



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Oakwood

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

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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 Oakwood opened on 24 April 2012. It is operated by G4S through a contract with Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS). It has operational capacity for 2106 prisoners. HMP Oakwood is one of the largest prisons in the country. In 2021/22 there were 2136 admissions and 1471 releases and 651 transfers (in total 2122) from the prison. The prison held 397 licence recalls on average at any one time during the year.

All those held are adult male prisoners over the age of 21. The number of prisoners serving sentences of more than four years is 817 with 483 serving sentences over 10 years. Approximately 214 men are serving indeterminate or life sentences and 69% of the population have been classed as representing a serious risk of harm. Over a quarter (27%) of prisoners have been convicted of sexual offences.

The staffing group is diverse and represents a good mix of ethnic backgrounds.

The prison is a modern facility, which is well maintained, clean and tidy. This is enhanced by the flower beds in the general areas and on some house blocks, which have been created and cared for by prisoners. Douglas, the lifer's house block, grows vegetables for its own consumption and sends surplus to other wings. It also provides vegetables for the Plot-to-Plate initiative, which supports prisoners cooking for relatives during visits. There are similar initiatives for the most vulnerable prisoners on Ash where an allotment is planned. There is access for prisoners to purchase budgerigars as pets from the aviary team and plans to allow prisoners to keep fish.

A controller, deputy controller and assistant controller from HMPPS are based within the prison and are active in the control and management of the contract between HMPPS and G4S. There has been a change of controller and deputy controller during the reporting period.

The prison is a category C training/designated resettlement prison located near to Wolverhampton. The key providers to the prison include:

- Practice Plus Group (healthcare provider replacing CARE UK from April 2019 including the provision of the pharmacy from 2021)
- GEO Amey (transport provider between prisons and the courts)
- DHL (ordering and delivery of canteen items)
- Aramark (catering services)
- Novus (education provider)
- Staffordshire Library Services
- Staffordshire County Council (social work and care support)
- Restart (social enterprise offering support)
- HALOW (family support service)

There are some 20 prisoner-led initiative (PLI) groups providing regular help and support to prisoners throughout the prison. Most are now well-established and utilise the skills, experiences and self-motivation of the prisoners. The senior management team (SMT) is commended for its encouragement and unstinting support of these

groups. Regrettably, most of these groups were unable to operate over the pandemic period and the support they give was greatly missed.

The prison comprises the following units:

Ash: (vulnerable prisoners) currently accommodates 661 prisoners on eight wings. The eldest prisoner is 91 years of age with 216 prisoners over the age of 50. The disabilities on the house block range from mental ill-health and visual/hearing impairment to age-related illnesses, including dementia. A Lowers is a supported living wing; B Lowers is also a supported living wing but with a minimum age of 50 years. C Lowers is an enhanced wing and D Lowers is a long-term/lifers wing. D Uppers is an induction wing.

Beech: (mainstream prisoners) accommodates 637 prisoners on eight wings. This includes a lifers' wing and a family intervention wing providing a supportive environment and a range of family courses. Willow unit provides additional support to meet the needs of a group of prisoners who have shown they are unable to meet HMP Oakwood's expectations of acceptable behaviour or have become disengaged from the regime.

Cedar: (mainstream prisoners) accommodates 641 prisoners on eight wings. This includes a long-term/lifers' wing housing 64 prisoners and Chestnut, which is a basic wing for prisoners who have difficulty engaging and need ongoing support.

Douglas: (lifers and indeterminate-sentenced prisoners) accommodates 87 prisoners on two wings.

Elm: the drug recovery unit (DRU) accommodates 80 prisoners on two wings.

Care and separation unit (CSU): This has 24 standard cells, including a constant watch cell, two cells providing special accommodation and two dirty protest cells.

The Oaks: installed in June 2020 and closed in December 2021, it provided 80 single units of temporary, alternative accommodation for trusted prisoners. This enabled 80 single use cells to be provided in the main house blocks during that time.

Hazel: at the beginning of the pandemic, the second floor of the healthcare building was made available to house prisoners with Covid-related symptoms. This provision worked well but closed at the beginning of April 2022.

