



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Highpoint

**For reporting year
1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Highpoint was originally opened as a prison in 1977 and has undergone a number of estate reconfigurations over the years. The prison is sited on a former Royal Air Force base using many of the original buildings and is split over two adjacent (North and South) sites. It is situated some 10 miles south east of Newmarket in rural Suffolk.

HMP Highpoint is a male category C training and resettlement prison for London and Essex. The operational capacity for the reporting period was 1310.

Accommodation at the prison varies considerably in terms of fabric and facilities. At the beginning of the reporting year, there were 10 residential units on the South site. Two of these were deemed to be a fire hazard: unit 6 (40 beds) was closed in May 2021, demolished, and replaced in December with 33 Containex accommodation units, under the national initiative. Unit 7 (40 beds) was closed at the end of December and is scheduled to be demolished, to be replaced, in May 2022, by a further 52 Containex units. On the North side there are five residential units. Most units have in-cell sanitation except for 11, 12 and 13 on the North, which have 24-hour access to lavatory and shower recesses. En-suite cells are available on units 8, 9 and 10 on the South. Most cells are single occupancy; however, there are 38 doubled-up single cells across both sites.

Unit 5: During the reporting year, newly arrived prisoners at HMP Highpoint spent the first 14 days isolating on a reverse cohorting unit (RCU) located on K spur (the spur was acting as a reverse cohort unit in line with national Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) policy). All new receptions were offered the opportunity to engage in a PCR test on day one and day six. If both tests were negative, they were then able to leave the RCU ahead of the 14-day isolation period.

Unit 9 (protective isolation unit): Prisoners who were designated as shielding due to Covid or other medical issues could be located on this unit alongside other prisoners.

Unit 7A: The 24 individual units accommodate prisoners with enhanced status and are mainly constructed of steel. The interior of each unit includes a sleeping area and a bathroom area. The units were brought in by HMPPS to provide a temporary solution to the use of overcrowded accommodation.

The dynamics of HMP Highpoint, with its split site and large population held some distance from home (with some 60% coming from London or Essex) and in a remote and rural location, continue to create significant performance challenges for the prison and make Highpoint a complex establishment.

Agencies and contractors for the prison include:

- Drug rehabilitation services – Phoenix Futures
- Services for families and children – Ormiston Trust

- Healthcare – Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd
- IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) – Forward Trust
- Escort contractors – include Serco and GEOAmey
- Learning and skills, education and training – People Plus
- Maintenance – Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Resettlement housing (London) – St Mungo's
- Resettlement services – Shaw Trust
- Information, advice and guidance – Forward Trust
- Job Centre Plus – one full-time worker in the prison since April 2021

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Covid-19 has continued to impact the Board's operations. When not able to visit the prison in person, members carried out monitoring by telephone, which has its limitations

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

There was a noticeable decrease in all of the following: self-harm, violent incidents, incidents of disorder, and the number of prisoners supported by the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) procedure. Mandatory drug testing was disrupted due to Covid, but a new drugs strategy was published at the end of the reporting year. Efforts have been made to maintain support systems for vulnerable prisoners in spite of Covid restrictions. Strategies for dealing with the issues of debt were being highlighted at the end of the year.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

On the whole, prisoners appear to have adapted well to the changing Covid regimes throughout the reporting year, and accepted the various restrictions. It must be highlighted that every attempt has been made by the Governor and staff to reduce the stress created during this period. Time out of cell has been curtailed as little as possible for prisoners.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The GP and nurse-led services have continued to meet the needs of prisoners but there have been some limitations on numbers of patients seen in clinic. Considerable effort has been put into resolving the number of patients failing to turn up for appointments. This continues to be an area requiring focus however. It is disappointing to note that the difficulty with the external provider of mental health services continues, which then impacts on the workload of the in-house team. The Board is pleased to note that exercise periods and time out of the cell for domestics and meal collection have been as little affected as Covid restrictions would permit.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

From May 2021, education and vocational work resumed, but with reduced numbers. Library access has been restricted, which inevitably had some negative impact. There were waiting lists for vocational courses, due to reduced workshop numbers and tutor vacancies. Social visits resumed in May (again, on a reduced basis) but remote visits continued throughout the year. The offender management unit (OMU)

has been working hard against a backlog of cases, and there is a waiting list for places on offending behaviour programmes. Resettlement planning underwent a change of organisation in June, and outcomes are not clear.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

3.3.1 The loss or delay of prisoners' property in transfer between establishments is still an issue of concern. The Board again asks for an urgent review into the handling of prisoners' belongings.

3.3.2 In the interests of reducing reoffending and supporting prisoners' progression, the Board asks for consideration of stable funding strategies for the provision of therapeutic initiatives (e.g. music/drama) across the prison estate.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

3.3.3 The service provided by GFSL is still a major cause for concern. The Board requests an urgent review of the works maintenance contract to ensure it fully meets the ongoing needs of a challenging prison environment.

3.3.4 The effects of under-resourcing in contracted areas is having a significant impact on outcomes for prisoners. The Board wishes to draw attention in particular to recruitment and retention of tutors (People Plus), and mental health providers (Forward Trust) within HMP Highpoint. The Board understands that while rates of pay may or may not differ from 'outside' employment, in some instances the terms and conditions of employment may vary considerably.

3.3.5 Prisoner progression has been badly affected by Covid restrictions. D category applications, Parole Board hearings, and the availability of offending behaviour programmes (OBPs) are examples of this. The Board asks if some form of 'catch up' strategy could be considered for prisons where there is a substantial need.

3.3.6 The netting that blew down in the storm over a year ago at HMP Highpoint, and which has still not been mended or replaced, remains a security and safety issue. This prison is vulnerable to throw-overs, and the increased opportunity for contraband to get into the prison has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the prisoners.

