The sustained high levels of distress among women may partly be explained by the prevalence of borderline personality disorder, which affects one woman prisoner in four, and which makes their experience of prison particularly distressing. Separation from family responsibilities and the high risk of children being taken into care may also help to explain this finding.

The widespread movement of prisoners around the system that prevented the collection of data for more than two months can also have an effect on prisoners' mental health and the ability of health services to offer them effective treatment and support.

On the rocks

Alcohol is arguably a bigger problem in criminal justice than illegal drugs. Yet Sean Duggan of the Centre for Mental Health says it is the poor relation in terms of attention in prison

The New Year's eve riot at Ford open prison luridly highlighted the problem. But perhaps a third of new prisoners have an alcohol problem – not surprising, as a quarter of adults outside do too. The misuse of alcohol is one of the most daunting of all challenges for both health and criminal justice services. The cost of alcohol misuse is some £23 billion, more than £3 billion of which is born by the NHS. Yet neither health nor drug treatment services are responding adequately to the needs of offenders who misuse alcohol. A window of opportunity to help them to manage their use of alcohol is missed and the risk of further offending is not mitigated.

This year will see the creation of Public Health England as well as far-reaching changes to the NHS, to drug treatment services and to the criminal justice system. For all of them, responding to the needs of offenders who misuse alcohol remains a major challenge. Some three-quarters of incidents of domestic violence are linked to alcohol misuse as well as half of assault cases and two-thirds of woundings. Prisoners with alcohol problems are more likely to be arrive with problems outside, have a troubled time in prison, and are more likely to reoffend.

What should be done

As with many other public health and community safety issues, prevention is key and the management of problems should be stepped: from basic advice to those with the least serious issues to more specialised responses to those whose problems are more serious or entrenched. Yet for offenders who misuse alcohol, the responses at all of these levels are woefully inadequate. The absence of support is evident at all levels of need and all stages of the justice system, from first contact with the police to release from prison.

Offenders have told us that their alcohol problems have been ignored by front-line workers to the extent that some are forced to lie about or exaggerate illegal drug use to get any kind of help. Health and criminal justice commissioners struggle to find common ground on which to fund joint services, hindering the development of effective responses to meet different levels of needs. There are examples of excellent local initiatives, many of them led by enterprising individuals or user groups, but many have to manage on a shoestring.

We need action on at least three fronts. Alcohol should have parity with illegal drugs in the provision of services to support offenders. We need a range of responses – from ensuring that all front-line workers are skilled in identification and basic advice to supporting people on community sentences with an alcohol treatment requirement. This could include having CARAT teams in prisons deal with alcohol as well as illegal drugs. Usefully, the government's recent green paper suggests a more flexible health treatment community order requirement, integrating mental health, alcohol and drug services.

Second, health and drug treatment services, the police, prisons and probation need to come together to achieve this, building alliances with community and voluntary organisations that have developed

creative responses to need and listening to the views of offenders about the support they require. Many of the most innovative and effective schemes we visit are run by small, local community or user-led support groups.

The Wiltshire Addiction Support Project (WASP), for example, organises a peer support service as well as seeking to influence county-wide commissioning decisions. Others were created by visionary individuals or as a result of local partnerships that overcome institutional barriers to a more joined-up approach through the commitment of those leading them. Such initiatives need to be nurtured and enabled to demonstrate the benefits they deliver.

Finally, we need a renewed focus on prevention. Minimum or unit pricing and regulation of the night-time booze economy are important ways of reducing risk and preventing offending. Alcohol misuse should no longer be a label for exclusion. We need to see collective action to reduce the devastating impact of alcohol misuse and offending on all who are affected by them.

What the inspector found

HMIP surveyed alcohol services in prisons between 2004 and 2009. They drew on the experiences of 13,000 prisoners. In a thematic report published last year, they confirmed the disparity between care of illegal drug users and alcohol users. Overall, they described it as a 'depressing picture':

'Worryingly, over a quarter of those who came into prison with only an alcohol problem said that they were likely to leave with a drug problem, suggesting that in the absence of either alcohol or treatment, a new dependency had been created. Since community alcohol provision suffers from the same deficits as provision in prisons, it was hard to put alcohol users in contact with supportive community services on release – there is no equivalent of the drug intervention projects that support those using illicit drugs.'

