



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wealstun

**For reporting year
1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022**

Published October 2022



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	5
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	13
6. Health and wellbeing	21
7. Progression and resettlement	26
The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	31
Applications to the IMB	32

All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 HMP Wealstun is a category C adult training and resettlement prison for men, situated in a semi-rural area near Wetherby, West Yorkshire. It has a certified normal accommodation of 809 and an operational capacity of 832. Although the latter was reduced during the pandemic to enable all prisoners to be housed in single cells, doubling up in cells has been reintroduced.

2.2 There are 10 residential units and a segregation unit. A and B wings are the original 1960s remand centre buildings; A wing includes a residential support unit of self-isolators; D wing is a pre-fabricated single-cell accommodation unit; C wing accommodates the majority of prisoners on the integrated drug treatment system programme; E, F, G, H, I and J wings were converted from open category D accommodation to closed category C accommodation; G wing is the incentivised substance-free living unit; H wing is mainly for prison kitchen workers.

2.3 I and J wings were the reverse cohort units and induction wings during the pandemic but now there is no requirement for new arrivals to be isolated, I wing is the induction wing.

2.4 The site also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, library, healthcare centre and a number of workshops including a mess for staff. A reception area for prisoners' visitors is located outside the main gate.

2.5 The prison is part of the public sector and, although Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is responsible for the operation of the establishment, the main service providers are:

- Novus, for works, learning and skills
- Practice Plus Group for the provision of physical/mental healthcare
- GEOAmey, for escort provision
- Amey, for the provision of facilities management and site maintenance
- Jigsaw, for family intervention services

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

3.1.1 This report presents the findings of the Board at HMP Wealstun for the period 1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022. Throughout the period, most members of the Board were able to visit the prison and directly monitor. Evidence therefore was available from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records, minutes and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff and prisoner applications. As with all prisons, the pandemic affected all aspects of HMP Wealstun for much of the year. The prison gradually moved to Stage 1 of the National Framework in November 2021 but then had to move back to Stage 2 in December in line with national instructions. It returned to Stage 1 in March 2022.

3.1.2 Prisoners continued to be locked up for considerable periods of the day until the prison moved to Stage 1. There were very few workshops open and education was limited. The move to Stage 1 should have meant that prisoners had more time out of their cell. However, the staffing situation in the prison continued to deteriorate and regime restrictions were frequently implemented. The Board continues to be concerned about the impact the staffing shortage is having across all aspects of prison life. This is compounded by the significant churn of prisoners, with as many as 50 prisoners received each week as well as discharges and other movements through reception.

3.1.3 The Board raised the issue of staff shortages with Phil Copple, Director General of Prisons, in July 2022 and agrees that the recent pay award together with other initiatives should improve the situation in the longer term. However, in the shorter term, there were no solutions. The Board is extremely concerned that the situation for prisoners has become unacceptable during the summer period. In addition to planned regime curtailments at weekends, there are regular restrictions when only prisoners in essential work are able to work. The remainder get two hours out of their cell each day. Whilst this may improve once the peak staff annual leave period is over, it is shocking that after two years of Covid restrictions, prisoners are again subject to long periods locked in their cells.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

As reported last year, prisoners were locked up for up to 23 hours a day during the pandemic. This meant that there was very little access to drugs and, consequently, levels of violence and self-harm were low. There were much lower levels of bullying and overall the prison was generally quiet, so prisoners probably felt safer. However, when the prison moved to Stage 1 of the National Framework and prisoners were able to have more time out of their cells, levels of violence and self-harm rose significantly.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Whilst the Board accepts the necessity to limit contact between prisoners during the pandemic, it is disappointing that as the prison moved out of the pandemic, the new regime has moved to part time working to enable all prisoners access to work or education but this limited access to half days for the majority of prisoners. When not at work or education, most prisoners had 2 hours of time out of their cells for

domestics and structured on wing activity. The impact of this, of course, has been to limit overall time out of the cell and, equally significantly, has reduced prisoner pay. This was compounded by the shortage of staff across the prison, meaning there were regular regime restrictions. The reintroduction of the basic IP level also led to some inconsistencies being identified initially. A test for legionella in the water supply was positive in the older wings which caused disruption for staff and prisoners. The shortage of officers has meant that the number of key worker sessions was extremely low throughout the year.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Healthcare has managed well over the review period, with prisoners having normal access to most healthcare services. Some prisoners are not attending appointments because they conflict with time out of cell for other activities, which might be understandable, but renewed focus needs to be given to this issue to avoid wasted healthcare appointments.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The Board considers that prisoners are generally not being progressed towards successful resettlement for a number of reasons. Due to a lack of officers, access to the library is limited to very few prisoners. The short sentences of some prisoners do not allow for any meaningful resettlement work to be undertaken. Transfers of eligible prisoners to category D prisons are delayed due to a shortage of spaces. The prison does not have the provision in place to aid the progression of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) and life sentences.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

To consider ways to incentivise people to apply to work in prisons to alleviate the current shortage of staff, not only at HMP Wealstun but across the prison estate.

To end the inhumane treatment of prisoners serving IPP sentences across the prison estate by releasing all remaining IPP prisoners. (Section 7.3 refers.)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

To consider what assistance can be provided to increase the officer staffing in the short term so that prisoners are not regularly locked up at weekends.

To ensure that prisoners are not located in double cells as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners (particularly in respect of toilet facilities). (Paragraph 5.1.2 refers.)

To consider a complete refurbishment or replacement of the older wings (A and B wings) as it is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action for a number of reasons and is not a humane environment for prisoners to live in. (Paragraph 5.1.5 refers.)

The Board are aware that prison Governors have the responsibility for setting the daily food allowance from their overall budget. Although increased to £2.15 during the review period, it is a very low sum from which to provide three meals a day for adult men and it remains the Board's opinion that food budgets should be set at a

national level and regularly benchmarked to ensure that they remain adequate. (Paragraph 5.1.12 refers.)

To provide more category D open prison places, so that transfers are not delayed once a prisoner is recategorised (repeat area from 2019/2020 report). (Paragraph 7.3.2 refers.)

To ensure that prisoners allocated to Wealstun are not on short sentences or IPP/lifers as there is little opportunity for any progression or resettlement. (Paragraphs 7.3.3 and 7.5.1 refer)

TO THE GOVERNOR

To ensure that key worker sessions are prioritised when staff are available. (Paragraphs 5.1.14 and 7.4.5 refer.)

To consider increasing the rate of pay in line with inflation to enable prisoners to be able to buy items from the canteen. (Paragraph 5.1.14 refers.)

To ensure that a forum for category D prisoners is set up to discuss their issues. (Paragraph 7.3.2 refers.)

To ensure that the 'best practice ideals' are adopted for IPP prisoners including the reinstatement of the IPP/lifer forum and communication. (Paragraph 7.3.4 refers.)

3.4 Progress since the last report

There were a number of issues raised with HMPPS, the Prison Service and the Governor last year, some of which are ongoing.

The Board asked HMPPS to consider increasing the daily food allowance but this budget is devolved to Governors. Although the allowance has been increased to £2.15 it is still considered insufficient, and recent food price increases have eliminated any intended increase in purchasing power.

The issue of insufficient category D prison places within the prison estate remains a concern to the Board as recategorised prisoners are having to wait a considerable time before a transfer place is found.

