



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Forest Bank

**For reporting year
1 November 2020 to October 31 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/YOI Forest Bank is a purpose-built Category B male prison operated by the private operator Sodexo Justice Services (SJS). During the period covered by this report it has completed the transformation to the main reception prison for all the courts within the Greater Manchester conurbation and several just outside that. This has resulted in a much higher turnover of residents than previously experienced.

The was originally opened in 2000 and so the buildings are relatively modern in design and construction. There are eight residential houseblocks with a total of 16 wings. There is also healthcare centre, with a 20-bed inpatient capacity and a care and separation unit (CSU) which can house up to 25 residents. Other areas of the prison include: an education centre with classrooms, a library and computer suite. Facilities also include a chapel, a sports hall and an all-weather sports pitch. There is an industries wing comprising separate workshops, a reception centre, a visits hall, an administration block and kitchens.

The operational capacity was set at 1460 with an original certified normal accommodation (CNA) of 1064. However, in August 2021 HMPPS served the prison operator SJS with a 45-day improvement notice, as a result of which it was agreed that the capacity could be reduced by 200 to enable a scheduled programme of significant wing improvements to be undertaken as a matter of priority. Once a wing has been refurbished, it is reopened and the next wing's residents transferred to it while their wing is refurbished. At the time of writing, this work is ongoing and the programme will be finished by the agreed date. As each wing is undergoing the internal refurbishment, all the windows are being changed to a better design, which has eliminated both broken windows and the significant amount of litter that had been allowed to build up in the adjoining exercise yards, also mentioned in the improvement notice.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

During the period under review there have been three very significant occurrences that have had a major influence on the prison.

The first has been the ongoing effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. As the reporting period commenced the prison was operating on a stage 4 regime, which was reduced to stage 3 in May and reduced again to stage 2 in October. The prison has throughout the period been extremely proactive in addressing and controlling the spread of the virus despite losing 7580 staff days to isolation and the actual infection. This obviously created extreme difficulties for other staff, who worked extremely hard along with the management team to cover this shortfall. However, this focus may have concentrated resources away from other areas, leading to the improvement notice that was served by HMPPS.

August saw the departure of both the Director and deputy director, with interim leaders coming in to facilitate the SJS response to the rectification notice. So far there has been an extremely positive reaction to the new management team, with a strong focus on making the prison a more decent and humane place for residents to live in.

Finally, the management team, despite the above challenges, have all worked to develop and progress the prison into a remand and resettlement prison for the area, and are around 89% towards their target of holding 60% remand and short-sentenced residents and 40% resettlement residents who are being released back into the local community.

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Once again, this has been an extremely difficult year for the prison, its residents, and its staff. The Board are satisfied however that the management team have consistently put the safety of everybody in the facility at the top of their agenda. There has been a very slight increase in the number of applications received by the Board (36 as opposed to 33 last year) concerning alleged staff and prisoner concerns, including bullying, but in the context of the much higher turnover of prisoners and, following investigation of each application, we are satisfied that safety remains paramount.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

There have been considerable periods of time during the twelve months when the prison, like the rest of Greater Manchester, has had to be run in very high states of

lockdown, often with reduced numbers of staff available. The Board believes that every possible effort has been made to ensure that prisoners have been treated with the utmost fairness given the circumstances. All HMPPS guidance appears to have been complied with, and all advice regarding IEP has been adhered to during the period.¹ Every effort is now being made to get the prison back to a more normal regime, despite the ongoing levels of Covid being experienced in several areas of the prison.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Once again, the healthcare team have worked extremely hard in difficult conditions to deliver a service that is, possibly, in the current circumstances, better than that is available to the general public. Healthcare applications received by the Board have increased by around a third, from 35 to 47; bearing in mind the far greater turnover of men this is to be expected. All dealings between the Board and the healthcare team have been carried out promptly with patient confidentiality being respected at all times.

