

# imib news

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS

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5

New NC  
Members



13

IRC Conference  
2008

## Welcome to Dr Peter Selby





# Resignation of Jim Haines as Editor of IMB News

■ **Norman McLean**, *Head of IMB Secretariat*

As you may be aware, Jim Haines of the IMB at HMP Wymott has decided to resign as Editor of IMB News, as a result of other commitments. It is only fitting therefore, to acknowledge the many hours and dedication that Jim has invested in producing IMB News over the last four years. It is fairly safe to say, that there are few who are fortunate enough to possess both the necessary understanding of ongoing issues concerning IMB members and the relevant literary skills to create a magazine which has proved to be an informative publication of a continually high standard.

We therefore owe him a large debt of gratitude and would like to say a big thank you to him for his work as Editor of IMB News over the years.

Members of the Communications Working Group and the Communications Team in the IMB Secretariat met recently to review the format of IMB News following the resignation of the former Editor Jim Haines. A decision was reached that the magazine will continue in its present format and will be produced twice a year following each of the annual conferences.

Some features within IMB News are likely to change slightly, for example it is proposed that we will feature regional articles on pertinent issues in different parts of the country, e.g. Healthcare issues in Nottinghamshire etc, with a change of region for each issue.

We hope to continue to produce a publication that is both informative and relevant for IMB Members.

## Contributions

The IMB News editorial team is always keen to receive your comments, suggestions, contributions and letters.

Our contact details are printed on the final page of this newsletter, or you can send your correspondence via Laura Armstrong in the IMB Secretariat (laura.armstrong9@justice.gsi.gov.uk).

## Contents

National Council Issues	3
Dr Peter Selby Press Conference	4
New Member of the National Council	5-7
My Time as President of the IMB National Council	7
My Four Years as a Member of the National Council	9
Going National	10
Leaving the National Council	12
IRC Annual Conference – an overview	13
Opening Speech	15
Dr Stuart Morgan	16
Annual IRC Conference The Panel Session	16
IMB Website	19
News	20
Media and Recruitment Tips for Boards	21
Extracts from 2007 Annual Reports	22
IMB Training Courses 2008	25
Letters to Chairs and Board Members	26
Prison Service Instructions	26
The IMB Secretariat	27
The IMB National Council	28

# National Council Issues

## ■ John Weightman

Since the last edition of IMB News, much has happened, both within IMBs themselves and in prisons. Changes are in process even regarding this edition of IMB News. The editor, Jim Haines, has stepped down after four very busy years. His expertise, both as Editor and as a journalist, have been largely responsible for the excellent magazine we have. I am sure I write for all when I say we have a debt of gratitude to Jim for his efforts. I would like, on behalf of us all, to extend my thanks to him.

At the top we have a new President, Dr Peter Selby, which naturally means that the first President of the National Council, Sir Peter Lloyd, has now retired. Both of these distinguished gentlemen make their own contributions elsewhere in these pages, as do three newly elected Council members and their immediate predecessors.

Within the Prison Service there are changes around. The long rumoured re-invention of NOMS is now with us. The implications of this are still being considered. One of the early changes is that the Director General of the Prison Service, Phil Wheatley, is to be the Director General, Offender Management Service. Prisons and probation services are being brought closer together under the National Offender Management Service.

Another known change is the creation of Directors of Offender Management (the amalgamation of current HMPS Area Managers and Regional Offender Managers) who will be appointed in each region, to be responsible for regional commissioning, co-commissioning and management of SLA/contracts with all Prisons, Probation Trusts and other providers in the region.

The prison population continues to expand. The huge psychological hurdle of 80,000 has long since vanished into history. Time and again we have read in the press that the prison population was rapidly approaching its maximum, only to find that the seemingly elastic walls had somehow been able to accommodate another few hundred.

Overcrowding is at its simplest too many people in a given space. Of course when we discover that this is what is happening it is absolutely right that we comment. Too often, however, the focus can be limited to physical overcrowding. When spaces are literally found in which to

place a few more bunks, the problem cannot be said to have been solved. In a sense, it is only beginning as regimes are incapable of expanding at the same rate. All too often they will become impoverished. Following the introduction earlier this month of the new core day with all its implications, the acute observations of Boards have never been more important.

As if all this wasn't enough, there is the awful worry that we are not yet through with industrial action. Boards will hopefully be prepared so far as they can in preparing for this and incorporating into their Serious Incident procedures the advice given in the recent DC letter about this subject.

Other things which have engaged the National Council are briefly listed below:

- Re-writing aspects of the Prison Rules where they refer to the work of Boards
- The extent to which the NC should comment on criminal justice policy areas following consultation with Boards
- A learning and skills survey, delayed through ill-health but shortly available
- A refreshed focus on priority areas such as Mental Health issues, Resettlement matters, Population pressures, Foreign Nationals, Training, the IMB Website, review of new edition of Prisoners' Handbook, the expected building of new and different prisons and additional holding centres.

One thing is for certain: Independent Monitors are not about to become unnecessary. There may well be changes in the way we do business as we respond to the changes within the organisations we monitor. The way we deliver training to our members is surely going to change, again in response to changing needs. But we need to be there. Just being there makes a difference. When our mere presence is added to focussed and informed reporting, that difference has the potential to be profound.



John Weightman

# Dr Peter Selby Press Conference

■ **Laura Armstrong**, *Communications Manager IMB Secretariat*



Peter Selby

A press conference was held at HMP Holloway on 27th February to publicise the appointment of Dr Peter Selby as President of the IMB National Council. This was the first of a series of events planned to raise the profile of the IMB on a national basis.

The press conference opened with a very positive view of IMBs from Sue Saunders, Governor of HMP Holloway before Peter delivered an inspiring speech setting out his aims and strategy. A summary of Peter's speech is shown below.

During the press conference, Eric Allison of The Guardian interviewed Peter which resulted in an article being published two weeks later. National recruitment advertisements for Board Members were placed in The Guardian to coincide with the article. Peter is hoping to visit establishments in different areas during the year, which will provide useful opportunities to bring IMBs into the public eye.

## Making the difference

■ **Dr Peter Selby**, *President of the National Council*

Dr Peter Selby welcomed those present to HMP Holloway, and thanked the Governor and staff for their hospitality. He pointed out that such co-operation and welcome were typical of what IMBs find in the establishments in which they work, where they seek to be "critical friends" of those working there and of those held there. They recognise good practice and improvements where they happen. Governors see IMBs as allies in the attempt to change things for the better.

Part of being good allies lies in noticing things that are wrong and helping to find the reason. Boards send reports each year at least. Those reports highlight the strain put on good practice by features and policies which Boards have to point to again and again. Time and again they refer to:

- the huge pressure of numbers
- the holding of so many people with serious mental illnesses which have not been treated in the community and cannot be effectively treated in prison despite doctors' best efforts

- the difficulty of preventing self-harm and suicide from rising when the pressures are so great
- the scandal of prisoners who are foreign nationals and are held despite having completed their sentences, as well as the enormous tensions to be found in removal centres
- the effect of budget cuts on regimes and activities which would enable people to stand a better chance of abandoning crime.

The reports also reveal the bankruptcy of policies designed to build our way out of these pressures. Grouping smaller prisons together might save on overheads, but the choice of a word like 'Titan' to describe such large prisons is a revealing example of the aggressive language designed to appeal to a culture that is punitive to the point of being vengeful.

Much of that has been said before: but what is special about IMBs, compared for example with Her Majesty's Inspectorate, is that they are

composed of members of the public, people determined to know better than espouse the simple and aggressive solutions of locking people up and forgetting them. IMB members give their time to produce the evidence. The Council, mostly elected by IMB members, is there to give voice to those discoveries, challenge policies that can neither reduce criminal activity nor give people who have offended the opportunity and the strong challenge to find a more constructive way of living.

Peter Selby said, "So expect IMB members to keep monitoring and expect the Council to speak out loudly for change. And when we do produce the evidence, we want you, men and women of the media, to make it public, to make known the good practice there is and the good results it can and does produce, and not to get cheap copy by advocating policies that seem 'tough' but can be shown not to work. "

"We shall discover, and we shall speak out", the new President promised. "Then it will be up to you."

