



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE AND WOMEN'S PRISON

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

The Board is required to:

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

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

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

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

UK National Preventive Mechanism

The Independent Monitoring Board is part of the UK National Preventive Mechanism (UK NPM). It was set up under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), to monitor the treatment received by those detained in custody to confirm that it is fair, just and humane.

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

It is my privilege to have taken over the role of Chairperson since October 2022. Due to procedures, Ann Adams - who chaired the Board from April 2021 - was required to stand down as Chair mid-year and took on the role of Vice-Chair. Ann was an excellent Chair whose experience, knowledge and support to the team has, and continues to be, invaluable.

Following the restrictions of the Covid Pandemic, this reporting year of 2022/23 has seen a welcome return to a normal regime. At times during this year, staff were managing high numbers, particularly of female prisoners. This seemed to be due, in part, to the aftermath of Covid and delays in the courts.

We have been impressed by the refurbishments which have been carried out in Beech and Cedar making the environment much brighter and more welcoming. The many issues with the ablutions in Ash this year, are due to be resolved next year, with a new fit out of the ablutions in Ash.

In this reporting year, the number of IMB members has been considerably depleted. In April 2022, we had eight IMB members on rota - three of whom were newly appointed at the start of the year following a recruitment campaign. Of the three new members, only one has remained and another member took leave of absence from October 2022. By the end of the year, IMB members on rota numbered only four. While the Secretariat initiated another recruitment campaign in October 2022, unfortunately it was not fruitful, with only one new member appointed to Hydebank Wood (HBW) due to take up the role in April 2023. Sufficient numbers of IMB members for HBW would be fourteen, so we are far short of our necessary quota. Consequently, the members undertook many more rota shifts as well as attending other meetings. This has been overly onerous and considerably beyond what was originally expected of members.

If numbers of IMB members in HBW remain inadequate, potentially the rights of prisoners may be compromised because we will not be able to consistently fulfil our mandatory duties by providing the required level of monitoring within the prison. The

Statement of Concern attached to this report reflects the views of all three IMBs in Northern Ireland on this matter.

In spite of our low numbers, I should like to extend my deep gratitude to Ann, Yvonne, Norman and Michael (until October 2022). Their unwavering commitment continued to ensure that the rights, welfare and fair treatment of prisoners are at the heart of our responsibilities.

While reference is made in the body of the report to the levels of mental ill health during the year, those prisoners who presented with severe mental health issues were a cause for great concern and their needs are worthy of special mention. The health of those individuals highlighted the inappropriateness of them being in a prison setting. It is to be hoped that funding will be identified in the near future so that they will receive fair and just treatment in a provision that will better cater for their needs.

For many years IMB has lobbied for a prison for women. It is now our understanding that plans are progressing to make this a reality. This is to be wholeheartedly welcomed.

In October 2022, the Board visited the Dochas Centre in Dublin, which is a closed medium security prison for females aged 18 and over, located in Mountjoy Prison. We were very warmly welcomed by the Visiting Committee, Governors and staff. Unsurprisingly Dochas has the same constant issues as HBW, such as mental health issues and drug misuse. Of note, were the impressive upgrades to some cells which are well designed and include showers, a model which would be most appropriate for HBW College.

On behalf of the HBW IMB, I would like to sincerely thank Governor Richard Taylor, the other Governors and HBW staff for accommodating us, our requests and giving us accessibility at all times to carry out our role.

Pip Jaffa

Chairperson | Hydebank Wood College & Women's Prison

OVERVIEW OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

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

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

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

Summary of Monitoring Observations

- The Equality & Diversity Committee pursues transgender awareness raising as part of its own learning and development in 2023/24.
- Systematic adoption and implementation of NIPS Transgender Policy through the 2023/24 HBW Annual Training.
- Provision to this Board of a Healthcare organisational chart, illustrating name, job title and responsibility to ease understanding and communication
- The Board encourages increased support and resources to the Healthcare and AD:EPT (Alcohol and Drugs: Empowering People Through Therapy) staff in their development and delivery of therapeutic services.
- The Board commends the support and intervention systems, such as SPAR, Safety and Support meetings and Health and Safety which are in place in to react swiftly to self-harm and suicide attempts.
- It would enhance the discussion and decision making at a monthly Safety and Support Steering Group meetings if reports from all the relevant perspectives were submitted.
- Six monthly reports on Towards Zero Suicide would help to monitor progress and indicate impact.

