



HYDEBANK WOOD PRISON AND YOUNG OFFENDERS CENTRE
Independent Monitoring Board's Annual Report for 2005/06



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Mission Statement

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

Statement of Purpose

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board for Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre are appointed by the Secretary of State under Section 3 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (NI) 1968 and under the Prison Act (NI) 1953. The Board is required to:

- visit Hydebank Wood regularly and report to the Secretary of State on the conditions of imprisonment and the treatment of offenders;
- consider requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board;
- report matters of concern to the Governor or, in serious cases, the Secretary of State; and

- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005.

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

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



1 | Chairman's Introduction

As the Chairman of The Independent Monitoring Board for Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders' Centre, I am pleased to present its report for the period April 2005 to March 2006.

Hydebank Wood, one of the three prisons in Northern Ireland, was previously solely a Young Offenders' Centre, for which purpose it was built. However during 2004 it also became the women's prison for Northern Ireland and during the reporting year has operated both as a young offenders' centre and a women's prison. This previously created some confusion in nomenclature, since the Board previously operated as a Visiting Committee for young offenders and as a Board of Visitors for women prisoners. However the problem has now been resolved with the renaming of Boards of Visitors and the Visiting Committee – all are now Independent Monitoring Boards.

Members of the Board are all volunteers who give freely of their time with the objective of helping to ensure that prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners are satisfactory. This is effected through prison visits and resulting interfaces with both inmates and prison management, followed by consideration of issues raised and the transmission of conclusions to management and, in the last instance, to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who appoints members. It must be stressed that the Board has no management function and operates independently. In fact its operational independence has been enhanced by the assumption of secretarial and other services by the Prisoner Ombudsman's Office – a procedure which has involved learning curves being experienced by both parties. There was reference in last year's Report to the demands made on Board members' time and the resulting difficulties that arose in maintaining full Board membership, ie 15 members. Similar difficulties arose during this reporting year and vacancies in membership still exist, although recruitment is under way.

Thanks and acknowledgement must be made to a number of people. My Vice-Chairman was consistently supportive and played an important part in the Board's deliberations during a year which saw changes in the way in which we operated. He was elected to the Chair at the end of the year and I wish him every success during his Chairmanship.

All Board members responded positively to the support services changes and this contributed to the comparatively smooth transfer of these services to the Prisoner Ombudsman's office. The success of this move was of course also attributable to the Prisoner Ombudsman himself and to his staff, all of whom made positive and energetic efforts to make the transfer of responsibilities a success.

The Governor of Hydebank Wood has remained supportive to the operations of the Board. Always approachable, he reports openly and objectively about the operations of this establishment and is responsive to all questions put to him. He obviously has the confidence and support of his staff and they in turn have emulated the Governor by providing assistance to Board members whenever it has been requested.

Although the transfer of secretarial and other services to the Ombudsman's office meant that there has been less contact at some levels with Northern Ireland Prison Service Headquarters staff, the contact that remains points up the support for the Board that continues within Headquarters and there is a ready response to issues which the Board may raise.

Reid Armstrong



2 | Overview

The reporting year was one of relative calm at Hydebank Wood, despite problems arising from the increasing numbers at the prison, the continuing refurbishment programme, and issues arising from the presence, for the first full reporting year, of women prisoners at the site. The fact that this calm was experienced was not accidental but the product of efficient, purposeful and sensitive management by the governing Governor and his senior staff team, along with positive input from staff at all levels within the Prison.

During the year there were strong indications that the prison population in Northern Ireland was on an upwards path and this was the case at Hydebank Wood. The resulting pressure on prisoner accommodation was exacerbated by the continuing refurbishment programme and the occupation of single cells by two prisoners (i.e. 'doubling up') became necessary at times, although this only applied to male young offenders. The reasons behind the increasing prison population appear to be hard to define, although research into this area was entered into during the year. What will be most important is some assessment of the likely level the prison population may reach and the taking of appropriate steps to accommodate that number. At Hydebank Wood the prison's total capacity was expanded by the stratagem of doubling up, but this is neither desirable nor acceptable in the longer term.

Constructive development and expansion of facilities for women prisoners continued at Hydebank Wood during the year and, although the refurbishment programme meant that a temporary move of the women from one house to another was necessary during the year, this was effected smoothly. However the Board still holds that a new women's prison should be provided in the longer term. Whether such a prison should be based at Hydebank Wood or a new site remains an issue, it is appreciated that financial considerations may make it unavoidable that Hydebank Wood is chosen, but it will be important to ensure that any new women's prison should operate, as far as is possible, on a stand-alone basis.

Healthcare remains an area of concern. The announcement during the year that lead responsibility for this area would be transferred to the Department of Health in 2007 was welcome. Nonetheless this means that there will be continuing problems for a full reporting year after this one, ie until the new arrangement comes into effect. At the same time, it is recognised that significant improvements were effected in the healthcare area, with the appointment of additional staff and initiatives in the area of mental health.

In March 2005 HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland carried out a short unannounced inspection of Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre as a follow up to a full inspection carried out in 2001.

The report of this inspection was published in June 2005 and expressed disappointment that many of the recommendations resulting from the 2001 inspection had still not been implemented. The new recommendations were being addressed during the reporting year.