## New member of the National Council

■ **Lesley Harvey**, *HMP Holloway*

I was decided. I would put my name forward to be a candidate for the NC election in the South Central Area. The telephone call from Anne Marie Stephens telling me that I had been elected gave me a shock. Then I thought about why I had put myself forward.

I joined the IMB at HMP/YOI Holloway 15 years ago. I have been Chair twice and have learned so much about the women in the estate and of their special needs. As a member of the Wedderburn inquiry, "Justice for Women", I visited every women's prison in the country and gained a wealth of knowledge across a range of topics.

In 2003 I became a member of the National Training Team. This has enabled me to meet many IMB members from all parts of the country and from all types of establishments. The Training Team helps to contribute to members' knowledge of the Monitoring role of IMBs and to share best practice. Last year I joined the new Board at Heathrow Airport monitoring the short term holding rooms; a real challenge as it had never been done before. The first Annual Report has just been published. Unfortunately I had to resign in January this year, after my appointment to the NC,



Lesley Harvey

because of time commitments (and my knees). All the changes in our role and the challenges within the Prison Service have made my membership of the IMB a continually interesting one.

Joining the NC is to become a member of a team. I have taken over from Richard Gully who did a tremendous job. I have inherited 27 establishments!

My first job is to visit all the Boards in my Area and to understand what their concerns are and to raise any issues at the NC meetings. This I have started to do and thanks to those Boards who I have already visited for their time and hospitality. I have the added responsibility for being the NC lead on Offender Health, and the Women's Estate by the end of the year.

The National Council is elected to represent all the members of the IMB and to formulate policies that help Board members to undertake their roles effectively. This can only be done with Boards sharing and raising ideas with their NC members through Area Chair meetings and Boards' meetings. I knew the workload was going to be huge, but I am determined to do the job as well as I can with my constituents' help. Teamwork is the message.

# New member of the National Council

## ■ Barbara Bradbury, HMP Birmingham

I received my phone call early in November, congratulating me on my election to the National Council. I don't know that I realised quite what I had let myself in for, but I have always been ready to accept a challenge. What a challenge this is!

I joined the Board of Visitors as it was 11 years ago, at HMP Birmingham and after a short period was thrown in at the deep end as acting Chair when the Vice Chair, and shortly afterwards, the Chair resigned. It was a baptism of fire. The prison was about to receive the HMCIP report, a devastating document. A new Governor was in post, in fact we shared our first Board meeting, he as Governor and me as acting Chair. I remained Chair for six consecutive years and saw HMP Birmingham recover from that dreadful report, with an expansion bringing it into the 21st Century and with an operational capacity of 1,450 making it one of the largest Locals in the country. Hopefully this experience will stand me in good stead as an NC member.

I've taken over as representative for Boards in Wales and the West Midlands from Jo Jenkins, who worked extremely hard and is in fact a hard act to follow. One area of special interest allocated to me is Safer Custody, where I am following in the footsteps of David Graham, again someone who has done extremely good work and who produced the valuable Death in Custody protocol. Safer Custody is an area which interests me greatly. Unfortunately, during my time at HMP Birmingham there have been more than a fair share of self-inflicted deaths, a particular problem with Local Prisons. As at the deadline for this article, there have been 13 self-inflicted deaths in the prison

estate this year. A growing concern is the number of deaths by natural causes. An ever increasing number of elderly prisoners means that unfortunately this is not likely to reduce.

While on the subject of Safer Custody, I would

like to draw members' attention to the new PSO 2700 which came into effect at the end of April. Using this document all Safer Custody Governors/Staff are required to produce a local protocol. May I ask that you ask for a copy of your local protocol. As with David, if you have concerns regarding Safer Custody issues or examples of best practice that you would like to share, please let me know.

I also have responsibility working along with the President, for looking at the issue of overcrowding and monitoring the suggestion of Titan Prisons. It is not overcrowding *per se* but the overwhelming number of prisoners in the system and the resulting problem, among many, of prisoners being in the wrong place because they are just shipped from court to any prison where there is an available space. This currently seems to be miles away from the area in which they are sentenced and they appear to have no opportunity of returning to the home prison where they could get family visits and visits from legal representatives. There are just not enough spaces to accommodate the prisoners currently being sent by the courts or returned via licence recalls. Titan Prisons, who knows?



Barbara Bradbury

# New member of the National Council

## ■ Mike Davis, Chair HMP Hindley

Apart from a five year sojourn in Birmingham, I have always lived and worked in the North West. My wife Val and I met whilst teaching at the same school in Birmingham prior to moving north in 1970.

We have a son and a daughter and three grandchildren ranging from four months to nine years of age, all of whom contribute to a busy family life. Although the majority of my professional career was spent in

education, where I enjoyed almost 20 years as a Primary School Headteacher, I was also fortunate in having a second career in fundraising and marketing working for six years for the Cancer Research Campaign until the charity's closure in 2002, since which time I have been a volunteer fundraiser for the newly formed Cancer Research UK.

Having had a life long interest in football, particularly coaching and refereeing young children, I am now content to be an armchair supporter; my main interest being the fortunes of Manchester United. In 1986 I became a member of Bury Lions Club and have enjoyed many years of charitable fundraising and service activities within our town. Without doubt the high point of our Lions activities was in 1995 when Val and I travelled to South Korea to represent the North West at the International Convention in Seoul. Nearer to home we are both active members of Bury Parish Church where I have been a sidesman for over 20 years. In 2004 I was elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bury Crossroads, a charitable organisation employing 60 people working in the community supporting almost 200 carers each week.

In 1989 I was appointed as a Magistrate in Bury and am currently the Honorary Secretary of the South Lancashire Branch of the Magistrates Association and a Branch Representative to the Association's National Council. I also sit on the Association's Family Courts Committee.



*Mike Davis*

I joined the IMB at HMP YO1 Hindley, in Lancashire, in September 2003 and served as Information Officer and Vice-Chairman prior to being elected Chairman in January 2007. Having spent most of my professional life working with young people, Hindley was my personal choice, affording the opportunity to assist in the enhancement of the life chances of a particular group of vulnerable young people with extremely complex needs. In 2005

I joined the IMB Communications Working Group, assisting in the development of the new recruitment packs, leaflets, posters and other corporate identity materials. I am pleased that my participation in the Communications Group will continue as the National Council Representative to the Group.

With North West roots, I am pleased to be able to represent the area at the National Council. I offer my full support to the Chairman and Board members throughout the area, a number of whom I have already had the privilege of meeting. As your representative, I see my role as a conduit through which your concerns may be heard and via which you will be kept up to date and informed of national issues and policies. I am looking forward to my term of office with the knowledge that I am representing a group of people whose hearts are focussed on the welfare and safety of the residents cared for within their respective establishments.

Thank you for the opportunity.

## My time as President of the IMB National Council

### ■ Sir Peter Lloyd

Having chaired the 2001 BOV Review, I must confess I thought twice before accepting the job of President. It is one thing to dispense advice; quite another to help put it into effect. But I am glad I said yes. It has been rewarding to watch Boards shedding the contradictory remnants of the old Visiting

Committee role and embracing the IMBs' single-minded duty to monitor the treatment of prisoners and their preparation for release.



*Sir Peter Lloyd*

It has also been very satisfying to see the Review's central recommendation for an elected NC so thoroughly vindicated. The Review agreed that the best people to set out basic policies and collective good practices for Boards must be experienced Board members. So it has proved, thanks to the careful thought and hard labour of those elected. They have worked their way through the major changes put forward and, although inevitably it will take time and perseverance before every Board experiences the full benefit, I step down certain that the current NC will maintain the momentum.

There were two major complaints put to the Review. First, Board members were united in their frustration that, having spent hours in their prison or IRC and slaved over their annual report, no-one took any notice of what they said or sometimes even bothered to acknowledge it. I will say more on this later.

Second, critics in the Prison Service and beyond were adamant that many Boards through timidity, ignorance or misplaced sympathy allowed themselves to be captured by their establishments. They are "just screws in suits" said one prisoner dismissively.

