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Mission Statement

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

Statement of Purpose

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Hydebank Wood & Young Offenders Centre were appointed by the Justice Minister under Section 3 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (NI) 1968 and under the Prison Act (NI) 1953.

The Board is required to:

- visit HMP Hydebank Wood regularly and report to the Justice Minister on the conditions of imprisonment and the treatment of offenders;
- consider requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board;
- report matters of concern to the Governor or, in serious cases, the Justice Minister; and
- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005.

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

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

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have free access at any time to all prisoners and to all parts of the prison to which they are appointed. The Board shall also have reasonable access to any of the records of the prison.

UK National Preventative Mechanism

On 31 March 2009, the Independent Monitoring Board became part of the United Kingdom National Preventative Mechanism (UK NPM) as required by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

Chairman's Introduction

As Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board of Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre, I am pleased to present the IMB report for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

At the beginning of the period, several experienced Board members were transferred to either Maghaberry or Magilligan on their reappointment. This Board was reinforced in return by the transfer of myself and three other experienced members from the other two establishments. However one of them resigned in October 2010 and the appointment of another was terminated in February 2011. In July 2010 the Board was bolstered by the appointment of nine new members, two of whom resigned and three of whom went on sabbatical due to personal commitments during the period covered by this report. IMB members are unpaid and the demands on their time and commitment are considerable therefore it is to the Board's credit that it continued to function seamlessly despite being severely under-strength for most of the reporting year. I am most grateful to my colleagues for their work during the year and for their support to me.

IMB members visit all parts of the establishment regularly and report to the Board at monthly meetings held in the prison. At this meeting the Governor makes his report to the Board on the situation of the prison during the previous month. The Governor also answers queries and concerns of members during the meeting. During the reporting period, the theme that recurred most often was that of "locks" - prisoners being locked in their cells for long periods and the consequent loss of association because of staff shortages, particularly at weekends. The problem was most acute during the summer months when annual leave further reduced staff numbers. However an improvement was achieved by easing the ban on overtime and by "rolling unlocks" and the Board commends the Governor for this.

Sadly, this reporting period saw the death of a young man who was detained on remand in Hydebank Wood. Allyn Baxter died on 3 August 2010 after only four days in custody and his death is the subject of an investigation by the Prisoner Ombudsman. The vulnerability of prisoners in the first few days in custody is well documented and the importance of adequate supervision and protection arrangements and time out of cell to help those who are newly committed to adjust to custody cannot be emphasised enough.

Finally, I and the Board acknowledge and thank the IMB Secretariat for facilitating and supporting our work which would be impossible without them. In preparing this report, I am particularly indebted to the Head of Secretariat.

I also thank the Governor and his Deputies in Hydebank Wood for their cooperation and their courtesy in all their interactions with the Board. I acknowledge too the staff of Hydebank Wood for their assistance in fulfilling our role as independent monitors of the prison.

Frances R Symington
Chairperson

Overview of Establishment

HMP & YOC Hydebank Wood is a unique establishment in that it is effectively three different detention centres on one site. It accommodates all young male offenders, both sentenced and remand, between the age of 17 and 21 years serving a period of 4 years or less. In some cases an inmate may remain there until the day before his 24th birthday. Boys under 17 years, who are deemed unsuitable for the Juvenile Justice Centre either by virtue of the nature of their crime or by their behaviour, are also held at the centre. Since 2004 Ash House in Hydebank Wood has also been the women's prison for Northern Ireland. All women prisoners, both sentence and remand, serving a full range of sentence up to and including life, are held in the unit. Female immigration detainees are also held in the female facility.

The majority of prisoners are accommodated in five residential houses. Beech, Cedar and Elm house young offenders, Willow houses juveniles and Ash houses the women prisoners. There is a separate Special Supervision Unit (SSU) and a Healthcare Centre incorporating the prison hospital.

Healthcare for all prisoners is provided through the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT). The drug and alcohol service for prisoners who are in need of consultation is provided by ad:ept (alcohol & drugs: empowering people through therapy) in partnership with SEHSCT and NIPS. Education and training is provided by local services.

Various charitable and voluntary organisations maintain a presence on the site - NIACRO provide guidance through the Jobtrack scheme for prisoners trying to obtain a job on discharge; CRUSE provides invaluable support in dealing with bereavement issues; Barnardo's support prisoners over family issues; and Housing Rights staff brief prisoners on the complexities of obtaining housing, housing benefits and associated grants. NIACRO also run the visitors' centre where volunteers provide tea, coffee and sandwiches to the visitors and there is also a children's play area.

Spiritual and religious matters are the remit of the prison Chaplaincy Team which aims to facilitate the practice of all faiths within the prison community. Additional spiritual help is provided by Prison Fellowship.

The current prison grade staff comprises 301 of which seven are governor grades. Support is provided by a variety of civilian staff including civil servants, psychology staff, probation staff, teachers and civilian instructors.

The Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 382 and the maximum operational capacity is subject to operational demands. As at the end of March 2011 there were 254 prisoners on the roll. A breakdown of the prison population is provided at Appendix 1.

