



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Garth

**For reporting year
1 December 2020 – 30 November 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 Garth is a category B training prison. It opened in 1988 and holds long-term and life-sentenced prisoners. It has a maximum operating capacity of 845 and is now part of the Long-Term High Security Estate (LTHSE). There are seven residential wings and a segregation unit which is sited adjacent to the prison's healthcare department. Prisoners are housed in single cells with few cells adapted to specifically to meet the needs of the physically disabled or men with mobility needs. There are also three specialist units:

- The Beacon unit treats prisoners with profound personality disorders
- The Building Hope unit accommodates prisoners with additional disruptive needs
- The residential support unit is for vulnerable prisoners who have not been convicted of sexual offences.

The prison is set in a rural location which has no connections to mainline train services. There is no regular bus service from either Preston or Leyland, which are the nearest towns. There is ample parking for visitors who travel by car and there are reliable taxi services in the area.

Various services are provided to the prison. Some are contracted locally or regionally whilst others are contracted directly by national contracts with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Some of those services and providers are listed below:

- Primary healthcare – Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMHT)
- GP healthcare – locum GPs from various agencies
- Dental services – Smart Dental Services
- Mental health services – GMMHT
- Substance misuse services – Delphi Rehabilitation Service
- Adult social care – Lancashire County Council
- Pharmacy provisions – sourced by GMMHT
- Optical services – Optometrist privately employed by GMMHT
- Education and training – Offender learning & skills service/Novus
- Shared learning – University of Central Lancashire
- Prisoners' canteen – DHL
- Main food supplier – Bidfood
- Library Services – Lancashire County Council Library Service
- Listeners and phone line support – The Samaritans
- Prisoner transport – GEOAmey
- Facilities maintenance and management – Amey

3. Executive Summary

3.1 Background to the report

For a second year all aspects of life in the prison have been dominated by the continuing Covid-19 pandemic and the constant changes imposed or lifted by the government. Endeavours to control the pandemic and keep infections out of the establishment have continued throughout and the Governor, with the continuing support of the senior management team and staff, has worked tirelessly to maintain and improve on the work of the previous year. The dangers that the virus posed were clearly recognised and steps to manage the situation were taken. This was done by restricting the regime, closing down education classes, workshops, gyms and family and domestic visits and by keeping prisoner movement throughout the prison to a minimum. Some family contact was maintained via 'Purple Visits' (see 7.4). Precautions were also taken to reduce the number of people entering the prison. As a consequence the risk of bringing the virus into the prison was much reduced. Constant testing of staff and prisoners is ongoing and continuous.

The first Covid-19 case was found in Garth during October 2020; since then there have been isolated cases throughout 2021 with Garth listed by Public Health England, as an 'outbreak site on three occasions. Staff absences due to people having been in contact with others have been high, frequently with more than 65 staff absent, either with Covid-19 or having to isolate, and that situation is continuing. Staff absences have put additional pressure on staff in work. The situation has been handled effectively, although constant changes to the regime have been necessitated and on many occasions wings have had to be 'locked down'.

Throughout this period the Board recognised that it had a right to continue to enter the prison, if it was safe for members and prisoners. On three occasions the Board monitored remotely for short periods. At all times it has striven to work effectively but clearly its work has been affected by the conditions and by the fact that it has been going through a Board membership rebuilding period.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

In many respects the prison has been safer as a result of the pandemic restrictions than it was during periods on normal regime. Fewer than usual incidents have occurred

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Whilst, during the restrictions, many regular activities have been reduced or curtailed, in other respects prisoners have been well supported by staff and fewer than usual incidents have occurred. It should be noted, however, that throughout this period the prison has been actively recruiting new staff and that, consequently, there is a large number of relatively inexperienced staff in post.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

An unusually high number of applications have been received about healthcare issues during this period but it is the opinion of the Board that the regular healthcare staff have worked tirelessly to provide a full and effective service. There have been some instances where visiting practitioners have been unable to attend but, generally, the system has worked well.

See 6.1.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The transfer of prisoners has been reduced during this period because of Covid-19 restrictions both in Garth and in other prisons. Clearly this is a national problem which requires urgent attention. It should be noted that Garth normally holds long-sentence prisoners who are some distance from release. A small number of prisoners are released from Garth but increasingly problems are being encountered in transferring prisoners to resettlement prisons for discharge. In-cell telephony was installed in March/April 2020 and this has proved to be an important benefit for prisoners to keep them in touch with family and friends.