Training on PAVA and SPEAR has recommenced and most officers are now up to date.

The secreted items policy has been reviewed and the recommendations are due to be implemented.

Unfortunately, the staffing issues since lockdown restrictions were lifted has meant that key worker sessions are unacceptably low. This is a repeated issue from our 2019/2020 report and is now urgently in need of being addressed.

Notification to the IMB of prisoners being placed in segregation continues to be hit and miss.

There remains a need for the monthly forum with the offender management unit (OMU) for IPP and life-sentenced prisoners to be reinstated.

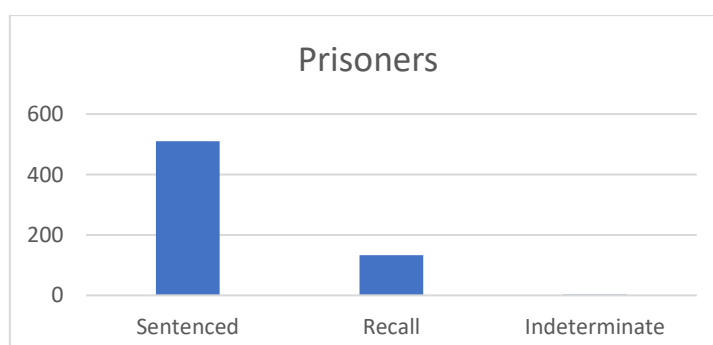
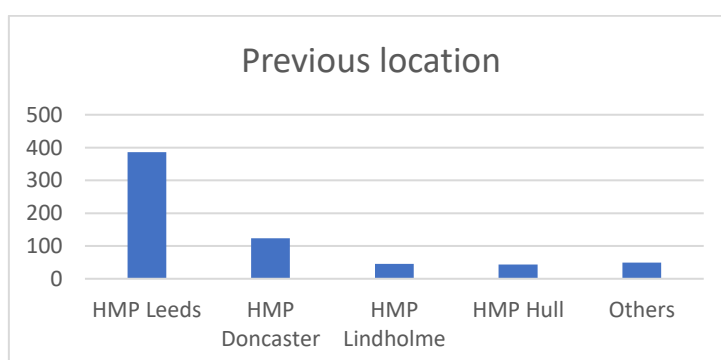
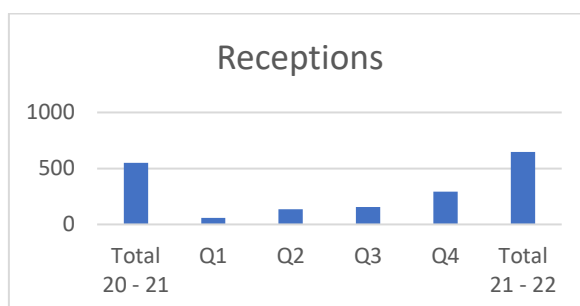
Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

There were some staff shortages within the safer custody team but it has continued to produce a weekly safer prison report, which is emailed to all staff. It contains details of notable new arrivals, any dual harmers (prisoners that cause harm to themselves and others) and prolific self-harmers, acute repeat self-harmers, isolating prisoners and vulnerable and problematic prisoners. They produce a detailed monthly safety report for the monthly safety meeting, containing considerable information and helpful analysis of the data.

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 There were 646 receptions during the reporting year, an increase of 17.7% on the previous year (549). With an OpCap of 832, the number of new receptions represented around 78% of the prison population. This presents a range of operational challenges for the prison, particularly in a period marked by significant staff shortages. If the reception rate experienced in Q4 2021-22 continues into 2022-23, the Board has concerns that this will impact negatively on both prisoners and staff.



4.1.2 On arrival, prisoners are escorted off the bus individually and their temperature is checked and photograph taken. The body scanner and metal detecting equipment are used to scan all new receptions upon arrival. In cases where scan images appear to show that a prisoner has secreted items within his body, he is sent to the segregation unit. Prisoners who refuse to be scanned are also segregated and immediately placed on report.

4.1.3 In the 2020-21 report, the Board raised concerns about the scanning process due to the high proportion of positive scans and the consequent number of prisoners being segregated, often merely on the suspicion of having concealed items. After IMB discussions with the Governor and the senior management team (SMT), the prison conducted its own review of the scanning process and a number of recommendations have subsequently been adopted. Whilst some prisoners arriving at Wealstun continue to be subject to segregation as a result of the scanning process, the Board is satisfied that the process and resulting decision making are much more robust.

4.1.4 Until the prison was instructed that it was no longer necessary to isolate new receptions, prisoners were held for 14 days (reducing to 10, then 7 as per public health England guidelines on the two reverse cohorting wings for induction and isolation so that the Covid risk could be managed. Induction processes were conducted individually through cell doors. Healthcare, mental health and substance misuse service workers also visit or telephone new prisoners. Officers explain how the prison regime works and identify any existing issues or concerns with new prisoners. The volume of new arrivals clearly places some strain on all parts of the prison including reception, the OMU and the business hub.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 The number of open assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents (ACCTs) remained steady throughout the year (about 20 were open at any one time). Incidents of self-harm remained low for the first part of the year as prisoners were locked up for up to 23 hours a day and were not associating with others, whilst the low availability of drugs meant that prisoners felt safer and bullying reduced. However, as expected, the number of incidents of self-harm peaked when the prison went to Stage 1 and prisoners were out of their cells for longer before quickly reducing again when the prison had to move back to Stage 3 in December. Returning to Stage 1 in March saw another spike of incidents of self-harm followed by a reduction in May when there were significant regime curtailments due to staff shortages. The Board is concerned about the significant amount of self-harm amongst a small number of prisoners and the fact that the level of self-harm is high against comparator prisons. It is difficult to know whether this is because of the nature of the current population or the fact that, due to a shortage of staff, the unpredictability of the regime is aggravating the problem.

4.2.2 ACCT reviews are well managed by the safer custody staff and members of the mental health team attend the reviews. The Board has only seen minor omissions on the ACCTs that it has examined, and staff quickly corrected them. A new ACCT process and document was introduced in 2021 and all staff were trained.

The new documentation, whilst undoubtedly comprehensive, appears to be quite complicated and it has taken some time to bed in.

4.2.3 The Board was pleased to note that those prisoners on ACCTs who were subject to adjudication hearings had their ACCT documentation available to the adjudicating governor to help inform decision making.

4.2.4 The 10 Listeners were available throughout the year and supported remotely by Samaritans.

4.2.5 There has been one death in custody apparently due to natural causes in the reporting period.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 Not surprisingly, trends in the level of violence have generally matched those for incidents of self-harm over the year with significant peaks for prisoner on prisoner assaults when the prison began relaxing regimes in October 2021 and March 2022. Prisoner on prisoner assaults increased in March and April but there was a decrease in May, which coincided with regimes have been regularly curtailed due to staff shortages. The main reasons given for violence are bullying and debt.

4.3.2 The number of challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) referrals is beginning to rise and is higher than a year ago, as are the number of open CSIPs. The cause is likely to be the opening up of the regime. Despite these increases the Board has no concerns about CSIP management which seems to be thorough.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Use of force incidents have been low over the year, due to the restrictions in place and the low availability of drugs, and overall use of force levels are similar to the same period in the previous reporting year. However, there were spikes when the prison moved to Stage 1 in November 2021 and March 2022. A reduction was seen in May 2022 but there was another spike in June 2022, possibly because prisoners were getting frustrated at the amount and length of regime curtailments due to staff shortages. The Board will monitor this closely.