The prison has introduced an in-house TV channel and this is being used by some departments to disseminate information to prisoners. Prisoners are also able to access religious services via the TV.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

For a second year, all aspects of life in the prison have been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the rigorous and fluctuating changes imposed on prisons by the government. Strong and exemplary efforts to keep infections out of the prison have continued and the Director, with the support of the SMT and staff, has worked meticulously to manage the constantly changing situation. This was done by restricting the regime, reducing interactions and adapting procedures, especially during the first and last quarter of the reporting year. As a result, the work of the IMB was frequently frustrated by the Covid-related restrictions. However, the Director and SMT have been very supportive in facilitating the Board's endeavours to maintain its monitoring role throughout.

The Board would like to highlight the following:

- The ongoing impact of the lockdown restrictions imposed on prisoners and the potential impact on their health and wellbeing has been to the fore in all aspects of the prison's Covid-19 planning.
- All levels of prison staff have continued to show exemplary commitment in their care for the prisoners, at times to the detriment of their own wellbeing.
- The written communications from the Director to both staff and prisoners at all stages of the lockdown period have been informative and honest throughout.

The impact on the prisoners of a 23-hour lockdown regime with limited exercise and association has been at best difficult and, for some, traumatic. The commitment and care of both prison.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

It is the Board's view that the prison is generally a safe environment for the prisoners.

The safety and wellbeing of prisoners has been under constant review to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. The guidance from HMPPS and Public Health England, in partnership with other health partners, has been scrupulously followed throughout to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff.

The SMT monitor the use of force on a weekly basis to ensure it is being used appropriately.

There is now a regular health and safety committee meeting, which the IMB are invited to observe.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board is of the opinion that prisoners are treated humanely and fairly. The confinements imposed on prisoners have, in general, been sensitively managed. Regular, but timed, exercise has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 lockdown periods.

The video calling service Purple Visits has, in the absence of social visits, continued to take place. Key worker sessions for two priority groups of prisoners have continued under an exceptional delivery model.

Contact with the prisoners has been taking place by in-cell telephone to ensure that, as far as possible, plans are made in relation to their presenting needs.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The Board is of the view that the health needs of the prison population have been met and are at least equivalent to that offered in the community and sometimes better.

Prisoners were given the opportunity to have Covid-19 vaccinations to mirror the access available in the community.

Vulnerable men were placed in a section of one house block that was modified to ensure they were kept safe from the virus as far as possible.

Prisoners were tested for the virus on arrival at the prison and isolated if necessary.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

As far as possible, prisoners have progressed but not as effectively and efficiently as they were prior to the pandemic.

The circumstances in the community have made the situation worse, as access to suitable accommodation and employment on release has been a challenge owing to the change of provider.

The prison's resettlement advice line and prisoner helpdesk (RALPH), a prisoner-led initiative continued to work at a distance; face-to-face work ceased but work continued via use of in-cell telephony and written correspondence.

3.3 Main areas for development 2021/22

TO THE MINISTER

The Board has been concerned during the reporting year that, following the retirement of the Coroner in the Staffordshire area, it has not been informed of impending inquests. This has had a direct impact on the ability of the Board to monitor any recommendations within the prison. Can the Minister ask the Chief Coroner to issue guidance about the importance of notifying the IMB of inquests concerning prisoners (para 4.2) as referred to in the IMB reference book guidance in relation to deaths in custody?

It was commented on in the Board's reports for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 that the transfer of prisoners' property across the prison estate still remains a concern. The Minister responded in September 2021 saying the framework was due to be published in early 2022. The Board is concerned that after three years this framework has not yet been published (see section 5.8).

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board is concerned that the change in arrangements for resettlement has created a service that is not of a good quality for prisoners in some areas, in particular the outsourcing of accommodation support. Housing referrals now go to the charity Nacro but there appear to be problems in obtaining accommodation. Nacro, which has taken over from the community rehabilitation company (CRC), is having problems locating accommodation for prisoners (especially high-risk prisoners) and is only achieving a 40-50% success rate in comparison to the 96% recorded by the CRC. It does not deal with prisoners requiring relocation out of the local area (see para 7.5).