Residents' decency was criticised in the rectification notice, however the Board is of the opinion that as the newly refurbished wings are opened up the men will benefit from the much better facilities

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The brand-new development of the employment hub, transforming a large industrial unit into a spacious modern open-plan centre that is well decorated and well furnished, has to be seen as an extremely positive step towards successful resettlement.

The combination of the Ingeus ('through the gate') team and the Jobcentre staff working together with the new employment hub unit, with a very positive attitude, should help in getting offenders back into employment quickly. The Board hopes to be able to report on the success of this reorganisation and investment over the coming months.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

There continue to be problems regarding the transfer, handling, storage and accessibility of prisoners' property during their time within the system. We understand that work is ongoing to improve this, but seek further reassurance that this is still being addressed.

Concerns have been expressed by several sources around the prison regarding the transfer in status to reception prison. This is being managed well internally, but there continue to be problems, as prisoners who would previously have been sent to HMP Manchester are now coming into Forest Bank, raising significant issues regarding the ongoing activity of organised crime groups. What are your views on this?

¹ The IEP scheme is now referred to as the incentives policy.

TO THE GOVERNOR

This has been a very difficult year for Forest Bank generally, but we are pleased to report that in most key areas we have seen significant improvements, particularly in those mentioned in the HMPPS rectification notice. Given that currently things appear to be moving in the right direction in areas such as accommodation cleanliness, general refurbishment, enhanced security, staff and resident testing and Covid containment in particular, do you think that these results will be sustainable and ongoing when the prison returns to its full capacity, bearing in mind the staff shortages you have experienced and that are forecast as continuing to be a national issue in 2022?

3.4 Progress since the last report

As they did last year, the key parameters of violence, self-harm and accidents have once again been slightly reduced, despite the additional pressures placed on both staff and residents during the period. The change in the prison's status has resulted in a much increased 'churn' of residents, which has been a major issue that the management team have addressed. The way that Covid-19 has been handled in one of the worst-hit areas of the country is a credit to the entire staff, who have learned such a lot and progressed so far from the early days of lockdown. A comprehensive testing regime developed during the period resulted in 5,130 men being isolated, with 249 positive cases being identified and treated.

As the regimes have eased from one hour exercise daily and 45 minutes for limited association, it is now encouraging to see residents being encouraged to attend education/employment and other activities; this of course depends on testing.

The exceptional partnership between the prison and Public Health England (PHE) has continued, with Forest Bank being commended for helping Salford City Council with supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE). Despite the previously mentioned improvement notice, the Board would like to thank the entire staff and management team for their dedication and hard work during both the pandemic and the ongoing change to reception status.

One of the areas of concern raised in the improvement notice related to the amount of contraband that was getting into the prison. The security team has addressed this problem with a much more focussed and concerted effort. The lack of social visits has seen far fewer opportunities for visitors to bring contraband in, so during the period the prison has introduced airline-type security checks for every staff member and visitor that operates at all times. There have also been articles in the *Manchester Evening News* concerning the amount of contraband that has been thrown over the perimeter walls and fences into exercise yards. This is detailed in section 4.5 of the report.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The overriding concern throughout the period has been the containment of Covid-19 in such a large prison. At the beginning of the period the IMB at Forest Bank, as previously mentioned, lost two members to this. One was sadly as an additional factor to other illnesses, but the Chair died as a direct result of the disease within a few days of his last visit to the prison. This has made the threat very real across both staff and residents and has enhanced the way that precautions and procedures have been addressed. Currently the prison is conducting around 5000 lateral flow tests per month.

As mentioned previously, the enhanced activity of the security team has also made the prison a much safer place to reside or work in.

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception numbers have increased significantly on a daily basis as the transition process has continued, despite Covid. Induction sessions are now being delivered to smaller groups, under safe management whilst still adhering to Covid guidelines. Reverse Cohorting Units (RCUs) are still being run in accordance with the compartmentalisation strategy, which allows 30 minutes for shower/cell clean and 30 minutes for exercise daily for new arrivals. The staff are making effective use of the Insiders in reception, and a new early days in custody process was instigated in February to facilitate settling in to residential units. The reception unit has also made use of the new body scanner to reduce the amount of contraband being brought into the establishment.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Within the period, the safer custody team has introduced assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) V6 throughout the establishment. Training was conducted for all staff and the IMB at HMP Forest Bank by the team for the roll out, which has been a success.

The recorded self-harm figures for the period are as follows.

2020		2021									
NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT
94	75	114	65	57	76	64	110	81	99	91	72

There were regrettably three deaths in custody. These are currently being dealt with by the Coroner, but it is of note that on each occasion the prison offered support to staff and to other residents and of course to the families of the deceased.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The safer custody team have also improved the identification and management of violent and refractory residents. The weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) oversees violence management interventions to address violent behaviour within custody. Safer custody still oversee the process of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) for residents. These residents are listed in the daily

operational report and it states who the responsible manager is for each person, as well as the date for the next review. Any missed reviews are highlighted for attention. Each resident subjected to CSIP is discussed within the SIM and any required action agreed.

4.4 Use of force

The trends for use of force (UOF) are closely monitored by the safer custody team. It has three members for the current year: namely a manager, a senior officer, and an analyst. The implementation of a weekly use of force review meeting with other departments checks that the force used is lawful and compliant with policies. It also provides recognition for staff and identifies key learning points. The review period covers the roll out for the use of handcuffs; training for all operational staff on this was completed between February and April and the use of handcuffs is now recorded as UOF. There is an appointed UOF coordinator who monitors all the activity to do with this, and also provides support to staff from initiation to completion of the paperwork.

The figures increased slightly across the 12 months, brought about by the recorded increase in the use of rigid bar handcuffs, the use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) and the fact that as the regime restrictions have reduced there has been more association and movement around Forest Bank, both generally and during transfers to other prisons.

2020		2021									
NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT
83	136	141	91	130	92	110	128	141	90	113	122

The Covid-19 pandemic has of course given the team fresh challenges to overcome and required some changes to their working practices.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison continues to take a very proactive stance against contraband. Firstly, the deployment of sniffer dogs and professional handlers has seen an instant increase in the amount of goods being detected, particularly around the perimeter fence area but also in cells, in incoming mail including legal mail and around general areas of the prison such as the visitors' car park.

Secondly, the exercise yards have been recovered in much heavier duty netting than previously utilised. This, combined with the much improved windows that are being fitted, has made it significantly harder for residents to retrieve throwovers. Combined with a more proactive approach from Greater Manchester Police, this has resulted in arrests and seizures of goods before they have actually got into the prison, and has also raised awareness amongst the perpetrators that they too can be charged with criminal proceedings by trying to make money by acting as middle men.

The prison has also applied for planning permission to add another exterior fence at four metres high, and hopes to install a further interior vertical netting, which will be flame proof. It is anticipated that this will make it much harder for associates of residents to throw contraband in from the parkland in which the prison sits.

These ongoing actions, combined with a far more focussed effort by the security team generally, have all helped to reduce the amount of contraband available internally. This is well known to aid the reduction of debt and hence violence, and goes a long way to the raising of decency and safety for both prisoners and staff referred to in the rectification notice.

Monthly interceptions currently average around 70 iPhone/smart phones, 110 other phones, 150 sim cards 4600g of cannabis and 80g of cocaine. The street value of the iPhone/smart phones alone is estimated at around £15,700, but their prison value is calculated at around £84,000, around five times more. Other security findings include significant amounts of tobacco, steroids and drug paraphernalia.

The Board would particularly commend the activities of the security team, who have worked tirelessly to make the prison a more humane and decent place to be during such difficult times.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

As mentioned previously in the report, staff have maintained a significant focus on containing and controlling Covid-19, while working with often greatly reduced staffing levels.

This has inevitably taken the focus off general housekeeping and even early on during this period the Board had to report concerns about litter building up in exercise yards, having been thrown out through windows. This also camouflaged any parcels that had been thrown over the security fencing and penetrated the netting and encouraged the presence of rodents. Elements of this led to the improvement order being issued by HMPPS in August and already we have witnessed a lot of remedial work, not only the block refurbishments but in other areas such as improved netting over the exercise yards, new windows, refurbished cells, a new fire alarm system and also, very importantly an adherence to a mandatory daily cell fabric check. This check is intended to give 'ownership' to residents, whereby, for example, graffiti can be rapidly spotted and accountability determined on the day and remedial action can be taken immediately.

The catering at Forest Bank has continued to provide exceptional quality food, although delivery throughout the year has been mainly in portion-controlled individual containers to both staff and residents. The kitchens have only been inspected by the Board on a handful of occasions, and on each visit no issues have been identified of any significance. However, due to restrictions in place, the Board has not been able to monitor the delivery or quantity of food on the wings, but it is able to note that no reports have been received from residents of any problems.

The kitchens were audited by Salford City Council in August and received an exceptionally high hygiene rating. The board must also commend the use of the 'comfort packs' that were made available to residents when large numbers of men were confined to their cells due to ongoing restrictions.

Visitor restrictions have made initial clothing deliveries to residents difficult, but the board has not received any reports of major problems in this area.

5.2 Segregation

The Segregation unit comprises 24 cells, including a constant observation cell, two special cells and a meeting room. There are also two showers, a toilet and a dedicated exercise yard. Rounds are carried out daily by managers and members of the chaplaincy, and by the doctor three times per week.

The Board has only attended one adjudication session and one good order and/or discipline (GOOD) review during the period, but can report that every procedure was carried out correctly in each case.

Latterly Board visits to CSU have just recommenced, with no significant issues being raised by residents.

In response to the ongoing situation, details of CSU admissions are emailed to the Board for recording.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

The staff-prisoner relationships continue to be generally good. There has been a spirit of 'working together' during the difficult times experienced by everyone, although there was a very serious incident where a member of redeployed gym staff received very severe burns inflicted by a resident throwing scalding water over him while he was assisting officers in the distribution of hot food and drinks to residents. At the time of writing, the staff member has only just been able to return to work, having spent many weeks in the burns unit at Wythenshawe hospital.

Staff turnover has continued to be a problem, but the learning and development team have continued to train groups of new staff throughout the year, respecting the Covid-19 protocols.

It has been reported by staff that the key worker scheme that was started in such a positive manner last year has struggled to maintain its profile due to ongoing problems with staff shortages. During the period it was agreed that despite all residential staff being trained as key workers, due to the reduced numbers available a core team of 15 highly experienced staff would concentrate on priority groups, namely those on ACCTs, foreign nationals, vulnerable men, those on CSIP lists and those in healthcare.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Despite the difficult conditions experienced by everyone at Forest Bank during the year, the diversity and inclusion action team (DIAT) has continued, with all staff and prisoners made aware of Sodexo's clear adherence to its company policy and a dedicated manager overseeing the ongoing implementation of it.

There has been a total of 65 discrimination report forms handed in, down from 75 last year. Some samples were randomly quality-checked by the IMB as part of its monitoring process and were all found to be in order.

During the year it is reported that 1550 diversity, care and support plans were put in place for residents with protected characteristics, 210 more than the previous year.

Actions are identified, agreed and monitored by the team, who also report into the senior management team (SMT) on a monthly basis. The IMB has been unable to attend these meetings but has received minutes every month.

During the period, the DIAT has worked across the prison with monthly awareness themes. Examples include immigration schemes, culture awareness, responses to the Windrush affair and external agency support.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team at Forest Bank continues to deliver its services to the residents and staff as stated in the prison service instructions (PSIs) and prison service orders (PSOs) to a very high standard. All statutory duties have been carried out (seeing new inductions, completing CSU & healthcare rounds on a daily basis), in addition to visiting all residents on ACCT books at least once a week and visiting all residents who are approaching their release date two to three weeks prior to their release, ensuring they are prepared and, in some cases, referring them to outside agencies and partners for support with various services.

The chaplaincy team also responds on a daily basis to an average of 30 applications from residents requesting to see a chaplain for various reasons. This is one of the main duties of chaplains and takes a significant portion of their time. It is considered vital to the wellbeing of the residents, as it solves many problems and eventually helps reduce violence and frustration amongst residents.

Applications have increased significantly since the start of Covid due to families being more concerned about residents' wellbeing and vice-versa.

Small groups (not communal services) resumed in October 2021 on a small scale with strict Covid protocols in place.

The chaplaincy continues to work with the Samaritans and has facilitated the training of 15 new Listeners.

There is a sense of frustration among the chaplains now (early November 21) due to the fact they have not yet restarted communal worship, especially when all other activities across the prison have resumed. We have been informed that we will resume communal worship once moved into stage 2.

The chaplaincy continues to receive weekly resources from chaplaincy HQ faith advisors, which are distributed weekly to residents according to their faith, and specific faith broadcasts on national prison radio and Wayout TV.

The chaplaincy continues to use the iPads provided by the prison service to enable residents to watch the funerals of direct relatives during lockdown due to the suspension of funeral escorts. They have facilitated approximately 20 funeral webcam/Zoom views for residents, and the feedback from residents was positive.

It is only fair to say that the chaplaincy team have been positively involved with staff and residents' morale throughout the entire period.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The prison has followed the national guidelines throughout the period. These are gradually being revised as the prison moves to a lower-level regime. This is being communicated regularly to residents using the kiosk system.

5.7 Complaints

The prison continues to run an effectively administered system that during the period has dealt with a total of 3187 formal complaints from prisoners, made up of 2898 Comp 1s, 222 Comp 1As and 67 confidential access complaints. The Board is once again very grateful for the assistance given to members by the responsible clerk, particularly during periods of remote monitoring where members have not always been in the prison.

5.8 Property

Property has continued to be a problem. The number of applications received for internal property issues has virtually trebled, although a lot of these applications concern issues where property has not been delivered due to the lack of social visits. As always, the issue of property going missing during court appearances or inter-prison transfers etc has been reported, but we continue to work on this as an ongoing problem. Conversely, property issues brought about by transfers to and

from other prisons are down to around a third of last year's figures. The Board continues to work with other Boards to try and resolve property issues.

6. Health and wellbeing

Healthcare provision has always achieved and maintained a good standard. The current manager has a clinical background and is respected by staff and managers. A member of the nursing team attends GOOD reviews, CSU safety reviews, multidisciplinary and ACCT reviews

The prison's last joint Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons / Care Quality Commission inspection was May 2019 and this was a positive inspection with no regulatory outcomes.

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare inpatient unit consists of 10 cells, one observation cell, and two wards which can hold up to four beds (three if hospital beds). The unit treats both physical and mental health needs. On arrival at the establishment, the prisoner receives an initial health screen which is completed by a registered general nurse from the primary care team, followed by a secondary health screen, completed by the same, within seven days of the individual's arrival at the prison.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The healthcare team continues to offer treatment and advice through appointments booked by residents using the kiosk system. A triage system is also offered on a daily basis from Monday to Friday.

Pressure on the NHS generally, as experienced by everybody, continues to make long waiting times the norm for external appointments.

The dental service waiting list is reflective of that in the community, however the team has been unable to recover high risk aerosol generating procedures (AGP) procedures due to the ventilation in the dental treatment room not meeting requirements under Covid-19 protocol.

As restrictions are being lifted, the dental service is now being restored.

6.3 Mental health

The mental health service is provided by Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, with the primary mental health service provided in partnership with prison operator Sodexo. The primary mental health team continues to offer assessment and support to residents with common mental health disorders and the secondary mental health team (Inreach) continues to offer a service to address severe and enduring mental health needs.

The primary mental health team is involved in a lot of operational processes to ensure compliance in ACCT review attendance, CSU safety assessments and contribution to rule 45 good order reviews, along with providing urgent assessment of high-risk mental health needs for those residents in crisis and who may self-injure. In addition to the daily provision of mental health review for those with escalating need, the primary mental health team offer a routine triage. Part of the primary mental health provision includes the psychological wellbeing service, which provides low intensity, psychologically informed interventions to help residents self-manage symptoms of anxiety, stress, coping, sleep problems and other common mental health issues that being in custody may cause.

Interventions are delivered face to face and self-help packs developed by the psychological wellbeing service incorporating self-help material are available, as is generic and general mental health and well-being support.

In addition to the case management of residents with severe and enduring mental health needs, working within the care programme approach (CPA) framework, the Inreach team provides case management for learning disabilities and other neurodiversity (i.e. autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, acquired brain injury). The team also has the responsibility of coordinating hospital transfers under the Mental Health Act and remissions from care settings back into the prison estate. A high level of multi-agency working is required within the secondary mental health team, and this includes involvement in multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meetings, pathfinders and the prison's interdepartmental risk management meeting.

Service delivery within the integrated mental health team has continued to take place on the residential wings. Use of in-cell telephony continues to be a useful facility for the mental health team to contact residents who do not necessarily require a face to face review. Post Covid restrictions, once healthcare clinics are fully resumed, the primary mental health triage clinic will once again take place in healthcare rather than via in-cell telephony or on the residential wings.

The service provides a visiting psychiatry service which attends the prison on a sessional basis and input is provided to both primary and secondary mental health cases to inform treatment and risk management. These appointments take place on the residential wings.

6.4 Social care

The prison works closely with the local authority, and the new resettlement partner Ingeus will take over the running of the original Shelter contract. Many specialist agencies work with the staff to deliver services and it is very encouraging to note that local industries are taking a much more active role in working with the prison. The Mayor of Salford visited Forest Bank recently and made several very positive comments. The prison delivers a wide range of services that are aimed at giving the best possible outcomes for residents.

6.5 Exercise, regime

Throughout the lockdown periods, residents have had to endure significant periods of time without much exercise or association. This has been managed very carefully, with the emphasis being on keeping staff and residents safe above all else. By splitting wings into cohorts or bubbles of men and by carefully minimising the opportunities for the virus to spread, this objective has been essentially achieved. It is of note that as each restriction has been eased the prison has been proactive at improving the day-to-day life of the men as quickly as possible. Now many activities are becoming possible again as long as a lateral flow test is taken first.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

In terms of delivery against the agreed strategy over the past 12 months, the prison has delivered the following key elements of the service for clients within the integrated substance misuse service (ISMS):

- All new receptions are seen by the ISMS team, inclusive of first night prescribing. The ISMS service provides a non-medical prescribing (NMP) provision in addition to the first night prescribing model.
- All new substance misuse residents receive twice-daily observations during stabilisation period by a nurse to ensure safety and they are reviewed on the 5th and 28th day of their sentence by a clinical and psychosocial ISMS team member to enable staff to update care plans.
- Prescribed substance misuse clients are located on the substance misuse wings for continuation of care, and work on a 1-1 basis with the psychosocial team every four weeks to address their needs and work on their care plan objectives.
- Each of the four ISMS wings has a named ISMS healthcare assistant (HCA) for a single point of contact.
- Any residents who have a positive mandatory drug test (MDT) or are reported as under the influence on the daily occurrence log are seen by the ISMS duty worker or sent a referral letter for the service.
- Mental health nurses within the ISMS team support those with complex care needs.
- Smoking cessation support is offered by the team, as are alcohol awareness sessions.
- The special interest general practitioner (GPSI) visits once weekly, reviews all substance misuse residents at the 13-week point, and reviews any complex cases.
- All ISMS residents are release-planned six weeks prior to release and then provided with release appointments for continuity of care upon release. This also includes non-prescribed clients.
- The ISMS service has four dedicated ISMS facilitators assisting on the recovery units. They are providing group work (according to the PSI) and react to current drug trends in terms of harm reduction and relapse prevention.