'It is clear that alcohol misuse is a growing problem, fuelling violent crime, particularly among young people. Yet, as this report shows, prisons have not grappled effectively with this problem and are not resourced to do so. Such provision as there is has depended on local initiatives and locally sourced funding – a fragile and patchy basis for an essential service.'



Offenders have told us that their alcohol problems have been ignored by front-line workers to the extent that some are forced to lie about or exaggerate illegal drug use to get any kind of help

A moral compass needed on every journey

by **Baroness Vivien Stern of the International Centre for Prison Studies and AMIMB President**

Few people may now remember Adam Rickwood, except perhaps a few lawyers, judges, activists and parliamentarians. He was 14 when he died in 2004, having, as a judge said, the 'mournful distinction' of being the youngest person to die in custody in the UK.

Adam came from a background of severe emotional problems. He was being held 150 miles from his home in Serco's Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in Durham. On the evening of 8 August 2004 there was an argument with a member of the centre's staff. Adam refused to go to his room when told to do so. A 'first response team' was called in, and four prison staff carried Adam, face-down, to his room. When Adam attempted to bite, one of them employed a technique known as nose distraction. This is one of four techniques that were in use at the time to regain control by inducing pain. The nose distraction involves placing brief upward pressure on the nose. After this force, Adam's nose bled. He then flooded his room as a sort of protest. Between 11.45 and midnight he hanged himself with his shoelaces from a curtain rail.

In 2007 there was an inquest, during which it emerged that the use of force to restrain the children held in the centre with the addition of inflicting pain was being used to get the young people to obey orders. It appeared that this was against the rules laid down by the government. According to the rules, force should have been used only to prevent harm or serious damage. However, the coroner refused to go into the question of whether Adam's treatment was lawful and to allow the jury to consider a verdict of unlawful killing. He did write to the government to point out that Secure Training Centres seemed to have been using force in this way over several years in contravention of the rules.

The government tries to change the rules

Once the coroner had put this view in writing, the government had two choices. They could tell the Secure Training Centres to keep to the rules and stop using force and pain infliction to get obedience. Or they could change the rules to make legal what

had been being done against the rules, if not illegally. What did they do? They changed the rules.

In July 2007, after a heated debate in the House of Lords, they brought in a new Statutory Instrument to make it lawful for the companies that ran the four private juvenile prisons to use force and inflict pain in order to 'maintain good order and discipline'. The new rules caused a bit of an uproar and there was a judicial review. A case was brought before the Queen's Bench division arguing that the rules were unlawful. The court found that what had happened was unsatisfactory in many ways but allowed the rules to stand. There was an appeal and eventually the Court of Appeal reversed that judgement. It quashed the new rules and said the way they were introduced was unreasonable and unlawful. What the new rules permitted was in breach of article three of the European Convention on Human Rights – which forbid inhuman and degrading treatment, and of article eight – which requires respect for family life.

It therefore became clear that the government was in a predicament. The use of force against young people to get them to obey orders was unlawful. The government were unhappy with that decision so they tried to appeal to the House of Lords. The request was refused. During the 12 months that elapsed while the legality of the Statutory Instrument was being argued before the courts, the Secure Training Centres continued to use physical restraint and pain infliction to maintain 'good order and discipline'.

Once the Government's request for an appeal was turned down, the road was clear for a judicial review of the decision of the Durham coroner at Adam's original inquest to refuse to go into the question of whether Adam's treatment was lawful and to allow the jury to consider a verdict of unlawful killing. In 2009 the judicial review was heard. The Hon Mr Justice Blake ruled that there had to be a new inquest for Adam. 'If a properly directed jury found', he said, 'that there was a contribution to the death caused by Adam's

unlawful treatment, that adds urgency and poignancy to the lessons that remain to be learned from the death'.

A second inquest

Finally, six years after Adam died, the jury in the second inquest decided just that. At the hearing, it was agreed by all the interested parties to the inquest that at or about 6pm on 8 August 2004:

1. The removal of Adam from Association was in breach of Schedule D, M6 of the contract between the Home Office and Serco, contrary to Rule 36 of the STC Rules and therefore unlawful;
2. The use of Physical Control in Care (PCC) on Adam to take him to his room was in breach of Schedule D, M5 of the contract between the Home Office and Serco, contrary to Rule 38 of the STC Rules, contrary to the Hassockfield Director's Rules and therefore unlawful;
3. The use of the nose distraction on Adam was a pain inducing technique which was unjustified, unreasonable and disproportionate, contrary to Rule 37 of the STC Rules and therefore unlawful.
4. Before and at the time of Adam's death, PCC was regularly used at Hassockfield in circumstances not permitted by the contract between the Home Office and Serco, the STC Rules and the Director's Rules.