It certainly requires strength of mind not to see the prison or IRC through its management's eyes especially when the Board is aware of the problems that management is facing and depends so heavily on its assistance. It is a long-standing absurdity that Boards have had to rely so completely on the very management they are monitoring to tell them what their establishments should be doing. I am pleased to say that there are now other sources providing reliable information against which Boards can monitor – the excellent IMB reference book; the special support groups; AMIMB's Practical Guide; the Inspectorates' Expectations and, of course, IMB News itself.

Most important is the IMBs' own national and local training, in need of co-ordination and now in the middle of a root and branch overhaul. In future, training will concentrate far more on the development of the special skills Board members need, not least the absolutely crucial, and always taken for granted, ability to engage with prisoners

and staff in ways which gain their trust and get them talking. IMBs need outside sources to know what should be happening in their prison or IRC, but need prisoners and staff inside to tell them what actually is happening.

With the increasing complexity of prisons the demands on IMBs have become more intense, so I hope that the Chairs Course will do more to help Chairs use the special experience, interests and expertise of their members to divide up and prioritise the Board's work, so that more can be done in the same (or even a little less) time. There are Boards where some tasks are done with unnecessary frequency, while other revealing enquiries are never made at all.

Back in 2001, the insularity of BOVs, (masked rather than reduced by excellent well attended annual conferences) was striking. Independence seemed to mean "our prison is different ..... we do things our way here" rather than "we have unfettered right of access and freedom to report." True, many Boards, particularly Chairs, established informal connections with other Boards which provided them with mutual support and a wider perspective. A Board can judge its own prison or IRC much better if it knows something of other establishments. I am glad such relationships have multiplied in recent years, particularly between prisons with similar roles. When problems arise it is reassuring to know that others have faced the same difficulties and helpful to learn from their experience without having to re-invent the wheel. What is particularly promising is that some Boards have begun to compare notes on the way they monitor, so discovering their own blind spots and passing on good practice.

Boards are essentially interdependent anyway. It needs only a few inadequate performers to damage the reputation of every IMB and the seriousness with which they are all taken. Senior management has various sources of information by which to judge each prison. If it sees that an establishment is failing and the IMB has not noticed and said so, it will inevitably put it down to the inadequacy of Boards in general.

I remarked at the beginning that the universal complaint from Boards was that no-one took any notice when they did speak up. I hope I am right in believing that there has latterly been a considerable improvement in the speed and thoroughness of responses from the Minister. What is more significant is that the Prison Service now extracts the hard findings from each report and circulates them to the relevant Managers. So Managers do see them, even if action does not necessarily follow.

The problem for the Prison Service has been that many IMB reports have been hard to make out. Important points have been buried in a mass of inconsequential material or missed altogether. In the past Boards have had to put their reports together without a clear idea of what Ministers or officials need to know. The template and guidance, issued a year ago to fill the gap, has made a huge difference. Most, but not all Boards, have tried to follow it with the result that reports now coming through are much easier to navigate and far more useful to those who have to make decisions.

It is true that each report only deals with one establishment and therefore is easily overlooked even if its findings are widely circulated. IMBs have seldom been able to put their collective weight, which is potentially very considerable, behind issues that affect the whole of the system as it did earlier this

year with the NC report on Foreign Nationals. With the new common format there is now a real opportunity to draw on reports to do this as the issues demand. I know my successor Peter Selby is determined this must happen. With the special support groups – Learning and Skills, Health and Mental Health and Diversity, the NC is well placed to make thematic reports on these specialist but crucial areas and on particular categories such as IRCs, Women and Open. With Board members regularly monitoring every prison and IRC, IMBs are uniquely well placed to give an accurate, up to the moment account of what is really happening or not happening inside and what, because they are not there as IMBs are, Ministers, Senior Management and the general public cannot know but need to be told.

When I mentioned Peter Selby a few lines back I realised that I have named no-one else. As President I've worked with so many devoted and able people on the NC, on Boards and in the Secretariat that there is not space to acknowledge each of them personally as I would wish. So I will simply thank them all together for their friendship and support to me over the past four years and for the long hours that they and so many others on Boards across the country devote to the frustrating but utterly absorbing and vitally important task of seeing prisoners are properly treated and prepared for release.

## My Four Years as a Member of the National Council

■ **Sheila Royle**, *Vice Chair HMP Altcourse*

As one of the founder members of the new National Council, which started its work in December 2003, can I first of all say what a privilege it was to represent the 16 Boards in the North-West who supported and encouraged me in every way for the four years of my tenure, and from whom I have received so many lovely messages and gifts and even a special night out to celebrate my retirement. A very big thank you to you



Sheila Royle

all. My thanks also to North-west Area Manager, Ian Lockwood, who was generous in his sharing of information and in hosting our area meetings.

I would also like to pay tribute to my fellow Council members, 14 in all, including those who started with me, but retired after two or three years, and those who joined in their places in the third and fourth years. We have always

worked well as a team, even with the shifting dynamics, and I enjoyed working with them all. We had a lot of fun and friendship as well as many difficult issues to thrash out.

Our esteemed first President, Sir Peter Lloyd, whose vision and drive led to the establishment of the National Council, retired too at the end of 2007. Over the years we have worked together my respect for Peter has grown. When I was first appointed I was somewhat in awe of an ex Minister of State but he very quickly put us all at our ease and really valued the work we undertook at his behest. I am proud to have had the privilege of working with him and getting to know him as a friend.

My areas of responsibility included Healthcare and Mental Health issues. The transfer of prison health care to Primary Care Trusts happened during my four years of office and I had many meetings with Department of Health staff in Offender Health where the role of the IMB was taken into consideration and where I was often consulted about the prisoner viewpoint. I will miss these meetings and the colleagues I met in the course of this work but intend to stay as a member of the Healthcare Support Group which was set up 18 months ago to research and disseminate healthcare information for boards.

I was also pleased to be able to have input on your behalf into the major revision of PSO 1700 which is due to be re-issued very soon, and to be a member of a steering group which is considering the mental health of prisoners held in segregated settings.

Unusual, but very welcome, for the Prison Service to consider the views of the IMB in this way.

In my four years on the NC I estimate I have driven nearly 8,000 miles in my car on NC business and attended approximately 200 meetings, workshops and conferences, including 27 of the 29 two-day NC meetings held during my period of office. I have made over 50 trips to London, spending more than 250 hours on Virgin Trains, and more than 60 nights away from home. I enjoyed it all, even though it was frequently very tiring, demanding and, at times, frustrating.

I am writing this at home at the desk where I fielded and responded to probably 5,000 e-mails over the years, wrote numerous minutes, notes and letters, and made umpteen phone calls. When I was doing this I never felt alone because I was in such frequent contact with so many other people, friends and colleagues and since I stepped down I have missed the 'buzz' and the thrill of being 'in the loop'.

These four years as a National Council member were rewarding and stimulating, and I will count them as a very special period in my life. Thank you to the boards in the North-west who elected me to undertake this role, and thank you to the Secretariat for helping me to carry it out, especially to Anne-Marie who has been such a good friend and support to me. I am proud of the work the National Council has done so far on behalf of Boards and I wish the present Council, and its new President Dr Peter Selby, every success for the future.

## Going National

■ **Richard Gully**, *HMP Parkhurst*

I served on the National Council for four years from its inception. The National Council evolved from recommendations in the Sir Peter Lloyd report on Boards of Visitors in 2001.

I had previously served on the two national bodies, the Co-ordinating Committee and the National Advisory Council, however the National Council was to be led by Sir Peter as President and required by the

Minister to implement many of the recommendations in the Lloyd report.

This would prove to be a very challenging programme for the next four years.



*Richard Gully*

The Council would have eight prison representatives based on Prison Service Areas and one representative for Immigration Removal Centres. These were to be elected posts where each IMB member had an opportunity to vote for their representative.

I was elected to represent London, Thames Valley, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. As such, I felt a strong allegiance to the constituents in these areas and worked to highlight the many constituency concerns at a national level. Due to the large number of policy developments one could easily forget that we were on the council due to election by our peer group. The council members were acutely aware that we could be viewed as a special clique detached from the electorate.