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3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

The Board's strong recommendation is that the contract with Amey should be investigated and reviewed as poor maintenance of the prison is impacting negatively on all aspects of life at Garth prison for both prisoners and staff. See 5.1.

The ongoing problem of the indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) continues. It is understood that the matter is subject to an inquiry by the Parliamentary Justice Select Committee and this Board has offered a contribution to the response from the IMB Management Board.

Staff retention problems throughout HMPPS have increased throughout this period in large part because of the erosion of staff salaries and conditions of service. This matter needs to be urgently addressed and rectified.

The Board regularly compliments the kitchen manager and his staff on the quality and quantity of the food provided but it is suggested that the food budget be increased as a matter of urgency

Similarly the number of beds available for prisoners with special needs throughout the estate is inadequate and requires increase urgently. See 5.2.

Throughout the prison estate there is a serious shortage of beds for difficult and hard to manage prisoners. This all too frequently results in excessively long periods of segregation. This issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board continues to be concerned about the length of time some prisoners are held in the segregation unit. The three specialist units in the prison do take some of the most disturbed of these people but it may be more appropriate to move some of them elsewhere. Further work needs to be carried out to improve this process.

The recruitment of uniformed staff needs urgent attention:

- Each prison and each category of prison has its own needs in terms of staff recruitment and balance.
- Each prison should have a say in the recruitment of individual officers in order to address the above requirements. This would be facilitated by face-to-face interviews in the prison.
- Each prison should have a say as to the gender balance of recruits.
- The retention of new staff is proving to be problematic. If the above issues are addressed it is likely that retention will be improved.

There is a growing number of older prisoners, many of whom are in need of mobility and other aids. Presently there is confusion about who should provide these aids and this matter needs urgent attention because it impacts increasingly upon budgets.

The Board is very concerned that the role and involvement of the outside Probation Service has been seriously limited in that.

- The community offender manager (COM) is not now allocated to a prisoner until (s)he is within sight of release.
- Pre-sentence reports are not now routinely prepared for defendants facing custodial sentences.

The offender assessment system (OASys) has been seriously diluted pre- and post-sentence and before transfer to category B and other prisons

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Restore the effectiveness of the key worker scheme.
- Maintain a secure and safe environment through the remainder of the Covid pandemic.
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness of Amey.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The following issues were raised in last year's report:

- indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP)
- deaths in custody
- staffing and recruitment of prison officers
- prisoners' property

In all of these categories the problems remain very much as they were despite best efforts by staff.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Garth receives new prisoners who are serving long or life sentences. Ideally the Board would like to be available to monitor each prisoner coming through reception but practically this is not an option. The prison is dependent on transport provided by GEOAmev which has had huge disruptions during 2021. There are no set times when prisoners arrive. Board members visit the reception area to observe new arrivals when possible.

Each new prisoner goes through the standard arrival procedure which includes full searches of him and his belongings. An inventory of every item is made on a property card and a copy is given to the prisoner. The prison now has a body scanner to detect concealed items and each prisoner is passed through it.

Each new prisoner is given an induction pack which includes information about the IMB and how the Board may be contacted.

A healthcare representative is available at each induction and the prisoner receives a triage medical check. This ensures that on arrival prescribed medication is provided from the first day. The induction includes full healthcare checks being carried out within a week of the prisoner arriving and ensures that health needs are met in a timely and efficient manner. The Board is satisfied from its observations that procedures in reception and ongoing induction are carried out courteously and correctly with prisoner queries responded to appropriately.

New prisoners are accommodated initially on an induction wing from where they are moved to a more appropriate location. Covid restrictions and health needs are considered throughout this process.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody.

The Board is acutely aware of self-harm and suicide issues and strives to monitor this area closely. Self-harm may be an occasional event for some prisoners or it may indicate a pattern of behaviour. Either way staff are fully briefed on procedures and good support is given to prisoners. A high proportion of prison officers at Garth have less than two years' service and are therefore relatively inexperienced and in need of peer support, which is available to them.