For six years the organisation INQUEST

Parliamentarians and pressure groups alike were listened to and then ignored



has been leading the battle to expose the failings that led to Adam's death and supporting Adam's mother, Carol Pounder. When the verdict was announced Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:

'This is a vindication of the battle by Adam's family for the truth against a background of denial and secrecy by the Youth Justice Board and Serco. That thousands of vulnerable children were systematically subjected to unlawful restraint in privatised child prisons – and that none of the regulatory or inspection bodies of the state did anything about it – is shameful. The public scrutiny finally afforded by this properly-conducted inquest into Adam's tragic death has highlighted serious failings in the way the state treats children in conflict with the law. The government must now respond and implement meaningful changes in order to safeguard lives in future.'

The Youth Justice Board put out a statement saying: 'The YJB unequivocally accepts the verdict brought by the jury today. We welcome the coroner's acknowledgment that the YJB systems in place today are clearly incomparably better than they were.'

Lessons to learn

What are the lessons of this sad story? The level of resistance by officials to face up to what was happening was remarkable. In 2004 when Adam died it became public knowledge that physical restraint was being used in Secure Training Centres disproportionately and possibly unlawfully. In 2006 a much-publicised Howard League inquiry

chaired by Lord Carlile of Berriew exposed the extent of the use of restraint. The figures showed it was used on around 3,000 occasions each year. In 2008 the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights published a report stating that physical restraint is not permissible for the purpose of good order and discipline and calling for the abolition of all distraction techniques. In 2009 Mr Justice Blake ruled that the use of these methods to ensure good order and discipline was unlawful.

So between 2004 and 2009 those responsible in the government and its agencies worked hard to ensure the continuance of a practice that they would have never have allowed their own children to be subjected to and which they knew had led to death and injury. The inspection regime was inadequate and Secure Training Centres had no IMBs to watch over them.

It is very easy for people engaged in the day-to-day business of carrying out the requirements of their job to lose their moral compass, to forget that there is an ethical framework that overrides their job description. No-one during these years resigned from the Youth Justice Board on grounds of principle. No-one in the responsible government ministry felt the need to say 'this must stop'. Parliamentarians and pressure groups alike were listened to and then ignored.

There is a lesson in this for IMBs too. Whenever they walk into their prison they must take their moral compass with them, because it is too easy over time for those who work within the walls to lose theirs.

The British revolution

Mike Reynolds of the Downview IMB stirs things up

Revolutions have been in the news recently. IMBs haven't taken to the streets, but we've been wanting change for years, haven't we? Change from measuring everything to helping prisoners map out their own futures. It does seem that our leaders are at last listening. Let's hope the revolution will be swift and bloodless – no guillotines for the old guard, just P45s.

In prisons themselves, the first place to revolutionise is Reception. This is where the door to a normal life may be opened – the gateway to reducing reoffending. Prison staff should apply the same discipline to all offenders. Fairly applied, discipline leads to self-discipline and, if caring needs are tackled simultaneously via the nine pathways system, the majority of prisoners will realise it is in their interest to respond. Some staff see themselves as disciplinarians rather than rehabilitators – a mindset which must be changed if the revolution is to succeed.

The revolution should also include contracting. Staff know what prisoners need, yet the three most important services – food, health and education/training – are contracted separately by higher headquarters. The belief that money is saved by employing large contractors to provide one-size-fits-all services is questionable. And the means of future healthcare provision by GP services are as yet unclear. The concept that education should be provided by one company, induction procedures by another, and the administrative minutiae of distance learning by an already-overworked Head of Learning & Skills demands revolution.

The big society

Critics of the 'big society' say it is vague and administratively untidy, and has no single defining virtue. That is true, but so what? At least it accepts that people should stop expecting government to do everything for them. Prisoners before and after release are also part of the communities that must be forged. For the British revolution in prisons to succeed, rehabilitation must be done as close to the ground as possible by people who really understand offenders' needs, assisted by others from outside who have the will and expertise to help satisfy them.