- The Board would wish to see that all prisoners have access at all times to a Samaritan Freephone.
- Deepening the trauma informed environment within both Care and Supervision Units (CSU) would further strengthen the overall impact of the work. Providing an important underpinning knowledge and skills for frontline teams to better collaborate with (mental) health colleagues, as they address the increasing complexity of need and vulnerabilities of individuals placed in their care.
- The prevalence of mental health issues within those females in CSU last year, highlights the importance of providing specific mental health training and awareness of conditions such as Autism and Personality Disorder, to equip frontline staff to manage complex and challenging behaviour within the unit effectively.
- There should be a greater sharing of information between Health and Prison teams, as part of a more integrated approach.
- The effectiveness of the Oversight Committee would be enhanced by a more regular attendance and input from all external stakeholders, providing a much-needed multidimensional approach to understanding the complex need and monitoring and mitigating risk.
- In commending all the providers of a wide range of courses, the Board would want to see this continuing, based on the need of the students.

EDUCATION AND PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

The Board was pleased to see increasing activity in the Learning and Skills Centre, serviced by BMC, prison staff, Start 360 and other agencies. Those on remand were facilitated where possible. When classes were not able to be covered by BMC due to the absence of a teacher, drop-in sessions were provided by them. BMC and others met with employers regularly to ascertain gaps in local industry and base their classes on these needs.

A Graduation Service Ceremony took place in June 2022 when students were presented with certificates for Student of the Year in specific subjects. It is hoped to have 2 Graduations in 2023/2024.

A successful Art Exhibition featuring students' work organised by HBW took place in March 2023 in Belfast city centre. Students' work was also included in the Holocaust Exhibition in the City Hall. A female student, enrolled on an industrial cleaning course, picked up a national award and travelled to London to receive it.

A variety of new courses were offered:

- Automobile Maintenance.
- Three-year Construction Site Regulations (CSR) run by NIACRO free of charge, including site safety and visual. Eleven males and 12 females were registered for this course.
- Donkey Harness Binding, on-going on a weekly basis.
- GAA for females, a six -week course.
- Hairdressing and Barbers students are studying for Level 3 in their particular areas.
- Joinery, a three -year course.

Volunteers from a local church attended HBW three days a week to help with educational needs. The students were involved on a cross-community basis with primary schools by providing planters for various areas around their locality.

Belfast Community Choir, which is National Lottery funded, ran choir practices on Mondays from 5 - 6pm for males and females. They also ran music lessons once a week. Outside work parties were up and running again after Covid. An ex-prisoner volunteered with the males under the Prison Art Foundation.

A new six-week course in Warehousing will be starting soon. Start 360 and other Agencies offered voluntary drop-in sessions - for example, knitting hats and painting by numbers. These options were brought in for males and females who didn't wish to pursue qualifications. In the kitchens and Tuck Shop, work-based learning took place as in a real working environment.

The Ulster Transport Museum donated classic cars for the students to restore. A Criminology module on Rehabilitation was run in conjunction with Queen's University

in which HBW students attended classes alongside students from the University. A six- week Acting Course on Friel Reimagines, was attended by both males and females.

Vocational areas (Horticulture and Business Studies) sponsored by Ideverde and All State New Jersey, had a six week pay placement with a £250 bursary. Fleece from HBW's own awarding winning sheep was taken to the Spinners and Weavers Guild for cleaning and on return, spun by students.

The HBW Board commends the BMC for the variety of courses offered in HBW College. The Board congratulates Officer Richard Graham on gaining the Butler Trust Award. Richard is the vocational Training Officer in Gardening and Animal Husbandry. He was also awarded the Keith Bramley Award for Education and Skills.

Observation

- **In commending all the providers of a wide range of courses, the Board would want to see this continuing, based on the need of the students.**

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Throughout 2022/23, there has been a regular review by the Equality & Diversity (E&D) Committee of robust data on protected characteristics that have consistently demonstrated compliance. We also commend the active involvement of male student and female prisoner representatives as part of the committee work.

Chaplains played an instrumental role in supporting E&D and in promoting inclusion and raised a number of issues and concerns through the Equality and Diversity Committee. These included: recognising the needs of foreign nationals and those from the Traveller community as well as the prevalence of mental health and its effects among the prison population and staff.

Other issues included: communication, use of Language Tablets and recognition the importance of religious practice and respect for that practice. We also note the importance of easy access to tailored support for all those in the prison population with literacy issues, in order to voice their own concerns with confidence and dignity.