TO THE GOVERNOR

3.3.7 The Board recommends that in the interests of fairness and safety the increased use of body-worn video cameras is strongly encouraged.

3.3.8 Whilst the Board is aware of successful and effective regime changes, restricted access to the library is negatively impacting on opportunities for prisoner

education and progression. The Board therefore asks for consideration to be given to facilitating increased access to this area.

3.3.9 It is hoped, with the decrease in Covid restrictions, that the key worker scheme can be reintroduced in support of the prisoners, in the way it was originally conceived.

3.4 Progress since the last report

3.4.1 The Board welcomes the appointment of an advanced nurse practitioner (Healthcare) and a full-time family worker (Phoenix Futures) – both of which have had a significant effect on prisoner support in their respective departments.

3.4.2 There have been continued reductions in self-harm and violence, and in the number of prisoners located in the segregation unit. These figures can again be interpreted as a positive reflection on the work of the Governor and staff in reducing tension during Covid restrictions.

3.4.3 The return of social visits, albeit in reduced numbers, the continuation of Purple Visits (a secure video calling platform) and the facilitation by the chaplaincy team of compassionate Zoom meetings have been appreciated by the prisoners.

3.4.4 With the loosening of Covid restrictions, the resumption of vocational courses and the return of a full-time Job Centre Plus worker from April 2021 have improved support and progression routes for prisoners.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 On arrival, all prisoners are assessed in reception by healthcare, including a temperature test and a Covid swab. They are then fully screened on the wing on the second day, and a further Covid swab taken on day six.

Their property and persons are searched; a body scanner was installed in December 2020. Use of the body scanner is intelligence led. In the first full year of its use there were 45 'positives'. Not all of these however were transferred prisoners. Use of the body scanner has to be voluntary, with location to the segregation unit the usual alternative option for refusal.

The prisoner's property is checked in front of them and, where appropriate, issued.

On occasions there are late arrivals. HMP Highpoint does not have a lock out time, but prisoners arriving after 5.30pm/6.00pm will, following security checks, be given an overnight bag before being located on the induction unit. In normal circumstances they will have their property logged and be brought back the following morning to have it checked. During Covid, because of isolation rules, the late arrivals have had their property checked in their absence the following day, by officers working as a pair. Prisoners are given the opportunity to make a swap if they wish for an alternative item of clothing to be issued.

As there are no healthcare staff on site at this time in the evening, late arrivals are located directly on the induction unit and placed on observation until they are seen by healthcare on the following day.

4.1.2 The induction unit is situated on unit 5, K wing. New arrivals are held in open isolation on the unit for a maximum of 14 days, awaiting a second negative Covid test. Before Covid, a full induction programme was run by governors and peer support workers and included advice and information on library and gym access. Throughout 2021 induction procedures have been carried out on unit 5 by unit staff assisted by peer supporters.

4.1.3 During the reporting year the relevant induction paperwork/information from Phoenix Futures, the integrated drug treatment service (IDTS), was sent to all new arrivals through the internal mail. Any prisoner not confirming its receipt was seen face to face as soon as possible, following their period in isolation.

4.1.4 On the first day, new arrivals are interviewed by unit staff and also speak to peer supporters – Listeners and orderlies.

All new arrivals are given an information booklet, produced by prisoners, about all aspects of prison life in HMP Highpoint. This is useful as prisoners can refer back to it. There are some prisoners who are unable to read, but they do not always declare this on arrival on the induction unit.

New arrivals are given information about the different criteria for being accommodated on certain units. They are questioned as to any previous ACCT involvement or suicidal feelings. Gang membership and safety concerns are noted.

4.1.5 New arrivals are monitored during the first night – the frequency of checks depends on whether:

- all checks have been completed (in which case a prisoner is observed every three hours)
- the screening has not been completed (the prisoner is observed every hour)
- the prisoner has not seen healthcare (the prisoner is observed every 30 minutes).

4.1.6 The chaplaincy see all new arrivals in person, one to one, within 24 hours of arrival. They signpost the pastoral care available from the chaplaincy team and ensure that religious affiliations are noted and enquire about the prisoner's welfare. Each prisoner is also given a diary.

4.1.7 Prisoners spoken to on the induction unit were appreciative of the induction arrangements and felt that they had been treated with respect and fairness by reception staff.

There remained an issue with property accompanying prisoners to Highpoint during 2021 but there was evidence that the issues were beginning to be addressed by the end of the reporting year.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 The safer prisons team is a dedicated team of officers and office staff, run by a designated governor, dealing with all matters involving the safety of prisoners, covering areas such as assessment, ACCT reviews and use of force.

4.2.2 The number of self-harm incidents has reduced from 499 in 2020 to 357 in 2021. This is a positive reduction, but the number is still above the 320 self-harm incidents recorded in 2018. Self-harm incidents at HMP Highpoint mainly involved cutting or ingestion. This is in line with the trends of self-harm observed nationally.

There was no evident pattern for the incidents of self-harm in 2021 and the triggers remained similar throughout the year – family concerns, relationship issues, debt, mental health concerns, issues around location or healthcare.

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 caused prisoners concern for the health and wellbeing of loved ones. Relationships often became more troubled as prisoners were unable to have in-person visits. Mental health triggers for self-harming episodes have been diverse, whereas healthcare triggers were usually connected to the prisoner having been taken off a particular medication following a review.

4.2.3 There were no deaths in custody in 2021. One prisoner died in December 2020 and the coroner's court hearing has been adjourned until 13 June 2022 due to the family wanting representation at the final hearing. The independent report by the

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) from this case has already been published, with no actions for HMP Highpoint to address.