Summary of Recommendations

The Board recommends that –

1 Accommodation

- a) action is taken to regularise the ventilation in prisoners' cells (paragraph 1.2)

2 Catering and Kitchen

- a) the kitchen staff rest area and toilet facilities are extended and made fit for purpose (paragraph 3.4)
- b) the portion size of Sunday night dinners is increased (paragraph 3.5)

3 Education and Training

- a) priority should be given to addressing the high levels of illiteracy and innumeracy among all inmates by providing adequate sessions of education in essential skills (paragraph 5.1)
- b) the number and variety of courses provided should be significantly extended in order to give purposeful and useful activity to all prisoners (paragraph 5.2)
- c) inmates on remand are provided with access to education, training or other constructive activity however long their stay (paragraph 5.4)
- d) increased emphasis is placed on the provision of formally accredited training courses (paragraph 5.5)
- e) steps are taken to increase the number prisoners in the category eligible to carry out work experience in community settings (paragraph 5.6)
- f) the further development of the Prince's Trust scheme as being beneficial in many aspects of offender rehabilitation including a sense of self-worth (paragraph 5.8)
- g) steps should be taken to ensure that prisoners do not miss out on education / training because of staff shortages, training or leave (paragraph 5.9)

4 Healthcare and Mental Health

- a) closer liaison is established with prisoners' GPs in order to provide continuity and suitability of healthcare (paragraph 7.4)
- b) landing staff should be trained in Mental Health, First Aid and the thresholds and timing for referring inmates who express thoughts of self-harm (paragraph 7.7)
- c) urgent steps are taken to progress the addition of a clinical psychologist to Hydebank Wood (paragraph 7.8)

5 Induction

- a) induction staff receive training in Mental Health awareness to help them spot any causes for concern (paragraph 8.3)

6 Juveniles

- a) an entirely separate unit is established for boys under 18 years which is not subject to the restrictions of the shared site. (paragraph 9.3)

7 Resettlement

- a) a coherent interagency strategy to enhance planning, partnership-working and collaboration in establishing links for pre- and post-release support is revived (paragraph 13.5)
- b) the appointment of a specific child protection liaison representative from the local HSC trust is considered (paragraph 13.7)
- c) the Personal Officers scheme is reinstated designating officers to engage with and motivate prisoners on an individual basis (paragraph 13.8)
- d) consideration is given to holding weekly meetings on landings between inmates and staff to encourage individual and collective responsibility for training and skills development (paragraph 13.9)
- e) the Probation-run Inspire Project should have an accommodation section accommodating those who need a bail placement as an alternative to remand as well as women prisoners on release (paragraph 13.11)

8 Safer Custody

- a) consideration is given to involving immediate and extended family members in case conferences or family group conferences (paragraph 14.1)
- b) guidance on NIPS child protection policy is reintroduced through an updated systematic training programme targeting first those who deal with visiting families, child contact and juveniles (paragraph 14.2)
- c) the practice of locking prisoners to ease staffing problems should be discontinued (paragraph 14.10)

9 Special Supervision Unit (SSU)

- a) the advocacy service should be made available to adult prisoners at adjudications as well as to juveniles (paragraph 15.4)
- b) minor reporting as an alternative to adjudications is made available to all inmates (paragraph 15.5)

10 Sport and Recreation

- a) participation in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme should be extended where possible (paragraph 16.3)

11 Tuckshop

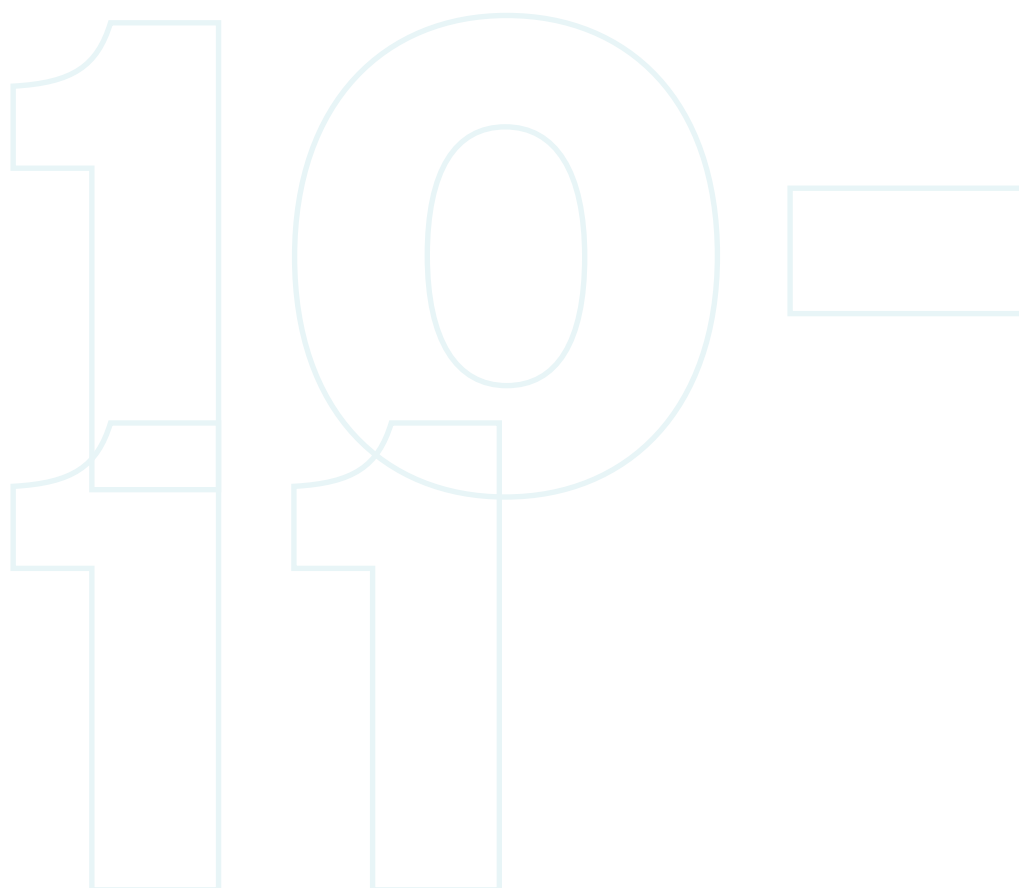
- a) every effort is made to ensure that all items are reasonably priced (paragraph 17.2)