Observations

- The E&D Committee pursues transgender awareness raising as part of its own learning and development in 2023/2024.
- Systematic adoption and implementation of NIPS Transgender policy through the 2023/24 HBW Annual Training Plan.

CHAPLAINCY

The Chaplaincy Department in Hydebank has a full complement of Chaplains. A new Methodist Chaplain, Tanita Lee was welcomed. She replaced Joan Parkinson after her retirement.

Also welcomed was Reverend Mark Lennox, Church of Ireland Minister. Mark is filling in for Rev. David Jardine who was on long term sickness absence. Tanita and Mark join Father Stephen and Sister Oonah - the Catholic Chaplains, Rev Rodney Cameron - the Presbyterian Minister, and the Muslim Chaplain, Dr Anwar.

It was a busy year with much to re-establish after Covid. All weekly services were in place and the Chaplaincy made sure that all commitments were seen and any resident at risk was followed through with visits.

One major issue this past year was having to look after very senior residents in the Women's Prison. Some of these ladies were over 80, with multiple social and medical needs - and without having proper facilities much distress was caused to staff across the prison system. The Chaplains, raised issues with agencies such as 'Help the Aged' and the Commissioner for the Elderly. The Chaplains highlighted that the prison was housing very vulnerably-aged people because the present society had nowhere else to put them and no-one else to care for them.

The Holy events of Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas and the Muslim Ramadan, were well attended and the Chaplaincy also co-ordinated Prison Week with Services in HBW as well as the main service in Bloomfield Church.

There was a day of reflection for the male students last May and Kairos came in for three days in November to lead a time of reflection for the women. Both events proved very successful in bringing a healing spirit to many distressed residents.

As lead Chaplain, Father Stephen tried to attend all Equality and Diversity meetings as well as having an input into Safer Custody and Support meetings. The Chaplains strive to be supportive in all they do for all our residents and staff.

HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SET) has continued to have responsibility for the delivery of healthcare within Northern Ireland's three prisons. Within Hydebank, this is serviced from the on-site Healthcare Centre, the Hawthorne Practice.

Healthcare staffing has been problematic in this year, with the team regularly operating at a reduced rate. This reflects the ongoing difficulties in the community with both recruitment and retention. Whilst staffing resource continues to be a challenge staffing has improved. There have been periods of significant shortages due to sickness being managed safely as a contingency arrangement and through the use of bank and agency nursing resource.

At the June Board meeting, it was reported that the Primary Care Team of seven nurses was considerably depleted and that the Mental Health Team of three nurses (responsible across all three prisons) was operating at 50% capacity. It was reported that recruitment was ongoing and that staff were working extra shifts to maintain a service. Additional to the above, there was a complement of one and a half Occupational Therapists, one Speech and Language and Communication Therapist, one Clinical Psychologist (across the three sites, though concentrated in Maghaberry) one Physiotherapist, one Pharmacist (three days) and one General Practitioner (two-three days).

The Consultant Psychiatrist - who has worked for many years across the three prisons - whilst recently retired, continued in a reduced capacity, until the post is filled. Two other psychiatrists offered some limited support, and the Consultant Psychiatrist specialising in Addiction, worked across the three sites.

Additional to the continuing daily provision of healthcare, the Healthcare team is charged with promoting, initiating and implementing targeted and dedicated services.

In this year, a new project was piloted: Positive Behavioural Support was introduced to support patients with a possible learning disability and/or who have difficulty regulating emotions, by developing a more personal plan.

Another development has been a sleep management programme introduced in HBW. Individuals attended a number of weekly sessions to support them with making changes to help improve their sleep. In response to a need, and to improve awareness, another one-off event was organised to highlight World Menopause Day.

Mental Health and Addiction issues continued to grow at an increasingly concerning level. With the 36 committals in January, 61% declared a history of self-harm, 50% being a drug user, 61% misusing drugs or alcohol prior to custody and 44% to being in receipt of mental health support services. In the same month, of the 16 male committals, 38% self-reported a history of self-harm, 69% being a drug user, 44% misusing drugs or alcohol prior to custody and 38% being in receipt of mental health support services.

As well as the degree of mental health and addiction difficulties, is the concern of their associated depth and complexity, which undoubtedly outstrips the often reduced and pressurised workforce. To mitigate this pressure the service was testing the introduction of the Towards Zero Suicide Prevention Care Pathway integrating evidence- based assessment formulation, safety planning and transition of care processes in partnership with those who use the services.