I had the pleasure of meeting many Boards and their members in the course of my time on the National Council. The level of dedication and will to become more professional in carrying out their duties has grown over the four years, against a background of overcrowding, changing prisoner profiles and demands, often with low Board membership.

I had the additional benefit of being a National Tutor, where I met a wide range of Board members. Here the most noticeable improvement is with new members who come to their national course after a good induction programme, now part of the probationary year.

Whilst recruitment remains a real challenge with so many other organisations, some of which pay an honorarium, seeking volunteers, the most serious concern is the high turnover of members within the first year or so. Are Boards being honest about the time commitment and when appointed are the new members made welcome and supported as they learn the complexities of the work? Good mentoring is essential.

At the other end of the scale is the role of the Chair, whose demand on their time and expertise has greatly increased. I have been pleased to be involved in the increased recognition of the Vice Chair's contribution and the encouragement of delegation throughout the board membership. The sum of the membership's contribution as a team is an essential part of a Board's success.

Boards increasingly need to review their performance, the efficient use of resources available to them, and the changing requirements of their client base. Annual Team Performance Reviews and development of strategic plans for the year ahead with progress monitoring is an essential part of a Board's tool box.

There are an increasing number of issues Boards are facing, healthcare delivered by the Primary Care Trusts, particularly mental health treatment, foreign nationals, radicalisation, juvenile and young offenders, overcrowding, clustering and Titan goals. All this against a background of reduced prison budgets.

IMBs will have to react to these demands with revised methods of monitoring.

The Thematic approach to some of these issues will provide a much more reasoned record of our concerns to take forward to the Minister and management. Likewise we should continue to challenge prison service targets and their outcomes, which so often reflect quantity not quality.

Most importantly we must not allow our monitoring role to be eroded by management's reference to lack of resources. We should understand their difficulties but not lower our standards in reporting on the fairness and treatment of people in custody.

The risk of warehousing in place of resettlement and reintegration into the outside community must be challenged. IMB members also have a duty to the outside community. I would remind everyone to think what it would be like if the IMB did not exist in these places of custody.

The achievements of the National Council over the last four years must be built on if IMBs are to carry out their role effectively in an ever changing Prison/IRC environment. Support from the National Council and the Secretariat will be vital to their success.

Finally, my thanks to Sir Peter Lloyd as our President, Anne-Marie Stephens in the Secretariat and the colleagues on the National Council I had the pleasure to work with over the last four years.

# Leaving the National Council

■ **Jo Jenkins MBE, HMP Parc**



Jo Jenkins

Reflecting on a four year period is not an easy feat; especially as the four year period in question, 2004–2007, saw the first four action packed years in the life of the National Council.

Born out of Sir Peter Lloyd's "Review", the National Council

looked to move away from the advisory role of its predecessor. Within months of our first meeting in December 2003, NC members were beginning to understand the Boards and issues within their area(s), and to be assigned lead areas of responsibility. I soon discovered that even innocuous task and finish jobs had the potential to take on a life of their own, and that the words "I thought you might like to know that..." spoken by an IMB colleague at the beginning of an early morning telephone call could see half the week disappear.

Many of my memories of the period trigger pictures of places; often hotels or draughty train stations, and of the faces or voices of individuals. While it became almost second nature to bump into senior Home Office personnel as I hurried between meetings in Westminster, it seemed strange to have communicated at length with an IMB colleague via phone, fax or email long before meeting them face to face.

My geography improved; even if my sense of direction is even now playing catch up. My understanding of the rail network developed; oh how I envied colleagues when their high-speed, well-stocked train pulled in ahead of my two coach Arriva Wales train. I learnt that the words "First" and "Great" do not sit happily alongside that of

"Western" and that the three hour train journey to, and the three hour train journey back from London, seemed to get longer every couple of weeks. Thoughts of the evening I returned to my local station to find the space I had parked my car in three days before was now in a puddle, so deep and so wide, that even a brave person in waders would think twice before venturing forth, still bring a wry smile to my face.

The pieces of work or topics assigned to me saw my knowledge base grow week by week. Drafting our Publication Scheme in response to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and working with colleagues on our Diversity Strategy were just two of a wide range of topics I came to know intimately.

Some of my greatest pleasures and sense of frustration revolved around my lead role on Contracted Prisons. While I believe the IMB members attached to the 11 contracted and three SLA prisons felt I worked hard on their behalf, progress was often limited or painfully slow.

Time to return to my new day job as Chair of the South Wales Probation Trust, and to my ongoing role on the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP & YOI Parc.

I wish Peter Selby and the National Council, in what is now its second iteration, well. I will watch their progress with great interest and some sadness as I remember the happy times as part of Sir Peter's "team". Every now and then some news item reminds me of the people I worked with and grew to like and value as friends, not just colleagues. I cannot end however, without mentioning three people for whom I have an immense respect; Sir Peter, Norman McLean and Anne-Marie Stephens. I enjoyed working with you. As for my IMB colleagues in Wales and the West Midlands, I have left you in very safe hands, those of Barbara Bradbury. Hwyl.

# IRC Annual Conference – an overview

■ **Peter Finimore**, *Dover IRC*

The early indications were promising, documentation in advance seemed to provide all that was needed, in good time. Arriving at the hotel in Cambridge we were welcomed by a team from the IMB Secretariat and given yet more documents that were well written and comprehensive, and suggested that this would be a slickly managed event. But would it last? Would we be initiated into the mysteries of monitoring and helped to understand why we monitor and how we can do it better? Would the fog of acronyms and strange bodies with apparently overlapping responsibilities be dispelled? Or would we have to suffer a succession of jargon-filled, boring speeches and discussions between experienced members that would mean little to a novice like me?

In my opinion it did last. Anna Thomas-Betts was an excellent Chair, ensuring things ran to time with tactful nudges to the few speakers who overran. She worried us a little when she spoke about disruption caused by last minute changes to the programme. I wouldn't have noticed.

Dr Peter Selby, the new National Council President, made a most positive start. 'Things will get rougher and we will have to get rougher' and '... more muscular'. Initially a little shocked by this rallying call, I then realised that he was talking about getting our messages across at a national level rather than the way we conduct ourselves in our IRC! The cancellation of attendance by the Government Minister and the Minister's failure to acknowledge, let alone act upon, IMB annual reports had clearly provoked anger. Important as this issue is, I could not help feeling that the day to day work of IMB members in their local settings is at least as important. There is little likelihood of any Government doing much to improve the lot of detainees given the xenophobia that pervades electorates. In the meantime, IMBs can achieve much by helping individuals and pressing IRC managers whenever systems and practices cause unfairness or insufficient

respect for detainees' dignity and rights. But back to the conference. Most of the speakers were good, some very good. They addressed us directly and very few relied excessively on their Powerpoint slides, with perhaps one notable exception (from the private sector!). There was never a shortage of questions from the audience, leading to a good feeling of debate rather than being 'talked at'. All the speakers were introduced, in some cases succinctly and effectively, in a few cases by members who seized the opportunity to make their own speeches. At least we didn't have to suffer the introducers being introduced!

Outside the conference, a few people criticised some of the speakers for talking down to us or being boring; and criticised some of the questioners for raising relatively minor issues without linking them to the bigger picture. I disagree. The overall standard of presentations was good bearing in mind what a difficult task it is; and it was good that members had a chance to discuss things that caused them concern in their IMB work. With a little effort, it wasn't difficult to link the issues raised to the major themes.

I thought that the best speaker was Dr Stuart Morgan, the Managing Medical Officer at IRC Haslar. After telling the best joke of the conference, he gave an excellent summary of research into the adverse psychological effects of detention on the mental health of those detained. We learned of a Detention Centre Rule that the mentally ill should not be detained. Research has shown that in fact that they are more likely to be detained than the mentally healthy! He himself was troubled by the possibility that doctors sometimes inadvertently colluded with improper detention and invited us to consider whether IMBs did so as well. Some people thought he exaggerated the reliability of some research findings – but if only a fraction of what we learnt was accurate, we had plenty of food for thought to keep in our minds as we undertake monitoring.