4.2.4 Pre-Covid, the Listener scheme was actively promoted, with posters displayed on all units. Listeners and peer mentor schemes did not operate during Covid-19. A prisoner needing support is offered a call to the Samaritans.

The Samaritans were due to return to Highpoint at the end of 2021 to offer refresher Listener training. Due to further Covid outbreaks, this was delayed until February 2022.

Peer mentor courses have also been delayed from 2021 and will take place early in 2022.

The safer prisons team will offer the delayed 2021 'bite size training' for staff early in 2022.

The Board considers these courses to be imperative and hopes that they can be arranged as early as possible.

4.2.5 The issue of debt caused by prisoners running unofficial "shops" has been recognised by safer prisons and was being highlighted at the end of 2021.

4.2.6 The number of ACCTs opened continues to decline, down from 379 in 2020 to 323 in 2021. The majority of ACCTs opened in 2021 followed incidents of self-harm. Statistics show prisoners of white ethnicity are more likely than others to self-harm and have ACCTs opened (this follows local and national trends).

The number of prisoners transferred into Highpoint on an open ACCT between January and November 2021 was 42.

IMB members ask to see prisoners on open ACCTs when visiting the units. Staff and Board members have had training on the new ACCT documents. Training was however paused during the later months of the reporting year due to Covid-19. Details of all ACCTs are given in the daily alerts report and dates of ACCT reviews are given in the daily briefing – but not the time at which these reviews will occur, making it difficult for Board members to attend on a regular basis.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 There were 218 violent incidents recorded during 2021; this is a welcome decrease of 18% on the number recorded in the previous year.

There were 108 prisoner on prisoner assaults, of which 10 were serious.

There were 95 assaults on staff recorded, of which seven were serious assaults.

4.3.2 Violent incidents are analysed, and all those involved are interviewed by safer prisons staff. Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are used at HMP Highpoint, as in all adult prisons, to manage and support those prisoners who are

violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent. The plans provide individualised targets and regular reviews. In 2021, 200 CSIPs were opened.

4.3.3 The Board is made aware of those prisoners on CSIPs through the daily briefings and alerts. The daily briefing documents the days when the CSIP reviews are taking place, but does not give times, which are subject to change.

4.3.4 Bullied victims are supported by staff, and known perpetrators are challenged. These men are identified in the daily alerts bulletin and IMB members aim to see them when they undertake rota visits to the units.

4.3.5 The daily briefing contains the names of those who are registered as 'men of concern'. Staff document their dealings with these prisoners each day. Details include whether the man has taken his meals, collected his medication or had a shower/exercise, comments on his general demeanour and the condition of his cell. The men are encouraged and assisted to keep themselves and their cell clean and to discuss any issues they may have. The number of men on the register fluctuates but averages between four and 10. (See also 6.4.2.)

4.3.6 The chaplaincy visits all vulnerable prisoners each week.

4.3.7 There is no longer a dedicated residential unit for vulnerable prisoners at HMP Highpoint.

4.3.8 During the reporting year there were 258 recorded incidents of disorder. Incidents in all recorded categories showed a significant decline from incidents reported in 2020, the figures for which are given in brackets.

- 25 incidents at height (36)
- 59 reports of barricading (70);
- 1 incident of hostage taking (2)
- 173 other incidents of disorder (302)

These figures show an overall reduction of 63% on the figures for 2020.

The Board was pleased to receive reports from governors throughout the year attributing much of this reduction to regime changes made during the Covid pandemic. It is planned to maintain some of these changes due to the beneficial effects for the prisoners and their safety.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Due to Covid restrictions during parts of 2021, the Board did not always attend incidents where force had been used to control prisoners. Board members did however contact the prison on those occasions by telephone, to ascertain what had occurred and to satisfy themselves that the prisoner was safe, had seen healthcare and that all procedures had been followed. Similarly, due to Covid-19, Board

members were not always able to attend the use of force meetings, which they are invited and encouraged to attend.

4.4.2 Force was used to control prisoners on 345 occasions during this reporting year, a decrease of 7% on 2020, when there were 371 incidents.

4.4.3 The Board is concerned that body-worn video cameras are not always activated during a use of force incident, despite their use being directed.

4.4.4 PAVA spray was not used at HMP Highpoint in the reporting year.

4.4.5 Handcuffs were used on 129 occasions in 2021 and batons were drawn just once. The use of handcuffs during the reporting year was a substantial increase on the 81 occasions during the previous year. If control and restraint is used, the prisoner is de-briefed by one of the safer prisons team officers and this is recorded on the national offender management information system (NOMIS).

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 Some of the new arrivals at HMP Highpoint were prisoners on methadone or Subutex prescriptions. Healthcare should have been informed in advance of their arrival (but this was not always the case). The names of these prisoners were passed on to the IDTS by healthcare, usually on the day of arrival. The information included whether the prisoner was classed as maintaining or detoxing.

Such prisoners were automatically seen by the Phoenix Futures IDTS team. As a part of their 'scripting compact, these prisoners are expected to work with Phoenix Futures on psychosocial interventions. There were no refusals in 2021.

4.5.2 Spice and hooch were the two main available illicit substances at HMP Highpoint in 2021. Measures to prevent the brewing of hooch were introduced at certain times throughout the year, particularly in the weeks leading up to Christmas. There was a 22% fall in the amount of hooch confiscated during the reporting year.

Drugs continued to find their way into the prison despite efforts to intercept them. Staff continued to find drugs that had been sent in through the post, in letters and parcels, and in throw-overs. There was an 11% increase in the amount of Spice, which had been sprayed onto paper, being intercepted.