The Board is concerned about the delays in transferring prisoners to category D open accommodation. We understand there is a shortage of places and this is creating waiting lists across the country. At Oakwood the waiting list for category D at the end of the reporting period was 84.

The Board is concerned about the time it can take for transfers to mental health establishments where the prisoner is deemed to have a severe mental health need. Despite the constraints of the pandemic the Board considers it was problematical during the reporting period, which meant prisoners stayed in the care and separation unit (CSU) longer than was desirable.

The Board is concerned that the education service from Novus is not viewed positively by prisoners and the small survey undertaken (see appendix A) demonstrates that communication and access to courses is not as it should be.

TO THE DIRECTOR

The Board requests the Director to review the following areas:

- The Board continues to be concerned about prisoners in the canteen not wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing. Notwithstanding that Aramark provided continuity of a balanced menu and two cooked meals a day, the Board is still concerned about the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided and the ensuing waste that results, and that the food is not always tested for serving at the correct temperature. There is also the problem of the time it can take for equipment to be repaired.
- The Board would like to suggest the introduction of a simplified guidance leaflet based on the HMPPS document for prisoners wishing to make a complaint. It would be helpful if this could include information on the request system that the prison currently uses, which is not always understood by prisoners transferring to Oakwood. The Board feels that the prison needs to operate a system that is transparent to prisoners which, at the present time, we feel is not fully understood, particularly in relation to requests/concerns.
- A further concern for the Board is the fact that the letter sent to explain how a request will be dealt with is long and not always clear for prisoners who cannot read easily or whose first language is not English. These multi-functional response letters are not dated and do not have any reference

numbers assigned for easy identification in the future. The Board asks that this be reviewed (see para 5.7).

- During the reporting year the Board has been concerned that the healthcare complaint boxes were not emptied on a regular basis and their location is not easily accessible to all prisoners at all times. The Board asks the Director to review this with the head of healthcare (see para 6.1).
- The Board requests that it is invited to the equality action group meetings (see para 5.4).
- Discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) scrutiny meetings should take place with HMPs Brinsford and Featherstone, but these have not taken place during the reporting year due to Covid-19 restrictions. The Board understands that these meetings are yet to restart and the Board would suggest that arrangements are made for them to start as soon as possible in order to bring some external scrutiny to the process. The Board also requests that it is made aware of when the meetings take place in order that a member can attend and observe the process.
- The independent adjudicator (IA) ceased sitting shortly after the start of the lockdown period and has yet to return to the prison; hearings were held remotely. The Courts Service made a decision to continue to use remote systems, as it is more efficient and makes it easier for solicitors to join the meeting. It would be helpful if the Board could join some of the remote IA adjudications and an agreement and system of notification needs to be put in place.
- The Board is concerned about the number and experience of new staff on the house blocks. From observing some of the case notes of key worker sessions, the quality of the reporting varies. The Board suggests that senior managers look at putting further training in place.
- The Board asks that the offender management unit (OMU) looks and reviews its communication with prisoners, using all the systems available to help to manage the prisoners' expectations.
- The Board asks that the Director reviews communication in relation to access to education and courses available. The Board also asks that consideration is given for prisoners who share a cell to be given access to a space to undertake coursework.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The following are responses received following issues identified as areas for development in last year's annual report.

TO THE MINISTER

A letter was sent from the Minister dated 15 September 2021, which acknowledged the Board's concern about the slow progress on publishing the new Prisoner Property Policy Framework. The Minister stated the framework was due to be published in early 2022. In addition, the new Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) contract has undertaken a review of the amount of property a prisoner can have transported from prison to prison.

In response to the Board's concern about support for foreign national prisoners, the Minister stated that face-to-face support will resume when it is safe to do so but

support would continue virtually, with an interpreter present if necessary. The prison immigration team are in daily contact with HMP Oakwood and with prisoners when requested – all still virtually.