12 Visits

- a) the extended visits facility should be considered for use by suitably assessed male prisoners (paragraph 18.2)

13 Women

- a) the building of a stand-alone women's prison is made a priority despite the current economic climate (paragraph 19.5)



1 | Accommodation

- 1.1** The majority of prisoners are held on landings each with sixteen cells. Beech House and Cedar House are situated together and accommodate young offenders in single cells. Beech has an observation cell equipped with CCTV in which those prisoners considered to present a particular risk to themselves can be placed for a short time. Elm and Willow consist of landings within a block which also houses the Healthcare Centre and some administrative offices. Willow is the juvenile accommodation within the establishment and during the reporting year children as young as 15 years were held there. Ash House is a separate building within the estate where the women prisoners are accommodated.
- 1.2** The standard of the accommodation varies across the establishment but most provide a good quality of living arrangements and an ongoing refurbishment programme ensures this standard is maintained. While the inadequate ventilation in some cells highlighted by the Board last year is no longer a problem in most areas, the rooms in Ash House still do not have efficient ventilation. Those that get the sun can become uncomfortably hot in warm weather with no means of cooling them. For this reason the Board again recommends that action is taken to regularise the ventilation in all cells.
- 1.3** The Special Supervision Unit (SSU) is located on the ground floor of Elm House. It contains eight cells with in-cell sanitation and also has shower facilities. It has recently been refurbished and some of the cells were painted by the inmates. It is a clean and well-managed facility.
- 1.4** Hydebank Wood has attractive grounds that are very well laid out, well maintained and always immaculate. The Board commends the staff and prisoners who do this work, providing what is a very impressive and pleasant environment for prisoners and staff alike.

2 | Alcohol and Substance Abuse

- 2.1** Many of those admitted to prison have alcohol and / or drug addictions and time in prison can provide a valuable opportunity to address their dependencies. Addiction services in Hydebank Wood are provided the internal Clinical Addiction Team and by ad:ept and the Board commends their work in this area.
- 2.2** The availability and misuse of drugs remains a concern for Hydebank Wood and the Board continues to recommend the use of the most advanced drug detection technology to combat drugs being brought into Hydebank Wood.

3 | Catering and Kitchens

- 3.1** Catering is a central service section of Hydebank, both in terms of location and importance. The kitchen itself is of a particularly high standard, not only in the quality and variety of food provided now, but in the standards of hygiene and cleanliness it displays.

- 3.2** The catering manager has taken inspectors' criticisms and observations seriously, and has recently pro-actively engaged with the Belfast Education and Library Board to avail of their expertise in nutrition for the prisoners in his care, and has, with their help, developed a non-repetitive menu cycle offering three choices at lunch and four at dinner; quite an achievement on a budget of £2.50 per day per prisoner. A vegetarian alternative is always available, and the menu has been designed to balance nutritional needs and calorific intake. Special needs and diets for ethnic minorities are always catered for.
- 3.3** Several prisoners are engaged within the kitchen on a regular basis, and are being trained by the staff through the NVQ system where possible. All the inmates, including orderlies, who handle the food, are put through the nationally recognised Essentials of Food Safety Certificate exam, and this certificate can be taken by the prisoner on release to enhance their employability prospects. The certificate does not identify Hydebank as the training centre so as not to create stigma.
- 3.4** One aspect of the kitchen continues to cause resentment among staff, and that is the lack of rest area and toilet facilities. There is only one toilet for the use of all 14 male and female staff, and only one room in which to change and shower. This is felt to be unacceptable. A plan was made to extend the accommodation out into the trolley park to make a more spacious rest suite, and this was the subject of architect's drawings last year which sought to provide a remedy, but nothing more has been heard of the plans. The Board recommends that this work proceeds expeditiously.
- 3.5** Members have found on visits in the past few months that the food is, generally, well received. There are complaints procedures, but nowadays they are little used, and the current general impression is one of polished, caring and dedicated service. The one recurring exception is Sunday night dinners. While there are no complaints about the quality there is just not enough. The Board recommends that this is rectified to make the portions bigger in line with other meals.

4 | Chaplaincy

- 4.1** The prison chaplains continue to enjoy a positive relationship with both prisoners and staff. They are involved in all aspects of prison life and provide spiritual help and support in any way they can. Although the team is made up of a number of Christian denominations they are able to call in representatives of other faiths to meet the spiritual needs of prisoners of other religions. The Board commends the chaplains for the vital role they play in helping those committed to Hydebank Wood cope with their imprisonment.