4.4.2 The threat and deployment of PAVA continues to remain low.

4.4.3 The monthly use of force meetings are well attended. A considerable amount of data is presented, together with full details of any incidents. These are then scrutinised by attendees. The Board commends the officer responsible for his work and diligence. This officer also reports on the quality of use of force incident reports and whether F213s (injury to prisoner forms) have been properly completed. Activation of body-worn cameras continues to be an issue and officers are being reminded continually.

4.4.4 The Board is pleased to note that refresher training on control and restraint, SPEAR, rigid bar handcuffs and PAVA is now taking place. The SMT is also to be trained so that they are fully aware of the correct procedures and able to undertake a management investigation into an incident where required. The Board will continue to monitor the situation.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 In previous annual reports the Board has highlighted the fact that the prevalence of drugs in the prison has been a significant contributing factor to high levels of self-harm, violence and bullying. During the pandemic period there was a significant reduction in the opportunities for drugs and other illicit items to enter the establishment and, in turn, it has been noted that this also contributed to lower levels of self-harm, violence and bullying.

4.5.2 The return to more relaxed regimes (although still significantly curtailed compared with pre-pandemic times) has, perhaps inevitably, led to a greater influx of illicit items. The management team has worked hard to reduce opportunities for illicit items to come into the establishment and has focused significant attention on a range of entry and distribution points including:

- distribution via kitchen trolleys
- visits to prisoners
- prisoner receptions
- throw-overs and drones
- trading and dealing of prescribed medication
- rule 39 abuse (letters purporting to come from solicitors containing drugs, particularly Spice)
- staff corruption

4.5.2 In the last report, the Board noted that the body scanner installed in reception had improved the ability of the prison to detect the attempted importation of unauthorised items and substances. All prisoners (with the exception of those being released at the end of their sentence) are scanned when moving through reception. The scanner is also used by the dedicated search team (DST) as part of its targeted search process. In addition to identifying suspect items secreted in prisoners' bodies, the increased likelihood of detection has served as a useful deterrent to those seeking to bring drugs and other unauthorised items into the prison. Used correctly, the scanner is an important part of the prison's strategy to reduce the inflow of drugs, and the Board is pleased that its concerns in connection with the scanning process and training have been largely addressed.

4.5.3 The number of prisoners indicating positive on the body scanner on arrival has reduced from 15 in July 2021 to 12 in November 2021, 1 in January 2022 and 0 in February 2022, which suggests that prisoners are now aware that they will be scanned when they arrive at HMP Wealstun, so stopping the flow of illicit items into the prison through this route.

4.5.4 To support the control of substance misuse the prison carries out a programme of random mandatory drug testing (MDT). Where a prisoner tests positive for drug use, a confirmatory test can be requested to establish the detail of which drugs and what quantities have been detected. In some cases this confirmatory test has not been requested as the prisoner has pleaded guilty after being placed on report (POR) but the Board understands that confirmatory tests will now be requested in all cases to enable the prison to better understand the profile of drug usage.

4.5.5 During the reporting year the DST and Yorkshire Area Search Team (YAST) teams have had a number of successes in finding illicit items as a result of

intelligence-led searches. The range of technological and other resources available to the prison is clearly having a positive impact on identifying inbound illicit items. Unfortunately, the shortfall in officers has resulted in DST officers being redeployed to normal duties which could impact on the number of searches. Initiatives have included:

- the use of drug testing machinery to test all inbound prisoner property (including clothing)
- a trial amnesty for weapons and drugs on C wing
- enhanced police monitoring of the prison perimeter
- enhanced gate security checks
- use of automatic number plate recognition equipment to monitor the roads around the prison
- use of a prison drone to detect security breaches
- introduction of enhanced controls on rule 39 mail
- county lines awareness training for staff
- enhanced monitoring of prisoner telephone calls

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food, canteen

5.1.1 The need to accommodate more prisoners at Wealstun due to a lack of prison spaces across the wider prison estate places pressure on the processes established to improve standards of decency. The clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent (CRED) programme referred to in the Board's 2020-21 report, developed to carry out a programme of repainting all cells over a three-year cycle, has had to be suspended. The CRED programme necessitated three cells being removed from the establishment's operational capacity to provide an opportunity to repaint three cells each week.

5.1.2 Population pressures during the reporting year also led to a requirement to utilise the 24 double cells located across the prison. Although the prison management does all that it can to avoid doubling up prisoners who are unhappy about sharing a cell, there are occasions where it may be unavoidable. The Board believes that the operational capacity calculation should exclude any requirement to house two prisoners in one cell as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners (particularly in respect of toilet facilities).

5.1.3 The programme of the SMT inspecting cells on a daily basis to ensure high standards of maintenance and decency has also been discontinued. The new process is that the duty governor rota includes a wing inspection where five cells are inspected. Defects are reported to wing custodial managers (CMs) and to the head of residence for them to progress remedial action with Q Branch.

5.1.4 The small works programme, managed by Amey, now operates smoothly after experiencing issues over the past couple of years. Amey allocates 40 hours of work each week to be carried out by a handyman. A monthly review meeting monitors the work carried out against the list of required minor repairs and a plan is agreed for any outstanding items.

5.1.5 Conditions in the older A and B wings are of increasing concern to the Board. As the Board noted in 2020-21, it is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action or reconstruction/replacement. This accommodation is also deemed unusable for prisoners who have an 'arson flag' on their record. During the current reporting period there was a significant issue with legionella which led to a requirement for temporary shower facilities to be made available. This issue has now been addressed through dosing units being installed, at significant cost to the prison, to prevent a recurrence of legionella bacterial build-up.

Clothing

5.1.6 Clothing stocks continued to be adequate for the establishment with stock levels maintained to meet requirements.

5.1.7 In 2020-21, the Board made reference to Wealstun's acquisition of new commercial laundry equipment. This is now fully operational and provides the ability to provide a service for Wealstun and a number of other prisons in the region. As a

result of the increase in usage the prison has decided not to progress its plans to incorporate personal laundry into the main laundry service. This outcome is welcomed by the Board which was concerned that centralising all laundry facilities might result in loss or damage to prisoners' personal clothing.

Food

5.1.8 Once again, the Board continues to applaud the kitchen manager and his team for the good standard and variety of food produced for prisoners given the budgetary restraints. The Board welcomes the investment in replacement hot trolleys, ovens, Bratt pans and bakery equipment which have been important to support the production and delivery of quality and nutritious meals.

5.1.9 The kitchen caters well for religious diets, festivals, special dietary requirements and allergies.

5.1.10 The daily re-select menu has been increased to provide a six-option choice for both lunch and evening meals. The additional 'F' choice is the result of a new partnership with Food Behind Bars, a charity who are supporting the prison to educate prisoners to select healthier meal options and try new dishes. As part of this initiative a 'Take Care' booklet has been distributed to provide information to prisoners on wellbeing, exercise and healthy eating.

5.1.11 A bakery trainer comes into the establishment once a week to upskill prisoners in making bakery produce that can then be sold in the staff mess. If additional funding can be secured the intention is to expand production and offer bakery produce for sale to prisoners.