The turnover of Board members remains depressingly high. The degree of this turnover is highlighted by the fact that only three of those who were members of the old Visiting Committee of five years ago remain on the present Board. At the time of writing, recruitment of new members is in hand, but the continual and debilitating wastage of members means that valuable experience is being lost, while at the same time the learning curve of the Board membership as a whole is lengthening.

3 | Summary of recommendations

This summary of recommendations is intended as a pointer to issues raised in the Report and reference should be made to the specific areas concerned in the body of the Report.

Paragraph

- 5.2** Girls under the age of 18 should not be accommodated in Ash House.
- 5.4** The specific requirements of women prisoners need to be taken account of and female specific policies and procedures implemented as soon as possible.
- 5.8** There should be a continued use of a multi-agency approach to the assessment of and service provision for women presenting with mental ill health and personality disorders.
- 5.9** The use of 'safe dresses' and unfurnished cells as a management technique should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- 5.10** Continued consideration should be given to the provision of a custom-built prison exclusively for the needs of Northern Ireland's women.
- 6.4** An overall study should be made of the long-term accommodation requirements at Hydebank Wood with a view to the production of a strategic plan.
- 7.7** The consultation draft Child Protection Policy and Procedures should be treated as a matter of great importance.
- 7.8** Steps should be taken to implement the wearing of identification badges by prison staff.
- 7.9** An effective personal officer scheme should be introduced at Hydebank Wood.
- 7.11** Consideration should be given to transferring the delivery of prisoner programmes to prison officers.
- 8.12** Access by Independent Monitoring Board members to inmates at lock-up times should be improved.
- 9.4** The writing of a detox policy should be expedited.

4 | Board business

Conduct of business

4.1 In last year's Report it was noted that the Visiting Committee had, with the arrival of women prisoners, also become a Board of Visitors. A further change has taken place during this reporting year with the name changing yet again – to Independent Monitoring Board. Coincident with this, the provision of secretarial and other services to the Board has been taken over by the Prisoner Ombudsman's Office.

4.2 The Board continues to meet monthly and operate a rota whereby members visit the prison each week. Each member is also assigned a number of areas of special responsibility and makes visits to Hydebank Wood to familiarise themselves with the running of these areas and take forward any particular issues which arise.

4.3 The Chairman attended the weekly briefing meetings with heads of departments which is chaired by the governing Governor, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman also attended the quarterly meetings held with NI Prison Service Headquarters staff. Both of these meetings provided invaluable continuing information about Hydebank Wood in particular and the NI Prison Service in general.

Rota Visits and Applications

4.4 During the weekly rota visits members of the Board found that the number of written requests to the Board from inmates was decreasing. Although postboxes are provided at various points within the prison for such applications to be made by prisoners, it was not uncommon for all such boxes to be empty and this is a matter of some concern. It had been thought that the setting up of the Prisoner Ombudsman's Office would affect the number of applications being made to the Board and this appears to have been the case. However there are other factors which have a bearing. One positive factor is that the relative calm of the prison in comparison with the situation some years ago means that there are fewer complaints. A less positive factor is that there may be greater ignorance about the Board by inmates than is desirable and steps are planned to redress that situation – for instance by investigating a possible role for the Board at inmates' committal stage. In any event, direct approaches to Board members are often made by inmates during rota visits and, while such approaches often involve relatively trivial matters, some can give rise to more serious issues.

5 | Women Prisoners

5.1 This reporting period covers the first full calendar year that women prisoners have spent in their new location at Hydebank Wood. Primarily their accommodation has been within Ash House although since February 2006 refurbishment has resulted in the women's temporary move to Beech House. This is to accommodate the installation of in-cell sanitation, anti-ligature fittings in all rooms and the development of two dedicated safer rooms on one of the landings. These are important developments, as is the planned exercise area adjacent to Ash House that we hope will be functional imminently.

5.2 During the year there has been a total of 311 committals to the Women's Prison with an annual average population of 30 women. At its lowest the population was 19 with a high of 39 also experienced. The breakdown for the year has been 90% adults with 8.3% being young offenders and 1.7% being juveniles. A further look at the categories of prisoners indicates that 50% were on remand, 33.3% were sentenced, 10% were immigration detainees and 6.6% were imprisoned for fines default. The disparate nature of this population ranging from, on the one-hand, those sentenced to life imprisonment to those serving days for fines default, clearly presents issues with regard to management and to the development of a regime which encompasses responses to this variety and complexity of need. It is positive that since 30 January 2006 immigration detainees have not been accommodated within Ash House. There is however a strong argument for fine defaulters not becoming part of the prison population. As a Board we also continue to advocate that girls under the age of 18 should not be accommodated in Ash House, and we so recommend.

5.3 This reporting year has seen the publication of two important reports, one published in May 2005 relating to an unannounced Inspectorate visit 28 - 30 November 2004 and a Human Rights Commission report, "The Hurt Inside", published in June 2005 and relating mainly to research conducted in Spring 2004. Both reports were highly critical of the regime for women prisoners, the former making 96 recommendations, many of which were echoed in the latter report. These reports do provide important benchmarks in terms of standards for the Women's Prison. This Board notes as positive the Northern Ireland Prison Service

6 | Accommodation

action plan and updates developed in response to these reports, and it is important that the momentum generated continues as progress is made with regard to the valid recommendations.