6.7 Soft skills

The staff within the healthcare department work hard to provide a caring, empathic atmosphere. Residents who are under medical care are encouraged to partake in various activities. Under normal circumstances, daily activities are undertaken in small groups led by a skilled mentor who tries to develop social skills with colouring, reading, puzzles and suchlike, in a relaxed furnished area adjoining the healthcare suite. The healthcare staff are well supported by the education staff, who also tailor specific therapeutic activities to individuals and groups, currently providing in-cell work and group work when regime allows. Healthcare prisoners also have access to the gym, though due to current regime under Covid-19, this is currently limited to one hour every two weeks.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

From September 2020 until the third week of July 2021, the education team were delivering learning in cell. There were up to 360 learners in total. These learners were taught by teachers visiting wings and over the in-cell phones. Despite this learning taking place in cell, they team was able to deliver 1,676 City and Guilds functional skills units in maths and English, 765 externally accredited personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) qualifications and 512 vocational courses, with at least 50% being accredited by external awarding bodies.

There has been a move since the end of July to re-open classes that are socially distanced to two metres. There are 44 spaces dedicated to practical cleaning, maths, English, general studies, PSHE, health and safety, and beginners Spanish. Some courses were still being delivered in cell, and there were 240 learners on in-cell learning at the end of the reporting period. However, as things progressed to a more normal regime, the department was administering lateral flow testing on all residents as they entered the department in the mornings and the afternoons. The residents were very co-operative and understood why this is necessary.

The library is still working in the same manner as last year: residents order books on the kiosk and they are delivered to the wings. The normal monthly average amount of orders is 240.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Despite the lockdown, learning and skills have still been able to deliver 512 vocational courses, with at least 50% being accredited by external awarding bodies.

These qualifications have been delivered to all residents who have been on waiting lists for employment in roles such as wing, shop, stores, visits, and reception orderlies. The courses they are expected to complete are relevant to the work area where they have placed an application, or in some circumstances where they are currently working. They are delivered in the form of high-quality workbooks which can be completed in cell.

Where some workshops have been open, national vocational qualification courses (NVQs) in warehousing and storage have been delivered. After re-opening with social distancing in July, work expanded in industries workshops, and these increased to four, providing work for 160 residents. A practical cleaning course and a recycling course were also delivered in one of the workshops. The practical cleaning course is accredited by a national body. The prison has recently been granted direct claims status, so that it can decide who passes and claim the certificates for the residents, rather than having every course externally audited. This course is especially valuable during Covid, as it focuses on biohazard cleaning.

In the last month of the reporting period, four residents were offered employment on release through New Futures Network employers, in catering, butchery, food production and scaffolding. One resident started a fork lift truck course on release.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Core offender management has continued, with basic custody screening assessments completed within the 72 hours prescribed timescale. Prison offender managers conduct face to face or in-cell phone checks with new residents, which have proved beneficial. The public protection team continues to work with external agencies to monitor residents, and where issues are identified – for example, residents who are subject to restrictions – they ensure that residents are aware of them and understand what they mean and the implications.

Ongoing issues are the continued need to transfer residents out to other prisons as part of the transition to a reception prison. However, the Board understands that this is being hampered by the ongoing pandemic. In February 2021, 65% of the sentenced population fitted Forest Bank's resettlement criteria, with another 35% requiring transfer to more suitable establishments. The figure for those serving less than 12 months was 45% (665 residents) in February 2021. The number of life sentenced residents remain consistent at around 80–82, and licence recalls at around 350, at any given time.

7.4 Family contact

As the country and Greater Manchester have gone through varying stages of lockdown and social distancing regulations, the prison has worked hard to ensure that family contact has been maintained as much as practical, with compassionate visits and Purple (video) Visits being given priority.²

In the months where visiting has been permitted under the regulations, visits have been offered at the rate of one per month per resident, with social distancing rules applied at all times. Since September 2021, it has been a condition that a resident has to take a lateral flow test prior to the visit commencing. Visitor numbers are currently restricted to three per resident per visit. At the end of the reporting period, the prison started to enable weekend visits.

