

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ranby

**For reporting year
24 March 2020 to 31 March 2021**

Published November 2021

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Ranby is situated in North Nottinghamshire, mid-way between the towns of Worksop and Retford. Ranby is a category C male training prison.

Since opening as a prison in 1972, Ranby has had the accommodation capacity regularly and significantly increased due to demand including most recently 2008 when further accommodation was built.

In May 2016 Ranby was named as one of six early adopter sites for autonomy where the Director of East Midlands Reform Group was able to make business and financial decisions separately to the wider prison estate.

The certified normal accommodation (CNA) at HMP Ranby as at the end of March 2020 was 892 and its operational capacity (OC) 1,025.

The residential accommodation consists of seven house blocks. Located within the house blocks are the departments for the induction of new prisoners, resettlement, skills for life and safer custody. One house block has prisoners on integrated drug treatment system (IDTS).

There is a provision for a 24-hour healthcare service, as HMP Ranby has no hospital but has 24-hour healthcare cover on site. The single storey healthcare building accommodates other functioning departments, such as the drug and alcohol recovery team (DART), IDTS and mandatory drug testing (MDT).

The segregation unit is located in one of the older buildings and has 16 single cells. Attached to the segregation unit is a small, paved exercise area which is contained by a high wall.

Education is allocated within two buildings, one of which holds the library and one the chaplaincy. For prisoners in the segregation unit, there is in-cell learning and teachers visit them as appropriate.

The workshops, which are run both by the prison and education provider, include:

Textiles; painting and decorating; woodwork; wood assembly; plastics; industrial cleaning; officers' mess; data input; laundry; powder coating; engineering; barbering, waste management; gardens; building trades.

Physical exercise takes place within two buildings and the sports field. One building instructs prisoners mainly on weights and treats prisoners who have physical disabilities. Fitness equipment has been installed outside each house block.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Covid-19 restrictions have been in place in HMP Ranby for the entire period covered by this annual report. This has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and to validate some information to pre-Covid standards. Though some Board members attended the prison in October and November 2020 with a total of 10 visits, generally no Board members visited the prison between the first national lockdown in March 2020 and June 2021; even then, no face to face interactions took place.

During this period the members phoned the house blocks and segregation unit every week, the Chair had weekly telephone calls with the Governor and there was an occasional telephone call with a member of the prison council. Board meetings were held via Zoom. Prisoners were made aware of the availability of an 0800 telephone number where they could lodge an application that would be passed to the Ranby IMB.

Covid-19 also impacted on the prison management and staff, at one point reducing staffing levels by 25%, which was managed by the Governor. It should be noted that the prison Governor, management and staff kept Covid-19 under control and avoided a major outbreak of the disease in the closed society of the prison.

Mass testing of the prisoners started in November 2020. If a positive result was discovered, then the whole landing was locked down for 10 days.

Covid-19 vaccinations started in March 2021 in the prison and initially there was little resistance to receiving it.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board continued to receive statistical data from the prison and considers the prison to be reasonably safe. In terms of acts of violence, HMP Ranby ranks well in the national ranking with a total number of incidents down by 60% year on year from before the pandemic.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Setting aside the imposition of a 22-hour lockdown necessitated by the pandemic, it is the opinion of the Board that the prisoners within the confines of HMP Ranby were generally treated fairly and with humanity, however, there are exceptions that remain and that the Board repeats - including staff communication, cell sharing, cell clearing, lack of hostel space, compassionate moves, transfers to category D prisons, and transfers back from a category D prison - where the Board considers that the prison system and not necessarily HMP Ranby fails to provide fair and humane treatment to prisoners. (Section 5)

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The healthcare service provided by Nottinghamshire NHS is in line with the service provided to the general public outside the prison. The Board considers that they provide a satisfactory service.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The Board does not have any meaningful data to report on this topic. For the first five months of lockdown, the home detention curfew (HDC) scheme was suspended and only commenced again in September 2020.

3.3 Main areas for development

Note: The board continues to raise similar concerns to previous years, as they remain unaddressed. This is happening again and will continue to happen as long as the Minister, Prison service and Governor fail to act to resolve what we consider the main areas for development at HMP Ranby.

TO THE MINISTER

1. Will the Minister explain what is being done to reduce the need to house prisoners with mental health problems in the segregation unit of HMP Ranby. (Section 6.2)? The Minister responded to the same question in the past with a comprehensive list of reports, audits, programmes being compiled/developed by specialised health and justice commissioners, mental health teams in NHS England, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and a Select Committee. Regrettably, it appears that no actual action to deal with this problem has been planned or taken and the segregation unit, as well as a cell in house block four, is being used to monitor prisoners who should, in the Board's opinion, be elsewhere.
2. Can the Minister justify the use of single cells for two prisoners? Can she explain the rationale behind this and how it is reflected in the decency agenda? The Minister responded previously that '...plans to transform the prison estate gather pace and more new prisons are being delivered while existing unsuitable capacity is closed.' Meanwhile, the prison population of HMP Ranby remains 200 over the prescribed certified normal accommodation.
3. Will the Minister explain why 36% of prisoners are released with no fixed abode and why for the same reason prisoners suitable for home release are not being allowed out of HMP Ranby?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. Will the Prison Service explain why a number of prisoners transferred from other prisons arrive without all their property?
2. Will the Prison Service explain why a prisoner returned from a category D prison on an alleged breach of rules is returned without paperwork or the chance to answer the charges for the return, but the return is posted on NOMIS and therefore on their record?