COMMENTARY

Following the decision on Adam Rickwood, a high court challenge has been launched over the Ministry of Justice's refusal to identify hundreds of children who have been unlawfully restrained in privately run child jails using techniques that have since been banned. The Children's Rights Alliance for England (Crae) has applied for a judicial review of the refusal by justice secretary Ken Clarke, to identify and contact children who may have been unlawfully restrained in the privately run secure training centres. Crae believes that there may be hundreds, if not thousands, of children who have been unlawfully restrained in secure training centres since they first opened in 1998.

Director of the Howard League for Penal Reform Frances Crook said: 'This secure training centre was run by a private company which locks up children for profit. We would like the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider whether there is a case for instituting corporate manslaughter charges against Serco.'

Meanwhile the controversial use of strip-searching in youth custody will continue after a review of the practice found that technological alternatives don't work. The Youth Justice Board's review of strip-searching involved a two-month study of the use of full searches in a selected number of young offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes. The review found there were 1,750 strip-searches at Feltham YOI – the highest number among the five YOIs in the study. There were 290 searches at Hassockfield and Rainsbrook secure training centres. Generally, establishments strip-searched on reception and discharge, mostly at random, although a small percentage were based on intelligence. But detection rates were very low, with contraband such as drugs or weapons detected in under 3% of cases.

‘Tantamount to a life sentence’

Indeterminate sentences and the lives behind them: personal stories collected by Charlotte Rowles

The government’s green paper has details of further reforms to the biggest mistake in recent sentencing history – indeterminate sentences for public protection. These reforms may cut down on the numbers imprisoned under IPP. Meanwhile, though, less than 200 of the 6,500 IPP prisoners have been released; half of the ones still inside have gone beyond the tariff set, their progress stalled, usually, by lack of the resources needed for them to demonstrate that they could be safe for release.

Here are the family stories behind just three IPP prisoners.

Reproduced by kind permission of the *Guardian*. Names have been changed.

In 2005, **Pat**’s partner was involved in a drunken fight. In 2011, he will have served four years in excess of his 18-month tariff. After a second parole hearing failed, he became depressed. Pat explained how she’d go to bed with her phone on, expecting a call from the prison to say he’d died. ‘When you are an IPP prisoner, you can’t appear to be weak if you want to be released... you have to cope.’ The law on IPPs changed in 2008, so no one with a sentence of less than two years would receive one. Pat is bitter at the injustice: if her partner had been sentenced after that, he would now be free. Over the years, Pat and her family have tried to find ways to cope. ‘You never have expectations for the future. It’s living without hope.’

Kate’s son **John** was 19 when he was convicted of wounding after an argument that turned into a pub brawl. He was given an IPP with a minimum tariff of two years. ‘My son has been in prison since 2005 ... and the key has been thrown away’ she said. Last month he was finally released having served three years over his tariff. He was lucky: under 4% of the total IPP population have been released. On release, John is subject to strict restrictions for a minimum of 10 years. Kate accepts that he needed to be punished. ‘I have never claimed my son should not have gone to prison..but the IPP sentence is inhumane.’ She is bitter about the wasted years: ‘I’ve had the ghost of IPP on my shoulder ... it has been my mission to bring my son back from the brink of despair.’

Peter’s son **Tom** was given an IPP at the age of 16 for the crime of wounding. It was his first offence. ‘The IPP was the worst we were expecting’ says Peter. While trying to deal with a relationship breakdown and feelings of being mixed up, Tom had sought help from an NHS mental health team. They found no evidence of psychiatric problems, a conclusion shared by an independent psychiatrist. IPPs target specific serious offenders and those who are assessed by the court as dangerous. In Peter’s opinion the court reached the conclusion that mental health problems translate into evidence of dangerousness. ‘I think this NHS contact played a big role in judge’s mind... The safest thing to do was give an IPP.’ Tom has moved onto adult jails and is struggling to see a future. ‘The problem with IPPs is that they are tantamount to a life sentence.... We carry the scars.’

**Troubled? Confused?
Uncertain? Harassed?**

AMIMB Helpline

Here’s a selection of the sort of things we get asked about.

- Dissension on boards.
- How to deal with a tricky prisoner application, perhaps about missing property?
- How to get a reply from the Secretariat?
- What do we think about a governor who has just been transferred?
- Is there a prescribed way rota reports should be done?