During this reporting year eight deaths have occurred, either self-inflicted or by illness or Covid-19 infection. It is not possible to give the number of times when for. Accurate numbers are not available because a number of investigations and inquests have not been completed. When a death occurs an investigation is carried out by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and the IMB receives copies of their interim and/or final reports, which includes recommendations that are made. A member attends the Coroner's Court as appropriate. It should be noted that the time taken from the death to the publication of the Ombudsman's report may be very long and this may have an adverse effect upon family members and staff.

Even though there has never been a week in this reporting year when the prison has had its full complement of staff in all departments, prisoners continue to be monitored closely. There have been many occasions when an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document has been opened, which means that a care plan is formally agreed between prisoner, physical healthcare and the mental health care team together with the prison officers who have the task of closely monitoring a prisoner to ensure he is kept safe and well. A total of 361 new ACCT case files were opened during the year and it is felt that this process works well and has saved lives.

Prisoners receive additional support from Listeners, trained by the Samaritans.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The extended lockdown during Covid led to a substantial drop in violent incidents as prisoners were not permitted to mix for much of the year. Assaults began to recur once domestic periods (formerly association) were allowed again and the questionable design of certain parts of the prison made staff supervision of all areas difficult and slowed responses. On the four original wings, A, B, C and D, there is no line of sight between landings and CCTV coverage on stairwells is inadequate. There were no occasions when PAVA spray was used.

Lockdown affected men in different ways; some enjoyed the peace and safety that in-cell isolation provided whilst others missed the interaction with other prisoners. During long hours behind their doors there were frequent complaints about music being played loudly and for excessive periods. A staff information notice (SIN) was distributed detailing how officers should react to this situation but enforcement was patchy, as seen in October on F wing when officers were on occasions reluctant to intervene.

On a small number of occasions IMB members monitored violent incidents involving prisoners. Invariably it was felt that these were managed appropriately by staff.

The fact that prisoners are located in single cells is a benefit in managing them, as are the specialist units. The Beacon, Building Hope and the residential support units continue to work effectively and the segregation unit has achieved some positive results.

4.4 Use of force

During the year there have been fewer occasions when force was needed because of lockdown. However the Board has been impressed with the professionalism and restraint used by officers in these situations.

The Board is told of planned removals and if available a member will go to the initial briefing and observe the removal; usually the prisoner is taken to the segregation unit where observations continue until the prisoner is safely locked in a cell. Body-worn cameras are worn and a video is taken of the whole procedure. There is a debriefing session which the IMB attend and throughout the year there are several use of force/scrutiny panel meetings which the IMB attends. This includes reviewing CCTV and bodycam footage. It gives the opportunity for officers to feed back and:

- critique the contents of the video footages
- identify and analyse any learning points
- compare previous quarterly and annual statistics

An example of when an unplanned incident occurred was in October when an inebriated prisoner needed to be restrained and escorted from a wing. Despite provocation the Board was impressed with the restraint and respect shown to the prisoner when he was being escorted through long corridors to the segregation unit. During this transition he made repeated attempts to assault officers but he arrived safely and with minimal injuries to both himself and to officers.

From December 2020 to November 2021 the Covid situation, as stated previously, reduced the times when disruption occurred and force was needed as men were isolating by choice or locked down by order. The prison overall has been relatively settled as this reporting year comes to a close and plans to reopen are being formed dependent upon the ongoing Covid situation.

There have been 60 prisoner on prisoner assaults, 69 prisoner on staff assaults and 60 other incidents where force may have been used to defuse a situation. No comparable figures for other years are being given here as the prison has not operated a normal regime. Let it suffice to say that we are informed that incidents are much reduced from previous years when the prison was not operating such a restrictive regime.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

There continues to be concern about the numbers of illicit items being brought into the prison but this has been helped greatly by improved security at the gate.

There have been instances of items being thrown over the wall and being flown in by drones but these incidents have been relatively few.

The main drug of choice has continued to be the psychoactive substance (PS) commonly known as Spice, some of which has been made on site, and hooch continues to be brewed.

Searches of cells are conducted regularly and randomly as many inmates improvise weapons. This is something that is concerning for all staff and prisoners, some of whom have received serious injuries from these illicit items.

Assaults in prison, particularly with weapons, are referred to the police and Crown Prosecution Service for consideration of prosecution through the justice system. During 2021 the following illicit items were found:

- 140 mobile phones
- 102 SIM cards
- 147 phone chargers
- 78 weapons
- 36 USB/SD cards
- 813 litres of hooch
- 2,205 grams of drugs and tobacco

The prison is well aware that these illicit items, if not found and controlled, may be used for criminal purposes.