In an effort to counter this, security instigated the national unique reference numbers for rule 39 mail, and the prison is planning for the barcode system, to which solicitors will have to adhere, to be introduced in the next reporting year.

Towards the end of 2021 security began photocopying social mail in a further effort to prevent paper impregnated with Spice from reaching the prisoners.

4.5.3 There has been a reduction in intelligence around prisoners being under the influence of drugs. Mandatory drug testing (MDT) was disrupted due to Covid-19 restrictions during 2021. It recommenced in June but had to stop again at the end of

the year. Five percent of the prison population were subject to random tests every month. Suspicion testing and risk assessment testing also continued.

4.5.4 Throughout 2021 the security netting that blew down in the 2020 storms was not mended. This is unfortunate as, given its rural location, the prison is susceptible to throw-overs. Officers have intercepted many throw-overs and perimeter patrols have been increased in an attempt to mitigate the risk, but the broken netting does create a vulnerability.

4.5.5 There was a significant decrease in the amount of other, non-Spice drugs (cannabis, cocaine and heroin) found during 2021. Whilst the Board is pleased to see this reduction, we are concerned that the reduction in intelligence, the limits around MDT and the increased number of throw-overs might be masking the true figures.

4.5.6 Initiatives to tackle the issue of drugs included a review of the drugs strategy during 2021. The new strategy was published at the end of the year.

4.5.7 During 2021 Phoenix Futures continued to undertake more remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic, including the use of in-cell work packs. As they were also working in this way throughout much of the previous year, they have been able to fine tune the provision.

All prisoners who were actively working with Phoenix Futures during 2021 had contact with their key worker regularly maintained.

Those prisoners who have in the past not wished to engage with Phoenix Futures were also contacted and informed on how to engage if they wished.

At the end of the reporting year, Phoenix Futures were actively working with 19% of the HMP Highpoint population. During the reporting year, on average, Phoenix Futures held paperwork for 48% of the prison population. This percentage includes men who may or may not have engaged with them at some time in the past or who may be expected to engage in the future for 'release' work.

A full-time family worker is now in post and this is proving to be a very valuable service to both the prisoners and to their family members who access this service. At the end of the reporting year the number of families using the service was 17.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Staff actively make sure that the units are clean and tidy. Prisoners who do not keep their cells clean are encouraged to do so. *(See also 4.3.5.)*

Serveries are thoroughly checked after each meal, and the findings recorded. The standard is usually high. Governors' visits result in a high level of activity, and the prisoners seem justifiably proud of the results.

5.1.2 The Board understands that the works being carried out by GFSL were not being done in a timely manner. This is having an impact over the two sites, North and South. When works were carried out, not all works including fire safety were regularly quality checked by a GFSL supervisor.

The Board also understands that prisoners were carrying out minor maintenance works, which helped.

The Board would once again point out that the workforce employed within the prison are trying their best to complete the works, but they are still not being adequately managed by the GFSL senior management team.

It would appear that the GFSL senior management team does not understand the complexities of the issues and concerns in HMP Highpoint as a working prison.

The Board understands that GFSL were still struggling to recruit tradesmen and retain them.

Specific concerns include delays in:

- general repairs to electrical equipment
- general repairs to plumbing

Management of kitchen equipment showed improvement.

The Board asks that HMPPS carry out a review of the works maintenance contract provided by GFSL to ensure it fully meets the needs of a challenging prison environment.

5.1.3 The prisoner workforce consisted of 27 men on the South site and 10 men on the North site. They carry out various maintenance works including cell refurbishment, painting, mastic works, plumbing and oven cleaning.

5.1.4 During a previous reporting year, a fire at another establishment led to a survey of similar accommodation blocks at Highpoint (units 6 and 7). Although not identical in construction, unit 7 was closed and demolished and unit 6 was closed prior to demolition. *(See also Section 2, Description of the establishment.)*

5.1.5 The North and South sites combined produced over 2,500 meals each day. Special diets and religious observances were catered for. Despite Covid restrictions, food tasting by Board members has resumed.

5.1.6 Supplies and deliveries to the kitchens were sporadic due to the pandemic and Brexit.

5.1.7 There was little disruption to prisoners' orders for 'canteen' (goods which can be purchased inside the prison against earnings or private cash credited in their account), and they were able to buy food supplies to cook for themselves in the unit kitchens as usual.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The segregation unit continued to be settled and run in a highly professional and productive manner. Staff have to deal with very challenging and unpredictable behaviour and are able to diffuse volatile situations when dealing with prisoners. There are 18 operational cells available, plus one that is reserved for searches, and two 'special' cells, one of which was used as a library, and the other as a storeroom. The average occupancy of the unit was nine.

5.2.2 During the reporting year, 384 prisoners passed through the unit, compared with 434 in 2020, a reduction of 12%. The average length of stay in 2021 was six days. Progression plans are made to facilitate a prisoner's return to a residential unit or, where deemed appropriate, a transfer out to another establishment. The segregation governor attempted to keep the occupancy of the unit low, and return prisoners to normal locations. Three prisoners stayed in the unit for over 42 days; the correct procedure was followed each time.

5.2.3 Segregation review boards are held with a governor, with a member of the mental health team, and Board members have resumed their attendance. By the end of the year, visits were being made by a Board member to every prisoner in the unit twice a week, where good access was always permitted.

5.2.4 During the reporting year, there was a total of 2,793 adjudications, compared with 3,021 in 2020, a decrease of 228. Adjudications would normally take place in the segregation unit, but during Covid restrictions, a governor and a member of the segregation unit staff carried these out on the units, to avoid unnecessary movement of prisoners and staff. Due to Covid, the Board has only attended a small number of adjudications. The Board noted that at the adjudications the prisoners were shown respect and fair-mindedness by the duty governor and segregation staff.