It was encouraging to receive comments commending HMP Oakwood's management team for their commitment and dedication during a challenging and unprecedented period. The Minister was pleased to hear that good standards of cleanliness were maintained and the reception and induction processes were delivered effectively.

TO HMPPS

- **Education provision.** *It has seen a significant improvement at HMP Oakwood since the arrival of the new educational manager in April 2021. The prison is currently satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning, engagement of learners and performance of the provider. The improvement notice issued in response to concerns about the service provided by Novus will remain active.*
- **Access to medication/medical records.** *The healthcare provider stated there were no concerns with transfers from HMP Dovegate. The concern regarding HMP Birmingham has been addressed. NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to monitor the situation and offer support.*
- **Late arrivals.** *The PECS contract delivery manager (CDM) conducts monthly reviews of arrival times and those received very late are raised by the CDM with the contactor as official complaints.*
- **Contact with family and friends.** *The connectivity and network issues in relation to secure social video calling (Purple Visits) were resolved and no further issues identified.*
- **Ligature inflicted incidents.** *HMPPS apologised for the way in which the reporting of ligatures was communicated to the IMB. HMPPS changed its position on recording of noose making, not ligature incidents. Ligatures are still reported as self-harm incidents. Directors and Governors have been instructed to notify staff that this change does not mean noose making should be treated any less seriously.*
- **Testing for Covid-19.** *All testing is voluntary and refusal to test does not prevent a transfer from going ahead. All prisoners arriving at HMP Oakwood are routinely tested for Covid-19 on arrival and on the first and fifth day.*
- **Offending behaviour programmes.** *In August 2020 HMPPS interventions services developed an 'alternative delivery format' for the delivery of accredited programmes. As a result, a remote delivery model was developed, although this could not be relied upon in every case, nor with every prisoner and this was considered on a case-by-case basis.*

TO THE DIRECTOR

- **The condition and numbers of body worn video cameras (BWVC).** *New BWVC cameras have been ordered and additional staff have been deployed daily to ensure all cameras are functioning and staff draw cameras correctly.*

- **Informing IMB about planned use of force incidents.** *An instruction has been sent to the orderly officers by the Deputy Director to ensure the IMB member is alerted to any planned intervention.*
- **Lack of alternative communication options as well as kiosks on the wings.** *Oakwood TV has now been established with great success, including Directors/SMT announcements and faith TV, in addition to notices to prisoners, which are displayed on the kiosk and on units. Purple Visits have proved to be a valuable alternative throughout the pandemic for the prisoners to help maintain family contact during restricted regimes. The prison is currently exploring the feasibility of retaining the service as part of its future regime development post-Covid-19*
- **Following up on missing property.** *The process has been reiterated to all managers and the number of complaints and issues relating to missing property has reduced. A significant number of missing property issues stem from sending prisons.*
- **PIN numbers to be checked soon after prisoners transfer to the prison.** *Public Protection manage the process appropriately and within the public protection guidelines.*

4. Safety

The ongoing restrictions on the regime due to the pandemic have had an impact on the prisoners, with reduced exercise and limited in-cell provision for distraction compared to the last lockdown. There were four serious incidents in January 2022 where prisoners went over the rails and whilst they were managed well it was reflective of the frustrations that are occurring.

The Board is concerned that staff recruited during the pandemic have never worked in a fully functioning prison before and, although trained in all aspects of care support and discipline, may not be confident enough to carry their role through.

4.1 Reception and induction

The prison's reception and induction procedures continue to provide a warm and positive experience for new arrivals. Experienced staff, with prisoner orderlies on hand to assist in the registration process, support an effective and efficient reception into the prison. Property is received and accounted for in accordance with established procedures.

Early identification of vulnerability and risk issues for each new prisoner is carried out, including cell sharing risk assessments. Individual healthcare assessments are undertaken to ensure new or ongoing medical needs are identified so that appropriate healthcare can be arranged.

The Board continues to be concerned about prisoners arriving very late, meaning they have little time to settle before being taken to cells and locked down. In addition, the nursing staff have to process complex healthcare needs very quickly.