During the last week of September the national dedicated search team attended the prison for three days to thoroughly search a number of wings. There were a number of complaints about the behaviour of these searchers but none were found to be proven. It was reported that most did not wear body-worn cameras and therefore factual evidence was scarce. It is advised that the prison should be financed to provide sufficient body worn cameras. Their practices should be reviewed and revised.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The prison was opened in 1988 and A, B, C and D wings date from that time as does most of the infrastructure. E wing and F and G wings were constructed later. The prison is showing its age with significant repairs and renovations being required. The contractor charged with the repairs and maintenance contract is Amey. They have been, and continue to be, criticised for a poor standard of service and the Board continues strongly to suggest that their contract should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

HMPPS allocates £2.06 per prisoner per day for food. This figure includes all food: not just the standard meals, but also the cost of providing for intolerances, religious requirements and special food for festivals and celebrations. Despite the lack of financial resources food is deemed to be good and credit must go to the catering manager and his staff for providing consistently good, nutritional meals with minimal resources whilst being plagued by breakdowns, which are not dealt with promptly by Amey, as mentioned earlier. The Board receives very few applications or complaints about the food provided but it is noted that the prisoners frequently supplement their diets with additional food sourced through their canteen. It is suggested that the food budget should be reviewed as a matter of urgency as food prices have inflated significantly.

Each prisoner is provided with clothing and may purchase additional clothing while in prison. There are laundry washing and drying machines on each wing. The Board frequently receives applications in respect of lack of these facilities due to machines breaking down or becoming obsolete. The Board regularly contacts Amey, the authorised contractor, to question when repairs will be done and when wings will have effective equipment. It is not acceptable that this situation is allowed to continue. Amey is consistently failing to satisfy its obligations to the prison.

Similarly it is noted that numerous cells are empty and awaiting repair or refurbishment. It is the norm for prisoners to be housed in single cells but this situation requires some to agree to cell sharing. The maximum capacity of 845 is much reduced and the prison is therefore not able to accept the number of prisoners it could accommodate.

The Board regularly attends prisoner council meetings where the above issues are regularly raised by prisoner representatives, and it is noted that the Governor and members of the senior management team invariably respond positively to them.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit is one of the older parts of the prison and suffers from its fair share of demands for maintenance requirements. Cells are frequently vandalised by prisoners and are regularly out of use and awaiting refurbishment as are other areas that have multiple use. One example is that for a period of about one month one of the two prisoners' showers in the unit was out of commission. This could have compromised prisoners' hygiene but staff arranged for the use of showers in the old gymnasium, thus maintaining good standards.. Once again the response from Amey was poor. The unit is being repainted by the prisoners (not Amey) to improve the

appearance of the accommodation and to make it seem less austere. This reflects the approach taken by the staff team to ensure that the prisoners get the best from limited resources.

The segregation unit benefits by being staffed by a dedicated governor and a regular staff team, thus providing consistency of policy and management. The IMB sees numerous examples of the officers' calm, professional and humane approach leading to good outcomes with a particularly difficult prisoner group. The unit daily requires, and receives, excellent services from general healthcare, the mental health team provision and the chaplaincy. A responsible governor does an early morning round to look in on each prisoner every day and to assess needs.

A major concern for the Board is the length of time some individuals are held in the segregation unit. As this reporting year drew to a close, on 30 November 2021, the Board has been monitoring closely one prisoner who has been held in isolation for more than a year with no progress being made to move him on. This is not an isolated case and is not acceptable. We are aware that procedures are followed and permission is given for him to remain in segregation as there is nowhere more suitable at Garth for him to ensure that he and the prison are kept safe. Attempts to transfer him to a specialist unit at another establishment have been unsuccessful. It seems the number of beds available across all of the prison estate for difficult prisoners is not meeting demand and this situation needs to be remedied urgently.

The Board continues to observe and monitor the segregation unit by attending 72-hour initial reviews and ongoing 14-day reviews. In 2019/2020 members were in attendance at reviews on 146 occasions. During 2020/2021 members attended on 48 occasions and during those times participated in 234 reviews.

Many segregated prisoners have extremely complex mental health needs and severe personality disorders which indicate that they would be unsafe on a wing and even in some cases on the specialist units at Garth. In these cases it is recognised they have a need for more specialist care which may require transfer to a more appropriate prison or secure hospital but these transfers are frequently frustrated by lack of provision.