5.2.5 During 2021 there were 51 use of force incidents in the segregation unit.

5.2.6 During 2021 there was a total of 46 ACCTs in segregation. This was a mixture of ACCTs being opened in segregation, and prisoners locating already on an open ACCT.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff resignation rates during 2021 saw no resignations in January and February and then an increase over the year to eight resignations in October (this is for Band 3 to 5 operational staff only). There was a total of 33 leavers, excluding promotions. There were 63 new officer starters in 2021.

5.3.2 During the year the Governor continued to hold forums with each unit. These were paused however whilst the prison was in outbreak status.

5.3.3 There have been few examples of prisoner frustration at Covid restrictions being vented against staff. This the Board believes is due to the careful and humane managing of the restrictions by the Governor and staff.

5.3.4 The Board has noted the frequent information bulletins to prisoners from the Governor, explaining in clear and frank terms any changes in regime due to Covid.

5.3.5 Due to Covid restrictions the key worker scheme was not able to be implemented as planned.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 Recruitment to replace the business administrator has been ongoing, but a successful candidate has not yet been identified. The diversity and inclusion (D&I) work however moved to the 'hub' model, and was undertaken by the safer prisons business administrators in line with their job descriptions. Recruitment was still ongoing to provide a further administrator in this area.

5.4.2 The equalities officer has a base on the South site but also services the North site. There are 17.5 hours per week identified for this role on both prison sites. In 2021, 1057 hours were delivered in this role against a profile of 910 hours (17.5 hours per week times 52 weeks). Due to Covid, there were some weeks where there was no D&I delivery. The team was also supported by a custodial manager who has a responsibility for D&I.

5.4.3 In 2021, 37 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted, two of which were upheld.

Thanks to the equalities officer and the community diversity officer, the following information has been obtained regarding the ethnicity of prisoners submitting DIRFs and the prison area to which they refer.

DIRFS (37): 2021	
Subject matter	
Disability	6
Religion or Belief	15
Race	15
Age	1

Ethnicity of prisoners who submitted DIRFS (37) in 2021	
Asian	5
Black	15
Mixed	4
White	10
Other	3

Location of prisoners who submitted DIRFS (37) in 2021 and location of prisoners	
Reception	2
Segregation	1
Kitchens	1
Healthcare	1
Adjudication	2
Units	
Tempest (B)	6
Tempest (D)	3
Unit 10	3
Unit 11	3
Unit 3	2
Unit 4	1
Unit 7A	2
Unit 8	7
Unit 9	3

NB: A number of prisoners submitted more than one DIRF.

5.4.4 Sixty-four percent of DIRFs were returned by the fifth day of the 14-day interim period. The IMB and regional team have concerns about return times and hopefully this will show improvement next year.

5.4.5 A new DIRF format is due in March 2022.

5.4.6 During the reporting year there were 183 foreign national prisoners from 36 countries (approximately 14% of the total population). Facilitating deportation is frequently complex and lengthy regarding the response of the Home Office and foreign embassies. Prisoners will be assessed for transfer to immigration removal centres at the end of their sentence, but some are not deemed suitable, or elect to stay at the prison until their situation is resolved. Immigration officers are usually

present in the prison, to engage with prisoners to hear their concerns, and inform and update them. This however did not take place during Covid restrictions, which caused a lot of frustration.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 In December, the team consisted of two Roman Catholic chaplains, one Muslim, two Free Church and one Church of England. In addition, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Humanist, Pagan and Mormon chaplains have made several visits during lockdown.

5.5.2 In spite of lockdown, the team have been carrying out all statutory duties, plus visiting all units daily.

5.5.3 One-to-one sessions continued, and there is a confidential phone line to the chaplaincy and to Samaritans as well as a private prayer line, all of which are well used by prisoners. Weekly newsletters were written for all religions, and these were personally delivered by the chaplaincy.

5.5.4 Services were resumed for a while, but had to stop due to Covid restrictions. At Christmas, all prisoners were given prayer petitions, to ask for prayers for family members, and the team held their own service for this. Each prisoner was also given three cards, donated by the Mothers' Union, to send to family and friends

5.5.5 Prisoners have access to the bereavement counselling service, provided in the main by Cruse and a spiritualist counsellor. Support is also available by phone.

5.5.6 An analysis carried out by the chaplaincy team shows that since July, one-to-one support of prisoners far outweighed conducting liturgical services. This support has been much appreciated by the prisoners.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 Prisoners are encouraged to 'do the right thing for the right reason', to earn incentives enhancements.

5.6.2 During Covid, prisoners whose behaviour meant they would normally be placed on the basic regime were noted as such, but they were not placed under those conditions. For example, in-cell television was available to all prisoners, regardless of their incentives scheme status, until the establishment progressed to stage 2 of lockdown (October 2021). At this point, the privilege was removed from those on basic regime. When nationally all prisons returned to stage 3, however, this was reversed, and all prisoners had in-cell television unless they were located in the segregation unit. All prisoners therefore were in effect living under either standard or enhanced conditions.

5.6.3 Unit 7A comprises individual units, set in a communal garden, and houses 24 enhanced prisoners.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Should a prisoner have an issue with the prison, he can send a COMP to the complaints clerk. This should normally be responded to within seven working days, but due to Covid and operational issues, this was not always achieved.

5.7.2 Daily briefing reports show that complaint forms were freely available on all wings. There was not a significant increase in the number of complaints received, but the content, as usual, reflected what was happening in the outside world, for example, frustration with Covid restrictions. Other complaints related to compensation for lost items (often multiple complaints were received from the same person, and in some instances, where compensation had already been paid – as can be verified by the records), and prisoners eager for category classification.