5.1.12 In the last annual report, the Board drew attention to the fact that the then daily food allowance of £2.02 was an extremely small amount to provide an adequate diet for adult men and HMPPS was asked to consider an appropriate increase. The response indicated that establishment Governors have the responsibility for setting the daily food allowance from their overall budget. Although the budget has now been increased to £2.15, this needs to be seen in the context of food price inflation over the reporting year. It remains a very low sum from which to provide three meals a day for adult men and it remains the Board's opinion that food budgets should be set at a national level and regularly benchmarked to ensure that they remain adequate.

5.1.13 It is of particular note that, despite the budgetary pressures and the complications continuing to arise from the pandemic, the Board only received three applications relating to food and kitchens during the 2021-22 reporting period.

Canteen

5.1.14 The introduction of part-time work and thus part-time pay has not gone down well at the same time as the cost of items available via the canteen have increased due to the increased cost of living. Although some prisoners may have private funds or have family who are able to send them money, there are many who are not so fortunate and so are unable to afford even basic items such as vapes and phone

credit. As there are few key worker sessions, the number of prisoners affected is going unnoticed and could actually be causing some to get into debt. The Board would like the Governor to consider increasing rates of pay in line with inflation.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The segregation unit is a purpose-built building with cells for 13 prisoners, including three short-term holding cells for prisoners awaiting adjudication. There is one constant watch cell and one robust cell (built in such a way as to be unbreakable). Prisoners are removed from their normal location either for their own safety, having received threats from other prisoners, or because they need to be segregated owing to their behaviour or risk level. Cellular confinement in the segregation unit can also be imposed as a punishment for infringing the prison discipline rules; once the punishment is completed, the prisoner is returned to the wing.

5.2.2 The unit is reasonably well maintained and is kept fairly clean. It is brightly lit and there is little graffiti. A cleaner is present on the unit most days.

5.2.3 Prisoners in the unit are visited each day by the duty governor, the chaplain and healthcare. Every three days they are visited by the GP, and every week by the IMB and the Governor.

5.2.4 On the whole, relationships between staff and prisoners on the unit appear to be good. The staffing levels within the unit have reflected the difficulties of staffing as a whole and guest staffing has had to be utilised. However, there is a core group of staff members who are very able within the unit and who interact well with the prisoners.

5.2.5 The regime in the unit throughout the year was reasonable, with exercise and showers offered each day. The regime following lockdown was the same as in the rest of the establishment.

5.2.6 Notification to the Board of segregation, special accommodation, and so on, continues to be sporadic and the Board has had to make requests to the Governor that such information be given to the IMB consistently. A reminder to the relevant people was subsequently sent out by the Governor and there has been some improvement.

5.2.7 A Board member regularly attended rule 45 boards (a review of each prisoner's segregation) either by spider telephone or in person. However, towards the end of the reporting period spider telephone access has not been available, and this has made it difficult for some members of the Board to attend, especially if the time of the reviews is changed at short notice. The Governor has been asked to expedite the restoration of telephone access as soon as possible. It has been found that the correct procedures in these reviews are generally followed, including paperwork, attendance of a mental health nurse and the prisoners being able to fully participate. Prisoners are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, and work with staff to learn from them how to make changes, avoid further escalation of events and use the support offered.

5.2.8 Virtual segregation (whereby a group of prisons in the local area agree the transfer of difficult prisoners) ceased early in 2022, as those difficult prisoners were merely being rotated around the local prisons. This means that the prison must make its own efforts to secure the transfer of any prisoner on an individual basis and prisoners can indicate their preferred choice of prison.

5.2.9 However, the Board has been concerned at times to see that not all the necessary paperwork for the unit has been up to date. There were times when the whiteboards indicated the incorrect number of prisoners held in the segregation unit and occasions when the segregation record either did not hold the paperwork for an individual or did have the paperwork, but the individual had left the unit. There was one occasion when a prisoner's ACCT paperwork had not been updated, with the reason being given that the staff had not had the time to complete it. These concerns were highlighted to the Governor and the Board was informed that staff had been reminded of their responsibilities. The Board will continue to monitor the situation.

5.2.10 From June to December 2021, the average number of prisoners spending time in the unit each month was nearly 30, which meant that there was a constant turnover. Most of the prisoners in the unit are held under rule 45, for good order and/or discipline. Many prisoners are experiencing problems such as drug debts or bullying and then misbehave – for example, damaging their cells – in an effort to obtain relocation. Segregated prisoners are managed through a CSIP and advised of their targets in order to gain reintegration. The numbers came down in 2022; the average number of prisoners spending time in the unit each month reduced to just over 20.

5.2.11 However, the Board remains concerned that prisoners can still be held on the unit for a long time. Whilst it is understood that it is not easy for the prison to transfer prisoners out, especially when a prisoner has mental health problems due to a shortage of secure mental health beds nationally, some of the prisoners were held until they were released or just relocated back to a wing. The Board will continue to monitor this aspect of segregation.

5.2.12 The number of prisoners in the unit who were on an open ACCT has reduced during the pandemic, as it has throughout the prison in general. There were three prisoners on ACCTs in July 2021 through to one in October 2021. The number of prisoners who were segregated whilst on an ACCT has also remained fairly low; from one in August and September 2021 to three in February 2022 and two in May 2022.

5.2.13 The segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) and adjudications standards meetings were held quarterly over the reporting period. These were well attended by senior members of the SMT. Adjudications were discussed at the SMARG meetings and the results of adjudications circulated to all staff daily.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 At the end of May 2022 there were 166 Band 3 Officers in post against a complement of 179 and 54 OSGs against a complement of 64. Over the 12 month reporting period 66 new Band 3 Officers had joined HMP Wealstun but 50 officers

had left, 18 new OSGs had joined but 24 had left. The impact of the shortage of staff, especially at Band 3 level, cannot be underestimated and whilst the prison moved to Stage 1 in March 2022, there continue to be restricted regimes on a regular basis which is unacceptable.

5.3.2 The Human Resources (HR) hub organises the Extra Mile Nominations each month which is part of the monthly staff recognition awards enabling prisoners to nominate staff members who they feel have gone the extra mile. Throughout the year there were 98 prisoner nominations for officers. An average of 8 nominations were received each month. A sample of quotations from the nominations, “He constantly tries to get us to do things that may help us break the cycle”, “Cares about our future”, “Went out of way”, demonstrates positive relationships.

5.3.3 Key working is a priority for the prison and each prisoner has an allocated key worker to assist with information and general welfare problems. During the pandemic, key working was targeted at vulnerable prisoners due to the shortage of key worker sessions that could be made available, and a considerable number of prisoners had no contact with their key worker.

5.3.4 In January 2022 a CM was given responsibility for ensuring key work sessions took place as planned and managing of key workers. A pleasant office was set up in the administration centre, containing much information and guidance. Daily targets and the tally were set out on a whiteboard which IMB members could see if they visited. Officers were detailed odd hours as well as their other jobs which enabled them to manage and record sessions. Any spare hours, when staff did not have a profiled task allocated to them were directed to do key work. For a while figures on the whiteboard showed some encouraging signs.