The induction process has been curtailed due to Covid-19 restrictions and the need for incoming prisoners to isolate. The Board is of the opinion that the prison's reception and induction processes are delivered professionally, effectively, and comprehensively.

There were 1794 initial education assessments and 1711 maths assessments undertaken during reception in the reporting period.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

During the reporting year, there were two deaths in custody (one of the deaths was post release). To date there has been no reports from the Prison and Probation Ombudsman.

The Board has been concerned that during the reporting year, following the appointment of a new Coroner, it has not been informed of impending inquests. This has had a direct impact on the ability of the Board to monitor any recommendations.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 51 serious assaults reported, with 28 assaults on prisoners and 23 on staff. The number of reported fights was 104, of which 18 were categorised as serious. During the reporting period 182 challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) were put in place, of which 118 related to prisoners of white ethnicity and 64 Black, Asian or minority ethnic prisoners. All those subject to a CSIP are reviewed on a weekly basis.

4.4 Use of force

The HMIP inspection, which took place 17-28 May 2021, recommended there should be regular managerial oversight into the use of force. Patterns and trends should be identified and acted on to ensure force is always justified and proportionate.

Shortly after this, a use of force meeting was convened each week where 20% of cases were reviewed. The Board is invited to the meeting and have been able to observe the diligence that is taken to review the incidents. Quarterly meetings are also held where trends are looked at and an action plan has been developed.

The Board has been concerned that the body worn cameras (BWC) are still not consistently used by all staff. However at the meeting held in February 2022 it was noted that new BWVC are being purchased. This has been after several months where staff have reported problems with the equipment.

All new staff are given input on the five-minute intervention training around using interpersonal skills and communication to resolve confrontation.

There were 593 use of force incidents during the reporting period, 496 of which were spontaneous and 97 were planned. On a monthly basis, an average of 1.9% of the prison population was subjected to either a spontaneous or planned use of force.

Use of force is limited to the use of ratchet cuffs, guide and hold, personal protection and control and restraint techniques. PAVA spray, batons and body belts are not used in the prison. Of 397 use of force incidents, control and restraint was applied on 183 occasions and guide and hold on 214 occasions.

The following issues have been identified:

- The need for supervisors to be aware of technology used during briefing of staff and to reinforce its use
- Safety on taking prisoners downstairs
- The need for some staff to attend a refresher course
- Issues regarding BWC not being used because they cannot be activated but not being brought in for repair
- Paperwork not being submitted on time, particularly from the CSU

The use of force instructor oversees all the body worn camera recordings and picks up any use of force concerns that are not being dealt with appropriately. Re-training is mandatory if unacceptable practices are observed. The quarterly meetings that have been held reported that the highest percentage of use of force involved prisoners under 30 years of age.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

A walk-in X-ray scanner which was installed in February 2021, funded by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), has continued to have an impact on the identification of contraband concealed by incoming prisoners. A total of 10 prisoners have been moved to the CSU from reception in the reporting year compared to 121 the previous year.

The Board has noted that when the visits area was open staff raised concerns about staffing levels. It was stated that the CCTV does not commence until after all visitors

are in the room and that passes could go ahead undetected. It also meant that staff were concerned about safety and security.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Cells in the main house blocks are equipped with a toilet, shower, wash basin and telephone (restricted through a prisoner telephone PIN system), bed and storage. The in-cell telephone system allows staff to call a prisoner in their cell. The Board was given access to this system in September 2020, so they can also now call prisoners in their cells.

Several cells have been adapted for wheelchair use and for the use of Listeners (Samaritan-trained prisoners) on each house block. Every house block has an education block and a hub for medical staff.

The prison's good standards of cleanliness have been maintained throughout the lockdown period. Cleaning rotas have been maintained and the gardens have continued to look very good.

Opportunities have been taken during periods when the prisoners are on the wings to repaint communal areas and as cells are vacated they have been deep cleaned.