5 | Education and Training

- 5.1** The proportion of people with literacy problems is much higher in prison than in the general population. The Board remains concerned by the number of prisoners who have very poor levels of literacy and numeracy so recommends that priority is given to addressing this by providing adequate sessions of education in essential skills.
- 5.2** A range of programmes is available including Goals, Enhanced Thinking Skills, MEG, Barnardo's Parenting Skills and ad:ept in relation to drugs misuse and initiatives such as "Toe by Toe". These are to be commended but more needs to be done so the Board recommends the number and variety of courses provided should be significantly extended in order to give purposeful and useful activity to all prisoners.
- 5.3** Up to recently juveniles at Hydebank Wood had been missing out on the opportunity for the full range of education and workshops compared to the older male inmates. Therefore the Board commends the prison management for seeking the co-operation of parents to consent to their children participating in classes and workshops attended by their older peers.
- 5.4** Remand prisoners cannot be made to attend education or be involved in employment but the Board recommends that they should be encouraged to be involved in some form of meaningful activity be it education, employment, orderly duties, a hobby or sport.
- 5.5** The workshops provide a range of work and vocational training including plumbing, joinery, catering, brick-laying, cleaning, painting and decorating. However not all of the work/training available enables prisoners to gain formal accreditation. The Board recommends that increased emphasis is placed not only on formally accredited provision but also the recording of non-accredited skills gained. The latter is particularly important for prisoners serving short sentences.
- 5.6** The Board also considers fostering good links with local communities as being essential and community-based organisations such as Conservation Volunteers could include some Category D prisoners in their schemes to provide work experience and training. Relatively few inmates are accorded the status of Category D and it is recommended that steps are taken to increase this group of prisoners who can gain greater experience of carrying out work experience and responsibilities in community settings.
- 5.7** Young offenders and juveniles receive training in horticulture, producing tubs and hanging baskets and flower beds. This not only enhances the environment but can be therapeutic for those participating. They can also obtain certificates at differing levels according to time spent and proficiency achieved. Horticulture staff are enthusiastic and encourage the inmates to work towards these awards. The Board commends this work but expresses concern that this potentially therapeutic activity is available to so few.
- 5.8** The Prince's Trust provides valuable incentives and training and the effect of success in this is evident in the pride of the young offenders when receiving awards. The Board recommends the further development of the scheme as being beneficial in many aspects of offender rehabilitation including a sense of self-worth.

- 5.9** The Board considers it imperative that steps are taken to ensure that prisoners do not miss out on education / training because of staff shortages, training or leave and recommends accordingly.

6 | Equality and Diversity

- 6.1** It remains a fact that prison service staff are predominantly Protestant. This is in contrast to the prisoner population at Hydebank Wood which has a greater representation from the Catholic community. The Board continues to have concerns that prisoners from a Catholic background are disproportionately the subject of adjudications. This can only in part be explained by certain, possibly more disruptive, individuals receiving multiple adjudications.
- 6.2** The Board has continuously held the view that this anomaly can only be answered by a robust and thorough investigation and analysis therefore it welcomes that the NIPS has now commissioned an independent research project into this issue. The project will look at the disparity in prisoner outcomes not only in respect of adjudications but in other areas such as regime status, education and work allocation. This initiative should also be welcomed by prison staff, who will wish to address and dispel any unfounded charge or perception of impartial treatment as these perceptions may be more acute given the makeup of the prison workforce.
- 6.3** The Board does not attempt to second guess the reasons for this phenomenon before the findings of the investigation are published. However, the continued and marked pattern may suggest something of a cultural or systemic origin rather than that which can be explained by individual behaviours.
- 6.4** The foreign national population in Hydebank Wood, made up of both inmates and immigration detainees, while still relatively small, is increasing both in number and in the diversity of ethnic groups represented. This is not without its challenges. Apart from the obvious language and communication problems, some ethnic and / or religious groupings have particular dietary requirements. However, the Board has had no significant concerns expressed to it that these needs are not, in the main, being addressed.
- 6.5** There are a small number of prisoners from the Irish traveller community within the prisoner population who often make allegations that they are subjected to insults from other prisoners because of their background. The Board believes the NIPS research project mentioned previously should also cover whether there are cultural or systemic factors which give rise to such allegations.

7 | Healthcare and Mental Health

- 7.1** In general, the level of health of people in prison is lower than that of people on the outside so it is essential that those in prison must have access to a range and quality of health services of no lesser standard than the general public. This is an ongoing challenge for both the NIPS and the SEHSCT, which has overall responsibility for prison healthcare.
- 7.2** In Hydebank Wood there is a range of treatment, consultation and administrative accommodation all of which has been refurbished in recent years. There are also a small number of in-patient rooms which tend not to be used much but the Board has been made aware that the SEHSCT intends to conduct a review of prison healthcare which will incorporate a review of the need for this in-bed provision. The introduction of self-medication for suitable prisoners has relieved the staff of daily medicine dispensing and allowed time for other duties.
- 7.3** It must be stated that substantive individual healthcare complaints are dealt with through the Trust and are not the remit of the IMB. The Board does of course listen to complaints and attempts to resolve them quickly, if possible, to try and negate the need for escalation.
- 7.4** A major cause for concern is that there are often different perceptions on urgency in healthcare needs which leads to difficult relationships between healthcare staff, prisoners and landing staff. A frequent complaint from prisoners is that medication prescribed by their GP in the community is stopped, changed or abruptly reduced when they arrive in Hydebank Wood. The Board has been told that medication is removed from all new committals and reissued by the nurse until a full assessment can be carried out and the prisoner's GP contacted so it recommends that closer liaison is established with prisoners' GPs in order to provide continuity and suitability of healthcare.
- Under the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines healthcare staff are obliged to reduce prisoners' dependency on prescription medicines and the Board is assured this is done appropriately and is carefully monitored.
- 7.5** The Board feels that health promotion should be a priority so the programmes run by healthcare staff are helpful and are welcomed. The Board commend this work and would encourage its extension.
- 7.6** It is well known that constructive day time activity makes a significant difference to mood and self-esteem with those participating often sleeping better, eating properly and socialising constructively and staff providing such activity can achieve a more therapeutic interaction. Therefore it is important to increase the level of constructive activity to reduce the number of inmates who remain on the landing during the day.
- 7.7** Prisons have a population in which there are concentrations of mental health problems, educational difficulties and deficits. A much larger percentage of prisoners suffer from mental health disorders than in the general population so consequently mental health issues present

significant problems within Hydebank Wood. Different perceptions on urgency also surround concerns about mental health issues that may result in self-harm. For this reason the Board recommends that landing staff should be trained in Mental Health First Aid and receive briefing on the thresholds and timing for referring inmates who express thoughts of self-harm.