5.7.3 There were 2,802 complaints received from prisoners within HMP Highpoint, 83 fewer than in the previous reporting year, and 171 from other prisons, three fewer than in 2020.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 The Board received 34 applications concerning lost property. This is a decrease from 56 in 2020.

5.8.2 The problem still seems to be mainly regarding the transfer of property between establishments. It is frequently possible to resolve what has happened to property that is mislaid in the establishment which a Board member monitors, but it is often not possible to establish what has happened to property mislaid elsewhere. This leads to unnecessary time being spent trying to locate the property and, most significantly, frustration and disgruntlement among prisoners. Items are not necessarily of monetary value, but more significantly, of personal and emotional value to the prisoner. Loss of such belongings can severely affect the wellbeing of all prisoners, particularly those serving longer sentences.

(See 3.3.1 TO THE MINISTER)

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

Healthcare has been provided by Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd on North and South sites since October 2020.

6.1.1. There are two permanently employed GPs and one regular agency GP. Remote telephone sessions are also available via Practice Assist one day a week at the North site. In addition to this an advanced nurse practitioner has been recruited who works four days a week. This recruitment has made a measurable difference to improvements in the quality of care provided, ensuring a green rating across the majority of metrics.

6.1.2 Due to continued Covid restrictions during the course of the year, the team continued to adhere to social distancing within all the waiting rooms, whilst still accommodating routine appointments. After reviewing working practices, the team looked to engage with patients by taking as many clinics as possible out to the units. Patients have been seen face to face by GPs and nurses throughout the pandemic.

Historically, the number of appointments which were not kept ('did not attend', or DNAs) has been an issue and this problem has continued to present challenges. During the course of the year a great deal of effort has been put into resolving this to pull the rate below a 10% threshold, and taking work out to the units has helped in this regard.

In October DNAs stood at 12.39% and had reduced to 9.79% by December.

6.1.3 A nurse-led seven-days-a-week service is provided using on average three to four nurses per day assisted by support workers with two nurses on north. Out-of-hours assistance is provided via the NHS 111 service and paramedic/emergency ambulance call-out. If a prisoner needs to attend the local hospital for treatment, officers are deployed to facilitate this. Prison officers also receive first-aid training, including the use of the automated defibrillator.

6.1.4 Dental treatment is no longer commissioned by Practice Plus Group. Community Dental Services is commissioned directly by NHS England to run the dental service.

6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1 Operating under the Practice Plus umbrella there were three practitioners in the mental health team assisted by an agency nurse. They dealt with prisoners with secondary mental health issues, with an ongoing caseload of 40 prisoners. Demand was matched by resource 95% of the time.

The team were able to continue with face to face work and maintaining their excellent work with the mandatory attendance at segregation reviews. The Board

would like to commend the high level of care provided by the team during a difficult year.

6.2.2 Those with anxiety disorders are referred to the IAPT service, provided by the Forward Trust. There was a significant backlog of cases throughout the year with this in turn leading to re-referrals to the mental health team.

It would appear that this backlog is due in large part to the under-resourcing of the Forward Trust team, who are currently looking to recruit, and to the increasing anxiety demands of prisoners during the pandemic.

6.3 Social care

6.3.1 There were regular needs assessments, and social care is provided by external sources wherever possible.

6.3.2 Prisoners identified as men of concern were discussed at morning meetings. *(See also 4.3.5)*

6.3.3 Peer support is provided wherever required and this continued during the pandemic.

6.3.4 There are no special units at HMP Highpoint, and end-of-life care support is provided on the units until transfer to the local hospice is appropriate. The Board notes there is a good working relationship with the local hospice.

6.4 Exercise, regime

6.4.1 Prisoners have the opportunity for two outside exercise periods per day and this did not change during the pandemic with the exception of when individual units were in lockdown. The gym was closed. The gym instructors have however been visiting the wings.

6.4.2 Movement between the wings has continued to be restricted. As noted above however the twice-daily exercise periods have continued where possible as has time allocated to mealtimes, showers etc. The Board wishes to commend the Governor for continuing to maintain the opportunity for social interaction whilst looking to limit the possible spread of disease.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.5.1 Phoenix Futures is responsible for the delivery of drug and alcohol support. The year proved to be challenging, with Covid restrictions meaning no group work was possible. One-on-one help continued however through the course of the year provided by the 11 practitioners supported by three managers. The caseload was maintained at approximately 200 at any one time with capacity in general meeting demand.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 As in 2020, the majority of 2021 has been subject to Covid restrictions. There was no face to face education provision from the start of the year until mid-May 2021.

From the start of April, all education staff were back on site and offering in-cell education packs. The education department have advised that 'take up was very low'.

When classes resumed in May the attendance was good – around 75% – but class numbers were reduced to allow for social distancing. There were initial problems with recommencement due to unlock lists not being closely followed by officers. Prisoners who were in full-time work were still being offered in-cell distance learning. All others were expected to attend actual classes.

On a positive note, whilst observing a level 1 English group there appeared to be good engagement between the prisoners and the tutor and the peer mentoring system was observed and appeared to be working well. There were also visits arranged for an external group to come in to engage in play writing with some prisoners. However, unfortunately due to budget cuts therapeutic initiatives have diminished and there is no provision for music or drama at Highpoint.

7.1.2 The Shannon Trust which helps the disadvantaged with learning was unable to operate for some of the year because only education classes were given direct access to the library (others received ongoing unit book deliveries). It is claimed that the prison resources were 'reasonable' for dealing with learning disabilities, but it is unclear how this claim is backed up by formal assessment. Chromebooks were available for the Shannon Trust to support disadvantaged prisoners.