The overall number of prisoners being segregated has reduced in recent times although many are found to have been segregated on numerous occasions. It is recognised that more constructive work is being carried out on the main wings and this will have contributed to the overall reduction of prisoner segregation.

Staffing and lockdown issues have on occasions caused reviews to be conducted at cell doors both in the segregation unit and on wings. All agree that this is not satisfactory and that the practice should cease. The Board has frequently been unable to attend reviews on wings for a variety of reasons including Covid restrictions, the unpredictable timing of these reviews and because we do not have sufficient members to cover every eventuality.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The regular prison council meetings are well attended by wing representatives, and the senior management team, led by the Governor, deal effectively and openly with issues as they arise. The relationships between wing representatives and

management are good, and constructive dialogue takes place. Respect is given on both sides and disputes are infrequent. One major concern which is regularly voiced is the poor quality of service offered by Amey.

The key worker scheme is not working as envisaged. This is largely because of staffing problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the inevitable relocation of staff to other tasks. There was a cessation of extra funding for the role and that, together with staff sickness absences throughout the pandemic and unexpected resignations of staff, slowed down progress. The senior management team are well aware of this problem and are committed to its effective restoration as quickly as possible. In the meantime there are instances of good practice by key workers who are given positive encouragement and support to actively improve their interventions.

Seventy-two of 230 applications to the IMB fell into the staff/prisoner concerns category, including bullying. Many of these applications appeared to relate to changes that had to be implemented by prison officers and other staff due to national directives in respect of Covid. Some prisoners appeared to become frustrated with the situation and then made complaints about individual staff members, not all of which were found to be justified.

Board numbers during 20/21 increased from four to eight members, who have been coming into the prison regularly during this reporting year. This has given the opportunity for more observation and we can report that in the main we see men and staff responding well to each other, with staff being more visible out on the wings.

The Board has observed that many new staff have been recruited within the time period from March 2020 to the present and that the prison, for the whole period, has not operated a normal regime. Since October there have been some changes to the regime which is opening up gradually. As mentioned previously, a high proportion of prison staff in Garth have less than two years' experience, having been recruited during the two-year period when the prison has been on a restricted regime. This has given limited opportunity for new staff to interact constructively with prisoners and to build up their confidence to undertake the full range of work required of them.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prisoner population at Garth is varied in terms of race, language, religion and sexual orientation. In order to support everyone equally and fairly, including staff members, an equalities team which includes active prisoner representatives has become well established and effective. The IMB attends their meetings when possible but these have been infrequent during the last year because of Covid-related problems.

Applications to the IMB regarding equality issues are rare, there having been only one in 2019/2020 and three during 2020/2021. This suggests that the strategy adopted by the prison in this area has been effective. An equalities action plan is in place which is reviewed regularly.

A significant number of prisoners are elderly and will continue to be serving sentences for some time to come. There is a significant increase in the number of mobility aids which the prison has had to purchase from a limited budget, and there are some serious concerns about the rising costs of equipment. There is an ongoing

discussion regarding who has the responsibility to pay for or provide such aids. Is it the Prison Service, local authority or the NHS? This issue needs to be resolved.

Black History Month was celebrated and remote events arranged. All faith festivals are celebrated throughout the year with the kitchen preparing for dietary requirements both for celebrations and prisoners' personal dietary needs.

New staff members joining the prison attend an online training programme in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure their understanding of how these are practised throughout the establishment. This is in line with policy and established practice.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team is well established and provides pastoral and other support for 21 main faiths and others when the need arises. Throughout this period formal services have had to be suspended but good quality guidance and support have been afforded to prisoners on a personal basis. The team work closely with prisoners and prisoners' families when deaths in custody occur and they do this in conjunction with the family liaison officer and other staff.

As Covid restrictions continued, social distancing had to be maintained and numbers of people meeting in groups were severely restricted. The usual faith services were not possible. However, services did continue throughout the year and were filmed, then transferred to DVD, which then were transmitted via the prison TV channel, making the services available to all prisoners.