7.8 In last year's report the Board recommended an extension to the availability of psychiatry sessions in Hydebank Wood with a specific need for child and adolescent provision. The Board is pleased to note that steps have been taken to address this though there seem to be delays accessing the service. The same holds true for clinical psychological services and the Board recommends that urgent steps are taken to progress this. However the decision to dedicate and ring-fence a mental health trained nurse to reduce the significant backlog of assessments for prisoners with mental health problems is welcomed.

7.9 The Board remains strongly of the opinion that prison is not appropriate for prisoners with severe and enduring mental health issues as staff are expected to deal with situations for which they are just not qualified. This again raises the ongoing issue of the lack of specialised facilities for prisoners with personality disorders - highlighted in many previous Board reports but still not progressed.

8 | Induction

8.1 Prisoner induction is a comprehensive and structured process staffed by a multi-disciplinary team. Prisoners receive a handbook containing information about the establishment and Hydebank Wood also provides a "First Night" DVD containing information on the range of facilities available. Last year the Board recommended a review of the induction process to ensure that the needs of prisoners for whom English is a foreign language are being met and is pleased to note that an interpreter service is now routinely provided when necessary.

8.2 The induction process includes a two-stage health screening process to address prisoners' health needs. They are also assessed for their levels of literacy and education to help staff draw up each prisoner's individual sentence plan.

8.3 Anxiety is a common feature of the first stages of imprisonment so induction staff need to be alert to the signs and be able to respond appropriately. The Board recommends training in mental health awareness to be essential for induction staff. This would enable them to interact and develop good relationships with prisoners while also being able to spot any causes for concern.

9 | Juveniles

- 9.1** The designated juvenile unit in Hydebank Wood is Willow 1&2. During the reporting year the number of boys held there varied from a low of seven to a high of nineteen. At times during the year Willow 2 landing was closed and all juveniles were housed on Willow 1. The Board is of the opinion that is beneficial to the young people that they are divided between the two landings as this gives staff the opportunity to interact on an individual level with them and allows for much more productive contact.
- 9.2** Improvements to the physical environment of Willow were completed during the reporting year with cells being refurbished and a new kitchen, craft room and multi gym being installed. The unit also has a garden area. Juveniles are on a specifically adapted PREPS scheme which has a progressive five-tier system - bronze, silver, gold, platinum and platinum plus. Each regime offers a different level of earnings and privileges.
- 9.3** The Board continues to be concerned about the ability of Hydebank Wood to provide a purposeful, daily regime which meets the educational, personal and social development needs of young boys and notes it is not in keeping with “child safeguarding” for particularly challenging children to be held in Hydebank Wood. The Board notes that there has been closer liaison between Hydebank Wood and Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre that has resulted in some transfers to Woodlands. The Board agrees with the recommendation of the review teams for both prisons and youth justice that adaptations should be made to Woodlands so that all juveniles are placed there, including those who would otherwise be moved because of their level of risk and danger and once again recommends that children under 18 years are not held in Hydebank Wood.

10 | Library

- 10.1** The Board is pleased that during the reporting year efforts were ongoing to increase the number of prisoners using the library. This is a very valuable resource as it not only provides an excellent range of reading material but also has the potential to help those who are experiencing a degree of social exclusion. A mobile library is also provided for Ash House and the Special Supervision Unit (SSU) which the Board commends.
- 10.2** The Board welcomes the new “message to you” facility which allows inmates to pick up computer messages from family and friends.

11 | Progressive Regime & Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS)

- 11.1** Two years ago the NIPS implemented a revision of the Progressive Regime & Earned Privileges (PREPS) scheme to bring the scheme in line with the new Offender Management Model which includes sentence planning and home leave. Under this system inmates can earn privileges such as enhanced pay, extra visits and television in their rooms in reward for good conduct and fulfilling contracts in relation to sentence plans and programmes.
- 11.2** Inmates with enhanced status are housed in Cedar 5 where they are given a degree of freedom and autonomy intended to prepare them for release and resettlement back into the community. Unfortunately the prevalence of drugs in the centre and consequent discipline problems mean that a number of inmates are often “back housed” to Beech or Elm. The Board has also noted that some inmates do not wish to remain in this house because they cannot cope with the extra freedom, possibly due to immaturity or feelings of insecurity. Despite these setbacks the Board commends this initiative with its emphasis on positive behaviour and attitudes and suggests that there is scope for extending and building on it.

12 | Reception

- 12.1** The reception area is where prisoners get their first impressions of the establishment to which they have been committed so its importance should not be underestimated. The women’s reception has long provided an appropriately welcoming environment being clean, bright and cheerfully decorated. The Board is pleased to note that the completion of the much-needed refurbishment of the male reception means it is now equally welcoming for new committals but continues to highlight the sharing of the male reception by both young men and juveniles as less than ideal.
- 12.2** Given the importance of prisoners’ initial experiences the Board consider it vital that prison staff deal sensitively with this stage of the prison process even at the busiest periods and is content that this is the case.

13 | Resettlement

- 13.1** Resettlement services have a vital function in preparing the prisoner for release, but also in enabling family relationships to be maintained and perhaps enhanced. It will also have longer term impact by counteracting the prospects of offending and reoffending.
- 13.2** Offender Management is designed to provide case management from the prison through to the community for certain categories of prisoners. It has an important emphasis on partnership-working and has considerable value in terms of providing a coherent and consistent approach to the management of offenders. It has also been beneficial in that it has brought the concept of case management to all sentenced prisoners.