7.1.3 Whilst specific numbers have not been provided, the Board is aware of continuing staffing issues in education. Recruiting to teaching roles is difficult as although the pay is similar to further education colleges, other terms and conditions of employment are apparently less favourable – for example holiday entitlement. With regard to prisoner employment in education, the loss of free flow means that some internal job roles no longer exist. These were trusted positions and therefore this is a problematic loss of opportunity for prisoners.

7.1.4 During 2021, 17 learners started studies with the Open University and in the year 16 students completed and passed their modules. Eighteen learners started distance learning courses that were not Open University. In terms of achievements, 10 learners gained various qualifications (certificate, diploma, BA (Hons) degree). Unfortunately, Open University courses do not qualify as 'work' as do other courses and therefore prisoners undertaking Open University courses receive no pay for the time spent working in the library. This is a disincentive to enrol on these courses. Chromebooks were purchased to facilitate prisoners on the wings with Open University work and CV preparation.

7.1.5 Because of Covid restrictions the library has been operating a request and delivery service. With the co-operation of wing staff this has run smoothly – books and DVDs being delivered to the prison units at lunchtimes. The end of free flow has meant however that prisoners are unable to use the library in the normal/traditional way of browsing freely and spending time reading. The only prisoners who have had direct access to the library were those in education, who were permitted a 15-minute visit during their course time.

7.1.6 Distance learners have been disadvantaged with regard to library access as they were not able to use the computers as they did prior to Covid restrictions. A further issue was that some distance learners had difficulties accessing Open University materials. This was due to an inability to download required materials onto prison-issue laptops because of delays in the security system. (See also 7.1.4.)

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 There were long waiting lists for the City & Guilds courses particularly in areas such as carpentry, painting and decorating, and car mechanics, where qualifications lead to potential job placements and hence employment after release.

7.2.2 As of December 2021, the class sizes were reduced from an average of eight to six due to Covid restrictions. All courses have waiting lists for places. On South there are 100 places for 900 men and on North 150 places for 350 men. There were nominally 25 courses, nine of which were offered on both sites, but there were tutor vacancies for four of these which was going to be further compounded by the impending retirement of two tutors.

7.2.3 Workshops on South site were monitored during the year, with the sewing workshop employing 30 rather than 32 men due to Covid restrictions. The workshop was making boxer shorts, pillow cases, blankets and sheets.

Courses funded through the dynamic purchasing system (DPS) still ran in 2021 despite Covid restrictions. (The DPS was launched in 2018 and is an online procurement system enabling Governors to commission small education projects for their prisons.) Some men who had applied for courses were then refused after allocation or dropped out during the course, or were removed for behaviour issues.

Statistics from 2021:

- Barista – 3 courses delivered, 19 learners allocated, 17 completed
- Energy & utility skills register (EUSR) / construction skills certification Scheme (CSCS) – 5 courses delivered, 48 learners allocated, 39 completions
- Level 2 catering and hospitality – 17 enrolments, 9 completions
- Counterbalance forklift – 18 courses delivered, 63 learners allocated, 54 completions
- Level 2 gym and rugby – 13 learners allocated, 11 completions
- Level 1 horticulture – 19 learners, 19 completions
- Level 2 horticulture – 4 learners, 1 completion
- Prisoner mediation – 2 courses delivered, 24 learners, 20 completions

- Personal track safety (PTS) rail track – 2 courses ran with 13 learners allocated, 8 completions
- Rowing course – 2 courses run, 16 learners allocated, 11 completions
- Flat roofing course – 2 courses run, 16 learners allocated, 12 completions
- Level 2 warehousing – 38 enrolments, 17 completions
- Level 7 refereeing course through the Football Association – 11 learners, 11 completions
- The Sycamore Tree victim awareness course – 11 learners, 6 completions

Information regarding waiting lists during the monitoring period in question is not available, as the lists change on a daily basis due to allocations.

Information was also not available regarding staff vacancies and recruitment times.

7.2.4 A few years ago, it was possible for prisoners to obtain a national vocational qualification (NVQ) for kitchen work. The relevant member of staff left and has not been replaced. The Board hopes that this can be rectified in 2022.

7.2.5 There is an active employment forum with potential employers including Halfords, Kier etc. This area makes a crucial contribution to the rehabilitation aims of the prison.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Because of Covid there were no face to face sentence planning meetings during the first part of the year, with the exception of high-risk prisoners who were nearing the end of their sentence. Staff stated that whilst there was difficulty and a backlog with sentence planning management, Covid and safety were the priorities.

7.3.2 The OMU is based in 'outer admin' (outside the main gates of the prison) and deals with the paperwork connected with transfers, court appearances etc. In effect they acted as an intermediary between the outside world and the prisoner offender managers (POMs) who are based within the prison. Communication has proven to be more difficult now they are not based in the same building.

7.3.3 By the middle of the year there was an inevitable backlog of work due to Covid restrictions (such as programmes not being available and long waiting lists). Prisoners were arriving from other establishments without a sentence plan which further added to the delays. The reduction in the availability of all courses during the lockdown in the first four months of the year also prevented the prisoners progressing as they had been able to prior to Covid.

By the middle of August, the OMU was understaffed. There should be 12 staff (eight uniformed and four non-operational). At that point they had seven staff in total. Two vacancies were being advertised, one staff member was on long-term sick leave and another was on maternity leave. Caseloads should have been 50-60 per member of staff, but at that time were running at about 75-100. There were instances of staff who had left the service not being replaced. The prison did try to help this situation by reassigning uniformed staff to the OMU for eight weeks at a time.