5.3.5 Once the prison moved to Stage 1, the Board had hoped that things would improve. However, staffing levels were so low that staff allocated to conduct key worker sessions needed to be redeployed to other duties and the overall number of sessions continued to be very low. A variety of options and systems were explored to enable greater key worker provision. Locking down a wing to release staff to make a key worker session available, for example, still could not provide sufficient officers. Ultimately it is clear that, whatever is said about key worker sessions being a priority, due to staff shortages they have been sacrificed in order to try to deliver a safe and decent regime. Prisoners of concern due to self harm or having been involved in incidents of violence are prioritised for the keyworker hours available.

5.3.6 In May 2022 a fortnightly prisoner information desk (PID) worker forum began. It was welcomed by the PID workers who immediately raised areas of faulty communication. Prisoners were sometimes unaware of proposed or even short-notice lockdowns of the regime. Occasionally information about work, education or medical arrangements was confusingly received. Prisoners needed to know when they should prepare for a course or work. It was agreed that prisoners should have some certainty of when they would be locked down and so plans were in place for spreading information about each weekend lockdown. However, there were also a number of short-notice regime restrictions which is not acceptable, although the Board recognises that the prison’s options were often very limited.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The prison's ethnic diversity remains broadly unchanged from recent years, with approximately 75% of prisoners identifying as White and the balance from a range of ethnic minorities. Also, like last year approximately 40% of prisoners identify as having some form of disability.

5.4.2 Just under 70% of the prisoner population are below 40 years of age, with 32% under 30 and 37% between 30 and 40. Last year the figure for between 30 and 40 was 47%. The under 30s continue to be the population most associated with complaints and adjudications, use of force etc.

5.4.3 The prison initiative to manage and monitor equality and diversity under the title IDEAL (inclusion, diversity, equality, access, leadership) appears to be a well-embedded programme within the prison. The Board attends most of the quarterly meetings and remains impressed with the strong leadership and commitment to the programme. Given the discipline and rigour within the process, any issues identified are done so in a timely way and a programme to address them is initiated.

5.4.4 The Board remains impressed with the process around the discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRF). Redacted DIRFs and responses are subject to scrutiny on a quarterly basis at the IDEAL meeting, during which prisoner representatives are present and fully involved.

5.4.5 The data available for staff ethnicity profiles remains incomplete, however from the data available the indication is that 80% of staff are White. Whilst the prison leadership team is keen to improve the representation of other groups, there is also a sense of pragmatism given the current staff shortages.

5.4.6 The prison initiates several events throughout the year to increase awareness around protected characteristics. The kitchen also provides a range of food options for all dietary requirements. Special meals are provided for all religious festivals.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The Board can report that the chaplaincy presents as a positive force in the prison, it is well staffed with committed individuals and strong leadership. During the lockdown period the chaplaincy provided a consistent and vital support to prisoners. Although services were not possible during the pandemic, members of the chaplaincy team were present to provide support and were also regular visitors to the segregation unit and actively involved in ACCT reviews.

5.5.2 The current staff levels include two full-time staff (the managing chaplain and an Anglican minister). They are supported by part-time staff (one Catholic, two Free Church, three Muslim, one Buddhist and one Jewish). There are also three volunteers across various faiths. Vacancies exist for Pagan, Sikh, Hindu and Rastafarian volunteers.

5.5.3 Services began again in February 2022, initially for Church of England, Muslim and Roman Catholic prisoners and then for other faiths. Initially they were conducted every two weeks, but they have now returned to weekly services. Faith classes have also recommenced. It is noted that attendances at both services and classes have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Whilst the prison was able to conduct its annual carol service, Christmas services were held in cohorts.

5.5.4 In the coming year the chaplaincy is looking to support the official prison visitors scheme. This scheme is intended to support those prisoners who have not been visited in the last 100 days, and in some cases prisoners who have had no visits for over two years.

5.5.5 The chaplaincy is looking to work with Cruse¹ to help enhance the bereavement counselling work that they currently undertake.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The prison has an incentives scheme which aims to encourage responsible behaviour, encourage sentenced prisoners to engage in activities and courses designed to reduce the risk of reoffending, and help to create a more disciplined and safer environment for both prisoners and staff. The levels are basic, standard and enhanced.

5.6.2 The use of the basic level was suspended during the pandemic and the prison had the option to reintroduce it from the end of September 2021, but chose not to, due to the restricted regime and the removal of many of the pandemic mitigations such as the £5 telephone PIN credit. When the prison moved to Stage 1 regime in April 2022, the basic level was reintroduced. This was a concern to the Board as many prison officers were inexperienced and unfamiliar with the process and the more experienced officers had not used it for two years. It is perhaps not surprising that there were a number of issues with prisoners when basic was reintroduced, including increased levels of self-harm and other incidents.

5.6.3 Prior to a prisoner being put on basic the process is that they should get two warnings before a third warning results in a review board being convened. Prisoners should always be issued with a notification slip recording each warning. However, members of the Board have been told by prisoners that they did not receive the necessary slips from staff members or that they did not understand why they had received such slips. The Board will continue to monitor this.

5.6.4 Over the course of Covid, many prisoners were given enhanced status, when they applied for it simply for not receiving any negative entries, rather than going 'above and beyond' as would normally be expected from a prisoner on enhanced level. The incentives policy framework states that an enhanced prisoner should make progress on their personal goals and sentence plan and demonstrate 'good attendance and attitude in activities and interventions'. During Covid, this was not possible, so the enhanced level was given out just for having no negative entries for three months. This led to a high proportion of prisoners being enhanced.

5.6.5 Since the prison has opened up, the CMs have been doing more regular reviews on prisoners of all incentives scheme levels and have found that some enhanced prisoners are receiving negative entries, such as failing to attend work. Whilst this would not normally lead to a downgrade to basic, it would warrant a review and possibly a downgrade to standard. It seems likely, over the next few

¹ <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

months, that the CMs will be carrying out more reviews and the incentives status of prisoners will level out.

5.6.6 However, there is some indication at the moment that some staff are not sufficiently challenging bad behaviour by prisoners on the wings and are not using the incentives scheme as a positive step for individual prisoners. Although officers on residential wings should be supported and coached by wing CMs, the Board had initial concerns that the levels of enhanced, standard and basic across the 10 wings were not consistent. The Board is currently looking into this matter further and will continue to monitor in this reporting period.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The complaints process remains stable and is managed with a professional and diligent approach by the complaints clerk who should be commended given the pressure on staff in the business hub due to a shortage of staff.

5.7.2 In the period covered by the report the prison processed just under 2,000 complaints. They are spread quite evenly per month over the year, with a peak of 187 and a low of 95. Property is the most common complaint category, accounting for some 20% of all complaints. The top three subjects (property, residential and canteen) account for approximately 40% of all complaints.

5.7.3 The number of complaints and profile of subject matter remains similar to last year.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 The number of applications to the Board concerning property from other establishments rose from the previous reporting period which is unsurprising given that transfers between prisons increased. Applications from prisoners about property already within Wealstun reduced significantly despite it being the top category of complaint within the prison complaints system. The indication is, therefore, that the prison is increasingly successful in resolving property-related complaints.

5.8.2 The number of prisoner receptions during the review period placed significant pressures on the staff in reception, especially as staff shortages occasionally resulted in reception staff being redeployed to other duties. All property accompanying prisoners arriving at Wealstun is thoroughly checked by the reception team and any prohibited items are placed in storage. Wealstun's policy is to review inbound property in line with the facilities list, although in some cases this can cause issues, as prisoners may be refused permission to bring in some items that they have been allowed to have with them at other prisons but which are not on the facilities list and hence not allowed at Wealstun.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Healthcare at the prison is provided by the healthcare contractor Practice Plus Group (called Care UK prior to September 2020). This includes support for physical health, mental health and substance misuse.