The BIA speakers told us very clearly about what had been achieved and what was planned. In question and answer sessions issues like the adverse effects of frequent movement of detainees (often at unearthly hours) and how to improve care of detainees' property were explored in depth. We heard many promises about improvements to come. We later heard from experienced members that unfulfilled promises were nothing new. This reinforced something that struck me when the speaker from the Criminal Casework Directorate showed a slide summarising her department's plans to improve. The list could perhaps have been condensed into the phrase 'bumble along as usual'.

Nevertheless, the openness of the BIA speakers and their recognition of things that must improve was striking. Lin Homer's appearance at dinner, apparently at short notice following the Minister's pull-out, was one of the conference highlights. She overcame a misbehaving microphone to answer a series of members' questions, speaking frankly about the key issues. In some ways it was just as well that the Minister didn't turn up: he was replaced by someone willing to answer the questions!

Fiona Cooper was particularly effective at explaining the role of DEPMU (not sure what it stands for yet but it has something to do with shifting detainees around the country) and the difficulties she faces in managing the population. She clearly cared about the harm caused to detainees by frequent, sometimes unnecessary, transfers and set out the improvement plans. She also stayed for the whole conference. She engaged her audience with four questions, finally asking whether IMBs are (a) a necessary evil (b) an unnecessary evil or (c) a force for good practice and change? At least most of us were able to get that one right.

The session with G4S was valuable, giving an insight into the way in which the mixed public sector/private sector provision of detention services actually functions. The interminable lists of actions planned and actions completed seemed at first sight to be impressive. But was it anything more than window dressing designed to hide what was really going on? And perhaps designed to leave no time for awkward questions? And did we really believe their assertion that 'making a profit is not our motive'?



*IRC Conference Group Discussion Session*

The two general discussion groups I joined worked well. They were a good opportunity to discuss with members from other IRCs how to tackle typical day to day issues that arise during rota visits. They could, however, have benefited from having a little more time allocated.

The other workshop I attended, on diversity, was, perhaps, less successful. In the preceding session, Bilkis Malek had cut out the jargon and given a convincing explanation of the diversity strategy and how it could be applied. Short role plays were enacted to make key points effectively. To me the most memorable point she made was to ask whether the regime of activities in IRCs benefited the people who most needed to be lifted out of boredom or depression. This leads to the thought that in our IMB work we perhaps concentrate too much on people who make applications to see us. Maybe we should try harder to identify depressed and apathetic detainees who are too frightened or are unable to make applications to see us.

The diversity workshop, however, began with a rather unstructured brainstorm on what diversity means to us. This was not very well linked to a discussion of draft diversity statements for each IMB and to a model

for proactive diversity monitoring. Given the time available to the average board of volunteers it seemed to most of us that the expectations were over-optimistic. The workshop facilitator seemed to be advocating a very aggressive approach towards IRC managers if they didn't cooperate. Most of us thought that a more conciliatory approach towards managing these key relationships would often produce better results.

The venue seemed to me to be most suitable. The food, while not exceptional, was pretty good and the bars were very pleasant (but not the prices!). Meeting members from other sites around the country was a great opportunity to exchange views about how IMBs operate. When I became an IMB member I hadn't realised what an eminent, sophisticated and diverse group I was joining.

So, to sum up, it was a good conference. For this new member the fog of acronyms and strange bodies with overlapping responsibilities was at least to some extent dispelled. I gained new insights into the purpose of IMBs and lots of new ideas about how I might do a better job for the detainees and for the IMB where I work.

## Opening Speech

■ **Hashi Syedain**, *Chair Harmondsworth IRC*

"We have to get rougher in rough times. For our job as IMB members is nothing less than standing up for people who are in danger of losing their stature as human beings." These were the rousing words of Dr Peter Selby, new president of the National Council, as he opened the IRC conference, in place of Immigration Minister Liam Byrne.

Dr Selby observed that the current social climate was far from benign for immigration detainees and that many people do not care very much whether they are treated with fairness and respect. In this climate, he said, IMBs have to become more assertive and Ministers must expect us to report widely and go public with our concerns if we feel they are not being heard.

"We must move towards a greater muscularity, look at how we work and focus on the areas where we can make the most difference," he said. Dr Selby also urged IMBs in the IRC estate to work more closely with their prison colleagues and focus on common areas.

"The people we represent may not have the rights of citizens," said Dr Selby, "But they have the stature and status of human persons that it doesn't depend on a Minister to confer. The work we do as IMBs is in defence of that status."



*Peter Selby*

# Dr Stuart Morgan

■ **Hashi Syedain**, *Chair Harmondsworth RC*

All IMB members are acutely aware of the problems faced by detainees with mental health issues. Dr Stuart Morgan, the Managing Medical Officer at Haslar IRC, gave an impassioned presentation to the conference on mental healthcare in IRCs, highlighting in particular the detrimental affect that detention has on mental health.

He cited studies conducted in the US, Australia and the UK, which show that people in detention suffer more mental health problems than those outside and that the indeterminate length of detention stays is a particularly important risk factor for a worsening mental state.

The Robijant study, published in July 2007, covered detained and non-detained asylum seekers in the UK, as well as detained ex-FNPs. It found that all groups scored highly for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder but that those detained suffered more than those in the community and that detention was the highest predictor of depression and anxiety.

Dr Morgan also addressed the difficulty of providing mental healthcare in IRCs. Detainees face scepticism about claims of torture and the distressing experience of detention. They do not necessarily trust healthcare staff

and suffer a lack of continuity of care as they get moved around the estate.

Few are better placed to talk about mental health in detention than Dr Morgan.

Aside from having worked with detainees at Haslar since the beginning of his career as a GP, Dr Morgan has been commissioned by the new UK Border Agency (formerly Border and Immigration Agency) to conduct an audit of the healthcare facilities in the contracted out estate. As part of that process he has already visited several establishments and will be visiting the rest in the coming months.

Dr Morgan urged IMB members to be vigilant in looking out for detainees who seemed particularly down. He said not to lose heart and feel that we can't make a difference. He ended his presentation with the poem *Sometimes* by Sheenagh Pugh, which concludes,

"Sometimes our best efforts do not go amiss, sometimes we do as we meant to."



Stuart Morgan

## Annual IRC Conference The Panel Session

■ **Wendy Williams**, *Harmondsworth IRC*

A panel comprising of Norman Mclean, Head of the IMB Secretariat, Alan Kittle, Detention Services' Head of Operations, The Prison and Probation Ombudsman, Stephen Shaw, and Richard Lumley of the Refugee Council provided one of the most informative sessions during this extremely interesting and useful conference. This is a short résumé of that Q and A session.

In earlier discussion groups, delegates had been encouraged to consider which issues seemed to be of

greatest concern, either to detainees or to the IMB members themselves. Not surprisingly many of the same concerns were raised by all discussion groups.

The first issue presented to the panel was that of loss of property and the enormous distress this causes detainees. We have all spent long and frustrating periods of time trying to locate property that has been lost or is unaccounted for and have gone round in circles trying to unite detainees with their property.

According to the Ombudsman, this is also the bane of his life and is the largest single category of complaints received by his office. Stephen Shaw puts the problem down to the very outdated systems that are in place. He also noted the unwillingness of prisons and escorting services to take responsibility when property is lost or damaged. Alan Kittle was quite clear that from wherever a detainee comes, a police station, another IRC, or from prison, the escorting agent is responsible for checking with the detainee whether there is property to be collected. It is at this point that any property problems should be resolved. As Alan said, this is a cross-agency problem but the bottom line is that a detainee must be compensated if property is lost or damaged while in the care of the Detention Services. This is obviously only right and proper. However, it would be good to know that a more robust and transparent system could be put in place to lessen the distress of detainees and reduce the time spent by custody and welfare officers, as well as by the IMB, on what should not be an intractable problem.

On most rota visits, IMB members will almost certainly be presented with a problem relating to the complaints system. In the discussion groups, many delegates were of the view that there should be more independence and transparency in the investigation of these complaints. Stephen Shaw responded that, when a complaint reaches his office, there is certainly transparency; and he noted that there had been changes in the complaints system, especially in IRCs. However, he went on to say that he is worried about the small number of complaints received by his office relating to IRCs and escorting agencies. It would be expected that the most serious complaints, including allegations of assault, would be seen by the Ombudsman. The fact that this is not happening is a cause of serious concern and he urged Board members to refer to his office any complaint that they felt was not being handled satisfactorily. Norman Mclean reiterated this and emphasised that it is part of every Board's responsibility to ensure that a robust complaints system is in place in their centre.



