

Example of the text for a media release to recruit members.

IMB MEDIA RELEASE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO MONITOR PRISONS IN LINCOLNSHIRE AND NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Few people realise that inside every prison there is an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), a group of ordinary members of the public doing an extraordinary job. IMB members are independent and unpaid although travelling costs and some out of pocket expenses are reimbursed. They monitor the day to day life in their local prison and ensure that proper standards of care and decency are maintained.

The Vice Chairman of the IMB at HMP Ranby in North Nottinghamshire said “I never expected when I joined that it would be so interesting.” The Chairman of the Board at Morton Hall, says “membership of Independent Monitoring Boards offer a unique opportunity to develop and apply your individual skills to monitor the needs of prisoners and the concerns of staff while still maintaining your independence. It is a valuable and essential role in the community. Quite simply we are the eyes and ears of the Minister of Justice at each prison and we have to report annually on our findings and work.”

Board members are required to satisfy themselves that the prison premises are kept in order, that the administration is carried out correctly and most importantly that the prisoners are treated humanely and with dignity. Members have access to the prisons at any time and can visit any part of the establishment.

Each establishment brings its own unique challenges depending on its size, type of prisoner population and rehabilitation programmes offered. HMP Ranby is a category C adult male training prison, located near Retford, with a capacity of 1038. The other three local prisons hold a lesser number of prisoners. There are two prisons in the Lincoln area; HMP Lincoln on Greetwell Road near the local hospital is a Category B local community prison for adult male remand and convicted prisoners with a small number of unconvicted young offenders; HMP Morton Hall is a semi-open women’s prison with a large population of foreign nationals located to the south of Lincoln near Swinderby; and HMP North Sea Camp, located close to Boston, is an adult open male prison.

The Boards at all four prisons are seeking to recruit new members. The final decision on appointment will be made by the Minister of Justice. The volunteers are required to give the equivalent of at least two to three days a month but this can vary. They are also required to attend local and national training to equip them to carry out the role. Boards benefit from having members with a range of skills and backgrounds so applications from men and women as well as individuals from diverse communities and professions are encouraged.

If you would like to find out more about being an IMB member please contact the IMB Clerk based at the respective prison. They will send you an information pack and application form and will also ask the Chairman to contact you for an informal chat and arrange a familiarisation visit so you can assess whether this is the role for you.

[Insert Board contact details here]

NOTE FOR EDITORS

Visiting Committees were first introduced into the prison system in the late 18th century. By the end of the 19th century Boards of Visitors were in place in all prisons. Boards were renamed about six years ago to Independent Monitoring Boards to better reflect their role. Policy and other key decisions are made by an elected National Council. The non-executive President is the former Bishop of Worcester, Dr Peter Selby.

The Chairman of the IMB at HMP Lincoln is available for interview or further information for the Media. Initially contact the IMB Clerk at HMP Lincoln to make the necessary arrangements.