As well as being a multifaith facility, the chapel provides a good facility for a variety of formal and informal meetings and as a much-needed quiet space.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The prison operates an effective incentives scheme which encourages good behaviour and engagement with education and work programmes and sentence planning, when they are available, and also plays an active part in reducing misbehaviour. As with many other aspects of the regime this has been adversely affected by Covid restrictions, although many prisoners have actively used in-cell education facilities.

5.7 Complaints

The Board has closely monitored the prison's complaints system throughout this period. In total 3,093 complaints have been responded to, with the prison now operating a policy of not rejecting any complaints. On the whole this process works well but many applications to the IMB suggest that improvements can, and should, be made. The Board has commenced a system of regular monthly monitoring of a sample of complaints, looking for evidence of fairness, equality and clarity.

The number of IMB applications received during this reporting year increased from 108 to 230. These totals have been affected by Covid restrictions but the increase is some indication of the gradual opening up of the regime.

5.8 Property

As the Board has reported in numerous annual reports, property problems invariably figure largely in the applications statistics and this year is no exception.

It is well documented that when a prisoner is transferred from another prison he is only allowed to bring a limited amount of property with him, usually two or three bags full. The remainder of his property follows later but in many cases it does not arrive. The veracity of this can usually be checked through the prisoner's property card. It is understood that GEOAmev and other companies that transfer prisoners are keen to maximise their income through carrying as many prisoners as possible rather than by having their vehicles filled with property. We would repeat that this problem may be remedied by either running more suitable vehicles or by towing secure trailers. These potential solutions would have a cost implication but would save money in the long run, not least by reducing the amount of money that is paid to prisoners as compensation for lost property.

Similarly, there are regular issues with property lost when a cell is searched or a prisoner is moved from one wing to another. More care is needed when logging items in the inter-establishment moves to avoid unnecessary concerns.

On numerous occasions during this year the Board has spent considerable amounts of time liaising with other Boards across the prison estate in trying to resolve property matters.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust is the lead provider of health services. Delphi Rehabilitation Services provide drug and other substance abuse support,

The IMB has had a higher than usual number of applications relating to healthcare issues. The Board believes that the standard of in-cell care for the sick, mainly Covid cases, has been very good. Other general health provision has been patchy with visiting practitioners being less in evidence and therefore less effective.

One of the Board members regularly visits the healthcare department and this is most beneficial in keeping members up to date with details of Covid outbreaks, including numbers of positive case and locations. It means members can make informed decisions in respect of where the risks are in the prison and whether to visit a particular area or not.

The Board is very satisfied that healthcare staff provide a good and effective service throughout the prison.

Approval has been given to refurbish an area within the healthcare department to provided gated cells for prisoners who require constant observation and it is disappointing that this work has not yet been started.

The Board continues to be concerned about the very poor quality of the prisoners' waiting area in healthcare. This issue has been raised in many previous reports.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Ensuring that the prisoners are keeping fit and well is paramount as during lockdowns many regular health checks could not take place. Board Members, when talking to the prisoners, heard that many understood and appreciated what was happening and took responsibility for their own health (see 6.4).

6.3 Mental health

Garth's psychology department has managed to maintain reasonable staffing levels throughout the year with many staff exceeding their normal work hours when colleagues were not available due to isolating as and when required. In doing so they have confirmed their commitment to the prison, prisoners and their work. Members of the team daily see prisoners and are invaluable when attending segregation and ACCT reviews.

6.4 Social care

Garth has an aging population and as such expects that there will increasingly be a need for guidance and advice from Lancashire County Council whose representatives may assist in assessing a person's needs and with the production of a care plan.

Presently there are a number of prisoners acting as carers for other prisoners. It is usually for someone on the same wing who needs physical care and assistance. A prisoner is paid £2.50 a week to formally provide this service which works effectively.

The provision of mobility and other aids for a prisoner is an increasing cause for concern. It is not clear who has the responsibility for providing this equipment. It is also a concern that the aging infrastructure of the prison causes major problems for staff and prisoners with mobility problems. There are only two lifts in the prison, and stairlifts which should have been installed some years ago did not materialise. These issues need to be remedied.

6.5 Exercise, regime

During Covid lockdowns exercising to improve physical health has been difficult but some of the men improvised with homemade gym equipment, which was tolerated by the prison management. For example, weights were made from liquid containers filled with water strapped to a broom handle. Each time the Covid rules changed to allow the prisoners to exercise outside and use the gym facilities, most of the men took advantage and booked themselves in for appropriate sessions.