All individuals coming into HBW are offered the following:

- a committal assessment with a primary care nurse
- a mental health face to face triage consultation
- a comprehensive nursing assessment within 5 days of committal

Following completion of the above if a further review is required, a referral is made to a relevant professional or healthcare service.

Upon committal, an individual is triaged by a nurse and referred, where appropriate, to the Mental Health Team. They are then triaged by this team and referral is made, as deemed appropriate, to the Medical Consultant or to AD:EPT

AD:EPT is a programme managed by Start 360, a long established voluntary sector organisation commissioned by the SET, whose staff provide services to those patients willing to engage. The range of these crucial services includes one to one counselling, check-in support, failed drug test support, acupuncture, relapse prevention, harm reduction sessions, naloxone and overdose sessions and pre-release support. These services are delivered in a non-clinical but therapeutic manner.

Additionally Start 360 in this year, in conjunction with NIPS, developed a wellbeing room, where residents visited for de-escalation and emotional support. As with the Healthcare team Start 360 staff reported a continued struggle to keep on top of the increasing demand.

The Board has continued to monitor the situation concerning provision for a mother and young child housed on a landing in the Healthcare Centre - the Primrose Unit -and for pregnant women held during the year. It continues to be satisfied that those responsible have continued to work effectively together for the well-being of all involved.

Finally, while very much appreciating the constant demands and pressures on the Healthcare team, the Board is keen to highlight a recommendation made from previous reports 2020/21 and repeated in 21/22 that it considers important and most valuable: *'Attendance of the Lead Nurse or representative from Healthcare at Hydebank Wood at every Board meeting.'*

Observations

- Provision to the Board of a Healthcare organisational chart, illustrating name, job title and responsibility would be useful to ease understanding and communication
- This Board encourages increased support and resources to the Healthcare and AD:EPT staff in their development and delivery of therapeutic services.

SAFER CUSTODY

The Safety and Support team is made up of one Governor, a Senior Officer and three officers. The role of the team is to identify those in need of additional support, working alongside the residential team and in collaboration with departments including external agencies. The support is provided in different ways such as helping to integrate those who find being in general population a challenge and by making referrals to agencies for specialised support.

The high levels of mental ill health, personality disorder, drug and alcohol misuse, learning difficulties - along with other vulnerabilities, provide a considerable challenge for all staff, and in particular those responsible for safety and support, to ensure prisoners are safe and protected.

The opening of the Lavender landing in Beech, has been a welcome initiative for those women who present with issues such as disability, which makes the general landings unsuitable. Since it opened, Lavender has been a well-used resource which we have observed to be of benefit to those who have been resident there.

Weekly Safety and Support meetings are the multidisciplinary forum for staff to discuss vulnerable individuals who are in need of additional support for reasons of self-harm, low mood, anti-social behaviour and to put care plans in place as extra protection.

The monthly multidisciplinary Safety and Support Steering Group meetings focus on an overview of the additional needs of vulnerable prisoners. However, not all representatives expected to attend, are present at these Steering Group meetings. It is the case that there have been a number of meetings during the year when no reports have been submitted on 'Towards Zero Suicide' or 'Healthcare', leaving gaps of up-to-date information from these standpoints. While recognising the demands on staff, it would be the view of the Board that the discussion and the decision-making process about some of the most vulnerable prisoners, would be enhanced by having all perspectives represented.

The data presented at these meetings enables analysis of trends, patterns and emerging issues. These include issues such as suicide attempts, anti-social behaviour incidents, self-harm, SPAR Evolution Plans and use of observation rooms.

Importantly, comparisons are made with previous years. The reports also help to identify those prisoners who may need to be reviewed at the weekly Safety and Support meetings or who may have underlying problems.

The last six months in comparison with the same time the previous year, shows that the number of Care Plans decreased by 26% for females and by 18% for males - with low mood being the main reason for opening Care Plans. While no correlation appears to be made between this decrease and actions by the staff, the introduction of sensory rooms as chill-out areas, animal therapy and importantly, the prompt attention by staff to those who have self-harmed or presented with low mood, could well be contributory factors to this downward trend.

The analysis of self-harm figures indicates that there doesn't appear to be any correlation between self-harm and any specific event such as visits, adjudications, or R32s. The self-harm data also shows that while there has been a 13% increase in males who self-harm, there is a much larger increase within the females for this time period - 134% - adding to the challenges for staff to manage this risky behaviour.