*Panel Session Members*

Alan Kittle noted that as from the 25th February the team responsible for investigating serious complaints has transferred from Detention Services to BIA's Professional Standards Unit. All IMBs will welcome Alan Kittle's commitment to working with Stephen Shaw's office and also his agreement to provide Chairs of IMBs at IRCs with a flow diagram illustrating the complaints procedures. This should clarify the routes that detainees' complaints can take.

Another question raised by many delegates was the issue of how detainees are prepared for leaving an IRC. Stephen Shaw pointed out that the Chief Inspector uses the same template for judging both IRCs and prisons and that preparation for release or removal is a key issue. It is part of the IMB role to monitor, for example, the opportunities available to detainees to acquire skills that will facilitate their adjustment to post-institutional life. We should also be conscious of how easy or difficult it is for detainees in IRCs to maintain contact with their family, their friends and their community. We also need to be aware, as Norman Mclean pointed out, that returning to their country of origin can be a huge culture shock. In this regard, Alan Kittle welcomed the introduction of internet access in many centres, commenting that this had enabled contact with other countries. This facility will soon be available in all centres. Nevertheless, as Richard Lumley noted, facilities vary greatly between centres. He felt that improved information was needed and it might well ease the stress of transfer for detainees if they at least knew something about the centre to which they were being moved. It was encouraging to hear from Alan that he is about to commission a review of welfare which will engage with a range of stakeholders, including IMBs, to look at operational standards that affect detainees on arrival in detention, during their time in our centres and on release.

The final issue raised with the panel leads on from this. In the discussion groups, delegates had expressed concern about the mental health of detainees and about the psychological effects of detention. This topic was later covered in greater depth in an excellent presentation by Dr Stuart Morgan.

Norman Mclean felt that the number of movements around the estate was a contributory factor to the stress felt by detainees. This had been discussed in an earlier session with DEPMU and G4S. Norman's view was that much greater strategic planning is necessary. Another cause of distress mentioned by Stephen Shaw is uncertainty; uncertainty about issues within the centres, including the length of time that they are going to be in the centre and about their prospects after leaving. Any measures taken to provide greater certainty will help to alleviate this distress. He also commented that the more life in the centre can be integrated with life outside, the easier it is for detainees to cope. Stephen stressed that certain groups of people such as non English speakers can feel particularly isolated. As IMB members, we are all aware of the danger that such people can be overlooked and their distress remains unrecognised.

Richard Lumley expressed the view that there are people in detention whose mental health condition has not been diagnosed and who should not be in detention. He argued that processes are not in place to review the mental health of detainees and to release where necessary and that current procedures are not adequate to identify individuals who, for example, are the victims of torture. Alan Kittle added that his role was not to defend policies but to ensure that they were carried out with humanity. One development that he feels will make life easier for detainees is the improvement that is planned in the way activities are delivered. He acknowledged that the activities currently provided in many of the centres are geared towards short-term stays whereas the proportion of detainees staying for longer periods has increased over the last 18 months or so. Within the next few weeks there is to be a complete review, which will result in a programme that is more suitable for long-term detainees. Alan was hopeful that this development will improve the quality of life for detainees.

Many more issues were raised by delegates in the discussion groups but there was no time to present them to the panel. It had been a lively and wide-ranging discussion which gave us all a very useful opportunity to air some of our concerns.

# IMB Website [www.imb.gov.uk](http://www.imb.gov.uk)

■ **By Laura Armstrong**, *Communications Manager, IMB Secretariat*

Following a year of technical difficulties, most of which have been out of our control, the IMB website has recently been updated and is fully functional. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused and look forward to making better use of this valuable resource. The website is easy to use and it is easy to navigate from one section to another. As there are few graphics, the website also has fast accessibility.

The screenshot shows the IMB website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, A-Z index, Accessibility, Site directory, and Site map. A search bar is positioned on the right side of the header. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, there is a vertical menu with links such as 'Becoming a Member', 'Volunteer Profiles', 'Frequently Asked Questions', 'Locate Your Local Board', 'Annual Reports', 'Existing IMB Members', 'Contact Us', 'Useful Links', and 'IMBs in the News'. The central section is titled 'WHAT'S NEW TO THIS SITE' and contains a welcome message and a 'NEWS' section with several articles. On the right, there is a 'FOR MEMBERS' section with a list of links, a 'FIND A REPORT' section, and a 'RELATED WEBSITES' section with links to various government and justice-related websites.

## Attracting new IMB Members

The first four hyperlinks in the menu on the left hand side of the Home page direct members of the public to general information about the work of the IMB and its members. If any existing Member would like their 'story' to be published in the 'Member Profile' area of the website, please email Laura Armstrong in the Secretariat.

## IMB Member Information

There is some helpful information in the 'Existing Members' section of the website. This can be accessed by clicking the hyperlink on the left of the web page. Within this section, you will be able to find information such as stationery templates to download, copies of 'Dear Chair' and 'Dear Board Member' letters and a copy of the IMB reference book. The reference book can be downloaded to your own computer, but at over 280 pages, I wouldn't recommend it is printed! You can use it as a useful resource and just print the appropriate pages as and when required.

## Annual Reports

There is also a section for annual reports. Many of the annual reports from as far back as 2002 are available. The annual reports that were originally supplied to the Secretariat in electronic format have been uploaded. If there are any gaps, please email the electronic file to Michael Poole who will then upload it to the website for you. (Michael's contact details are printed in the inside back cover of this publication.) We can only upload those annual reports that are received in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format. We regret that we are unable to upload 'paper' versions.

The Communications Working Group are working on ideas to make improved use of the website and are interested to find the views of members. If any member would like to make suggestions or can think of information that may be helpful to share with other members, or indeed, potential new members, please call or email Laura Armstrong on 020 7035 2265 or [laura.armstrong9@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:laura.armstrong9@justice.gsi.gov.uk).

# New Lead Trainer

■ **Norman McLean**, *Head of IMB Secretariat* ■ **Steve Reeves**, *Training Representative National Council*

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Doug Merriman as the new leader of the National Training Team. For those who don't know him (and that can't be many!), he is a member of the IMB at HMP The Mount.

Doug took up this appointment as lead trainer recently and has already started to suggest changes to national training policies and procedures. We wish him well in this venture.

# IMB Secretariat

■ **Norman McLean**, *Head of IMB Secretariat*

As many of you will know, the IMB Secretariat were previously part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) of the Home Office and remained within NOMS when it transferred from the Home Office to the Ministry of Justice. This is to let you know that with

effect from 1 April 2008, the Secretariat transferred from NOMS, which now has operational responsibility for the Prison Service and the Probation Service – to the Criminal Justice Group of the Ministry of Justice. This Group is headed by Helen Edwards.

## Prohibition on conveying articles into prisons

■ **Norman McLean**, *Head of IMB Secretariat*

With effect from 1 April 2008, certain sections of the Offender Management Act (OMA) 2007 were implemented and, as a result, it is now a criminal offence to:

- take in or take out of a prison, without authorisation, certain articles, including mobile phones and drugs
- use within the prison, without authority, certain items such as cameras and sound recording devices
- take out of a prison, without prior authorisation, "restricted documents" (e.g. many official documents), including prisoner files and photographs.

Subject to the seriousness of the offence, the penalties can range from 10 years' imprisonment to a fine of £1,000.

Guidance will be issued to IMBs on this subject as soon as possible.

In the meantime, IMB members are encouraged to obtain more details on this subject from the Head of Security in their own establishment.

# Media and Recruitment Tips for Boards

■ **Laura Armstrong**, *Communications Manager, IMB Secretariat*

A media workshop was held at Ashley House last year. It was attended by members of the IMB Communications Working Group (CWG) and IMB Members from some of the London Boards. This was a two-way workshop, aimed at listening to and understanding the media and recruitment needs of IMBs and also to provide some media assistance and ideas to the Boards in attendance. It is acknowledged that due to the density in population of London, these Boards have different needs than those in more rural areas. Analysis of this workshop has determined the necessity for further development, and another workshop is planned for later in the year in the north of the country.