5.4 The transfer of a female governor from within the Northern Ireland Prison Service to the management of the Women's Prison has been an important development. Her role has been complemented by the availability on secondment of a governor with experience in female prisoner issues in Great Britain. We understand that work is at an advanced stage on the development of female specific policies and procedures. The specific requirements of women prisoners need to be taken account of and so the Board recommends that these policies and procedures be implemented as soon as possible.

5.5 Women prisoners continue to have access to a range of educational, work and recreational activities. The continued good work within the horticultural project is to be commended and its associated benefit for local charities in terms of fund-raising is a positive outcome. The evidence of creative thinking on the part of staff as reflected in the introduction of pet therapy is welcomed and to be encouraged. In keeping with the resettlement strategy, educational and vocational training should, where possible, be linked to formal qualifications so that the women have a tangible outcome from their efforts. As far as is possible the work regime should mirror the community-based working day to assist in the development of positive routines that would help on release.

5.6 Out-of-cell time should continue to be maximised with a range of activities available that minimises the impact of boredom, especially during evening and weekend periods. Examples of positive staff interaction with the women have been noted. This should continue to be promoted as the norm, with staff supported and trained in the necessary skill and knowledge requirements.

5.7 The afore-mentioned reports particularly highlight the needs of women who have specific vulnerabilities on account of mental ill health or personality disorders. Clearly some of the women do present with significantly challenging behaviours often connected to earlier life experiences and unresolved personal traumas. Prison is often not an appropriate environment and consideration does need to be given to alternative responses for women whose offending behaviour is not the primary concern.

5.8 The availability of cognitive behavioural therapy nurses is an important complement to the healthcare team. This Board recommends the continued use of a multi-agency approach to the assessment and service provision to women presenting with such difficulties. However this should be reserved for those women whose offending behaviour renders a custodial option necessary and community based responses must be developed for those women inappropriately placed in prison.

5.9 The management of self-harm presents challenges and it is accepted that the preservation of life is the fundamental priority. However the use of 'safe dresses' and unfurnished cells as a management technique should be kept to an absolute minimum. The Board would like to see a marked reduction in the 2005/06 figures where there were 229 incidents of 'safe dress' use, as a more comprehensive range of therapeutic responses are utilised. It is imperative that agencies work together with prisoners and, where appropriate, families in the development of a range of management techniques. Training to support staff in the assessment and management of risk must underpin such a strategy.

5.10 The past year has seen important developments in the services available to women prisoners, that contribute to a more positive and therapeutic regime. However the Board, while recognising both staff and management's commitment, considers that continued deficits exist while women prisoners are housed within a shared site. Hence, the Board reiterates its recommendation from last year that continued consideration be given to the provision of a custom-built prison exclusively for the needs of Northern Ireland's women.

6.1 Pressure on prisoner accommodation at Hydebank Wood remains – and this was exacerbated over the year by the continuing refurbishment programme which removed Beech House from the total available accommodation. However, the completed refurbishment of Beech House enabled the planned decant of women prisoners from Ash House to take place, thereby releasing Ash House for refurbishment. The Beech House project was completed satisfactorily with a range of facilities which included two mother and baby units. At the time of writing this report, work had not yet started on Ash House and it is to be hoped that the letting of this contract will not be long delayed.

6.2 Apart from the major refurbishment projects various minor works projects were successfully effected, including improved accommodation for Probation Service personnel and – something which was urgently needed – extension of the staff car park. A new recreation area for women prisoners was provided adjoining Ash House.

6.3 One unfortunate consequence of the refurbishment programme has been the restriction of available cell accommodation and this has been one of the reasons for overcrowding in the prison. However, another significant factor in this regard had been increasing inmate numbers and the end result has been the need to apply doubling up, i.e. where two inmates occupy a cell which had been designed for single occupancy. This has only proved necessary for male inmates to date and it is true that there have been no significant complaints from male young offenders when they have been sharing cells – indeed some have preferred it. Nonetheless the size of cells is such that the practice should be – and is avoided whenever possible. Occasionally pressure on accommodation necessitated the use of the Special Supervision Unit for inmates not subject to disciplinary action, while the Healthcare Centre has also housed inmates pending reception into the normal residential areas.

6.4 If the trend of an increasing prison population continues, the overcrowding problem will become much more serious. Earlier in this report the Board reiterates its recommendation that a new women's prison be provided, but additionally it is recommended that an overall study of the long-term accommodation requirements at Hydebank Wood be carried out with a view to the production of a strategic plan in that regard.

7 | The Regime

Reception

7.1 Reception is an area that requires modernisation. This is a very important place for an inmate because it is his first impression of Hydebank Wood. It should be bright and pleasant, and staffed by sensitive officers because young men come in often traumatised after a court appearance. The Board applauds the full implementation of the PRISM (Prisoner Record Information Management) computer system. This system allows all information to be processed in reception with greater speed and detail. Information on inmates can then be accessed throughout the prison at each computer terminal. With this system there is greater accuracy and much greater detailed information on each inmate. Actual inmate numbers and locations are available at any point in time. Female inmates are processed separately in their own residential house.

First Night Arrangements

7.2 Officers on the committal landing are advised when a new inmate comes in and special attention is given to any inmate who may be vulnerable or prone to self harming. Each inmate is given a first night pack with all necessary information. The Board appreciates that the practice of housing new inmates in the Special Segregation Unit has ceased. We appreciate that this only occurred when the establishment had reached full capacity, but this was never viewed as good practice.