- 13.3** There are seven prison staff in the OMU team - four are dedicated to sentence management and three to programme facilitation. The Board is pleased that OMU staff are now on “domestic shifts”, i.e. from 7.30am to 4.15pm and are no longer withdrawn to cover gaps in staffing on the landings.
- 13.4** Offender Management, while an important development in its own right, devotes the main attention on those who have committed violent / sexual offences as the protection of the public is a priority. However, while case management also applies to other mainly short-term prisoners, the level of attention is consequently less intense. Effort should be made to ensure that those convicted of violent or sexual crime do not use up a disproportionate amount of the resources. There is also a need to avoid a potential that the prevailing culture could become dictated by risk management rather than rehabilitation.
- 13.5** It is mainly from within the grouping of shorter term prisoners that recidivism rates are highest. The reconviction rate for young men is high, between 70% – 80%. This places a greater emphasis on the need to engage with prisoners and also with their families to counteract reoffending. This will have implications for such work in terms of volume, intensity and quality. The Board recommends a revival of a coherent interagency strategy to enhance planning, partnership working and collaboration in establishing links for pre- and post-release support and continuity of follow-up.
- 13.6** The co-location has not resulted in the original plan of multi-disciplinary teams working with a common case load. While there has been an improvement in co-operation between Prison staff, Probation, Psychology and Opportunity Youth / ad:ept it would be still more cohesive if they worked as “cluster” groups.
- 13.7** The concentration of effort on Offender Management, particularly by Probation staff, calls into question whether the time and skills that Probation Officers used to provide in dealing with prisoners’ social problems is now less available. In view of the importance of families and also the child safeguarding requirement it may be useful to explore with PBNi and the Health & Social Care Board if there should be a specific liaison representative from the local HSC Trust appointed.
- 13.8** The culture within the residential units is important and landing staff would be better placed to become active partners in Resettlement if they were designated as Personal Officers tasked to engage with and motivate prisoners. It is acknowledged that the shift pattern and the movement of staff between landings does not easily facilitate this approach and attempts have foundered in the past. However the Board believes that the Personal Officer scheme has much to recommend it and would wish to see it implemented.
- 13.9** In addition, it is recommended that landings should consider holding a weekly meeting with inmates as a group to address not only issues of behaviour and relations between inmates and between inmates and staff, but also opportunities for training and skills development and generally to encourage individual and collective responsibility.

- 13.10** In view of budgetary pressures which are impacting on the availability of both Family Officers and Resettlement Officers, it is important to identify support from elsewhere within the extended family, other agencies and voluntary/community groups. Unless the quality of prisoners' involvement with their family is better harnessed then the level of recidivism will remain high so the Board continues to promote the value of partnership with families. The best plans for inmates and which have a better chance of lasting are those where the family members have responsibility for planning and thereby take ownership of the decisions. This is a model of empowerment know as Family Group Conferencing and the family and agencies are agreed on the plan.
- 13.11** Housing Rights have a member of staff seconded to Hydebank Wood however, there can be those who slip through the system and there are still difficulties in finding accommodation for some prisoners before they are released. The Board recommends that the original concept of the Probation-run Inspire Project having an accommodation section should be revived and that it should accommodate those who need a bail placement as an alternative to remand as well as women prisoners on release.

14 | Safer Custody

- 14.1** Safer Custody is an extremely important area in the prison regime. From officers on the landings to senior management it is recognised as the responsibility of every member of staff. For this reason a multi-disciplinary Safer Custody meeting is held each week to which a Board member is invited to attend. These meetings are to be commended, but can struggle to construct a plan that moves beyond monitoring to improving the situation. It is suggested that there may be more potential for problem-solving through the involvement of immediate and extended family members in case conferences or family group conferences and recommends accordingly. In the latter, it can transpire that there are people with strengths in the extended family that have been waiting to have permission to add their help and support.
- 14.2** The Child Protection policy launched in Hydebank Wood in April 2010 was initially introduced to senior and key staff through awareness training. The implementation of the guidelines has been hampered, in part, by the pressure of other training demands. It is recommended that the guidelines be reintroduced through an updated systematic training programme targeting first those who deal with visiting families, child contact and juveniles.
- 14.3** One of the potentially most vulnerable points for an inmate is placement in solitary confinement. Some inmates report that they actually like the respite they experience in the SSU and most get on well with the staff keeping them under observation but others are very uncomfortable throughout the whole process and, irrespective of age, struggle intellectually as well as emotionally with the situation. For this reason the Board commends the advocacy service available to inmates under the age of 18 years who undergo adjudication for misdemeanors and can fulfill their punishment in their own landing.

- 14.4** The Board commends that all three NI prisons have established Family Support groups but these need to be utilised more effectively with active recruitment of the families of new prisoners. Family Officers in Hydebank Wood could also have a more proactive role in assisting the committee executives. Unfortunately, when budgets are tight family support gets squeezed.
- 14.5** The Prisoner Forum has been an important and welcome initiative but the Board feel that the concept of weekly meetings on each landing should also be explored. Such meetings would have the potential to address concerns, challenge bullying and other negative behaviour and provide input to the Prisoner Forum so that the time spent at that meeting is better focused. This would also fit with Minor Reporting and prevent some issues leading to problems.
- 14.6** The Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) scheme enables any officer or other agency representative working in the prison to have inmates placed on surveillance if it is suspected they are at risk or are displaying unusual behaviour. Other reasons for SPARs are drug / alcohol abuse, low mood, self-harm or thoughts of self-harm and suicide attempts. The SPAR status is not removed until the prisoner is deemed to be no longer at risk. Last year the Board reported that prisoners on SPAR were occasionally held in the inappropriate setting of the SSU and is pleased to note this no longer happens.
- 14.7** The Board regrets that the listener scheme has been discontinued due to limited success but commends the very useful Insiders befriender scheme. This scheme allows a trusted enhanced prisoner to befriend a new inmate and to speak to them in their own language about things like first night trauma, family contact, boredom, letters and visits etc. It is the Board's view that this scheme be encouraged and expanded.
- 14.8** Hydebank Wood operates zero tolerance towards bullying and any incident is subject to charge and/or loss of enhancement.
- 14.9** Research has shown that pets often have a beneficial effect on morale so the Board commends the pet care programme which currently has two dogs being cared for in the female area. This could be expanded to other animals such as fish or birds in communal areas as in other prisons.
- 14.10** The Board welcomes the number of new initiatives the Governor has started or is about to start, especially his aim to have as few prisoners possible subject to lockdowns during the day and that they should all be involved in some activity where possible. It is acknowledged that when there is only one member of staff on a landing it is sometimes necessary that prisoners are locked to enable that one member of staff to escort someone or deal with a crisis. However the Board recommends that the practice of locking prisoners to ease staffing problems should be discontinued and other ways should be found which do not impact negatively on the prison population.