For support or advice from AMIMB contact Angela Clay (01622 844481, angela.clay@amimb.org.uk), Susan Dyas (01262 469339, susandyas@hotmail.co.uk) or Michael Watson (01995 640437, michael.watson3@ukonline.co.uk)

Application for AMIMB membership

Name _____

Address _____

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I enclose my cheque for £ _____

I am a UK tax payer and I would like AMIMB to reclaim tax already paid on this, and any future subscriptions and donations unless I notify you otherwise. My tax bill this year will be more than this gift.
Yes No

Signature _____

Date _____

Membership fees The annual subscription is £20.
Send this form and a cheque, made payable to AMIMB, to the treasurer: Jenny Budgell, Natural Numbers Ltd, Syms Yard, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 6LH.

If you would like to pay by standing order in future years tick here

The chief inspector

Six months into his new job, Nick Hardwick talks to the *Monitor* about the changes he wants to introduce – and about his relationship with IMBs

Nick Hardwick arrived in the job, as all chief inspectors have, by an indirect route. An English graduate, he became a temp with Nacro to earn money until he got a job on a local paper. A career in journalism abandoned, he spent many years with Nacro on training schemes for young offenders and then as a regional manager. He ran the Centrepont homeless charity, worked for the Refugee Council, then in 2004 was hired to set up the new Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). Having weathered the storms of, among other events, the Jean Charles de Menezes killing, he applied for the HMIP job and started in July.

So how is it? Well he reckons there are ‘more shades of grey’ at HMIP. ‘More intellectually demanding.’ Although he had visited prisoners occasionally in the past, his first proper prison visit was Wellingborough. He still feels a bit green, but says it’s useful that he can ask the basic questions that anyone fresh to prisons asks. ‘I am not supposed to be a prison professional, more a representative of the public – in the same way as IMBs are.’ He’s been shocked by what he sees. He had allowed himself to be quoted in the *Evening Standard* criticising the plight of mentally ill prisoners in Brixton – his first exposure to the hopeless misery of young prisoners waiting to go to secure hospitals, but meanwhile living in squalor. In general, he says ‘I have yet to see a prison holiday camp.’

Then there are the bigger questions. ‘Why are there twice as many prisoners as there were 20 years ago? Are people twice as bad? He recognises ‘the shift in the political climate. Penal policy is a hot potato.’

But his ambition is to refine the role of the inspectorate. ‘I think we should concentrate less on the detail. There are some processes that are a matter of principle, but I think we should focus on prescribing the outcomes and let the prisons deal with how it’s done. Take diversity: it’s not important that there are these posts, those committees; what

matters is that everyone in the prison has the same opportunities and access to facilities. How it’s done, I don’t mind.’ Similarly, he’s sceptical about the significance of having personal officers.

This philosophy will mean a review of the HMIP Expectations. But meanwhile there are those 128 reports a year to get out. He and his deputy share out all but the short follow-ups. There’s a routine: the team arrives on Wednesday, he turns up on Thursday for a briefing with the team leader, and then there’s feedback to the prison on Friday. (He’s making sure now that there’s a written version of the feedback.) He is keen to involve the IMB more: they should have talked already to the team leader, but ‘I try to see the IMB as well and say: this is what we’ve found – is it different for you? I don’t want to disagree with the IMB by accident. Different conclusions are fine. But I want to understand why that is. It’s already started to happen. We need a close and effective working relationship without either of us compromising our specific roles and independence.’

Like the IMB, he will explore the prison. ‘Normally I prefer to get shown round by a relatively junior officer. But I have keys and speak to people privately. To begin with I would open cupboard doors and stride purposefully into them. On the whole people are proud of what they do and want you to see it but you do find people who are defensive, often with good reason. Some

want to show me what hard guys they are – which is unimpressive. Most are pretty professional about the inspection process. If they scurry around a bit before you get there, sorting stuff out, well that’s no bad thing.’

Nick Hardwick has had discussions with the IMB national council about closer collaboration. ‘Where IMBs use our Expectations, that’s a useful part of the overall framework. And they could help after an inspection report. A weakness in the system is the action plans that prisons produce in response to our recommendations. Often the plan is done at quite a low level and not followed up – particularly if the prison’s neither great nor terrible. The IMB could review progress. The danger is that it all goes quiet for five years.’