Induction

7.3 Preparation for release begins as soon as the inmate enters custody and is one of the purposes of induction. (Resettlement Strategy June 2004). The induction programme which is viewed as the basis of the resettlement process has been supplemented with advice on housing benefits and the inclusion of the Resettlement Programme. The NIACRO 'Reach Out Programme' has also been included. So far as the day-to-day running of the induction programme is concerned, the experience of the past few years has meant that a few aspects have been fine tuned so that with the added input mentioned, everything seems to be working well. The induction programme is a day and a half programme lasting eight hours and consisting of twelve topics. The Board feels that some inmates suffer from information overload

due to the intensity of the programme and would continue to request that its own role be emphasised to inmates during induction.

The Juvenile Unit

7.4 By law, all those aged under eighteen years are classed as children. All juveniles are housed in Willow 1 and Willow 2. Willow 1 is used for induction while those in Willow 2 are all on the enhanced level of the Inmates Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme. The Board was concerned that these residential landings were not solely used for juveniles in the past and are happy that this has changed.

Remand Issues

7.5 The number of inmates on remand in Hydebank Wood remains at over 50 percent, with remand and sentenced inmates still housed together and granted the same access to the compact scheme. (Inmates Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme). The Board continues to draw attention to what it considers to be unacceptably long remand periods. Currently an inmate may be on remand for between six and nine months before being sentenced.

Movement to and from Court

7.6 The movement of inmates to and from court by the Court Escort Service continues as before without any major difficulty for most of the time. The one problem that arises occasionally is the need at times for separate transport for female inmates. This is possible most of the time except when female inmates are returning from court at the same time as male inmates. This is an issue that the Human Rights Commission highlighted on a previous occasion.

Child Protection Issues

7.7 A draft was produced in September 2005 entitled Child Protection Policy and Procedures. While there were many positive elements to this paper, it has been superseded by a revised document that will soon be sent out for consultation. By law, no one employed before 2004 is required to be vetted by PECS (pre-employment check). All new staff are vetted and to date forty two officers have been specially trained for juvenile landings.

The Board acknowledges the need for urgent implementation of a child protection policy and recommends that the new consultation draft should be treated as a matter of great importance.

Staff identification

7.8 Prison officers at Hydebank Wood wear civilian clothes rather than the standard Prison Service uniforms. While this is generally welcomed by the Board it is not always possible, therefore, for Board members or indeed Prison Service staff, to identify to whom they are speaking or how they fit into the organisation. The problem is greater in the women's accommodation where members can have difficulty in distinguishing which are prisoners and which are prison officers. The wearing of name badges is normal practice in organisations embracing the principles of total quality management and it is understood that Northern Ireland Prison Service policy stipulates that they should be worn. It is recommended that steps be taken to implement the wearing of identification badges by prison staff at Hydebank Wood.

Personal Officer Scheme

7.9 The concept of the personal officer (key worker) is of a member of staff with responsibility for the care of a small number of designated prisoners on an ongoing basis. Under the scheme, prisoners should know their named personal officer and should be able to access him/her as an initial point of reference. Personal officers should be aware of the individual needs of their prisoners and help them to access the services they require or respond to any matters they raise. Personal officers should also know the personal circumstances of their prisoners and, where necessary, act as a point of contact with the prisoners' families and encourage appropriate links with them.

An attempt was made about five years ago to introduce the scheme at Hydebank Wood but it never really got off the ground, primarily because of difficulties caused by a moving prisoner population. The Board again recommends the introduction of an effective personal officer scheme at Hydebank Wood, benchmarking best practice at prison establishments in Great Britain.

8 | Control and Discipline

Absenteeism

7.10 In last year's report comment was made about absenteeism levels of prison staff. It is noted that present indications are that undesirable levels of absenteeism have not merely been addressed by management but that positive and encouraging improvements have been effected in this area.

Resettlement Planning

7.11 It was noted that the prisoner programmes at Hydebank Wood were in the main delivered by outside agencies, as the following list indicates:

Programme	Delivered by
Car Crime	Impact team
Parenting Skills	Barnardos
Welfare to Work	NIACRO
Alcohol Management	Probation Board and Opportunity Youth
Drug and Alcohol Awareness	Opportunity Youth
Cognitive Behaviour	Opportunity Youth
Anger Management	Probation Board and Prison Service
Enhanced Training Skills	Prison Service
Making the Most of Myself (for females)	Barnardos
Bereavement	Cruse

The Board feels that the Northern Ireland Prison Service should consider where possible transferring the delivery of prisoner programmes to its own prison officers and recommends accordingly. Undertaking such meaningful work would enrich the job of the prison officer and help to establish a stronger working relationship between prison officers and inmates. Absorption of this work by the Prison Service should also help to reduce its operating costs.

Disciplinary procedures

8.1 One of the roles of the Board is to monitor the level and consistency of Governor's adjudications on women and young men who commit an offence against prison rules whilst being held in Hydebank Wood.

8.2 Adjudications are carried out where the Governor deems an offence to be serious but not sufficiently serious as to warrant a police investigation and court involvement. Sanctions can range from loss of earnings and tuck shop privileges to loss of association or to cellular confinement in the respective Special Supervision Unit.