15 | Special Supervision Unit (SSU)

- 15.1** The Special Supervision Unit (SSU) accommodates male inmates and juveniles who are either there under Rule 32 or in cellular confinement following Governors' adjudications. Television and radio, books, tobacco and access to the exercise yard are all available. Tuck can be bought, the phone can be used, and visits continue as normal. Inmates frequently report that they like the SSU as it gives them a chance 'to clear their heads'.
- 15.2** The officers in the SSU are generally sympathetic to the inmates in their care and develop a good relationship with all but the most difficult of charges. Prisoners who display aggressive and demanding behaviour challenge the officers' duty of care but they display a high level of professionalism and integrity in their work. In general the unit is well run which helps to ensure the safe and smooth running of the prison but the staff report that the availability of drugs remains a problem.
- 15.3** One unsatisfactory aspect of the SSU is that prisoners have to eat, sleep, use the toilet and spend up to 23 hours per day in the same place, but accommodation in this wing is restricted and a solution to this problem has not yet been found.
- 15.4** The SSU is also where adjudications are held daily from Monday through to Saturday and are presided over by a governor. Adjudications are regularly monitored by members, and reports find that due processes are observed, prisoners are treated fairly, respectfully, and transparently and that records are kept diligently. An advocacy service is provided for boys under 18 years which includes advice and support in relation to the adjudication process. The Board recommends that because many inmates have learning deficits, this service should be made available to adult prisoners as well as juveniles.
- 15.5** In the past, it appeared to the Board that a number of charges were soluble at an earlier stage, in keeping with the principles of de-escalation and restorative justice. Behaviour such as "foul and abusive language" can be the subject of inconsistent response as at times individual officers give some latitude to the inmates but then can suddenly mete out charges as the "perceived" line has been crossed. Differentiating between these episodes and more serious issues can be remedied by Minor Reporting whereby a Senior Officer on the landing presides over less serious breaches thus avoiding the delay and resources required by full adjudications. To date Minor Reporting is only employed on the juvenile landing but the Board recommends that this is rolled out to all inmates.

16 | Sport and Recreation

- 16.1** The PE department at Hydebank Wood is a well-equipped facility with a sports hall, a weight training and fitness suite and five outdoor playing fields, one of which is an all-weather facility. The impact on inmates of spending a long time in their cell ruminating about family or partner problems and upsets provides fertile ground for agitation or depression. For this reason the Board would wish to see greater use of exercise yards and football pitches especially in dry weather.

- 16.2** The Board commends the PE staff for their commitment and note that prisoners who attend the gym always comment positively on it. The PE staff are also to be commended for bringing in teams to play soccer and rugby against inmates. This helps build team spirit, skills and constructive engagement with the wider community.
- 16.3** The Board notes that a small number of prisoners are currently involved in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. This scheme is excellent for personal and social development and fostering a sense of achievement so it is recommended that participation in it is extended where possible.
- 16.4** Regrettably it still appears that the women prisoners lose out in this area as their scope for outdoor games etc is very limited. Although Ash House has an exercise area there are no netball or tennis courts where exercise could be had and encouraged.

17 | Tuckshop

- 17.1** The tuck shop is a valuable resource used by both all prisoners. It provides a wide range of products and caters for the needs of all the prisoner population including some items specific to the foreign national prisoners. The Board welcomes the ongoing work in building a new larger tuck shop facility.
- 17.2** The price of some items remains a cause for complaint from prisoners and while it appreciates that purchasing contracts influence prices the Board recommends that every effort is made to ensure that prices are reasonable.

18 | Visits

- 18.1** It must be acknowledged that progress has been made in improving the quality of visits. The Board commends both the prison staff and NIACRO for providing child-centred visits - a highly commendable service that enables prisoners with children to spend time with their families. This helps to create and strengthen family bonds while ensuring that children's visits are both safe and of improved quality. Where appropriate, support with parenting skills is also offered.
- 18.2** The Board continues to applaud the extended visits facility that enables suitably assessed women to have unsupervised extended visits with their children for up to a period of 6 hours. These visits are facilitated in a static caravan beside Ash House where women prisoners and their children can spend quiet and private time together. Feedback continues to be very positive with women saying it has been invaluable in making them feel like they have their own space. Given the importance of child contact the Board repeats the recommendation that this scheme be considered for roll-out to male prisoners who are suitably assessed.