In the meantime, it was felt by the CWG that it would be helpful to share some of the tips and ideas discussed at the workshop, which are as below:

- Appoint a dedicated press and/or recruitment person or small team within each Board to focus on media and recruitment.
- Target the local audience.
- Find local media contacts. It is important to build relationships with radio and local newspapers.
- Always have a press release for annual reports. This makes it easy for the journalist and the publication of an article is more likely.
- Media coverage or publication of any article is excellent for recruitment as interviews and publicity are free.
- Privacy is important – never include home addresses of IMB Members.
- In addition to the recruitment benefit, representation of the IMB to the community is also important.
- It is helpful to practise radio interviews, by role playing with colleagues and/or family.

Gerald Main, an IMB Member from Warren Hill, was also present at the workshop. Gerald has a great deal of experience from his extensive career in the media and radio.

His tips for radio and TV interviews are as below:

- Be prepared and arrive early, perhaps by half an hour.
- It is essential to be completely familiar with the subject.
- For radio, don't write lots of notes. Take bullet points on a card, e.g.:
  - a. X is good
  - b. X is work in progress, etc.
- Do not script your speech.
- Tell the truth. If not, you will be found out.
- Speak normally and don't use jargon. For example, don't talk about NOMS, IMB etc as the general public will not understand.
- For radio and TV it is important to know the context and understand the editorial guidelines. You must ask who else is having their say, for example.
- Be aware of the time you have available, e.g. two minutes or five minutes in order to make the most of it.
- Keep the interview interesting, it must not be boring or dull.
- Always aim for quality. The interview must be done in the studio, and not in a car via a mobile. This will allow you to take a bit more control.
- More people listen to early morning radio rather than late night. Therefore, two minutes at 06:30 is preferable to 30 minutes at 22:30. (More people watch TV later in the day.)
- Always try to get honest feedback from others, e.g. Board Members. This will help you to improve, for example to ensure you don't say 'um' too often. Try to get a recording of the interview. Radio stations don't usually provide this, so ask a colleague to record it for you.
- Ensure you give out the IMB website address. (This is very useful to write on the card.)

# Extracts from 2007 Annual Reports

■ **Angela Clay**, *HMP East Sutton Park*

Angela Clay, from the IMB at HMP East Sutton Park, who is a member of the Communications Working Group compiled the following article, which highlights some of the key issues raised by Boards in their 2007 Annual Reports.

**HMP BELMARSH** is a local prison for remand and short-sentenced prisoners from South-East London and parts of Essex, but it is also a high security establishment housing Category A prisoners on remand and awaiting trials at the Central Criminal Court.

Yet again, the Board must highlight the delay between deaths in custody and coroners' inquests. Not only are these tragic incidents in themselves but the trauma experienced by families and staff during these delays can be unbearable. Whilst recognising the need for thorough investigations to be undertaken, it is, nevertheless, absolutely unacceptable for these inquests to be delayed for up to four years as at present.

**Overcrowding** remains a big issue with the establishment operating at its operational capacity limit most of the time. This allows the jail next to no flexibility in the allocation of accommodation to prisoners. Recent discussions at national level about resource reductions over the next three years have only served to increase anxiety about the prison's future ability to meet prisoners' basic needs.

**Vulnerable prisoners** can be locked-up for up to 22 hours a day in their mainly three-man cells. Although in very recent times serious efforts have been made to reduce the number of these men on overflow, the Board feels that, at times, their treatment has bordered on the inhumane.

**HMP BIRMINGHAM** is a Cat B local prison, its main brief to receive prisoners from Crown and Magistrates Courts. The population includes remand and convicted prisoners including lifers and those awaiting sentence.

**Overcrowding** generally, and especially in reception. Prisoners are brought to Birmingham far from their homes. They may have been sentenced in Manchester or Dover and sent to Birmingham for lack of available space. Overcrowding affects most wings and most activities.

**Lifers and IPPS prisoners** – and the lack of provision for them. This concern was raised last year, but the numbers have increased. Birmingham prison is not profiled to provide the types of programme required by Probation before their release can be considered.

**Foreign Nationals** – some Foreign Nationals are still held in the Prison long after completing their sentences or Detainee/Deportees are held for considerably lengthy periods instead of returning to Detention Centres.

**Deaths in Custody** – during the year there were three, one of which was from natural causes, an inquest has already been held. Another is suspected from natural causes, but is awaiting an inquest; in the third instance, a prisoner has been charged with the murder of his cell mate. A trial or inquest is yet to be held. **Five inquests have taken place and two others are outstanding; one from December 2005, and one from March 2006.**

The Board continues to have concerns at the number of prisoners held in Segregation who appear to have **mental health** problems; indeed one prisoner was held on CC who was awaiting a place at a secure unit.

**BLANTYRE HOUSE** is a Category C semi-open prison. Reparation work in the local community is an important part of the resettlement programme.

Once risk assessed, groups of four to six offenders supervised by a prison officer go out to work on projects. Over the past year their tasks have included graffiti clearance, fence building, general maintenance as well as painting and decorating. Beneficiaries have included village schools, parish councils and local charities.

The Construction Department offers City & Guilds accreditation in Painting and Decorating and Plastering in a new larger workshop. Learners achieve good standards of work and retention is good; Plastering 100% retention and 93% achievement, Painting & Decorating 100% retention and achievement. There is good evidence of employment within the construction industry once the offenders leave Blantyre House

**HMP BRIXTON** is a Category B male local prison which serves a number of courts in South London.

**Deaths in Custody** – There have been six deaths in custody at HMP Brixton this year. All the deaths were handled appropriately and professionally by staff at HMP Brixton, both in terms of notifying the family, reporting the death to the Ombudsman, and dealing with those prisoners and staff affected by the death. However, to date, no inquests have been held for any of the deaths listed above, and no final reports have been received from the Ombudsman.

Overall, the prison has made strides towards improving visits, and overcoming some of the problems that have persisted, most notably the visits booking system which had been the source of much frustration for visitors. The atmosphere in the visits hall seems positive, and officers have helped to create a welcoming environment for visitors.

**HMP CHELMSFORD** is a Local Category B prison for remand prisoners, young prisoners aged 18-21 (YPs) and adults with sentences ranging from a few weeks to life.

**Death in Custody** – as recorded in last year's Annual Report, the time which elapses between a Death in Custody and an Inquest is unacceptable.

**HMP LONG LARTIN** is a dispersal prison within the High Security Estate. The population of Long Lartin consists mainly of prisoners with long sentences

**Life Sentenced Prisoners** – The Board has recently discovered that there are 12 lifers in Long Lartin who have yet to be given their tariffs. It is shocking to find that they have been waiting for between three and seven years.

**HMP MORTON HALL** holds convicted adult female prisoners serving predominantly long term sentences.

The food provided ensures all prisoners get a balanced and nutritional diet; in fact it is interesting to note that we get few complaints about the quality of food provided, receiving more about the quantity and size of portions, which is monitored and felt to be more than sufficient.

The Board has observed great efforts being made by all staff to ensure that religious festivals, requiring specific foods, are managed with skill and sensitivity.

**HMP NEW HALL** (Female) By the Minister's own admission, too many people with mental health problems continue to be imprisoned. The Minister also commented that prison staff have the opportunity to receive mental health training via the mental health in-reach team. This is, of course, to be welcomed but many staff do not believe that they entered the prison service to become 'mental health counsellors'.

**HMP PRESTON** Category B male local prison.

**Safer Custody and Suicide Prevention:** We regret to report that in the 12 month reporting period there were **four deaths in custody**. However, we should point out our concern at the quite unacceptable delays in holding these inquests: we have just been informed (April 2007) that the inquest into a death in custody that occurred in January 2004 will be held in May 2007.

Of a prison roll of 720, no more than 350 have some form of work, education or training: half of the prisoners have nothing constructive to do. No constructive activity means little or no chance of

rehabilitation and even further reduced chances of successful reintegration into the community.