As of July 2022, the healthcare service comprised 43 staff in post and 10 vacancies:

- management and admin – 10 staff in post and one administrator vacancy
- mental health, substance misuse services (SMS), drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) – 19 staff in post and no vacancies
- pharmacy – nine staff in post with five vacancies (for senior pharmacy technicians and pharmacy technicians)
- primary care team – five staff in post with four nursing vacancies

The healthcare service reported they are actively seeking to fill the vacancies.

6.1.2 The prison receives GP services through a local GP practice. Psychosocial services, psychiatry and psychology services are subcontracted through Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust. Also subcontracted are:

- dental services, provided by Time for Teeth
- physiotherapy and podiatry, provided by Premier Health
- optical care, provided by the Prison Opticians Trust
- X-ray and ultrasound, provided by Global Diagnostics

6.1.3 The relationship between the prison and healthcare managers is generally good. The head of healthcare is involved in all relevant prison meetings, such as the SMT and use of force. Mental health nurses attend all ACCT reviews and rule 45 boards.

6.1.4 Healthcare was instrumental in carrying out the prisoner vaccination programme for Covid-19 and promoted the vaccine via Wayout TV, posters and letter to families and staff encouragement. The hesitancy they encountered came mainly from the younger prisoners. The last year has represented a period of continued recovery from Covid-19 ensuring support for services is maintained. Improvements have been made to the pathways for substance misuse services (SMS) and a mandatory drug testing (MDT) approach for medication reviews and safer prescribing pathways.

6.1.5 There were a total of 37,620 healthcare appointments during the review year, of which 86.7% were attended, 5.7% non-attended and 3.6% cancelled. There was an average of just over 3,100 appointments per month. The numbers do not completely match up due to the way the data is extracted.

	Appointments booked	Attended	Refused – DNA	Cancelled – no access visit
Jun-21	3,062	2,646	175	98
Jul-21	3,416	3,098	149	100
Aug-21	3,018	2,655	178	93
Sep-21	3,255	2,792	187	110
Oct-21	3,276	2,931	148	112
Nov-21	3,444	2,968	208	153
Dec-21	3,142	2,698	201	146
Jan-22	3,523	3,202	145	109
Feb-22	2,141	1,792	229	73
Mar-22	3,341	2,871	223	119
Apr-22	2,849	2,453	173	110
May-22	3,153	2,499	137	133

6.1.6 The healthcare team sends out letters and makes phone calls to ask non-attenders why they did not attend. The main reasons reported for non-attendance are:

- appointment clashes with work and/or association
- appointment clashes with visits
- appointment slip not received

6.1.7 The prison has now introduced a process whereby prisoners will receive an incentives scheme warning if they refuse to attend their appointment. The Board are concerned that the system for notifying prisoners of their appointment is possibly a contributing factor to non-attendance and will be monitoring the situation.

6.1.8 Healthcare does not hold waiting time data for routine services, as they aim to be flexible depending on the urgency of need. Average waiting times for other services are similar to in the community:

- GP (non-urgent) – 10 days
- physiotherapy – 18 weeks
- optician – 5 weeks
- dentist – 16 weeks
- podiatry – 4 weeks

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Healthcare process around 3,200 items for acute and repeat prescriptions each month. Nineteen percent of the population is on two or more abusable medications and 25% of population on opioid substitution therapy. Mirtazapine is highly prescribed at 23% of the population, with pregabalin at 3% and gabapentin at 1%.

6.2.2 The Board is aware of a number of prisoners who had their prescriptions changed by hospital staff which then do not accord with the prison's local prescribing guidelines. This has caused distress to prisoners and some have raised concerns with the Board that they believe they are being denied medication deemed suitable

by a hospital consultant. All prisoners are reviewed in line with safer prescribing guidelines. Although it may not be the patient's perceived first line treatment, the subsequent (prison-approved) treatment for the prisoner's needs is still consistent with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. Any complex medication reviews are discussed in at the healthcare team's multi-professional complex case clinic.

6.2.3 The Board is concerned that prisoners have reported that they had not been able to obtain nicotine patches. Patches were not available on canteen and smoking cessation psychosocial groups have only just resumed following the pandemic. Previously the healthcare team reported high abuse of products when supplied and 80% of patients would fail spot checks when reviewed under the incentives scheme. The Board raised this issue and patches are going to be added to the canteen list. However, the Board is concerned about the possible misuse and will monitor the situation.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 See section 6.2 for details of prescription medications for depression and anxiety. Separate appointment and waiting time information specifically for mental healthcare was not available.

6.3.2 All prisoners are screened on arrival at Wealstun by healthcare for any mental health problems and referrals made if required. There has been no increase in reports of mental health issues over the past year, despite the restricted regime.

6.3.3 The Board has observed good interactions between the mental health team and prisoners, particularly in rule 45 reviews.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 Due to a shortage of members over the year, the Board was unable to monitor this area. However, it is not a significant issue at Wealstun due to the nature of its prison population, which has relatively few social care needs. This was further confirmed in discussions with the healthcare team during the preparation of this report.

6.5 Exercise, regime

6.5.1 During Stage 2 and 3, prisoners were normally locked in their cells for over 23 hours each day. They were allowed 30 minutes for domestics (showers, etc.) and 30 minutes for exercise. However, this depended on staffing availability, and some prisoners were out of their cells for longer as they were working.

6.5.2 At Stage 1, the prison introduced part-time working/education, either morning or afternoon, with an hour for domestics (showers, exercise etc.) and an hour doing structured on wing activities (SOWA). So, assuming there were sufficient staff to support the regime, prisoners were out of their cells for possibly six to seven hours a day.

6.5.3 However, the prison had a critical officer shortage even prior to Stage 1, and upon moving to Stage 1, the new regime could not be supported. Regime restrictions were the norm and, following consultation with prisoners, it was agreed to keep regime restrictions to weekends, where possible, to allow prisoners to plan accordingly. This resulted in prisoners being allowed out of their cells for domestics,

either morning or afternoon during weekdays, but potentially locked up for 22 hours at a time at weekends.

6.5.4 The weekend regime restrictions were often not enough and although the prison made full use of the Payment Plus scheme (through which officers can work additional contracted hours) and redeploying specialist staff such as the DST, short-notice restrictions on weekdays were required on occasion. This resulted in education and work being cut to two hours to allow time for domestics before lock up.

6.5.5 The Board is very concerned about the impact of staff shortages on prisoners and the potential for this to lead to disruptive behaviour as a result of frustration.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit, moved to G wing in July 2020, is now firmly established. The facility is fully subscribed (50 places are available) and there is a waiting list of prospective new entrants. Amongst the new benefits available to ISFL residents there is now an opportunity to purchase meal deals from the prison's catering academy.

6.6.2 Although the ISFL unit appears to be achieving some successes, it can only accommodate 50 prisoners from a total prison population of around 800. The Board understands that funding is available to increase ISFL take-up (either by accommodating the unit on a larger wing or by designating an additional wing as a ISFL unit). Either of these initiatives would be welcomed by the Board given the importance of assisting prisoners to reduce their dependency on drugs both during their time in prison, and as preparation for release.