19 | Women

- 19.1** Ash House is Northern Ireland's prison for women. It has five landings and each woman has her own room, all of which are adequately decorated and furnished. It has its own Reception Centre, family visits facility, crafts room and cottage industry area. It also has its own garden and exercise area. There is no SSU for females but a dedicated cell in Ash 1 is used for cellular confinement or detention under Rule 32.
- 19.2** Ash 5 houses prisoners serving longer sentences and has specific admission criteria. The prisoners there do their own cooking and washing which provides them with a certain degree of independence.
- 19.3** Ash also has a room equipped with CCTV in which those women considered to present a particular risk of self-harm can be observed. It is a matter of concern to the Board that many women are at such risk. This is evidenced by the high number of SPARs opened in Ash House each month and by the number of self-harm episodes – and those attempts that are prevented by the vigilance and intervention of staff.
- 19.4** The staff who work in Ash House are given the opportunity to participate in a Women Awareness Staff Programme (WASP) and the Board continues to note improvements in staff / prisoner relationships and increasing levels of interaction.
- 19.5** While women prisoners are afforded unescorted movement within Ash House and the grounds, the Board continues to be concerned that the women lose out in the shared location as their access to many facilities and activities, such as the gym, are limited because there are more males than females. The Board believes the complex and varied needs of women prisoners cannot be met in a shared establishment and considers the need for a stand-alone facility to be imperative. Despite the current economic climate the Board recommends the provision of a discrete women's prison, catering solely for the distinct needs of women and focussing on their rehabilitation and resettlement, is made a priority.

Appendix 1

Breakdown of Prison Population (March 2010)

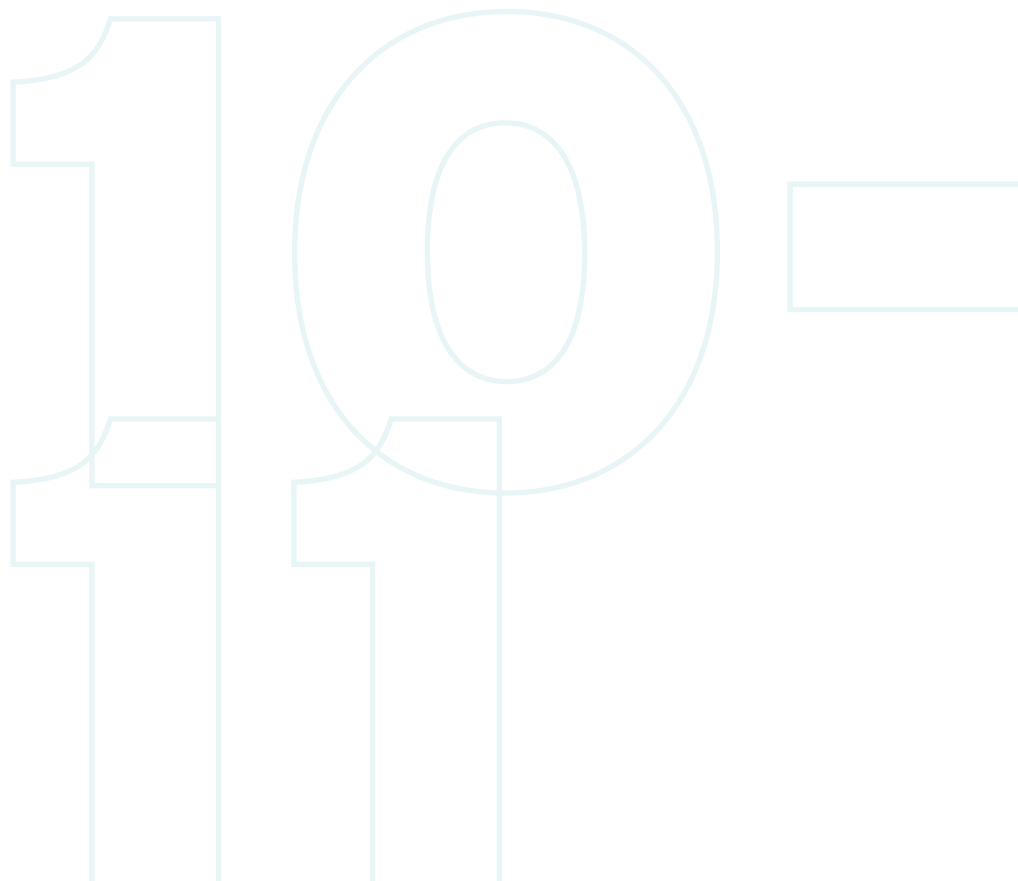
| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Numbers by Location | Ash | 47 |
| | Beech | 50 |
| | Cedar | 62 |
| | Elm | 54 |
| | Willow | 33 |
| | Prison Healthcare Unit | 2 |
| | Reception | 1 |
| | Special Supervision Unit | 4 |
| | TOTAL | 254 |
| | | |
| By Status | Sentenced | 139 |
| | Remands | 115 |
| | | |
| By Category | Category A | 4 |
| | Category B | 38 |
| | Category C | 74 |
| | Category D | 16 |
| | Unclassified | 121 |



Appendix 2

Hydebank Wood Board Members 2010-2011

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|-----------------------|--|
| Mrs Frances Symington | Chair |
| Dr Michael Boyle | Vice Chair |
| Mrs Christine Allen | Appointed July 2010 – Resigned February 2011 |
| Mrs Charlotte Beck | Appointment terminated February 2011 |
| Mr George Bratty | On sabbatical from April 2010 – Resigned October 2010 |
| Mrs Natasha Francis | Appointed July 2010 |
| Mr Joe Irvine | Appointed July 2010 |
| Mr Brinley Lewis | Appointed July 2010 - Resigned January 2011 |
| Ms Sadie Logan | |
| Mr Michael Love | Appointed July 2010 |
| Ms Judy O’Loan | Appointed July 2010 - On sabbatical from January 2011 |
| Mr Ronnie Orr | |
| Ms Christine Stoll | Appointed July 2010 - On sabbatical from February 2011 |
| Mr Francis Walsh | Appointed July 2010 |
| Mrs Linda Williamson | Appointed July 2010 - On sabbatical from November 2010 |



2010