Might this result in a more formal relationship – the IMB as local inspectors? He’s not keen on that. He concedes that some IMBs could be ‘more professional’. But he clearly feels that the two organisations should be able to disagree, based on the different ways the two operations approach the work. ‘On the one hand it’s in the nature of institutions that you often don’t see what’s under your nose. We went to a prison recently where a senior IMB member worked closely with a head of function. We didn’t agree that the function was working well – and it was down to poor leadership. But we can miss stuff too. And that’s why we need that dialogue. I certainly would like to work more closely with IMBs.’

And could that include being critical of an IMB if he felt it was deserved? He was guarded about that, but certainly felt that in general being volunteers shouldn’t mean that you get away with not doing a proper job. ‘The main things is: how can we work together to improve what we’re both doing?’

I don’t want to disagree with the IMB by accident



LAST WORD from Carp

Officers untrained

Nearly one in three prison officers working with young offenders in custody have not completed the required specialist training on safeguarding and assessing vulnerability, an investigation by Children and Young People Now has found. This is based on figures provided by the Youth Justice Board following a Freedom of Information Act request. They show that 503 out of 1,747 staff (29%) in state-run young offender institutions are yet to pass mandatory training courses. Figures are not available for the two privately run establishments – Ashfield YOI, run by Serco, and Parc YOI, run by G4S. It varies from place to place: all 49 officers at Newhall are fully trained; only 125 of 222 at Warren Hill are. The YJB also revealed that it does not know how many prison staff are trained in life-saving resuscitation skills.

Who writes what to IMBs?

A member contacted the *Monitor* as he thought he'd heard that the IMB secretariat drafted the minister's replies to IMBs. 'Scandalous' he thought it would be, if true. Well it's not true, apparently. The *Monitor* asked secretariat boss Mick Robins how it worked. It's the responsibility of the MoJ's Performance & Regulation Unit (PRU, the IMB's sponsor team) to co-ordinate IMB responses and prepare drafts for the Minister (via his private office and the MoJ's Ministerial Correspondence Team). The PRU also gets advice and contributions from the relevant directorates within MoJ and UKBA as appropriate. The Secretariat does from time to time get asked by the PRU or the minister's private office to provide some information. So no scandal, sorry. Next time: the *Monitor* tackles the mystery of 'Treat Official' correspondence.

Healthcare criticised

A recent report from the ombudsman identified deficiencies in the care of prisoners who had died of circulatory diseases. They reviewed 115 such deaths (three yearsworth), focusing particularly on the 82 who died from ischaemic heart disease and the 63 who died in their cell. Of those who required an emergency response, the ombudsman found that 43% deserved something better than they got; the response in seven cases was seriously below par. Of the 82 who died of heart disease, 34 had not been diagnosed previously: this was criticised, and might have contributed to some of the deaths. Ten of the 48 who were being treated were getting treatment that clinical reviewers had serious concerns about. They felt that at least two prisoners might not have died had their prior treatment been better. All in all, this is an area that IMBs might focus on.

Near misses

An article in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* casts an interesting light on the treatment of suicidal prisoners. Researchers identified 60 male prisoners in 19 prisons whose attempts at suicide, mainly by hanging, had failed apparently by chance. When interviewed within four weeks of the attempt, and



compared with 60 matched controls, attempters showed strikingly higher levels of at least one mental disorder: 97% against 35% of controls. Several subsidiary findings give special cause for concern about both identification and treatment. In the first place, only 40% were on an open ACCT at the time of the attempt. Second, although 87% were significantly depressed, only 37% had been prescribed anti-depressants. Third, despite a serious suicide attempt less than four weeks previously, only 23% were being seen by a mental health professional.

Haven't got a prayer?

IMB members in need of spiritual uplift might find comfort in this BoV prayer from the 1998 book, *Prayers for people in prison*, by William Noblett, chaplain general to the prison service.

Lord, we hold before you
the work of members of
Boards of Visitors.
As they are entrusted
with responsibility for
inspecting prisons,
may they do so with
an eye for justice,
a heart for those
who have hurt,
and may themselves be hurt;
with an integrity
which is for the
common good.

AMIMB statement of purpose

AMIMB works to maximise the effectiveness of its members by providing:

- encouragement in the robust and efficient performance of their duties
- training support
- best practice advice on the treatment of prisoners and the administration of prisons
- information on relevant developments in penal affairs
- support for members who seek advice in times of difficulty.

AMIMB also helps to enhance public awareness of the work of Independent Monitoring Boards.