This is not to downplay our continuing concerns over those men sent to prison with severe and continuing **mental health** problems; an over-crowded and under resourced local prison must be the worst possible environment for such men to live, yet they continue to come and will do so for the foreseeable future in the light of the appalling shortage of alternative and relevant accommodation.

**HMP STYAL** – a female closed prison.

**Mentally ill women** are held in very restricted conditions, which by the admission of all concerned only serves to exacerbate their symptoms.

In an establishment where one death in custody, 35 “near misses” (**attempted suicides**), and 1,532 incidents of self-harm have been recorded in a 12 month period, the staff remain under relentless pressure, and the conditions in which they operate very often do not mirror their high standards.

The lack of suitable psychiatric accommodation for women who are deemed by Mental health professionals to be too ill to remain at the prison, and the delay in finding such beds which are urgently required.

**HMP WAYLAND** is an adult male Category C training prison. It is a calm and purposeful establishment, which is reflected in the care of prisoners by well-motivated staff and management.

Wayland’s **Healthcare** Department has performed professionally and well in difficult and, sometimes provocative circumstances. The least it deserves is to be provided with the additional new recruits to meet the very significant new demands that are certain to be placed upon it.

High Performing Prison pays great attention to its resettlement policy and targets. When prisoners are released, they have received the best information,

training and guidance possible to prepare themselves to return to their home areas better equipped to live law-abiding lives.

**HMP WHITEMOOR** is one of the eight prisons in England in the ‘High Security Estate.

**Mental health** services were particularly inadequate, especially given the needs of the population. The management of the pharmacy services was lamentable, bordering on the dangerous. Healthcare staff were unable to provide proper support for safe detoxification. Nor were there appropriate arrangements for older prisoners, in spite of the best efforts of a very energetic prison officer.

The problems of prisoners with mental health issues continue to be a cause of tremendous concern to the Board as well as the prison itself. It is the Board’s opinion that the main reason for so many people with **mental health** issues remaining in prisons, and HMP Whitemoor in particular, is because the “Care in the Community” policy has very largely failed.

**HMP WINCHESTER** is a local Category B prison.

**Overcrowding** – HMP Winchester is suffering, like many others, from the effects of overcrowding. The problems are not eased by the constant churn of prisoners.

**Length of sentence** – Many prisoners do not know how long their detention in custody will last. The period of uncertainty may last for several weeks, and the Board considers this unacceptable.

**IPP Prisoners** – There are 23 prisoners at HMP Winchester who are subject to indeterminate sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). As a local community prison, Winchester cannot offer any offending behaviour and rehabilitation courses, and such courses are oversubscribed at other prisons. The result is that prisoners may spend long periods of time unable to address their offending behaviour; this is not only unfair to the individuals but also undermines the principle of public protection.

# IMB Training Courses 2008

## NEW MEMBERS' COURSE

11–12 June	MacDonald's Hotel, Manchester
27–28 June	Holiday Inn, Eastleigh near Southampton
15–16 August	Aztec Hotel, Bristol
26–27 September	Marriott Hotel, Waltham Abbey (Essex)
7–8 November	Marriott Hotel, York

## EXPERIENCED MEMBERS' COURSE

18–19 July	Marriott Hotel, York
10–11 October	Holiday Inn, Eastleigh nr Southampton
24–25 October	Aztec Hotel, Bristol

This course is aimed at members of the Board who have been on the Board at least three years and have

not attended an Experienced Members course in the previous three years.

## EXPERIENCED MEMBERS' COURSE 2 – Pilot Workshops

(Themed as a general discussion group.)

27–29 November	Marriott Hotel, Leicester
	(Themed as a workshop on issues relating to Foreign Nationals.)

These pilot sessions are designed for members who have been on the Board for at least six years and who have not been on an Experienced Members' Course in the last three years.

Please note the change of venue for the New Members' Course on 15 – 16 August and the Experienced Members' Course on 24 – 25 October from the Menzies Hotel, Bath to the Aztec Hotel Bristol.

For more information on the above courses please contact Rodney Bowles at [rodney.bowles@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rodney.bowles@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)



IMB Members attending a training course

# Letters to Chairs and Board Members

## Letters (to Chairs of IMBs in Prisons & IRCs)

DC	IMM	Title
DC 01/08	IMM 01/08	Minutes of the NC Meeting 5 Dec 2007
DC 02/08	IMM 02/08	Update and Guidance on FN Prisoners
DC 03/08	IMM 03/09	Dr Peter Selby Press Launch
DC 05/08	IMM 04/08	IMB Role in the Event of Industrial Action etc
DC 06/08	IMM 05/08	Minutes of NC Meeting 6 February
DC 07/07	IMM 06/08	Review of Financial Loss Allowances (FLA)
DC 08/08		Prisons Annual Conference 2008

## DBM Letters (to all IMB Members)

DBM 01/08	Letter from New President to Members
DBM 02/08	Important Information on Expenses
DBM 03/08	Security Information
DBM 04/08	Prisons Annual Conference 2008 (IMBs in Prisons only)

You can now view DC letters online – visit [www.imb.gov.uk](http://www.imb.gov.uk) and select the section for existing IMB members. This will be updated shortly.

# Prison Service Instructions

Here is the full list of Prison Service Instruction which have been issued since January 2008. The gaps in the sequence are either unissued or not available on the public internet. Full copies of the listed PSIs can be downloaded from the Prison Service website at: <http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/resourcecentre/psispsos/listpsis/>

14/2008	Change of national security clearance provider
13/2008	Use of workforce modernisation establishment implementation team functional mailbox
12/2008	Removable media memory sticks
11/2008	Amendments to prison discipline manual PSO 2000
10/2008	Use of official vehicles by C and R staff
09/2008	Offender management functional mailbox
08/2008	Terrorism offences – presumption against suitability
07/2008	Categorisation of male IPP prisoners
06/2008	Brent equipment
04/2008	Financial year end procedures 2007/08
03/2008	LIDS data entry
02/2008	Producer responsibility waste management regulations

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Please note that some email addresses have changed as a result of the move to the Ministry of Justice and are indicated above.

# The IMB National Council

NC Member	Constituency	Areas of Special Interest
 <b>Michael Davis</b>	North West	Communication.
 <b>Barbara Bradbury</b>	Wales & West Midlands	Overcrowding/Future Prison Policy (including Carter); Safer Custody in Segregation (with Lesley Harvey).
 <b>Lesley Harvey</b>	South Central	Health (especially Mental Health) with Sheila Royle; Women's Estate Segregation (with Barbara Bradbury).
 <b>John Weightman</b>	North East, Yorkshire & Humberside	Education/Skills; Juveniles/Young Offenders; Annual Reports.
 <b>Peter Booth</b>	IRCs & IHRs	IRCs and Immigration Holding Rooms; Lead on Recruitment and Retention (handing over to Richard Brown).
 <b>Jane King</b>	Kent & Sussex	Lead on Women's Estate (handing over to Lesley Harvey); Lead on Communication (handing over to Mike Davis); Lead on Annual Conference (handing over to Richard Brown).
 <b>Sue Simkin</b>	Eastern	OPCAT; Foreign Nationals; Conduct and Discipline.
 <b>Richard Brown</b>	South West	Recruitment and Retention (including Probationary Year and Reviews); Annual Conference.
 <b>Jane Wright</b>	East Midlands	Contracted Estate.
 <b>Dencer Brown</b>	Diversity Representative	Diversity.
 <b>Steve Reeves</b>	Training Representative	Training.

## IMB Key Messages

1. We monitor to ensure that people in custody are treated fairly and humanely.
2. We operate independently of the Prison and Immigration Services.
3. We are volunteers appointed by the Home Secretary to report on closed establishments on behalf of the community.
4. We have unrestricted access to prisons and immigration removal centres.
5. We listen to prisoners' and detainees' requests and complaints, privately and in confidence.
6. In prisons, we monitor the range and adequacy of programmes preparing prisoners for release.
7. We don't make the rules governing prisoners or detainees, but we see that these are properly applied.
8. We continually challenge things we are not satisfied with and take our concerns to the Home Secretary where necessary.

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