7.3.4 Offender assessment system (OASys) plans should be completed within 10 weeks of a prisoner arriving at HMP Highpoint. By the end of August, 144 cases had missed that deadline. Fifty percent of all transfers in were arriving without an OASys plan which further increased the failure rate. The OMU is expected to complete 120 cases per month. Voluntary overtime was made available to help facilitate this, but this was not taken up sufficiently to decrease the backlog, resulting in prisoners not obtaining D category status.

7.3.5 Although the OMU were short staffed they regularly attended surgeries on the wings and are aware of the benefits of seeing prisoners and of being seen. Such an approach however was haphazard and generally prisoners did not interact with their allocated member of the OMU, thus diminishing the quality of the contact.

Staff were regularly going beyond their 39-hour week, utilising lunch times and days off. Whilst this is admirable there are risks associated in respect of the quality of their decision-making process, taking on board tiredness, disengagement and employee burnout. OMU staff admitted that those prisoners who agitated the most were likely to be prioritised simply to remove the added pressure. This reactionary response is a 'firefight' approach and impacts the mental health of staff.

7.3.6 The Board wishes to note that the OMU staff present as engaging, professional and inspirational. Their drive and diligence in delivering the service was noticeable. Time has been highlighted as a limited resource so that additional staff are needed, but the loss of several experienced staff has compounded the issue. The training of colleagues impacts negatively on time available even though it will be beneficial in the long run. Staff were informative about the needs of the prisoners, and the importance of their part in the prisoner's journey. They acknowledged the difficulties for the prisoner when certain 'tick-boxes' have not been completed to enable the prisoner to move on (or not).

7.3.7 Prisoners who receive a two-year sentence are eligible for licence at 12 months. The community offender management system (COMS) takes over the prisoner's case 7.5 months prior to release, therefore allowing only a short period before transition. The OMU staff reported that in such cases prisoners were rarely seen and generally only received a phone call of introduction using the in-cell phones.

7.3.8 Category D applications, parole hearings and courses such as offending behaviour programmes have all been seriously impacted by Covid. The rehabilitative courses can only facilitate three prisoners on each session instead of the pre-Covid number of 10. However, Covid has also allowed for innovation in other areas such as online hearings (technology permitting). Waiting lists for courses are unacceptable – 11 prisoners have been waiting between two and three years for a Kaizen Course, and seven have been waiting for between three and four years.

7.3.9 Probation appears to have been in a similar situation to the OMU. At the end of the summer, a full complement of probation officers was 10 but only five were in position. Retention of staff appears to be the biggest issue. Requests to use temporary probation staff from agencies were turned down which further exacerbated pressure on the service and its ability to deliver as required.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 There were no social (face to face) visits between 26 December 2020 and 14 May 2021 due to Covid restrictions. From 14 May 2021 to 31 December 2021, 2,149 social visits were completed with a total of 3,952 family members attending visits.

During the whole of the year, Purple Visits (a secure video calling platform) were permitted. There were 1,127 visitors registered on the Purple Visits application and 3,155 video calls were made.

The chaplaincy team facilitated 152 compassionate/family visits and Zoom calls during this period.

7.4.2 Up until March 2021, all prisoners were provided with an additional £10 phone credit on a weekly basis (£5 being funded by HMP Highpoint and £5 by the Ministry of Justice). From December 2021 the Ministry of Justice reinstated their £5 additional weekly phone credit. This credit was provided to all prisoners with no exceptions.

7.4.3 When visits recommenced, it was a requirement for lateral flow tests to be administered. Staff dealt efficiently and politely with these. Childcare facilities were stopped due to Covid restrictions and the Ormiston Trust provided activity packs to visiting children.

7.4.4 Because HMP Highpoint is classed as a 'London' prison, it is apparent that visiting can be difficult for families due to the length of journeys required, the cost of journeys and the difficulties with lack of public transport to the area.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 In June 2021, resettlement was absorbed back into probation. Prior to this, resettlement was dealt with by community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) – for low to medium risk prisoners. It has been difficult to obtain any figures for the year due to the fact that everything seems to have been 'split off'.

Since the changes, St Mungo's only deals with housing issues for London-based discharges. For prisoners being discharged outside of London, resettlement will contact their local authority if needed under the 'duty to refer'.

7.5.2 Job Centre Plus (JCP) has been working full time back in the prison since April 2021. Prisoners are contacted by letter by JCP 12 weeks prior to discharge and an in-cell phone call or a face to face meeting can be arranged, as JCP are not allowed to go onto the residential units. JCP assist in finding work upon release and if this is not possible will help with benefits applications.

The work of the IMB

At the start of the reporting year, there were 13 Board members, three of whom were at the end their probationary period and carrying out duties.

Within the reporting period, three experienced members resigned from the Board.

During lockdown, it should be noted that applications were collected and dealt with throughout the year. Some members of the Board were able to continue visiting the prison, and the rest of the Board monitored remotely.

In spite of the restrictions, a recruitment campaign has resulted in three potential new members.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	425
Total number of segregation reviews attended (due to Covid, a number of the reviews were carried out by telephone)	104

During January and February, due to Covid-19, two members of the Board went onto both sites to empty the IMB boxes on all units during the period before unlock. The two Board members assessed the applications from the prisoners and contacted the relevant departments. The Board member then contacted the prisoner by letter and confirmed the action taken.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Reporting year 2020	Reporting year 2021
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	4
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	16	5
C	Equality	3	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	6	3
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	7	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	8
F	Food and kitchens	11	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	24	20
H1	Property within this establishment	15	34
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	41	36
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorization	30	42
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	20	13
K	Transfers	12	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	14	55
	Total number of applications	214	239



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