8.3 The Governor, the Deputy Governor and other governor grades within Hydebank Wood may preside at adjudications. In practice the Deputy Governor conducted the majority of adjudications in the reporting year. This concentration of the adjudicating role on one individual coupled with the use of award guidelines tends to enhance the professionalism of the officer concerned and also tends to provide consistency of disposal.

8.4 In the year 2005/06 there were 564 adjudications of male inmates compared with 784 the previous year, representing a 28% decrease; 328 adjudications involved sentenced prisoners and 236 those on remand.

8.5 So far as females were concerned, there were 74 adjudications in 2005/06 compared with 115 in the previous year. Women prisoners were in Hydebank Wood for only 10 months of the previous year; the figure for the reporting year therefore represented a significant decrease.

The offences reported can be summarised as follows:

Offence	Male	Female
Violence	96	12
Damage to property	35	8
Trafficking in / possession of prohibited articles	82	9
Breaches of regulations (insubordination /abusive language)	351	45
Total penalties imposed	540	74

8.6 During the year there were no notable breaches of security. Approx 40 grams of cannabis and some needles, ampoules of steroids and tablets were found in the Visits area. In male accommodation approx 68 grams of cannabis, a mobile phone and a quantity of white tablets were found. In female accommodation approx 40 grams of cannabis and a quantity of tablets were found. The passive drugs dogs were on duty in the Visits area on 264 days out of a total of 312 days on which visiting was permitted and were responsible for uncovering several items.

8.7 There were no escapes or attempted escapes either from the complex or from officers accompanying inmates outside the complex. Nine males and one female failed to return from home leave and eight males failed to return from compassionate leave.

8.8 During the year the Board received no complaints concerning unfair adjudications.

9 | Drugs Awareness and Strategy

Special Segregation Units

Male Unit

8.9 The segregation unit for males is located on the ground floor of Elm House. It is a stand-alone facility with eight cells. Only three cells have in-cell sanitation, a chamber pot being provided for the remaining cells. When an inmate requires a lavatory visit he knocks on the door to attract an officer. The internal bell is for emergency use only.

Female Unit

8.10 At the start of the year the unit was housed in Ash House; however during the year all female inmates were moved to the newly refurbished Beech House.

Inmate Allegations

8.11 The Board has in conjunction with the Boards of Maghaberry and Magilligan Prisons, introduced a standard method of documenting complaints/requests/queries. It is still in its infancy but basically complaints/requests/queries are now passed to the Governor for written response. Co-incidentally since the appointment of the new Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland the actual number of written complaints received by the Board has reduced.

Access to inmates

8.12 Access by the Independent Monitoring Board to inmates is still restricted to periods when inmates are not locked up. It is appreciated that the possible unavailability of prison staff during lock-up is a factor. Nonetheless, the Board considers that steps should be taken to improve its members' access to prisoners at lock-up times, and so recommends.

9.1 At the end of the reporting year 92% of the Hydebank Wood prisoner population was drug free, with four drug-free landings in Cedar House. The determination of the staff to tackle the drugs problem remains clearly manifest but it is also clear that they are fighting against the tide of those inmates and their family members who make determined efforts to get drugs into Hydebank Wood – a depressing reflection of the acceptance of drug abuse within families.

9.2 The Drugs Steering Committee, chaired by the Head of Security, met regularly and connected with all areas of Hydebank Wood's management. This group has explored various ways to negate the ingress and use of drugs within the establishment. Planned and targeted searches, particularly after evening lock-up, have been carried out with good results. Passive dogs are used during visits and on inmates returning from courts or home leave visits. Laboratory testing of samples identifies the nature of the drug involved and can stand up as evidence in court.

9.3 The Positive Steps through-care programme implemented by Opportunity Youth has the aim of reducing drug culture in Hydebank Wood by providing a holistic, consistent and intensive continuum of support for each sentenced inmate with alcohol or drug misuse problems during their incarceration and for a minimum of eight weeks after release. Opportunity Youth personnel have shown great dedication to their work during the week and over weekend/holiday periods.

9.4 Healthcare is in the process of writing a detox policy: it is recommended that this be expedited as soon as possible.

9.5 The Board understands that the budget in this field has been cut, that services for the incoming year will have to be reduced and that Opportunity Youth have had to cut their family support service. Funding for another counsellor was also refused.

9.6 The Board supports the plan that drugs awareness/detox training be delivered to staff as a priority.

10 | Juvenile and Child Protection

Juvenile and Continuous Assessment Unit

10.1 The juvenile unit is now housed in Willow 1 and 2. Children under 17 can transfer from the Juvenile Justice Centre under the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Children) NI Order 1998. This happens when they are deemed to be at risk to themselves or of harming others or where a court orders that they serve the unexpired portion of the Juvenile Justice Order in a Young Offenders Centre. Those who are under 18 and are committed directly from the court are normally committed under the Children's Order (NI) 1995 legislation. All these young people are legally considered as children and are subject to child protection procedures.

10.2 The juvenile unit in Willow 1 and 2 can accommodate up to 26 committals. Staff within this unit are required to have training in child protection. At present there are 43 staff operating that have been trained. (May 2006). This is a significant step forward from last year's report and the Governor and his management team are to be commended.