These examples of the data gathering reflect the care and attention that staff take when managing prisoners - some of whom are extremely vulnerable, particularly the women. The Board would commend staff for having a regular and systematic scrutiny of the vulnerability of prisoners and for taking action subsequently.

Given that there is constant concern about self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts, the appointment across all three prisons of Damien Kavanagh to take forward an initiative called Towards Zero Suicide, is extremely welcome. Damien's responsibility is to put in place options to improve practice which includes training for staff. The Board would be keen to see a progress report on the impact of this initiative.

Due to technical issues, prisoners have been unable to access the Samaritans Freephone. As this provides another means of support for those experiencing negative emotions, the Board would wish to see this re-instated as a matter of urgency and in such a way that allows students and women prisoners to make calls with the utmost privacy.

The Board is pleased that a recommendation from its 20/21 report-NIPS investigates the purchase of additional equipment, including body scanners, to detect drugs and unauthorised articles-has been agreed and is due to go 'live' in the first month of 23/24. This had been in support of the recommendation in the CJNI and RQIA Inspectorates' Report 2019 and then by the Prison Ombudsman in 2020. Additionally, the Board considered that it might go some way to alleviate the issue often raised by residents over the reliability of the passive drug dogs.

Finally, the Board recognises that there are boundaries between the role of prison staff and other disciplines. In saying that, training for staff was carried out this year on Resilience, Trauma and Low Mood. The Board would commend this and the plans for further training, which assist the staff in gaining more knowledge to manage the welfare of an increasingly challenging and growing population in HBW.

Observations

- The Board commends the support and intervention systems such as SPAR, Safety and Support meetings and Health and Safety which are in place to react swiftly to self-harm and suicide attempts.
- It would enhance the discussion and decision making at monthly Steering Group Safety and Support meetings if reports from all relevant perspectives were submitted.
- Six monthly reports on Towards Zero Suicide would help monitor progress and impact
- The Board would wish to see that all prisoners have access to a Samaritans Freephone at all times.

SEPARATION UNITS

Students and women prisoners can be segregated in Care and Supervision Units away from the general population for their own safety - or for the safety of others - for breaking Prison Rules or, because they are suspected of having drugs or other illicit items in their possession. Two separate facilities at Hydebank Wood provide an important means to de-escalation for male students and female prisoners alike. Both facilities are in good order, with open shared living spaces and kitchens which are bright, clean and consistently well maintained.

A dedicated staff team play an important role in the care and support of those transferred from the general prison population, working with compassion and professionalism, in very challenging conditions, to mitigate risk and create conditions to enable a safe return to the general population.

Weekly Oversight meetings complement this direct work by providing a holistic assessment of those placed on R32, drawing on reports from a range of internal stakeholders. The Oversight Committee plays an important role in quality assuring the work within the CSU and may also recommend an early review of the R32 period.

It may be argued that some female prisoners with severe mental health issues should not be in prison and should be cared for in alternative settings. Moreover, female prisoners should not be placed in CSU for disruptive behaviour as a consequence of their illness, with alternative solutions being considered more routinely.

Similarly, senior leaders in Justice and Health should also take steps to strengthen collaboration between frontline NIPS and health teams as part of enabling a more integrated approach. This culture shift should help diminish any sense of functional, silo working and enable hard working teams to jointly produce better outcomes for prisoners.

Observations

- Deepening the trauma informed environment within both CSUs would help strengthen the overall impact of the work. Providing an important underpinning knowledge and skills for frontline teams to better collaborate with (mental) health colleagues, as they address the increasing complexity of need and vulnerabilities of individuals placed in their care.
- The prevalence of mental health issues within the female prisoners in CSU last year, highlights the importance of providing specific mental health training and awareness of conditions such as Autism and Personality Disorder, to equip frontline staff to manage complex and challenging behaviour within the unit effectively.
- There should be a greater sharing of information between Health and Prison teams, as part of a more integrated approach.

- The effectiveness of the Oversight Committee would be enhanced by more regular attendance and input from all external stakeholders, providing a much-needed multidimensional approach to understanding the complex need and monitoring and mitigating risk.

LIST OF HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE IMB MEMBERS 2022-23

Ann Adams - Extended 1 year until 31/03/23

Yvonne Adair

Pip Jaffa - Chair 2022/23

Norman McKinley - Appointed 01/04/22

Michael O'Hara -

Lekan Abasi - Appointed 01/04/22 / Resigned 16/08/22

Mike Mawhinney - Appointed 01/04/22 / Resigned 22/11/22