6.6.3 ISFL group work and compact testing are both now fully operational after a hiatus during the pandemic. The drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) has a regular presence on the unit. There is also greater focus on celebrating the progress made by prisoners with their recovery plans.

6.6.4 DARS and the mental health team are integrated within the wider healthcare department. DARS facilitates structured drug awareness programmes (including a recent initiative on fentanyl awareness) which prisoners attend as part of a supportive measure if they are found to be, or suspected of being, under the influence of drugs. DARS works with a range of partners including St Giles Trust, through the gate and the OMU, and also has strong links with a wide range of community substance misuse support and prison link workers to facilitate smooth transition and care for prisoners leaving custody.

6.6.5 The prison is making increasing use of rehabilitative adjudication awards in cases where a prisoner engages positively and is motivated to address their substance misuse. The balance between punishing substance misuse and supporting users to address their offending behaviour is a delicate one.

6.6.6 Approximately 25% of prisoners are on opiate substitution treatment. As part of their treatment, prisoners must engage with both psychosocial and clinical

substance misuse teams through a wide range of interventions. They also attend daily clinics where the treatment is administered.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 A university research project run by York and Leeds Universities in association with the Academy of Justice in Warsaw, Poland involving problem solving skills has continued. Prisoners are recruited and trained to help each other solve problems using a stepped approach. and the programme has won awards. Peer-led problem solving has shown impressive results for a few previously troubled prisoners.

6.7.2 No yoga sessions have been held during the period. Staff in the gym are to be trained in the coming year.

6.7.3 A music project was so popular that funding has been found for next year. The musician in residence for six months was appreciated. Twenty-one instruments were distributed. It proved very popular and there was a waiting list to join. Music was used to help other areas in cross-curricular work, with pages of creative writing being produced. Prisoners are eagerly awaiting vocal classes.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Throughout the pandemic, in-cell education work had proved popular and successful. Prisoners were, however, pleased, receptive and positive when full in-person classes resumed in May 2022.

7.1.2 The education buildings have suffered from the weather. At least two leaks have precipitated ceiling collapses after storms. The induction and art rooms have been fixed but the staff room still awaits attention. Space for classes is thus limited.

7.1.3 English, maths, business studies, art, food safety, barista, hospitality, cookery, horticulture, construction skills, PMO (performing manufacturing operations), cleaning and IAG (information, advice and guidance) are recognised through accredited measures. Cleaning competencies, life skills, business start-up, art and craft, ICT/digital skills and creative outreach are non-accredited. Accredited work has been dropped from some subjects. Non-accredited work requires less time commitment, fitting in with reduced sessions.

7.1.4 Disappointingly, education sessions are now only for half a day as the prison wants to allow more prisoners to access them. It is clear, however, that a depth of skill cannot be well embedded in fewer sessions. There are requests, for example, for accreditation in IT courses. In addition, the shortage of staff has, on occasion, resulted in restricted regimes and a lack of escort officers, leading to the cancellation or curtailment of education classes.

7.1.5 On several occasions, Board members witnessed the absence of prisoners in classrooms. Staff stood awaiting learners with equipment prepared and records ready. Sadly, the lack of escorting officers had prevented attendance. Once, as IMB members watched, two officers arrived for escorting duties halfway through a session, having just been released from a hospital escort. Prisoners on that occasion had a very curtailed lesson. The Board is deeply concerned that staff shortages are preventing prisoners from properly accessing educational classes which in turn contribute to preparation for successful release.

7.1.6 There are always waiting lists for courses. Although approximately 200 (25%) prisoners are longer sentence prisoners at HMP Wealstun, more than 600 others present a steady churn. Their sentences are shorter, sometimes only for a week or two, and consequently they do not have time to establish learning patterns or complete courses. Continuation of learning for prisoners transferred from HMP Leeds is improving. The system at the feeder prison establishes individual prisoners' needs which is then communicated to Wealstun.

7.1.7 Data indicates that successful completion of courses is good at entry level. Prisoners can withdraw or transfer out of the region, though, making interpretation of results difficult.

7.1.8 The Board was told that two prison officers are required to manage education and library functions. Only one has been available during the review period because of staff shortages, so none of the five libraries have been accessible for browsing.

The three library staff (although one spends most time with Shannon Trust work) have adapted by visiting wings to collect and distribute chosen books, information, quizzes, card-making kits and distraction packs.

7.1.9 The library is excellently stocked and benefits from the recently installed Simple Little Library System (SLLS). This enables age group, ethnicity and usage to be recorded through a unique bar code. There are 12,000 books available, including foreign language books, with stock being bought or revised. New furniture, a library agreement, a compact for the orderlies, and distraction packs continued to be varied and popular.

7.1.10 Staff in the library are committed, enthusiastic and adaptable. They receive referrals from education. Prisoners with disabilities thanked them for checking their needs. This was evidenced by good reviews from a recent audit inspection.

7.1.11 The library timetables had to be changed many times through the year. During March they reopened but soon closed again because of the lack of officers. Adaptations were made several times to accommodate the split regime between morning and afternoons.

7.1.12 A staff library member has spent most time working for the Shannon Trust (see 6.7.3 above). With administration being time-consuming and the six hours of officer help required not available, the Shannon Trust has recognised extra work and is hoping to make a case for additional funding to employ a helper.

7.1.13 While officers have been in short supply, they have managed to open the small libraries on C and D wing to enable borrowing.

7.1.14 The Shannon Trust, another charity, continues to do good work in Wealstun, as it has over recent years. Mentors are prisoners, who teach non-readers through a carefully structured course with regular practice in basic reading skills. Recent changes to Shannon Trust record keeping have required much more time from organising staff. This means one member of the three-person library team spends all their time filling in paperwork. The Shannon Trust management is looking into funding another person for this work.

7.1.15 A particular recent success has been the reading progress of several members of the traveller community. One prisoner from that community has encouraged others to achieve high standards and mentored two members of the community.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 As part of moving to Stage 1, the majority of prisoners are now only able to work or attend education part-time, either in the morning or afternoon, with their pay being reduced accordingly. (A small number of workshops are fulltime due to the amount of time required to complete the course.) Whilst the Board understands that this should enable more prisoners to be employed, this is not currently the case because the shortage of officers has resulted in regular regime curtailments, a lack of available escorts and curtailment of work to enable domestic periods before prisoners are locked up. This is totally unacceptable to the Board.

7.2.2 There is a variety of work available to prisoners including gardens, kitchens, tailoring, car part assembly, electrical waste recycling, sewing machine repairs, laundry, decorating and joinery training, waste management, tea packing and the catering academy. Q Branch shares its workshop with Martin House. Furniture is repaired which is sold for the benefit of the children's hospice charity. Q Branch carries out repairs inside the prison.

7.2.3 The sewing machine repair workshop teaches prisoners to mend and fix machines from other prisons. It is the only one servicing the entire prison estate. Previously eight prisoners learned how to maintain and fix mailbag, parachute, sandbag and other complicated machines used for sewing prison-wear. The work is specialised, needing intensive instruction. A prisoner storeman uses a laptop to process the expensive stock. When part-time work was introduced, an exception was made for this workshop because of the in-depth skills learning required. However, this failed as the regime did not allow prisoners domestic time, including showers. Therefore, five prisoners attended in the morning and five others in the afternoon, limiting their learning time.