Safer Custody

10.3 In a recent HMCI inspection, Hydebank Wood had been criticised for the lack of records kept and the number of meetings held. In order to comply with HMCI recommendations it was felt that it would be best practice to structure the management of Hydebank Wood similar to that of the English Prison Service. As a result, additional meetings have been generated from their recommendations.

10.4 The HMCI report recommended that Hydebank Wood set up a Safer Custody Committee and this was done during the year. The main task of the Committee is to consider the safer custody of inmates but it also examines complaints and requests in this area, monitors trends and overlooks the work of the Suicide and Anti-Bullying Committees.

10.5 This new Safer Custody Committee is chaired by the Deputy Governor and includes the Director of Custody, the Female Governor and the Suicide Prevention Coordinator. It also has representatives from Psychology, Probation, Healthcare, the Chaplain, Opportunity Youth, Samaritans, a member of the IMB and two inmates, one male and one female.

11 | Suicide Awareness and Prevention

10.5 A senior officer is in charge of Suicide Prevention and a principal officer is in charge of Anti-Bullying. It is hoped that this new initiative will create a more holistic approach to safer custody.

Anti-Bullying Initiatives

10.7 The Anti-Bullying policy, which became operational in November 2003, continues to apply. However, it is the HMCI's recommendation that Hydebank Wood's Anti-Bullying policy be reviewed and consideration given to how it affects inmates and its effectiveness. In September 2005 the draft policy for this area was produced and at present is out for consultation.

10.8 As well as dealing directly with incidents of bullying, the aim of the policy is to provide, for all individuals within the establishment's care, a high quality service, with an environment that is free from all forms of bullying, harassment and intimidation.

10.9 Bullying can be reported by a variety of means such as letter, telephone, direct observation and verbal report, with the policy stressing the importance of providing protection to all inmates reporting concerns. All reported incidents are recorded and thoroughly investigated by a principal officer. If the bullying is substantiated, the perpetrator is charged and in-house discipline procedures are invoked.

10.10 The Board stresses the importance of continuing to foster a climate within Hydebank Wood which does not tolerate bullying at any level.

10.11 Since the Anti-Bullying Policy pre-dated the move of female prisoners to Hydebank Wood, the specific needs of female inmates have had to be addressed. It is noted that the manner in which female prisoners bully is somewhat different to the way in which male prisoners bully. To this end, the Governor and his management team have reviewed the anti-bullying policy and its associated procedures specifically for women prisoners.

10.12 The Board supports the idea that training awareness regarding bullying should be delivered to staff and prisoners.

11.1 The Governor and staff at Hydebank Wood are committed, through care and understanding, to provide a safe, humane and positive environment for prisoners. To this end, Hydebank Wood has a suicide prevention coordinator who coordinates suicide and self-harm prevention issues and monitors compliance with safer custody strategies.

11.2 Since its last report the Board is pleased to note that in the past year there has been a review of the male suicide prevention policy and following the transfer of female prisoners to Hydebank Wood, a new female suicide prevention policy has been written. These suicide prevention policies comply with both Human Rights and Section 75 requirements.

11.3 Research has shown that prisoners are at their most vulnerable during the early stages of their custody with the uncertainty about the outcome of their case added to the difficulties in coping with their new environment. Inmates charged with offences of a sexual nature are particularly at risk. Prisoners also feel very vulnerable after a serious incident of self harm or where attempted suicide has taken place. If an incident like this occurs, all prisoners on the landing will be de-briefed by the staff. This applies throughout Hydebank Wood. The Board welcomes and supports this.

11.4 In November 2005 major renovation works started at Hydebank Wood and it has been necessary to "double up" some male inmates. Although this is far from ideal it is noted that there has been a considerable drop in incidents of self-harm and no attempted suicides. The number of self-harm injuries and attempted suicides for females continues to fluctuate. It is however, lower than last year. Nobody is complacent and staff are to be commended for their vigilance.

11.5 Where it has been established that an inmate is clearly distressed, an appropriate inmate would be identified for a period of 'doubling up'. This "buddy scheme" has proved worthwhile.

11.6 Other initiatives that have had a positive effect are the issue of a television on committal and the introduction of Samaritan telephones on the landings. Inmates have the use of these throughout 24 hours every day. Inmates are also engaging in Hydebank Wood's activities and programmes.

11.7 The Psychology Department has reviewed and updated the Aide Memoire for Suicide. This has proved most useful and will be passed to other prison establishments. However, there needs to be further suicide awareness training for all staff. The Board recommends that suicide awareness training be given priority.

12 | Welfare

Healthcare

12.1 In October 2005 the Director-General of the NI Prison Service announced that the lead responsibility for healthcare in prisons would be transferred in April 2007 to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. This decision, which was in line with a recommendation in the Board's report for last year, is welcomed; the proposed transfer should directly benefit prison healthcare and in particular provide better links with services in the community and more scope for addressing mental health issues. It is to be hoped that the transfer will be effected efficiently and smoothly.

12.2 The NI Prison Service considered itself too small an organisation to provide a comprehensive healthcare service to meet the complex physical, mental, psychological, emotional and social needs of the prison population in Northern Ireland. The Prison Service also took the view that the DHSS & PS and HSS Boards and Trusts should be responsible for prisoners' health in the same way they are responsible for the health of all other citizens in Northern Ireland.

12.3 The Board was particularly pleased to note the Northern Ireland Prison Service's 2005-2008 Corporate Plan's commitment to work with others in the criminal justice system and the wider health sector to improve the arrangements for those with mental health and personality disorders.

12.4 The Healthcare Centre at Hydebank Wood opened in September 2002. Major renovations are scheduled to be carried out in 2006/07 to provide six single in-patient rooms, one with ensuite facilities, two waiting rooms and an occupational therapy facility.

12.5 Over the course of the year the healthcare staffing complement increased by two and at the end of the year comprised one principal nursing officer (healthcare manager), one senior nursing officer, three psychiatric nurses, four general nurses and five healthcare officers.

12.6 During the year a community mental health in-reach support service was initiated for adult female prisoners. This pilot service was delivered by community psychiatric nurses employed by South and East Belfast Trust. With the service costing some £86,000 per annum, opportunity should have been taken from the outset to encompass all male and female inmates at Hydebank Wood with mental health problems. The Board recommends that this service should be extended to male and female young offenders.

12.7 A local GP practice provides a comprehensive service for male young offenders, ie regular daytime visits to the prison and a 24-hour call-out service. However, the service provided for female prisoners falls short of that provided for males in that there are daytime visits to the prison but no out-of-hours GP call-out, when the service is limited to advice by telephone. The Board recommends that the GP service for female prisoners should be brought into line with that currently provided for male inmates.

12.8 During the year only three dentist sessions per week were being provided instead of the five stipulated, representing a 40% shortfall. Moreover, the oral hygiene sessions delivered separately by a dental nurse were discontinued when the nurse concerned moved on. It is a generally recognised fact that the oral health of male young offenders is well below par. The Board recommends that the dental service at Hydebank Wood be regularised, including dental health promotion in addition to the normal clinical workload.

12.9 Up to 31 March 2006 responsibility for clinical governance lay with the Governor of Hydebank Wood. With effect from 1 April 2006 this responsibility will transfer to the holder of a newly-created post of Clinical Governance Manager.

12.10 The Board was pleased to note the refurbishment and reinstatement during the year of the garden at the rear of the Healthcare Centre, which is provided for the use of in-patients. It is hoped that maximum use will be made of this facility and that it will be maintained regularly by Hydebank Wood's own vocational trainees.

Family and friends

12.11 Hydebank Wood management has displayed an awareness of the vital role visits play in maintaining prisoners' relationships with partners, families and friends. Over the year staff have made a sustained effort to be as flexible and accommodating as possible. Inevitably, there have been a few problems, ie what identification is appropriate, length of visit etc, but these are rare. One relatively small issue is that of smoking – visitors smoke outside the Visits Centre, but there is a need to have a sheltered area.

12.12 Child-centred visits have been ongoing and running well. These are arranged by the family liaison officers and provide those who qualify with an additional two-hour visit once a month. Juveniles are also allowed these visits.

12.13 At Christmas there were excellent special visits/parties for both male and female prisoners with children, and every effort was made by the liaison officers, visits staff, NIACRO and Barnardo's to make these happy events.

12.14 There have been some problems with the parenting programmes because of difficulties in getting sufficient numbers for a group. Nonetheless, three programmes were run successfully during the reporting year. This is to be developed over the incoming year.

12.15 Prisoners are allowed to send two letters a week at public expense. Telephone calls seem to be the most favoured way of communication and by and large this works, although there remains the problem of the cost of calls, especially long-distance ones.

Chaplains

12.16 Although there are five Christian chaplains working at Hydebank Wood – Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Free Presbyterian and Methodist – it is a practical benefit that these chaplains can be seen to operate across sectarian lines. They meet once a quarter and more often if necessary. If a member of a faith other than Christian is committed to Hydebank Wood, there is provision for an appropriate representative to be contacted.

13 | Constructive Activities

Education

13.1 The Education Department is staffed with three full time and 10 part time teachers with the core provision continuing to be in the delivery of essential skills. Statistics for the year April 2005 to March 2006 are impressive with the following achievements for male and female students:

Entry Level 2 Literacy	10
Entry Level 3 Literacy	25
Level 1 Literacy	7
Level 2 Literacy	6
Entry Level 2 Numeracy	4
Entry Level 3 Numeracy	17
Level 1 Numeracy	1
CLAIT Modules	41

13.2 Hydebank Wood has dealt exclusively with NICCEA since Essential Skills were initiated and have maintained the excellent working relationship forged at the pilot stage. This year the Education Department sought and gained recognition as a NICCEA Essential Skills Accredited Centre.

13.3 A new qualification in Digital Technology was introduced in which candidates must successfully complete a course of study and complete a portfolio in the subject areas of Digital Imaging and Digital Music. To date two students have passed, one with full marks, and a further six students have been entered for accreditation. The options will be extended with the introduction of Digital Editing and Flash Animation in the near future.

13.4 Full screening of all male young offenders was introduced in June 2005 with Quick Scan, an assessment tool which indicates the range of dyslexia from borderline to full. The offenders with most dyslexia indicators and below Entry Level 1 on the Literacy assessment are encouraged to improve their reading skills and are offered one-to-one tuition. The results of screening show that over 39% of male inmates have dyslexic indicators in contrast to 10% - 15% of the general adult population who have dyslexic indicators. The results of the dyslexic screening will be used to develop a number of recommendations for dealing with those prisoners who are most in need of specialist intervention.