TO THE GOVERNOR

1. Normally, the Board would have a number of questions to the Governor concerning violence, illegal substances etc. The Board has a concern about the late reply to prisoners' complaints and the cell clearance process; however, after such an exceptional time, the Board does not consider that it is appropriate to raise these issues in this format.

3.4 Progress since the last report

With the imposition of lockdown and drastic change to the regime, the Board has no meaningful information to report on.

However, the Board has reported previously on the changing population of Ranby. HMP Ranby is a category C training prison, but it is receiving a large number of prisoners with a very short time left to serve. From conversations with the Governor, this situation has been exacerbated by Covid-19 and results in moving HMP Ranby and its staff away from its primary purpose.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

HMP Ranby altered the procedure on arrival of prisoners due to the pandemic. The men still entered through the reception area and were processed through the system by professional and caring staff before being assessed by healthcare. Regardless of their assessed health, all prisoners were isolated for 14 days in a designated house block. There their temperatures and general health were constantly monitored. Before being transferred to the general house blocks, each man was required to have two days of normal temperature and no other symptoms. There was an issue with the lack of suitable staff personal protective equipment (PPE) at the start which was quickly resolved.

Basic induction was completed on the isolation house block after the prisoner had spent 14 days in isolation. This was given by other prisoners.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board is saddened to report that there were two deaths in the prison in the reporting period, one a suspected suicide, the other as a result of Covid-19. The coroner has yet to report on both.

Acts of self-harm generally fell during this reporting period by 47% (monthly average down from 52 to 28). This could be due to the new 22-hour regime and the associated lack of opportunity to attract debt. The key worker scheme was suspended during the pandemic.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Acts of violence and assaults were also down over the reporting period. Again, it can be assumed that the new regime played a part in this reduction. Acts of violence were down by 58% (monthly average from 38 to 16) and assaults down 61% (monthly average from 34 to 13)

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Safeguarding and protection continued throughout the pandemic.

5. Fair and humane treatment

- 5.1** Setting aside the question of whether it is fair and humane to have prisoners locked up for 22 hours a day generally, the Board can report that the management made every effort to treat the prisoners fairly. However, late replies to complaints in particular and communication to prisoners in general, together with cell clearing following a prisoner's removal from a cell, is improving although there were still lapses in the procedure. Outside of the prison's management control is the use of cell sharing, prisoners (circa 60) not able to transfer to a category D prison, and prisoners sent back from a category D open prison for a misdemeanour, without paperwork or the right of redress. (Retained from our last report as still pertinent.)

The prison set aside a landing of a house block for vulnerable men so that they could be isolated from the general prison population, and staff were trained in the use of PPE from the outset to provide additional protection from Covid-19. Also, a separate landing was set aside for newly arrived prisoners so that they could be isolated from the rest of the prison population for at least 14 days.

The Board would also like to record that a number of prisoners thanked the Governor for taking care and protecting them during the pandemic.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

The unit has a total capacity for 15 prisoners, with one constant watch cell.

With violence down during the period, mainly due to restrictions on movement, generally it was reported to the Board that the segregation unit had a population on average of three men.

5.3 Complaints

The prison reported that there were, on average, 140 complaints per month of which 83% were replied to on time. The Board constantly reminds the prison that a lack of response only produces greater frustration on the part of the prisoner. The Board urges the prison to respond to all complaints in a timely manner.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

All out of cell activities were suspended during the period of this report.

6.2 Drug rehabilitation

The Board does not have any meaningful data to report on this topic, but it understands that the work in the dedicated house block continued during the lockdown.

6.3 COVID Precaution

A separate landing was set aside for clinically extremely vulnerable men (men with underlying health conditions) during the pandemic. A cohort of staff were specially trained in keeping this area safe for the men on the block.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education and library services were suspended during the period of this report.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Except for essential services - kitchen, waste management and laundry - all training was suspended during this reporting period. Those services that did operate used minimum staff and prisoners.

7.3 Family contact

All face to face visits were suspended during the period of this report; however, the prison invested in providing additional Purple Visits (secure video calling system) facilities. This included not only additional hardware, but also allocating staff time to the more popular time (evenings) for these visits to happen.

8. The work of the IMB

Regrettably, the work of the IMB members this year has been severely curtailed due to the pandemic and the Board is reporting only on the information that it received from HMP Ranby and its limited access. Of the 97 applications reported below, 61 were collected on 24 October 2020, two collected in November 2020 and one in December 2020. The Board received 33 applications from prisoners using the 0800 number.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	10
Total number of segregation reviews attended	0

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	28	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme, sanctions	30	3
C	Equality	11	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	26	3
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	32	2
F	Food and kitchens	24	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	46	16
H1	Property within this establishment	41	14
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	98	12
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	33	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorization	78	19
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	53	6
K	Transfers	43	0
	Total number of applications	560	97



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