Each wing, excluding the segregation unit, has an outdoor exercise yard with a variety of equipment available to the men who, when permitted, are allowed to use the facilities in small groups. The groups consist of the prisoners from one spur of a wing. To minimise the opportunity of infecting prisoners in other spurs no mixing is allowed. This proved effective as Garth, over the whole period of the pandemic, has had a low rate of infection.

There are two well-equipped gyms and, as above, as the regime has eased permitted groups/cohorts have been allocated time slots to attend. Sanitising takes place regularly to minimise the risk of infection.

There was a period when a prisoner could be allocated either a gym or library visit and this did cause some frustration. However, as the regime eases further this situation should change to ensure access to both activities.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Close supervision and monitoring are in place for those prisoners who have drug or alcohol issues although mandatory drug tests (MDTs) and voluntary drug tests (VDTs) have been suspended. At this time it is not known whether VDTs will be resumed. Monitoring of the use of medication is constant with monthly tradable medication reports produced. Medication is distributed daily and, for example in May 2021, of a total prisoner population that month of 790, 528 men were on medication. The types of medication have included anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, pain relief, methadone, and medication for ADHD. Many prisoners receive multiple medications.

The Delphi Rehabilitation Service has not been able to provide drug groups in the usual way but has provided good and effective one-to-one counselling and support.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The prison library is in the process of being relocated to the education department where it will be able to play a more effective role in the education of prisoners.

Because of Covid restrictions it has not been possible for prisoners to access the library in the normal way but book trolleys have regularly visited wings. Prisoners have also been able to pre-order books of their choice.

2021 remained challenging for the employment, learning and skills department due to ongoing Covid restrictions mandated by HMPPS. From the 2020 experience, Garth continued to offer the best possible standard of education through remote learning. This, together with the in-cell telephony, has meant that prisoners have had contact with prisoner mentors and tutors to support them with their learning.

All learners in Garth, regardless of location, have access to the in-cell courses, allowing prisoners in the residential support unit (RSU) and drug rehabilitation unit (DRU) to access education. A mentor is available to support learners in the segregation unit. Since these changes have been in place there have been nine new enrolments from the DRU and 12 from RSU. Overall there has been an increase in men accessing education since before Covid.

The education department opened for face-to-face delivery of study on 6 October 2021 and plans to continue with that. Thirty-four men progressed from pack learning to sitting an exam. Of those, 27 achieved passes, four failed and three awaited results as of 30 November 2021. The Board understands that the number of men in education has increased from 100 to 148.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Some essential workshops with formal contracts continued to be open, maintaining social distancing, although with few prisoners in the workplace. This is gradually changing as more restrictions are lifting; however they are operating with significantly fewer men than pre-Covid.

Kitchens	4 staff – 19 prisoners
Waste management/recycling	2 staff – 3 prisoners
Land-based gardens	2 staff – 4 prisoners
Textiles	2 staff – 8 prisoners
Plastics	2 staff – 30 prisoners
DHL	8 staff – 30 prisoners
Contract services x 2	3 staff – 8 prisoners

Knowledge-based vocational unit accreditation has continued to be facilitated, including Health & Safety in the Workplace Level 2 in food hygiene. One prisoner

designated a key worker in the plastics workshop has completed his level 2 polymer qualification through GQA Qualifications.

Another opportunity is available, delivered by Acorn Training, to achieve a qualification in information, advice and guidance (IAG). This is very useful for the training of prison mentors. During 2021 six men achieved information, advice and guidance (IAG) level 3. A further four are currently undertaking IAG level 4.

The Board received two complaints in regard to the provision of education and vocational training at the prison during 2021 and the previous year there was just one complaint.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Staffing problems exist throughout the prison both in terms of recruitment and retention, and the offender management unit (OMU) has not been exempt. It is understood that a new benchmarking exercise has been carried out which has reduced the number of case administrative officers from 10 to 7.5; which has meant that prison offender managers (POM)s have been obliged to do some of their work. The complement of probation officer POMs should be 11 but currently there are 8.7 and the number of Band 4 supervising officer POMs is down from 2.5 to 2. In the latter case, the two posts are made up of three officers who are all too frequently redeployed to other duties. These staffing problems inevitably impinge upon the effectiveness of the department.