7.2.4 Another important partnership is with the Clink Kitchens programme. Clink Kitchens provides a trainer, who works with prisoners employed in the kitchens to help them to gain qualifications, and a mentor to work with prisoners on release. This is an excellent example of working with third parties to provide high quality training and resettlement opportunities for prisoners, and the Board commend all parties involved for their dedication and commitment.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 This has been a very busy year for the OMU as it was short of staff and the number of receptions increased significantly due to the need to ensure local prisons had sufficient space to accommodate the increased number of prisoners arriving from court as a result of courts addressing Covid related backlogs of cases. All new receptions needed to be processed by the OMU which involved completing offender assessment system (OASys) assessments and checking the sentence calculation.

7.3.2 There is currently a shortage of category D places in the wider prison estate which means that prisoners are having to wait for places to become available. The possibility of a new wing being built at Wealstun for category D prisoners is welcomed by the Board but only if additional staffing can be found to run it. The Board considers that given the number of category D prisoners, the OMU should set up a forum for category D prisoners to discuss their issues.

7.3.3 The Board is concerned that an increasing number of prisoners are being transferred to Wealstun who are not appropriate for a resettlement prison like Wealstun. Many have very short sentences, whilst others include foreign national prisoners, IPP prisoners and lifers. This causes a number of issues as the prison is not set up to deal with such categories.

7.3.4 There are currently around 27 IPP prisoners at Wealstun (an increase from 19 in December 2019), mostly over tariff and mostly in prison on recall after initial release. In contrast to some other prisons, there is no designated accommodation nor specialist treatment for IPP prisoners. They are accommodated across all wings,

associating with other prisoner cohorts who are working towards a defined release date. Prisoner feedback suggests there is low awareness amongst prison staff of the existence of IPP prisoners and their needs, adding to a feeling of frustration and often despair that nobody is listening to them.

7.3.5 The Board would like to see the 'best practice ideals' in the HMPPS guidance for IPP prisoners being adopted, including the reinstatement of the IPP/lifer Forum and communication channels (to be led by staff and prisoner IPP leads), which could lead to more focused discussion of IPP issues and regular updates to the Governor of the progress of IPP prisoners.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 In-cell telephony was a huge benefit to prisoners during the pandemic, enabling them to stay in touch with their families and friends. During the pandemic, the telephone lines were open 24 hours per day, but have now reverted to the normal times of 7.00 am – 11.00 pm. Prisoners also received £5 telephone PIN credit a week during the pandemic period, which has now ceased.

7.4.2 Social video calls (delivered by Purple Visits), which wholly replaced social visits during the pandemic, enable prisoners, especially those out of area, to have contact with their families. However, many have complained about the poor internet connection or the possibility of the connection being stopped if, for example, the family dog walks into the picture. Since the reintroduction of social visits, prisoners are allowed to book one social video call per month. However, it is disappointing that there is no additional staffing allocation for social video calls.

7.4.3 From 21 November 2021, social visits were reintroduced and could include visitors from more than one household. Ten visiting sessions were available over six days. All visitors had to provide a negative lateral flow test from home and had to wear a face mask until they were seated. Hugging was allowed but no kissing. The Board has concerns that some prisoners report being banned from visits if they have misbehaved, so will monitor the situation closely.

7.4.4 Since the basic incentives scheme level was reintroduced in April 2022, prisoners were entitled to visits based on their incentives level. Those on basic could have two visits, those on standard three and those on enhanced four a month.

7.4.5 It is recognised that many prisoners are not having family contact through face-to-face visits, social video calls, telephone or post and the prison needs to use key workers to identify these prisoners so that they can be supported. However, as most prisoners are not having key worker sessions due to the shortage of staff, this process is currently ineffective. The Board will monitor the situation when key workers are in place.

7.4.6 The Jigsaw charity maintains two full-time members of staff to work with prisoners and encourage family engagement. Support and materials have been offered to prisoners in for use in social video calls. Fathers who were hesitant to play and speak with their children found the workbooks and suggestions useful to help with meaningful communication.

7.4.7 Jigsaw organised two family visits at Christmas, two at Easter and one during each half terms. These sessions lasted for two and a half hours which was shorter than previous 'dads and kids' days, as feedback from participants had said that these sessions were too long. Attendance was usually about a dozen families. Children were given seasonal activities, were photographed with fathers and received a book from Prison Reading Groups. Families played bingo and light refreshments were available. Feedback from the sessions was good, although families would have liked to have been able to move about more and have hot drinks, but Covid restrictions prevented this.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 One of the major concerns for the Board was the number of prisoners with very short sentences, including cases where a prisoner was at Wealstun for less than two weeks, which meant that there was no opportunity to undertake any resettlement planning. It is not appropriate for these prisoners to be placed at Wealstun.

7.5.2 An employment hub has been set up near the staff mess. On at least six occasions, the hub was opened to enable prisoners to speak personally to Jobcentre Plus coaches and to use computers to search for employment. Sadly, the lack of officers has restricted the opportunity for further sessions which, of course, hampers resettlement opportunities for prisoners which is unacceptable.

7.5.3 The partnership with Mary Magdalene Church youth project continues. The community support centre sends someone each week to find prisoners being released into the area. They are given help on release to settle back into the community. This work has been extended, and two other organisations, Caritas Social Action Network² and St George's Crypt³, are becoming involved with Wealstun to create initiatives to support prisoners on their release.

² <https://www.csan.org.uk/member/pact/>

³ <https://www.stgeorgescrypt.org.uk/how-we-help>

The work of the IMB

The Board currently comprises seven members, two of which were recruited in January 2022. Unfortunately, for various reasons, three members left before the end of 2021.

Through the majority of the reporting period, members were able to visit the prison despite the Covid-19 pandemic, although Board meetings were held remotely to enable all members to contribute.

Rule 45 reviews were attended either in person or by telephone throughout the reporting year. However, problems with the telephone line have meant that joining by phone has not been possible for a number of months.

Applications were collected and scanned by the clerk, and the Board's responses were provided through the 'email-a-prisoner' scheme. The majority of the applications were dealt with remotely and prisoners only seen in difficult cases. Prisoners also had access to the national 0800 IMB applications line and 27% of applications were made by this method (including 48% of these by just one prisoner). The number of applications for the reporting year was 151, a reduction of 40% from the previous reporting period. However, 25% of all applications came from just three prisoners.

It should be noted that the statistics do not reflect all the work of the Board during the reporting period as a considerable amount of work was undertaken at home. It is also the case that the availability of improved technology is allowing more activity to be undertaken remotely and that consideration should be given to this being accounted for by the IMB Secretariat.

The Board has been taking part in trialling the use of Kahootz, a secure cloud-based IT system. Once members are up to speed, Kahootz should make things easier for the Board as all information will be in one place.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	159
Total number of segregation reviews attended	73

Applications to the IMB (including via the 0800 telephone line)

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	6	1
C	Equality	4	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	6	6
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	24	9
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	14	5
F	Food and kitchens	2	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	23
H1	Property within this establishment	34	10
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	3	10
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	32	19
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	34	19
K	Transfers	4	5
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	40	25
	Total number of applications	248	151



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk.