



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Erlestoke**

**For reporting year  
1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022**

**Published August 2022**



# Contents

<b>Introductory sections 1 – 3</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	5
<b>Evidence sections 4 – 7</b>	
4. Safety	10
5. Fair and humane treatment	14
6. Health and wellbeing	20
7. Progression and resettlement	24
<b>The work of the IMB</b>	
Board support	30
Applications to the IMB	31

All IMB annual reports are published on [www.imb.org.uk](http://www.imb.org.uk)

## Introductory sections 1 – 3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Description of the establishment**

2.1 HMP Erlestoke is a category C training and resettlement prison for men and young adults. It is the only prison in Wiltshire and is set in a rural location not far from Devizes. It was built in the grounds of the former Erlestoke Park House.

2.2 Holding 443 prisoners with an operational capacity of 468, over a third are classified as indeterminate sentenced prisoners (ISPs) serving life sentences and indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP). Most of the remaining population is serving not less than four years. Younger prisoners in the 18 to 24 age group make up 11% of the population; 43% of prisoners are under the age of 35.

2.3 The prison focuses on intervention programmes to address offending behaviours and drug/alcohol issues. Part of the prison's remit is to provide a national resource for offending behaviour programmes. It is one of four prisons delivering the progression regime (PR) – the aim of which is to help ISP and IPP prisoners provide information and evidence to the Parole Board to support release.

2.4 Currently there are eight residential wings; four are for prisoners with standard privileges with the remaining being for those at enhanced level. There is a separate care and separation unit (CSU).

2.5 One of the eight wings (Silbury B) is used for induction. It accommodates groups of new arrivals needing to temporarily isolate to ensure Covid-19 free status.

2.6 In the reporting year, two further wings were closed and either partially demolished (Kennet wing) or totally demolished (Avebury wing). Replacements of these wings in the coming year will house an additional 62 enhanced prisoners and enable those on the PR, currently dispersed among the prison, to be located back into one working community.

2.7 The drug recovery community (DRC), dedicated to reducing drug dependence in motivated individuals, is located in one of the standard wings and has increased its functionality as Covid-19 restrictions have eased.

2.8 The site also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, sports hall, education department, library, healthcare centre and a number of workshops.

2.9 The prison is part of the public sector and, although Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) is responsible for the operation of the establishment, the main service providers are:

- primary healthcare provider: Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership
- education: Milton Keynes College
- site maintenance: Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL)
- escort contractors: Serco; G4S

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

3.1.1 HMP Erlestoke has been subject to a range of restricted regimes during the year to protect prisoners and staff from Covid-19 outbreaks whilst trying to maximise out of cell opportunities.

3.1.2 The national framework for protecting prisoners and staff from Covid-19 had five regime stages. Prisoners at Erlestoke spent 50% of the year living under stage 3 which meant very limited time unlocked, minimal access to education and training, and restrictions applied to social visits. While the prison moved to stage 2 in September, the Omicron variant and increased infection rates meant reverting back to stage 3 in December. As at March 2022, the prison was still at stage 2.

3.1.3 These restrictions have undoubtedly kept prisoners safe, with the vast majority accepting the need for protection from the pandemic. However, time unlocked remained very limited. Patience wore thin when tighter controls were reintroduced, particularly when the wider community in England had restrictions eased at a different pace.

3.1.4 Managing the prison through the pandemic has been in many ways all-encompassing. Staffing has been a challenge with several changes at senior management level, continued staff turnover, additional staff absence due to Covid-19, difficulty in recruitment and a prison with at least 42% of operational staff having less than two years' service. This has resulted in important functions such as key working and programme delivery being either severely restricted or non-existent. National restrictions have also significantly hindered staff training.

3.1.5 An inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in August 2021<sup>1</sup> highlighted that, while the prison had been impacted by Covid-19, there was room for improvement in areas of safety, respect, purposeful activity, rehabilitation and release planning.

3.1.6 The Board has been able to carry out near normal monitoring during the reporting year. However, the pandemic has had an effect on the ability to gather meaningful feedback from prisoners and assess outcomes. Therefore, this report contains somewhat less detail and supporting evidence than usual.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

##### **How safe is the prison?**

The Board is, in the main, satisfied prisoners remain relatively safe. However, bullying and debt have led several prisoners to seek segregation for their own protection (see 4.3.4). Self-harm has seen a decrease although it remains relatively high in relation to comparator prisons (see 4.2.1) and, while there has been an increase in violent incidents particularly among younger prisoners (see 4.3.3), initiatives such as youth focus groups have been launched. Cell searches increased (see 4.5.2) and by the year end a new facility for enhanced gate security and body/bag searches started to come into operation (see 4.5.1).

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/inspections/hmp-erlestoke-4/>

The requirement to receive cohorts from other prisons and to keep Erlestoke as free as possible from Covid-19 has been a priority to ensure prisoner and staff safety. The Board considers the overall management of the prison through the pandemic was good.

### **How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?**

Fluctuating regimes due to Covid-19 restrictions led to prisoners having limited time out of cell for a second year (see 3.1.3) with key working only being delivered to vulnerable prisoners (see 5.3.2). Slow progress to replace two wings (see 5.1.2) has meant enhanced prisoners had to be relocated throughout the estate with a subsequent impact on delivery of the progression regime (see 7.3.17). Management of the CSU saw notable improvements yet the lack of availability and the quality of distraction packs remains an issue (see 5.2.10) as does property loss on transfer between cells (see 5.2.9).

After a year's delay, the long-awaited installation of in-cell telephones has been a positive step forward for prisoners (see 5.1.8). This facility was welcomed as not only had family visits been impacted by the pandemic, the accessibility and unreliability of the technology supporting 'social video calls' caused discontent (see 7.4.3).

### **How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?**

Healthcare demonstrated flexibility to manage the needs of prisoners and responded well during the restricted regime (see 6.1.2). However, poor IT infrastructure proved challenging and connectivity impacted the ability to access medical records (see 6.1.5). Lack of staff escorts to take prisoners to healthcare meant appointments were missed (see 6.1.1).

Social care saw an improvement with a buddy system established (see 6.4.1) although there remain insufficient cells to meet the needs of disabled people (see 6.4.3). It is encouraging to see the drug recovery community (DRC) steadily progressing with numbers on courses increasing and prisoners' achievements being recognised (see 6.6.1).

### **How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?**

Staff shortages in the offender management unit (OMU) and consequently excessive workloads combined with Covid-19 restrictions has meant prisoner contact and sentence progression has been disrupted (see 7.3.1). Provision of offending behaviour programmes has been severely limited and has caused considerable prisoner frustration (see 7.3.8).

The education department and library are to be commended for maintaining services despite restrictions (see 7.1.3 and 7.1.7). Although hampered by slow refurbishment of wings, the progression regime has gained momentum in the year (see 7.3.12). A newly configured employment hub is starting to have a direct impact on prisoners' resettlement plans (see 7.5.1).

Significant delays in category D prisoners awaiting transfer have caused anger and resentment with an urgent need for places to be made available for those who are eligible (see 7.3.11).

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

#### ***TO THE MINISTER***

##### **3.3.1 Delay in transfer to category D prisons (see 7.3.11)**

What immediate solution can be offered to those prisoners desperate to move on with their sentence plan but who have been waiting to transfer to category D prisons, some for more than two years?

##### **3.3.2 IPP prisoners long over tariff (see 7.3.6)**

What targets have been set to reduce the number of IPP prisoners so some hope can be given to such prisoners at Erlestoke, over 10% of the population, several of whom are many years over their original sentence tariff?