The Board has been alarmed to learn that the Probation Service in the community no longer produces pre-sentence reports (PSRs) or stand-down reports in all cases where a custodial sentence is likely. It appears that this is yet another cost-saving decision which must have knock on effects post-sentence because it starves the initial sentence planning process of necessary information. Information provided in PSRs is frequently more balanced than that provided by the prosecution and defence lawyers and in these reports probation officers are allowed to express opinions which may be very valid and constructive. It is strongly recommended that this dangerous development be remedied forthwith.

When OASys was introduced there were clear instructions about when full assessments should be carried out and when shorter reviews should be done. Over time this process has been seriously diluted and it now appears that few, if any, OASys reviews are carried out pre- and post- sentence and before transfer to, in this case, a category B training prison. This inevitably means that staff in this prison have to rectify the situation – which of course means that other work is prejudiced.

The staff of the OMU are fully committed to the work they are tasked to do but there is increasing evidence that morale is low in this department because current national policies mean that staff do not now feel valued.

At the end of this reporting year, 30 November 2021, there was evidence that the government was at last looking seriously at the plight of IPP prisoners and that the problem had been referred to the Parliamentary Justice Select Committee. The IMB

Management Board has submitted a paper to this committee which included contributions from numerous IMBs, including this one. It is not known when the committee will conclude its deliberations.

In the meantime this Board would repeat its comments of previous years, namely to state that it believes that the law should be changed to allow the immediate release of IPP prisoners subject to a shorter licence period that would allow for their supported reintegration into society without the threat of long term recall. As Lord Blunkett, who introduced the sentence, has said this sentence has proved to be a great mistake and injustice which needs to be rectified.

7.4 Family contact

The Board was concerned that, when measures were taken in response to the pandemic to stop all visits, the lack of family contact would significantly affect the prisoners' wellbeing. However, just five Applications have been received by the Board during the year about visits. Prisoners were encouraged to write to relatives and friends and utilise the following ways to keep in touch.

In-cell telephones were installed in March/April 2020. These are available for prisoners to use for a fixed period of time each day up to 11pm. Prisoners can buy telephone credits and call out to approved PIN numbers. During Covid restrictions they have been given an extra £5 per week to facilitate this.

Purple Visits is a video conferencing call service which is monitored. A time slot is allocated. This has proved very popular during periods when lockdowns have closed face-to-face visits. Prisoners at Garth are from all over the country so family or friends living far away have found this a good option.

Face-to-face visits were suspended for most of the year and started again during September. Visitors have to do a lateral flow test on arrival and if it is positive they are refused entry.

Plans are being developed to reintroduce family days as a matter of priority.

7.5 Resettlement planning

See also 7.3.

The Board is aware that transfer to resettlement prisons has been seriously curtailed by Covid restrictions.

There are also increasing concerns about the roles and functions of the outside probation officers, now designated COMs. These are now routinely not appointed to a prisoner until about 7.5 months before release, which means that support from outside is not available and that the necessary working relationship building is seriously impeded – which in turn may lead to a greater risk of licence failure and recall to custody. The Board firmly believes that the COM should be involved with the prisoner throughout the sentence.

The work of the IMB

- At the beginning of the year the Board had four experienced members and four members started training in December. Face-to-face monitoring continued. The work of the IMB was continually frustrated with short periods of lockdown and the constant changes to procedures, all relating to Covid. The Board team are hugely dedicated to the work.
- The senior management team are supportive of the work of the IMB and regularly give time to members for discussion during their busy day. The Governor ensures he or his deputy attends every Board meeting. He frequently calls into the office with urgent updates and ensures that the IMB receives email communications circulated to staff, in the form of SINs (staff information notices), as they are despatched to all employees.
- A major regret is that the Board could not participate in many segregation reviews due to restricted space in the room used for reviews. As restrictions were eased members did participate on 48 occasions, monitoring 234 reviews.
- A major achievement for the Board was recruiting five members during the training year with one subsequently leaving to take paid employment. Four new members have completed their first year and have been recommended for appointment. The number of members is therefore now looking much more healthy. A recruitment campaign has resulted in two further potential appointments.

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	520
Total number of segregation reviews attended	234

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	8
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality	1	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	2	5
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	12	9
F	Food and kitchens	2	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	13	32
H1	Property within this establishment	13	42
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	17	29
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	9
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	18	9
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	43	72
K	Transfers	3	4
	Total number of applications	133	230



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