13.5 With young offenders serving longer sentences in Hydebank Wood it has been possible to consider higher level qualifications. Ten students are now studying for GCSE Mathematics, GCSE English, 'AS' Level History and English Literature, and OU Short Courses with one inmate completing an OU Openings course in preparation for undergraduate studies.

13.6 The education programme offered to female prisoners does not differ extensively from that of the male young offenders, although there is a difference in emphasis within subject area. Classes range from Essential Skills to OU Undergraduate Studies and the range of recreational activities matches that on offer to the male offenders, i.e. Cookery, Art, Craft, Leathercraft and Music. The Prison Arts Foundation offered new classes, in Creative Writing, Aromatherapy and Dancing which will be continued through the next term.

13.7 The Library is staffed for two full days each week and one evening, and is showing improved utilisation. A Book and Tape Club has been initiated with the objective of helping fathers and mothers keep in touch with their children while serving out their sentences. Library staff help the inmates choose books which their children would enjoy and an audio CD is made of the parent reading the book to the child. The CD and book is then sent home to the child to enjoy while listening to the parent read aloud. It is hoped at some stage to expand this programme to the recording of a DVD of the parent reading for their child.

13.8 The walls of the Learning and Skills Department continue to be adorned with art created by the students and has received recognition at the Koestler Awards and the Arts Council.

13.9 Last year's report recommended that one person, a Head of Education, be given responsibility for all education at Hydebank Wood, including vocational training and library services. The Board does not see the logic in education and vocational training being managed separately and therefore repeats its recommendation.

Vocational Training

13.10 During the year gardening for female prisoners continued to stand out as a benchmark of good practice and again was largely due to the leadership of the prison officer in charge.

13.11 Vocational training within Hydebank Wood is delivered mainly through the Vocational Training Unit (VTU). However the Catering and Physical Education Units also provide opportunities for inmates to achieve vocational qualifications in those specialist fields.

13.12 The VTU runs courses that involve both remand and sentenced inmates in computing, joinery, brickwork, painting and decorating and industrial cleaning. The VTU also has responsibility for maintaining the grounds of Hydebank Wood and provides inmates with opportunities to acquire related skills.

13.13 The VTU has good workshop facilities for its existing courses that are on a par with colleges of further education throughout Northern Ireland. Hydebank Wood also has excellent greenhouse facilities which provide the base for horticultural training.

13.14 The Board has regularly drawn attention to a proliferation of weeds in the gravel area surrounding the chapel. The Board has also on occasions drawn attention to the litter thrown from the windows of inmates' cells. The weeds and litter convey an impression of neglect and they need to be dealt with regularly by the grounds maintenance teams.

14 | The Probation Service

Physical Education

13.15 The PE Department has a well-equipped complex including a sports hall incorporating a rock climbing wall, a weight training and fitness suite and four outdoor playing fields (two with all-weather surfaces and two with a grass surface).

13.16 The Board has on occasions questioned justification for so many playing fields in the light of perceived under-utilisation. Moreover the Board has suggested that some of the land currently occupied by playing fields could be used to construct a stand-alone state of the art women's prison with its own entrance.

Kitchen

13.17 The budget for the Hydebank Wood kitchen is £16.39 per inmate per week – a figure which has not changed in over six years, despite inflation. It is recommended that a review be carried out of the kitchen budget with a view to effecting an increase.

13.18 The kitchen staff provide a varied and balanced menu for inmates, with alternative choices, and the staff are to be commended for supplying food efficiently from a central kitchen which serves inmates spread over various buildings located within a large campus.

13.19 Since 2002 almost 300 young offenders have completed NVQ's in food preparation, cooking and health and safety.

Tuck Shop

13.20 Now catering for both young offenders and adult women prisoners, the tuck shop continues to provide a service for all inmates. The only (continuing) complaint relates to the length of time taken to obtain certain items – and video tapes have been mentioned by inmates in that context.

The Probation Service

14.1 The Probation team working within Hydebank Wood was provided with service level agreements and probation plan for the year and the team met most of the targets set out. This was achieved despite staffing difficulties. Three staff members left the team during the year and, although they were replaced, a full staff team operated for only about one third of the year.

14.2 The arrival of female prisoners in at Hydebank Wood last year had created new areas of work for Probation and in the reporting year two part-time probation staff worked directly with women inmates, while at the same time the overall level of services for women increased at a time when requests coming to Probation from women inmates increased substantially. Probation staff also played an important part in the management of high-risk and vulnerable inmates.

14.3 During the year new accommodation was provided for Probation staff within Hydebank Wood and these offices represented a considerable improvement in facilities for Probation staff, with more space and an improved working environment.

15 | Appendix

Membership to Independent Monitoring Board Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre 2005/06

Chairman

Mr R T Armstrong

Deputy Chair

Mr C J McClean

Members

Ms K A Airlie O
Lady E Bloomfield
Mr M Breslin
Mrs S Bryson
Mr J Craig
Mr S Dickson
Mr I Gordon
Ms S Logan
Mrs C McLaughlin
Mrs M Marshall
Ms O McConnell
Mr G A Rogers