##### **3.3.3 Specialist hospital places (see 4.3.9)**

What plans exist to address the chronic national shortage of accommodation for those prisoners with complex mental health needs who cannot be adequately cared for in a normal prison environment?

##### **3.3.4 Daily food budget for prisoners (see 5.1.9)**

When will the daily food budget allowance set over five years ago be reviewed, given that food prices have risen more than 20% over the past two years?

#### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

##### **3.3.5 Replacement of residential wings (see 5.1.2 and 7.3.17)**

What is the revised timetable for completing the replacement of the residential wings, given there have been several delays and missed deadlines, so prisoners can benefit from the progression regime being in one location?

##### **3.3.6 Prison population increase (see 2.6 and 6.1.6)**

How will the Prison Service ensure the infrastructure and support mechanisms are enhanced to cope with the increase in the population of the prison when Kennet and Avebury wings are functioning?

#### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

##### **3.3.7 Property loss (see 5.2.9 and 5.8.2)**

What actions will be taken to ensure cells are routinely locked and clearance occurs efficiently during internal transfers to prevent property loss?

##### **3.3.8 Key working (see 5.3.2)**

What is the timetable to attain the key working delivery levels experienced by prisoners prior to the pandemic?

##### **3.3.9 Programme delivery (see 7.3.10)**

What targets are in place to increase the number of prisoners being able to complete offending behaviour programmes?

##### **3.3.10 Job opportunities (see 7.2.1 and 7.2.5)**

What steps will be taken to increase the number of meaningful job opportunities for prisoners?

##### **3.3.11 Workshop resource (see 7.2.3)**

What plans are in place to accelerate the opening of the dormant textile workshop given the significant investment in building such a new facility?

### **3.3.12 Staff/prisoner relationships (see 5.3.1 and 5.3.4)**

What actions will be taken to develop managers and frontline staff to increase supervision and confidence so that staff/prisoner relationships improve?

### **3.3.13 Distraction packs (see 5.2.10)**

How will the lack of availability and quality of distraction packs be addressed?

### **3.3.14 Adapted cells (see 6.4.3)**

How will the lack of suitably adapted cells for disabled people be addressed?

### ***To the Governor and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership***

### **3.3.15 Healthcare attendance (see 6.1.4)**

Over 40% of first assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews do not have the benefit of healthcare input, which impacts on the safety of prisoners – how will this issue be addressed?

### **3.3.16 IT in healthcare (see 6.1.5)**

What is the solution to improve the IT infrastructure so medical records can be accessed across the estate to ensure prisoners are not put at risk?

## **3.4 Progress since the last report**

<b>Issue raised</b>	<b>Response given by</b>	<b>Action taken and status at 31 March 2022</b>
<b>Autism support:</b> To increase facilities nationally and specifically for one prisoner	<b>Minister:</b> Referred to paper by Sir Robert Buckland and ongoing work by HMPPS	Prisoner transferred after over a year in the CSU
<b>IPP prisoners:</b> To reduce the number of prisoners long over tariff: raised in 2021	<b>Minister:</b> Referred to reduction in numbers and ongoing work by HMPPS	15 EDS <sup>2</sup> /ISP/IPP prisoners released in year (see 7.3.19)
<b>Replacement of wings:</b> The delay in the replacement of wings: raised in 2021	<b>HMPPS:</b> Completion of Avebury Wing by June 2022	Avebury demolished May 2021; Kennet March 2022. Both sites still flattened (see 5.1.2)
<b>Gym roof:</b> To hasten repair urgently needed - March 2021	<b>HMPPS:</b> Completion by end of December 2021	Repair took 10 months; completed January 2022 (see 6.5.2)
<b>Healthcare IT capability:</b> Poor IT capability affecting patient safety: raised in 2021	<b>HMPPS:</b> Wi-fi to be installed by March 2022	IT connectivity/hardware remain unfit for purpose (see 6.1.5)
<b>First ACCT review:</b> Healthcare not always present: raised in 2020 and 2021	<b>Governor:</b> Action noted	Discussed at healthcare meetings; issue yet to be fully resolved

<sup>2</sup> extended determinate sentence



<b>Issue raised</b>	<b>Response given by</b>	<b>Action taken and status at 31 March 2022</b>
<b>Segregation on wings:</b> Board not informed	<b>Governor:</b> Action noted	Board now notified
<b>Application of rules:</b> Lack of management consistency	<b>Governor:</b> Action noted	Some improvement noted via verbal/written briefings
<b>Diversity &amp; inclusion (D&amp;I):</b> Senior managers' commitment lacking; monitoring not robust: raised in 2020 and 2021	<b>Governor:</b> Action noted	Senior managers' attendance at meetings sporadic; good processes in place to monitor D&I
<b>Complaints system:</b> Lacking independent investigation	<b>Governor:</b> Action noted	No observed change: investigations still done by wing managers where complaint initiated

#### **3.4.1 Areas to note**

The Board particularly commends:

- the chaplaincy, library, education and gym staff for being proactive and innovative
- the Listeners who have demonstrated significant resilience and compassion
- the prison staff for notable commitment under ever changing circumstances
- the prisoners for patience shown during a further year of restricted regimes

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

The safer communities team saw significant changes in personnel during the year. A new head of safety was appointed in the last quarter. The function benefited greatly from having a dedicated full-time safety analyst and it is encouraging that more roles within the team have become ring-fenced.

Comprehensive data started to be produced and analysed for trends. However, strategic plans and management actions, which should ultimately feed through to outcomes for prisoners, remain very much work in progress.

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Currently the facilities for reception health screening are inadequate, with healthcare screens rarely being conducted in the room at reception designated for this purpose (see 6.1.5).

4.1.2 The reception facilities are cramped which is less than ideal when a number of prisoners arrive at the same time.

4.1.3 There has been an improvement in first night accommodation since the inspection carried out by HMIP in August 2021. Although the cells are somewhat bare and stark and lacking in storage facilities, for the most part they are clean, save for the lavatories which are heavily stained and unsightly. The cells are equipped with showers, and shower curtains have now been installed. One prisoner talked in glowing terms of the facility and his reluctance to move on to another location.

4.1.4 Reverse cohorting during Covid-19 restrictions has meant that newly arrived prisoners have had to endure isolation for their first 10 days confined to their cells for the vast majority of the day.

4.1.5 The group induction programme remained suspended but alternative induction procedures were developed to engage newly arrived prisoners. For example, each prisoner now completes questionnaires aimed at assessing readiness for release. Matters such as lack of birth certificates, driving licences and the like are flagged for action. Training in CV writing and interview practice is offered.

#### 4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 Self-harm incidents reduced from 392 in 2020-21 to 358 in 2021-22, involving 99 individuals. This represents a drop of 9% which mirrors the decrease seen in national statistics. However, the figure remains relatively high when assessed against comparator prisons<sup>3</sup>.

4.2.2 Cutting accounted for the largest number of incidents, followed by ingestion, with the majority of individuals self-harming being in the 30 to 39 age group. The White population was significantly more likely to self-harm, representing 90% of all incidents, despite accounting for 64% of the total population.

---

<sup>3</sup> Comparator prisons: HMPs Buckley Hall, Featherstone, Guys Marsh, Lancaster Farms, Onley, Rochester, Warren Hill and Wealstun.

4.2.3 Reasons for self-harm varied. The most common were symptomatic reasons such as mental health issues/stress and situational motives such as adjudications or cell moves.

4.2.4 As at 31 March 2022, 12 ACCT documents were current. There were 241 ACCTs opened during 2021-22 representing a 21% decrease from the previous year when 306 were initiated. This year's figure represents the lowest number of ACCTs opened in the past four years. It was noted more ACCTs were initiated in response to low mood with the rationale being to prevent further self-harm.

4.2.5 The new ACCT document was introduced in July with the majority of staff undergoing online training, as the changes to the document were considered minimal. Subsequent monitoring of paperwork varied in quality with some care map plans lacking in detail. It was only towards the end of the year that regular quality assurance checks were carried out, highlighting the need for greater detail and accuracy in recording observations.

4.2.6 Lack of healthcare participation in first ACCT reviews remains a matter of concern (see 6.1.4).

4.2.7 The Listeners' service, a peer support scheme backed by the Samaritans, continued throughout the year despite the restricted regime. It remains a valued service delivered by 15 dedicated prisoners whose resilience and compassion should be commended. An event was held to celebrate the appointment of newly trained Listeners in December; it was a good opportunity to show how much the service is valued.

4.2.8 No deaths in custody occurred during 2021-22. The final Prison and Probations Ombudsman (PPO) reports into the two deaths in the previous reporting year were received. Recommendations have either been implemented or remain with senior management. The Board notes that, as a result of a PPO recommendation from a death three years ago, daily checks to ensure observation panels are not covered are in force and reviewed by senior management.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

4.3.1 There was an increase in the number of violent incidents from 108 in 2020-21 to 149 in 2021-22, a 38% increase. This is in direct contrast to the downward trend in national statistics. Of these 78 were prisoner on prisoner (11 recorded as serious) and 71 prisoner on staff (15 recorded as serious).

4.3.2 Initially most prisoners understood the need for a restricted regime. However, as the outside community came out of lockdown in the summer, restrictions within the prison were maintained. Tensions and frustrations grew with understandable but limited access to exercise, visits, programmes and education. Particularly noticeable were the months of June and July when not only the number of assaults peaked but the highest number of self-harm incidents were recorded.

4.3.3 Forty-four percent of violent offences involved those aged between 18 to 24; this group only makes up 11% of the total prisoner population. To address this, youth focus groups and programmes have started but tangible outcomes have yet to be realised.

4.3.4 Bullying/victimisation, debt and retaliation continue to be the most common reasons for prisoner assaults. Evidence directly recorded by the Board indicates several prisoners in segregation or self-isolation for their own protection; they were reluctant to leave for fear of violence or bullying due to debt issues.

4.3.5 Violence reduction referrals totalled 428 which is an increase of 6% from 404 in 2020-21. Of these referrals, 43 resulted in challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) which support victims and help perpetrators to manage anger. CSIPs were relaunched during the year but are still an area requiring improvement. More training is needed to ensure proper completion of the plans which are meant to result in lasting outcomes for prisoners.

4.3.6 Key working, which increases staff-prisoner interaction and helps facilitate the management of perpetrators of violence and support for victims, unfortunately remained under-resourced and few one-to-one meetings took place (see 5.3.2).

4.3.7 An analysis of applications to the Board shows prisoner concerns regarding safety issues such as bullying accounted for 20% of the total number received (see Work of the IMB).

4.3.8 Of the two serious incidents observed by Board members, both were managed in a calm and professional manner.

4.3.9 There were six self-isolators as at 31 March 2022, with an average of seven prisoners per month throughout the year; both numbers are the same as last year. Towards the year end, a dedicated officer was engaging with those self-isolating. The integration plan for each self-isolator is reviewed in-depth at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM). Other complex prisoners are also reviewed at the SIM. Trying to implement plans to manage and support these prisoners highlights the chronic national shortage of suitable mental health provision.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

4.4.1 Use of force (UOF) increased by 12% from 295 occasions in 2020-21 to 330 in 2021-22. A significant number of these incidents involved those in the age group 18 to 29. There was no use of PAVA<sup>4</sup>.

4.4.2 Body worn cameras were not activated in just over 50% of the incidents. There was evidence of forgetfulness to switch on the devices. However, it is acknowledged there are problems with drawing the cameras and the age of the kit.

4.4.3 At the end of the reporting year, 45 officers remained out of date with basic control and restraint certification due to staffing levels in the prison as well as the lack of national training due to the pandemic.

4.4.4 UOF meetings which monitor levels and types of incidents have been more regularly held this year. Reviewing CCTV and body worn camera footage (when it is available) has become a standard agenda item – a positive step. Some instances clearly demonstrated inexperience of staff as well as the need for those managing the incident to take greater control so that prisoner safety is not compromised. Feedback to staff regarding lessons learned has been work in progress.

---

<sup>4</sup> Pelargonic Acid Vanillylamide (PAVA) – a synthetic pepper spray.

## **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 For much of the year, there was little activity on gate security, although by year end a new facility for enhanced gate security (EGS) was in use. Staff and visitors entered via this facility, which contained metal detection arches, but the building was not used for more than Covid-19 testing at the close of the reporting year. Body and bag searches started to be conducted in the last quarter.

4.5.2 Dog handlers were notably more present and built up a search regime to include at least four cell searches a day with increased results. Mandatory drug testing (MDT) was suspended during the year. Increased throw-overs were detected as well as a series of efforts to send in psychoactive substances (PS), usually Spice, via letters, including bogus rule 39 correspondence such as counterfeit solicitors' mail. As a result, access to drugs was classified as 'serious' and heading in the direction of 'critical' at the end of the year.

4.5.3 As at 1 April, there were 50 prisoners on opiate substitution therapy (OST) representing 12% of the prison population. This has increased substantially from five years ago when the numbers represented some 5% and last year approximately 7%. In addition, several prisoners have alcohol related issues, with many finds of illegally brewed alcohol being observed by the Board.

4.5.4 While Methadone is the first line drug substitute (an OST blocker which continues to be used), the aim is to reduce the number of prisoners using illicit drugs altogether. The aim is then to convert prisoners to Buprenorphine (Espranor) prior to release, which is less addictive. Inevitably all these substitutes are sellable items so that strict controls remain critical.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

5.1.1 The restrictions brought about by the pandemic continued to have an impact on maintenance and particularly on the refurbishment of the estate. The prison still has many ageing and, in some cases, poor quality wings with major investment required to improve the standard of accommodation.

5.1.2 Two wings, Kennet and Avebury, had been deemed not fit for purpose in the previous reporting year. Avebury was demolished in May 2021 and remains a flattened site. It took until March 2022 before the demolition of Kennet commenced with the replacement of both wings unlikely to be completed in this calendar year. Therefore, progression regime (PR) prisoners were unable to benefit from facilities and a sense of community – a fundamental concept of the programme. This delay has had a significant impact on PR prisoners, who had to be relocated throughout the establishment, with some on one wing having to conform to the standard regime.

5.1.3 GFSL, the site maintenance provider, has been tackling routine maintenance; improvement in the timeliness of routine repairs has been noted. Preventive maintenance is also beginning to take place. GFSL's performance at Erlestoke is now rated seventh out of the 48 prisons which GFSL services.

5.1.4 A new site manager took over sole responsibility with effect from April 2021. Employing extra staff and introducing new and enhanced works systems has helped GFSL deliver better outcomes to an improved standard.

5.1.5 A backlog of works orders totalling 1,200 in April 2021 has reduced to 54. Over the reporting year, 5,755 works orders have been completed with an average pass rate of 96.76% which is a noteworthy turnaround. One month's stock is held for all items so cells deliberately damaged are typically back in action within two days. Glazing, particularly of observation panels, is no longer an issue with most repairs being done within 24 hours.

5.1.6 The Board notes a marked improvement in GFSL being able to properly manage large contracts. For example, projects such as new shower units in Alfred, Wessex and Sarum wings have been completed. Alfred and Wessex wings now have new plate heat exchangers, replacing the old water heaters. Old metal diesel tanks have been replaced by new plastic ones.

5.1.7 A long-standing concern has been the cleanliness of the estate. At one point there was an infestation of rats which was eventually dealt with. Cleanliness has improved during the year with additional cleaners employed and equipment being made more available. However, litter outside some wings still persists.

5.1.8 In-cell telephone wiring started in April 2021 and was finally finished 12 months later. All prisoners now have in-cell handsets which is a huge step forward as it makes the regime less onerous and is really appreciated by the prisoners.

5.1.9 Food supplies were maintained during the year. The kitchen continues to deliver varied menus and looks at innovative ways of trying to make funds go further. However, given spiralling food prices, the daily allowance of £2.10 per day per prisoner which has not increased for at least five years, needs pressing ministerial review.

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1. The CSU has 10 cells, a constant watch cell and special accommodation cell. There has been a marked improvement in cleanliness and décor across the unit with repairs being completed more quickly.

5.2.2. During the year, 148 prisoners were accommodated in the CSU (which includes 52 prisoners who were repeat admissions) – a decrease of 55 in total from the previous year. There were 12 prisoners held for over 42 days; four less than last year. The Board continues to have concerns over the number of prisoners who have mental health issues, are the subject of an ACCT or who are in the unit for their own safety. The CSU is still perceived to be a route to transfer or an alternative to a vulnerable prisoners' unit.

5.2.3. Reviews are carried out by the duty governor. While Board members have not been able to attend many of these, the paperwork has been monitored and found to be acceptable. Reviews are completed by operational Band 7s and above who are appropriately trained; the Governor visits the CSU to see all prisoners every Friday.

5.2.4. Special accommodation was used on nine occasions compared to 11 in the previous year. It appears to be used appropriately and with the relevant governor signing the decision at the time. The Board is now being informed by telephone and via the duty manager's daily report when special accommodation is used. The paperwork for special accommodation is completed thoroughly.

5.2.5. Leadership of the function has remained inconsistent with key staff changes during the year. However, staff have received clearer induction and training; a local segregation policy reflecting Erlestoke's specific needs was issued. The Board recognises staff work efficiently and professionally under very difficult and stressful conditions; 16 assaults on staff were recorded. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, a good regime has been managed with timely reviews and extra time out of cell has been introduced in the afternoons.

5.2.6. Meetings of the segregation, monitoring and review group (SMARG) were not held regularly and have only recently been reintroduced. Consequently, there has been limited discussion and analysis to improve the conditions of prisoners in the CSU and monitor adherence to prison regulations.

5.2.7 Prisoners often state they have not received a contract on entering the CSU. However, paperwork has been completed in prisoners' files which suggests this has been discussed. Prisoners' behaviour targets are often not specific and smart. There is currently no regime notice board which would be helpful for prisoners to understand the daily/weekly events.

5.2.8 Sixty-six prisoners arrived with an ACCT and 19 had an ACCT opened whilst in the unit. The Board has concern over the number of prisoners in the CSU who were on an ACCT as this should only occur in exceptional circumstances. Sixty-two prisoners self-harmed in the CSU compared to 74 in the previous year.

5.2.9 Property is frequently lost, damaged, missing or stolen between the time it takes for a prisoner to transfer to the CSU from the wings (see 5.8.2). This often happens when the prisoner has come from a shared cell and a delay in locking the cell occurs. It has caused great distress. The prison aims to improve storage of items in the CSU and improve cell clearance – this has yet to be realised.

5.2.10 The Board continues to report that distraction packs are not available for prisoners. In spite of considerable expenditure to purchase high quality items at the start of the year, unfortunately the supply of such packs fell away. These packs were welcomed by prisoners and provided very engaging activities, and improved attitudes and behaviour were noted. Standard distraction packs have not always been available with some staff not willing to collect them or fully understanding the positive impact such activities can have. Basic printed material can be accessed from the CSU office but this has limited potential to engage.

### **5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers**

5.3.1 Staff/prisoner relationships have been mixed within the prison and have varied on different wings; many staff changes and temporary promotions have occurred across all levels.

5.3.2 Key working has suffered badly due to Covid-19 restrictions, staff shortages and last minute diversion to other duties. A decision was given for key workers to meet weekly but only with vulnerable prisoners for most of the year. As a result, 2,336 key worker meetings took place although 22,806 had been projected. The Board has evidence of five prisoners who have been very satisfied with their relationship formed with their key worker. However, there are still some prisoners who do not know their key worker's name.

5.3.3 The duty manager's daily report lists key working. However, often prison officers are reassigned due to staff shortages or other urgent needs. It is anticipated the daily report will be expanded to include numbers of staff having delivered key working together with the number of sessions completed; this will hopefully enable better transparency of this important function.

5.3.4 During Board rota visits, prisoners have been observed being disrespectful to less experienced younger members of staff. Equally on occasions there has been a tendency for staff to remain in wing offices rather than supervise and actively engage with prisoners. There is a concern, due to the loss of more experienced prison officers, that knowledge, skills and confidence are no longer being passed to newer recruits. Retention of staff remains an issue in the prison (see 3.1.4).

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 A sound infrastructure has been established for monitoring and promoting equality and diversity. The department responsible is better resourced than before with competent personnel appointed and all senior managers being allocated as protected characteristics leads. However, for the most part the work is inadequately supported by senior management, many of whom fail to attend monthly meetings and provide late, incomplete, information.

5.4.2 Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) are for the most part completed in a timely fashion and if not are chased. However, the Board regards as unacceptable the current practice which involves a wing's custodial manager (CM) investigating a DIRF arising on his or her wing. This practice lacks the independence and transparency necessary for confidence to be gained in the system. During the year 78 DIRFs were lodged. Of these 59 were deemed to raise actual discrimination issues, 47 relating to race, 9 to religion, 7 to disability, 3 to sex and 2 to age (total 68



but some of the 59 DIRFs contained reference to more than one protected characteristic).

5.4.3. In terms of religion, 288 prisoners (65% of the population) report Christianity as their defining religion through a variety of qualifying denominations whilst 88 (20%) report their faith to be Muslim. In terms of age, 261 prisoners are under 40 (60%) and 11% are between 18 and 24 years old.

5.4.4 In the past, statistics have been collected in order to seek out disproportionate representation of any group as defined by the Equality Act protected characteristics, in relation to a range of subjects including complaints, employment and adjudications. Previously there was little attempt to analyse the figures or determine reasons for disparity but now monthly statistics are discussed at each diversity and inclusion meeting. To date disparities have been identified but without further analysis it is too early to determine whether such disparities are of concern. The reporting year has seen a greater emphasis on focus groups/forums with four such groups held each month seeking to determine and subsequently address inequality. A diversity and inclusion database is being set up so as to assist the process.

5.4.5 There are now 10 trained prisoner equality representatives and the out-of-date equality plan has been replaced by a new equality, diversity and inclusion delivery plan which is both clear and comprehensive.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1. The chaplaincy team has continued to be proactive and offers very good support. There are two full-time posts and several part-time posts. They are very well organised and well led. The team has been able to facilitate all prisoners with a leader of their own faith when necessary.

5.5.2 Contact across all wings with all prisoners, whether prisoners are of faith or not, has been maintained by the team. They have ensured all new prisoners have had an induction meeting and have visited all vulnerable prisoners regularly on the wings. Those over 70 and under 21 continue to be seen monthly by the team.

5.5.3. A member of the chaplaincy staff has visited the CSU daily and spoken to all prisoners there. They have offered spiritual and practical help when needed. If no other distraction packs have been available, they have printed and delivered their own secular material for prisoners to enjoy.

5.5.4. The team has been able to offer faith group meetings and group services when restrictions have allowed. A range of services encompassing the main faiths have been held throughout the year.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 The objective of the incentives scheme is to encourage responsible and constructive behaviour whilst discouraging poor and/or disruptive behaviour. The incentives scheme at Erlestoke has four levels: basic, standard, enhanced and super enhanced. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, basic level should only have been used in exceptional circumstances for the shortest time possible and as a last resort.

5.6.2 Under the restricted regime and when in the CSU, only in exceptional circumstances should a prisoner be put on basic privileges which would include

wearing prison clothing. Those on basic level in the CSU have been allowed to wear their own clothing and this has fuelled resentment from other CSU prisoners. Also, throughout the prison, those on basic did not automatically have their television removed: this decision caused discontent among prisoners who had demonstrated an exemplary attitude. Over the year, 105 prisoners were placed on basic. As the national guidance relating to Covid-19 restrictions changed, all on basic had their televisions removed.

5.6.3 At the beginning of the reporting year, 70.36% of prisoners were at enhanced level, 28.28% were at standard and 1.36% at basic level. At Christmas, a difficult time for prisoners, the figures for those on basic represented 3.89% of the population. During the summer, figures showed an increase to 4.36% of prisoners at basic level, a decrease to 26.83% for those on standard privileges and a decrease of those on enhanced privileges to 68.8%. It was in the summer the outside community came out of lockdown but restrictions within the prison were maintained (see 4.3.2).

5.6.4 The monthly incentives scheme forum was not convened in the reporting year. The Board has not been able to evidence consistent target setting to improve behaviour; the reason given by staff implementing the incentives scheme was that each individual is different and therefore had been given bespoke targets. The request to the prison regarding the number of appeals against downgrading to basic level received the answer that such data was not recorded.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 During the reporting year 1,156 complaints were received, slightly higher than the previous reporting year of 1,014.

5.7.2 Residential complaints totalled 216. This category includes broken pipes, noise pollution, laundry, mattress replacement, telephones, and pick up times for medication. If the complaint is around living conditions/decentcy, these are flagged to a member of staff as well as the clean and decency lead.

5.7.3 The prison struggled with missing canteen items during Covid-19 restrictions which led to 80 complaints. This was caused by DHL not delivering to the wings (to avoid as much contact as possible) which meant canteen distribution was not always managed effectively – an issue which has subsequently been addressed.

5.7.4 Since the appointment of a new head of business assurance, a marked improvement has been noted with a focus on assurance and performance monitoring of complaints. The compensation process has also caused delays as it needs to be overseen by the Governor whose time is at a premium. However, the Board understands that a way of streamlining this is being addressed.

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 Missing property remains a persistent problem and detrimental to prisoner wellbeing, particularly when personal possessions are lost. Property complaints totalled 201; one complaint lodged on 26 October 2021 took until 28 March 2022 to resolve. Items lost between establishments often occurred due to restrictions in the number of bags accompanying a prisoner; this is specified by volumetric controls in the national contract with GEOAmey and therefore beyond the control of the prison.

5.8.2 Property lost within the estate when a prisoner moves cells takes a long time to investigate. When a cell has been vacated often following an incident, the lack of a cell check and lock up means possessions become 'available' to other prisoners. With staff shortages, investigations in this area have not always been seen as a priority. Where items are missing from reception, the investigation can be delayed as staff there are constantly busy and are not always detailed consistently.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

6.1.1 A second outbreak of Covid-19 infections occurred between December 2021 and January 2022 with 55 prisoners testing positive and one unvaccinated prisoner requiring hospital admission. However, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the delivery of healthcare in other ways. Without free movement of prisoners, any prisoner attending healthcare had to be escorted and throughout the year there were frequent occasions when escorts were insufficient to meet needs and appointments were missed.

6.1.2 Healthcare demonstrated flexibility in their approach with nurses mobilising onto the wings. However, this was not without risk in that with no access to wi-fi, healthcare staff could not access medical records when away from the healthcare building.

6.1.3 Uniformed supervision of prisoners attending healthcare for the dispensing of medication was not always adequate. A repeated complaint from nursing staff was that disorderly behaviour was often not challenged and that many officers did not assist in checking that medication was being consumed by a prisoner as opposed to being secreted for later illegal trading.

6.1.4 Last year the Board reported healthcare attendance at the first ACCT review as occurring in 60% of cases, a considerable improvement over the previous two years. In the current reporting year, the figure had slipped to 57.5%. However, a closer analysis of the figures showed that the majority of reviews missed by healthcare occurred out of hours in the week or at weekends when healthcare personnel were not on duty. It was only in just under 7% of cases that healthcare did not attend due to not being notified by prison staff. Although the absence of a member of healthcare at the first ACCT review is explained by dint of the arrangement of working hours it is nevertheless of great concern to the Board that in over 40% of cases a first ACCT review still does not have the benefit of medical input and thus loses the advantage to be gained from a multidisciplinary approach in keeping a vulnerable prisoner safe. With 24 hours to hold the first review the Board wonders whether in some cases a review can be delayed until healthcare staff are on duty.

6.1.5 IT facilities in healthcare rely on the internet. Without fast-fibre broadband the internet connection is grindingly slow which has an adverse effect on efficiency. Further, for most of the year a laptop has not been available to use in the room allocated to healthcare at reception, where newly arrived prisoners are processed and healthcare screening is meant to take place. As a result, 80% of first health screens take place at the healthcare building, remote from reception, denying healthcare the opportunity to liaise with their uniformed colleagues in the identification of vulnerable prisoners. In those 20% of cases where the health screening is carried out at reception the nurse often has no access to the SystmOne medical records and has to complete the screening template on paper, entering the details onto the computer record at a later time. Currently the second healthcare screen for newly arrived prisoners takes place one week after the first which is a considerable improvement on the previous practice where the second screen was combined with the first.

6.1.6 The healthcare building remains less than fully fit for purpose with inadequate facilities for clinics and consulting rooms. This is of growing concern in light of the fact that next year the population at the prison will be increasing. The roof of the healthcare building urgently requires replacement and although funds were allocated for the reporting year the work was not carried out meaning that a new bid for funding will be required. In the past, leaks in the roof have rendered sections of the healthcare building unusable.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 There was never a time during the reporting year when there was a full complement of directly employed nursing and ancillary staff. However, the shortfall has been made up through agency staff, most of whom have worked on a semi-permanent basis and through overtime.

6.2.2 Covid-19 restrictions and in particular the lack of free movement of prisoners, has had an adverse impact on the range of services that healthcare have been able to provide. For instance, it has not proved possible to run pharmacy clinics with the result that medication reviews have not taken place in person and have instead been conducted remotely.

6.2.3 The prison provides escorts for 10 planned hospital visits a week. This is insufficient to meet the demand for such visits, which means that difficult clinical decisions have to be made in determining priorities. On average two such appointments are cancelled each month.

6.2.4 Most clinics have been run during the year.

6.2.5 The waiting time to see GPs has improved considerably during the year with prisoners now waiting between two and three weeks for non-urgent appointments. The situation has improved as a result of the recruiting of an advanced clinical practitioner.

6.2.6 There were 138 complaints in the year – one less than the previous year. Statistics have not been collected as regards to the timeliness of responses; anecdotally the responses have not been prompt.

6.2.7 The extra precautions necessary so as to prevent Covid-19 transmission has considerably hampered the dental service with the result that only urgent cases have been dealt with in a timely manner with routine appointments taking at least six months to be dealt with. Of considerable frustration for the dentist, the lack of available escorts has meant that appointments have been missed or prisoners have arrived late.

6.2.8 The out-of-hours GP service provided by Medivo has improved since last year with doctors now more willing to attend the prison to treat a prisoner than hitherto.

## **6.3 Mental health**

6.3.1 The wellbeing team consists of 10 staff, not all full time, over and above the drug recovery community (DRC) staff, discussed below (see 6.6). Just under 50% of prisoners currently have mental health issues, 210 prisoners in all. Many require between daily and monthly checks; some are on drug and alcohol scripts and some 75% of these prisoners are on various psychotropic medications. Each member of

the team has a regular case load of approximately 20 prisoners. Apart from this workload, the team deals with ACCTs, segregation reviews, all care programmes (CPAs), emergencies and other triage events. The wellbeing team, while busy, appear to manage the situation well.

## **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 There has been an improvement in social care. A buddy system was introduced with prisoner volunteers trained to provide physical care to fellow prisoners with disabilities. Unfortunately, following a promising start, two of the buddies that had been appointed resigned, leaving only one. Steps are being taken to recruit further volunteers. In the meantime, at least one untrained and unvetted prisoner has become involved with providing care which is a situation not without risks and which needs to be addressed.

6.4.2 The memorandum of understanding agreed with Wiltshire Council has led to the fostering of a good working relationship and currently one disabled prisoner is the recipient of a care package with outside domiciliary care attending three times a week. On occasions assessments are conducted remotely as opposed to on a face-to-face basis. This is considered to be unsatisfactory.

6.4.3 There are insufficient cells adapted to meet the needs of disabled people and currently there are two prisoners requiring adapted cells who are confined to ordinary cell accommodation.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

6.5.1 The department has four physical education instructors (PEIs), and five orderlies who have level 3 personal trainer and British Weightlifting Association qualifications. The staff point out that a comparator prison (HMP Guys Marsh) has six full-time PEIs.

6.5.2 The condition of the fitness suite is much improved by a satisfactory (if temporary) roof repair which is protecting the new floor and the equipment from the elements. A problem with the floor of the gym has also been remedied.

6.5.3 The PEIs are to be commended for their initiative during the period of Covid-19 restrictions. They hit on the idea of taking a van with all their equipment around the wings to run the exercise sessions – three and a half hours per week per wing – and their claim to have contributed to the relative calm that persisted in difficult times is acknowledged by the Board.

6.5.4 The PEIs delivered over 2,800 prisoner hours of exercise per month, and between 280 and 300 prisoners have benefited from their efforts. Sessions for the over-50s are available in the gym, including walking football.

6.5.5 The ‘Roadstarz’ programme, mentioned in last year’s report, is being run by an outside provider at significant cost. Consideration is being given to deliver this programme in-house which would be a much more cost-effective solution.

6.5.6 The Friends of Erlestoke have, in a remarkable effort, reached their target of £250,000 to fund an all-weather pitch. Planning permission and the cost of new fencing are apparently the only obstacles to the project’s realisation. The PEIs point out that more staff would be needed to exploit this facility to the full.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 Marlborough wing DRC has continued to develop during the year. A new programme has been adopted beyond last year's, taking in an orientation phase of eight weeks, a core of 12 to 16 weeks followed by an aftercare section of eight to 12 weeks. Despite ongoing restrictions, numbers on this three-part course are increasing. These are staffed by four members of the wellbeing team, three of whom are dedicated to the DRC with the senior manager dividing responsibilities with an overall management role. It was good to see a 'recovery celebration day' in December where attendees were recognised for their individual progress in front of the whole DRC community.

6.6.2 For most of the year, progress has been slowed by the numbers of prisoners who were not involved in the DRC remaining on the wing. In January there were only 20 out of 43 on the programme but by the end of March this had increased and there were only six non-attendees on the wing. A waiting list for places, not only from internal applicants but also from a number of other prisons including HMP Bristol suggests that this specialisation of the wing will continue. Ironically, because 17 DRC prisoners are considered high risk and cannot share cells, this keeps availability for non-DRC prisoners restricted.

6.6.3 At the end of March, 24 prisoners were attending one of the courses while a further group remained on the wing following completion of the programme to continue their own recovery. Of these, eight were drug mentors to help others maintain their improvements. The mentors cite the improved proportion of participants on the wing as well as the removal of non-compliant prisoners as helpful. However, they would like to see the reintroduction of voluntary drug tests (VDT), more opportunities for meaningful activity once the courses are completed, further familiarisation for the wing officers, and progress on category D transfers. Clearly some part of the motivation to join the DRC is an improved opportunity at future Parole Board hearings.

6.6.4 It is encouraging that the governor responsible, the CM and the supervising officer (SO) are supportive of the DRC staff, despite some ongoing tension regarding priorities between the remainder of the operational staff and the DRC staff.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

6.7.1 As reported last year, wider educational opportunities and soft skills have inevitably suffered during the pandemic. Again, there was no literary festival ('Penned Up at Erlestoke'). Prisoners have continued with their origami (one design being chosen by the Ministry of Justice for its Christmas card), and sales of the cards made from their work have reached £8,000. Nineteen prisoners submitted entries for the Koestler Awards, and one each of the Platinum, Gold and Silver awards and three Bronzes were achieved.

6.7.2 There were seven prisoners working with students from Bath Spa University pursuing their studies in 'Unlocking Criminology'.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 The staffing situation in the education department is good, though the newly appointed tutors for maths and horticulture are still awaiting security clearance, and the bricks and plastering and the cleaning tutors are on sickness absence.

7.1.2 A learning disability screening provision allows Milton Keynes College to assess the educational needs of each individual prisoner.

7.1.3 As noted last year, the education staff are to be commended for their efforts to maintain a service to the prisoners despite Covid-19 restrictions. From April to August 2021 the tutors, working in teams, provided in-cell packs to the wings, delivering, marking and returning work. During this time, just over 1,000 courses were started (both accredited and unaccredited) involving 329 unique learners, of which only 1% were uncompleted. From September to December, the tutors were able to run taster sessions and some seminars on the wings when the prisoners were unlocked, and 394 more starts were made. When in-cell work was reinstated in January 2022, after the Christmas lockdown period, the enthusiasm of the prisoners (perhaps understandably) was not so noticeable, and the take-up not so successful: about 285 starts.

7.1.4 As at March 2022, stage 2 restrictions were allowing a return to classroom teaching, albeit at 50% capacity. Some candidates have been able to convert their in-cell learning in English into qualifications.

7.1.5 The hoped-for roll out of WayoutTV, which should enable prisoners to access information and teaching modules in their cells, has not been without its problems. It requires prisoners to re-tune their sets, which causes them to lose some other channels. Consequently, the courses available in the 'Way2Learn' scheme have not had a good uptake. It is hoped this expensive venture (£79,000 for the installation and licence for the first two years), which is at present under-promoted, will iron out these problems and flourish soon.

7.1.6 The literacy work of the Shannon Trust scheme has been very sporadic during this year because it has had to depend upon the mentors and the learners being on the same wing. The 'Times 2' maths scheme is no longer available.

7.1.7 The library team have, commendably, continued their service to the prisoners over this second year of Covid-19 restrictions with bi-weekly visits to the wings to distribute and collect books and DVDs. This service has raised the profile of the library, and there are now more borrowers than before the start of the pandemic – an average of 120 per week. Overall, 432 prisoners are registered with the library of whom 383 are active borrowers. The IT system which tracks the weekly borrowing figures does not, as yet, log the age or the ethnicity of the borrowers.

7.1.8 The readers' group and the 'Reading Ahead' challenge have both suffered from the inability to have any face-to-face contact; but both have survived.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 The number of jobs available in the workshops as at March 2022 was 132 (an increase on last year's 110), 50 of which offer a recognised qualification.



7.2.2 Until the very end of the reporting year, employment in the workshops has not been possible. However, the theory component of some of the practical skills has been covered through in-cell learning. Some candidates have been able to convert their in-cell learning in cleaning and fork lift truck driving into qualifications. As stage 2 restrictions allow a partial return to movements, the practical skills on offer with a qualification attached are: horticulture, bricks and plastering, carpentry, cooking, cleaning, fork lift truck driving, sewing, lawn mower and strimming (in farms and gardens), and the 'Clink' qualification in the kitchen. There are new opportunities in litter picking, green champions and recycling.

7.2.3 The search for an instructor for the sewing workshop is ongoing and, in view of the £80,000 of equipment in the refurbished workshop, it is critical that this investment must not be wasted.

7.2.4 It should be noted that recent research among industrialists and employers has revealed that what they most require in an employee is the ten so-called 'soft skills' (such as timekeeping, reliability, teamwork, initiative, etc.). In response to this the prison has introduced the 'progress in workshops' document which records the prisoners' progress in these 'soft skills' and so allows them to prove their employability.

7.2.5 Following the HMIP report requesting more internal jobs be made available with the aim of reducing reoffending, 47 new jobs have been created in this reporting year including green recycling. Ofsted has also requested that jobs created are meaningful with funds being provided to create a curtain making enterprise and a horticulture programme. Both the latter, frustratingly, await tutors.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

7.3.1 The offender management unit (OMU) has struggled during the reporting year with staff shortages and Covid-19 restrictions, so that prisoner contact and sentence progression have been disrupted.

7.3.2 A new head of offender management arrived in January and with authorisation from the Governor, introduced a 'demand management plan' which guarantees the core tasks are completed with the aim of getting a better outcome for the prisoners. Less urgent duties will be carried out by newly created engagement workers.

7.3.3 The demand management plan ensures all new prisoners are seen by their appointed prison offender manager (POM) within 20 days. Prisoners often complain they have yet to meet their POM so this is welcome. Thereafter, if the request is not urgent, prisoners are seen by an engagement worker or duty POM, so that prisoner contact is maintained and the less complex tasks and requests can be sorted. Lack of escorts to the OMU has also impacted delivery. Video link conversations and new in-cell telephones should improve communication. The Board continues to monitor whether these new arrangements have a successful impact on prisoners, who understandably wish to connect with their sentence plan and POM.

7.3.4 Outstanding offender assessment system (OASys) plans continue to be addressed. With a backlog of 60 to 70 cases and prisoners often arriving with incomplete plans, the catch up is never achieved. This is bad practice and extremely frustrating for prisoners and OMU case administrators. As of this calendar year, new

arrivals have their plans completed within 10 weeks of arrival, whilst the outstanding files of resident prisoners are outsourced in order to reduce the backlog.

7.3.5 Improved communication and collaboration between the PR, offending behaviour programmes and DRC departments has been established, with new thinking to help a prisoner feel less 'stuck' in the system (a huge problem during the pandemic when all progressive programmes were stopped). Non-accredited programmes are being considered, to prevent long 'languishing' periods, when prisoners lose hope of progressing their sentence.

7.3.6 There are currently 166 indeterminate sentenced prisoners (which includes 50 IPPs). Speaking to these prisoners during the reporting year, there was a sense of hopelessness that release conditions are too onerous: *'the probation officer is in charge of all aspects of our lives, including relationships, jobs, travel, and we will never be free men'*. Being recalled for breaches of licence which do not relate to the original sentence means some prisoners originally given a tariff of three years in 2006 are still in prison. The long wait for parole each time, the many mandatory courses they complete, and the languishing without progression for many years, has resulted in trauma, despair, anger and helplessness.

7.3.7 The OMU needs more probation offender managers to deal with this large number of complex long-term prisoners. The importance of having enough trained staff in this role cannot be overstated. Added to this, the complex case management of prisoners on the PR is done solely by probation offender managers and with 50 to 60 prisoners on PR at any one time, this is case overload. Staffing as at March 2022 showed:

- 4.2 probation offender managers against a national requirement of 5.5
- 2.5 prison offender managers against an establishment requirement of 5

7.3.8 Significant challenges remain with provision of programmes. Erlestoke is a national resource for offending behaviour programmes but courses have been disrupted due to the pandemic, staff turnover, newly trained staff failing on core skills and prisoners waiting for assessment to access a particular course, which can take months. Transport bringing in prisoners from other establishments to attend a course is often unreliable, which also causes delays.

7.3.9 Priority is given to prisoners within two years of parole but frustration is high amongst those prisoners who arrive at Erlestoke to attend a course, wait months for assessment and are sometimes turned down or the course is cancelled. Currently there are more prisoners awaiting a course than there are places available. This is adversely affecting sentence progression through no fault of the prisoner and needs addressing, as those who have not completed mandatory offending behaviour programmes before parole will likely be knocked back.

7.3.10 In the year, 28 prisoners started courses, 22 completed:

- Kaizen (a rolling course): seven starts with six completions
- Becoming New Me (BNM): six starts with five completions
- Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) and RESOLVE: 15 starts with 11 completions

With social distancing rules effectively halving the number of prisoners allowed on each course, the numbers are frustratingly low; subject to the relaxing of the Covid-19 regime, there are more ambitious targets this year.

7.3.11 There are currently 28 category D prisoners awaiting transfer, many of whom have waited over a year and some over two years. This is a national issue but nevertheless hugely frustrating for those trying to move on with their sentence plan, experience day release, and move nearer to families. A lack of drivers together with transport prioritised elsewhere (from courts to category B establishments and transfers from category B to category C) has led to delays and cancellations. Some category D prisons required prisoners to reverse cohort under Covid-19 restrictions which proved extremely difficult when trying to synchronise with unreliable transport availability. If prisoners are to be rehabilitated into the community, places urgently need to be made available for those who are eligible.

7.3.12 **Progression regime:** The PR currently has 56 participants. The numbers fluctuated during the year as prisoners either:

- were invited to join the PR
- deselected themselves
- got deselected for poor behaviour
- or succeeded at parole and went to category D prisons or were released

7.3.13 PR is offered to prisoners with indeterminate sentences, including those on IPP sentences, some many years over tariff, extended determinate sentences (EDS) and others who have failed in category D prisons. Post-tariff and recalled prisoners are prioritised. Some of these prisoners have become 'stuck' in the system and need help to address behaviours and understand their risk factors in order to move on with sentence progression.

7.3.14 During the reporting year, several changes to the PR have been implemented. Four probation offender managers in the OMU share the workload surrounding PR prisoners and the PR lead has initiated training for key workers which lapsed during the restricted regime. This is seen as important, since the heavy workload and understaffing in OMU does not allow much one-to-one time with prisoners until the parole window opens, causing much frustration.

7.3.15 Positive changes since restrictions relaxed include enhanced association time four nights a week (out of cell) for PR members, a new prisoner PR ambassador to be present at induction in order to flag up PR to new arrivals and the introduction of stage 3 ambassadors, who act as peer mentors to those joining at stage 1 of the PR. Good written and verbal work is needed to achieve stage 3, but staff are also working with those less literate, to help them arrive at stage 3 via other PR attributes.

7.3.16 Although the pandemic created disruption in the regime, enhanced behavioural meetings (EBMs) have restarted, with a strong emphasis on making it happen. For example, if the POM is unable to attend, they can now access the meeting via a new video link, as can the Community Offender Manager (COM). Meetings are therefore only cancelled when the prisoner refuses to attend. A more accessible meeting room with video link is now available for EBMs - along with newly

created private space for one to one calls from prisoner to probation officer or POM and further quiet space for the stage 3 ambassadors to mentor the 'beginners'.

7.3.17 Full implementation of the PR has been hampered by the much-delayed partial demolition of Kennet wing, the remaining part of which is ear-marked to house 40 members of the PR in due course. At present, somewhat unsatisfactorily, the prisoners are spread out around the estate. The final goal is to have approximately 80 members divided into two wings located side by side, creating a community. There is no doubt that until PR members are co-located, the PR regime lacks community feel and cohesion.

7.3.18 'Is the PR in line with your sentence plan?' This is a refreshing stance being taken by those delivering the PR as it allows access to the regime for those who have not yet completed mandatory offending behaviour programmes but have engaged and started. Those who have engaged with the HOPE programme (drug recovery) are also considered. This is a more flexible approach which aims to address the frustration felt by prisoners awaiting many months to start behavioural programmes, helps them feel they are progressing in the system and is to be applauded.

7.3.19 During the reporting year, the outcomes for PR prisoners were as follows:

- 15 EDS/ISP/IPP/lifer recalls and post-tariff prisoners succeeded at parole and were released
- Six moved to category D prisons
- Two chose to deselect – one moved to HMP Buckley Hall PR closer to home
- Two were deselected due to violent incidents

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 During the reporting year, weekly visits operated on a stop/start basis depending on Covid-19 restrictions. Half the usual number of visitors were allowed at any one time due to social distancing. No food or drink was provided and the children's play area was closed. Since restrictions have eased, visiting has been a priority issue and numbers are now almost back to pre-pandemic figures.

7.4.2 Regime restrictions disrupted family days, with just one family day for eight families achieved. Going forward, there are three days in the pipeline, though there continue to be stringent security checks, which can take several weeks to process. The Friends of Erlestoke have kindly committed to providing £100 per family day for food and drinks.

7.4.3 Social video calls (provided by Purple Visits) have continued to frustrate with persistent teething problems over software, lack of staff training and complicated accessibility. Video calls are extremely popular with families living further away or who cannot afford the time and expense of travel and with foreign nationals. Newly installed in-cell telephones have allowed more privacy and are much welcomed by all prisoners.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 During the year, a newly configured employment hub (EH) was formed dealing directly with prisoners during the last 12 weeks before release. Several new

staff have been recruited, visiting prisoners on the wings when ready for resettlement services. Prisoners attend an induction in the EH two weeks after arrival to implement a personal learning plan and be informed of education and jobs around the estate. Prisoner goals and needs are discussed.

7.5.2 Passports are located and in their absence a CitizenCard (costing £10 per prisoner and paid for by the prisoner) is bought and registered online. Similarly, copies of missing birth certificates can be located online at a cost to the prisoner of £14. National Insurance numbers and biometric residence permits, CVs, careers advice and interview practice are provided. A representative from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also works part-time with access to benefits and housing benefit explained. Provisional driving licences are proving more challenging. Barclays Bank offer an 'Unlock Bank Account' project which will activate once release dates are confirmed along with date of birth and previous address.

7.5.3 During the year, 142 prisoners were released as follows:

- Fifty-nine into settled accommodation (friends/family, householder, private rental, supported housing)
- Forty-two secured probation accommodation
- Eighteen had no data recorded
- Fourteen moved to unsettled accommodation (friends/family or other transient short-term accommodation)
- Nine were rough sleeping/homeless

7.5.4 Significant challenges have arisen for those going to approved premises as those who acquire jobs are required to pay rent, whilst those who do not have employment go straight onto benefits and have their rent paid. At present, this acts as a disincentive to those wanting work.

7.5.5 The EH is actively seeking companies who will employ newly released prisoners with some success to date. Companies are invited to come to the prison and present to prisoners who might be interested. The regional director of New Futures Network (NFN) provides monthly updates of vacancies and companies such as DHL, Halfords, Greggs who offer jobs to prisoners.

7.5.6 The EH sends the information through to the newly installed WayoutTV for prisoners to access, whilst folders of the latest jobs available are now kept in the wing offices. Each wing has a newly created volunteer reducing reoffending advocate who will chat to prisoners about the jobs coming in and allow access to the job file in the office. Time is made available on the wing to discuss job opportunities with staff.

## The work of the IMB

Despite the restrictions in place, the Board managed to maintain a near normal level of monitoring during the year. The number of visits increased to 289 compared to 213 in the last reporting year.

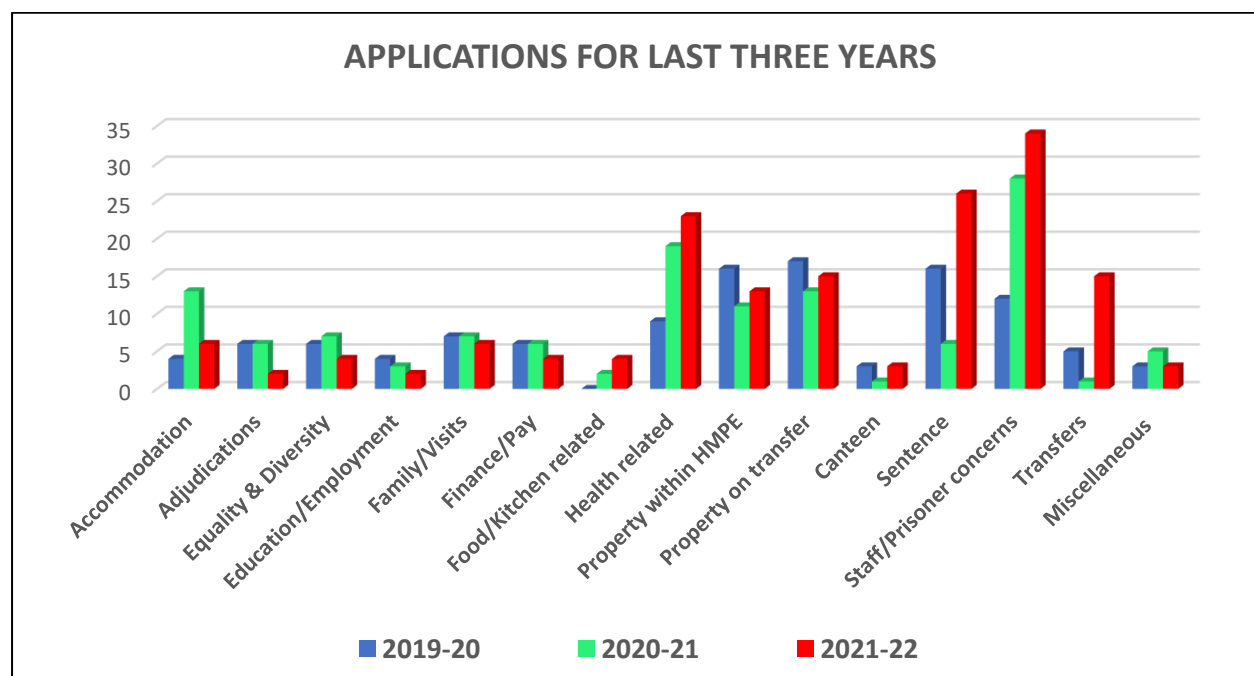
Regular meetings with the Governor provided useful updates on the status of the prison. Gathering feedback from prisoners at times proved exacting due to the restricted regimes in place.

Board meetings were held in person as social distancing was possible.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	289
Total number of segregation reviews attended	20

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



### 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	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	6	2
C	Equality	7	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	3	2
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	7	6
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	4
F	Food and kitchens	2	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	19	23
H1	Property within this establishment	11	13
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	13	15
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	26
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	28	34
K	Transfers	1	15
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	5	3
	Total number of applications	128	160



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

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

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

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [imb@justice.gov.uk](mailto:imb@justice.gov.uk).