To help offset this, residents have benefitted from increased funding for phone calls, enabling men to talk more frequently and for longer with friends and family while social visits have been restricted. The prison supplemented phone calls to each resident by £5 per week until 18 October when it was reduced to £3, and there was a further reduction to £1.50 on 1 November.

7.5 Resettlement planning

A tremendous amount of effort is put into looking after residents as they come to the end of their sentence, assuming that they have spent the full term at Forest Bank. Having reviewed this area recently, we were left with a feeling of a very positive 'can do' attitude that bodes well for the future.

Until the end of October 2021, Shelter ran the contract for ensuring that residents were being released into suitable accommodation, using self-assessment forms and in-cell telephones rather than face to face contact.

Issues such as tenancy, bank cards, direct debits and court fines were dealt with during the 12 weeks prior to release, and Shelter helped to facilitate these

² Purple Visits are now referred to as secure social video calls.

requirements by liaising with partner agencies and responsible officers within the community. If a resident expected to be homeless on release, Shelter liaised with the responsible officer around any accommodation expectations they may have (for example: approved premises referral or exclusion zones). If necessary (and with consent), Shelter sent a 'duty to refer' form to the relevant local authority and submitted appropriate accommodation referrals pre-release. However, with effect from 1 November, the responsibility has switched to Ingeus.

Ingeus ('through the gate') will in future work closely with the in-house jobcentre and with staff in the employment hub.

Currently the employment hub staff are sent details of a man's forthcoming release date 12 weeks out. They then work closely with him to ensure that they have a CV that they will then send off to any potential employers, looking at key issues such as the area he wants to work in, his experience and skill levels, and try to match these criteria up, the next stage being a monitored telephone interview. If there are close matches, the team will look to see if they can do things to assist such as specific training (for example, a food hygiene certificate may be a specific requirement) using funds that are available from the Achieve North West Fund that is provided by the HMPPS

Staff in this area work hard to get potential employers to come into the prison and run a recruitment drive. For example, on the day we were with them, a large local employer with a very large recruitment requirement was able to run a presentation to eight men. They also advertise upcoming vacancies on the kiosk with clear indications of the employers' requirements.

They work very closely with the jobcentre, who look after the funding and benefits side of a man's stay at Forest Bank and within a few days of sentencing will know his financial status and what needs to be done to support him and his dependants during and at the end of his stay, when they proactively try and remove as many barriers as possible to ensure that successful rehabilitation becomes a real possibility. They can provide transport, interview/work clothing, a mobile phone or tablet, a broadband connection, an appointment at the man's local jobcentre, and correct documentation – in fact, anything that will help him get off to a good start on his release, including liaising with a potential new employer and providing advocacy if it is required.

The work of the IMB

This has been an extremely difficult year for the IMB at Forest Bank, following the sad deaths of two of its most experienced members in December 2020. During the last reporting period, we only managed 200 physical visits; sadly, this has reduced to only 147 in the 20-21 period. A lot of monitoring has been done remotely, and credit must go to our Board clerk who has tirelessly worked to keep communication going. We have had some Board meetings via conference calls and some hybrid ones where members have joined calls from within the prison. We have been helped by two experienced members of other local boards joining us as dual members.

Our new members who were appointed in early 2020 have received e-learning and remote learning, but due to the lack of visits that have been undertaken by the board, both as mentors and mentees, there is still a significant amount of learning to be done. Our recruitment campaign in the summer of 2021 has only been able to add one new member, who we look forward to welcoming as soon as security issues have been cleared.

We are planning and hoping that the next 12 months will see many more visits and a return to pre-Covid levels of activity.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	147
Total number of segregation reviews attended	2

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	13	3
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	3	3
C	Equality	7	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	15
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	0
F	Food and kitchens	1	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	35	47
H1	Property within this establishment	12	32
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	22	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	4	1
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	33	36
K	Transfers	7	4
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	31	29
	Total number of applications	193	197



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