The ongoing remote monitoring by the Board during a substantial part of 2021/22 has meant that members were unable to physically monitor accommodation, kitchens or servery hygiene standards. When members were able to visit a range of issues were identified, for example:

- Equipment not working, such as food waste disposal units, and repairs not done for some considerable time
- Correct PPE not being worn by servery workers.
- The food complaints book not always available

All the above were reported to senior managers and arrangements made to repair/replace as soon as possible. In addition, a facilities team with prisoners was established to progress work more quickly.

During the lockdown period, Aramark has continued to provide a balanced menu for prisoners and two cooked meal options a day. Aramark should be commended for maintaining continuity of high-volume catering including special diets. However, as the Board resumed monitoring, concerns were raised about the quality and variety of the food provided, particularly in respect of those with special diets.

One of the recommendations from the HMIP report was that lunch should not be served before noon and the evening meal not before 5pm. The core day regime has not allowed the lunch-time meal to be served at midday and members have routinely seen trolleys being delivered and serveries opened at 11.30am.

HMIP recommended that prisoners should not be held in multi-occupancy cells that are too small. Whilst the Board shares this view, it understands that for the foreseeable future it will be necessary for the prison to operate with an operational capacity that involves a level of cell sharing use above its certified normal accommodation.

5.2 Segregation

The prison's CSU is a self-contained block with 24 standard cells, two cells providing special accommodation and two dirty protest cells. The CSU is a clean and well-maintained unit.

The HMIP inspection highlighted that the justification for segregating prisoners should be clearly documented and should include individual behaviour targets to allow prisoners to return to normal location at the earliest opportunity. The Board has amended the form that is used by members after attending good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews in order that this can be monitored more closely

Reviews and adjudications continued to take place throughout the lockdown period with Board members attending in person or remotely. Guidance has been issued for members on what needs to be checked when undertaking mandatory visits to the CSU, including welfare checks of new arrivals to ensure that our monitoring is robust.

Reviews are, invariably, handled sensitively but firmly with the prisoners' wellbeing to the fore. Whilst the CSU made every effort to re-locate prisoners back to the house blocks where possible and safe to do so, a number of prisoners were unwilling to re-locate, as they felt the CSU regime was safer than that of the house blocks. During the reporting year the Board has attended 343 reviews in CSU. All of the reviews have been well chaired and the prisoners in most circumstances have attended. Transfers between prisons and in particular mental health establishments continued to be problematical during the reporting period which meant prisoners stayed in the CSU longer than was desirable.

The IA ceased sitting shortly after the start of the lockdown period and has yet to return to the prison. The Courts Service made a decision to continue to use remote systems, as this makes it easier for solicitors to join the meeting. On occasion there are problems with connections with the network. It would be helpful if the Board could join some of the remote IA adjudications and an agreement and system of notification needs to be put in place.

The CSU continues to be well managed at front line manager (FLM) and SMT level. Their experience and approach to both prisoners and staff encourages a professional and supportive environment for prisoners. The Board commends the CSU staff for the respect, patience and support they have consistently provided to all CSU prisoners but especially those suffering mental health and behavioural problems, which were exacerbated by the ongoing constraints of the prolonged lockdown period.

There were some prisoners in the CSU on assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT). The Board has had training on the new ACCT procedure and where possible has read ACCT books for those in the CSU. There were a small number who were in the CSU for over 42 days due to the national restrictions on movement; some had mental health problems, some needed to be moved for their own safety, and some were re-categorised. The Board monitored this in discussion with the Director and the Controller and was satisfied that everything was being done to effect transfers as soon as possible.

The orderlies who work in the CSU are to be congratulated on the work that they do to keep the area clean and tidy and in the way they support the prisoners.

Adjudications

During most of the reporting year the Board was unable to attend adjudications but attendance recommenced in January 2022. The Board is concerned that over the year a number of adjudications have not proceeded owing to:

- Insufficient evidence being provided
- Paperwork issued out of time
- Evidence provided meant that the charge was dropped
- Non-availability of reporting staff

This is an area that the Board intends to monitor more closely in the next reporting year.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The relationship between staff and prisoners has been good throughout the prolonged lockdown period. Despite the ongoing threat of infection, the prison has always been able to maintain its operational requirements to keep prisoners protected and safe. Both management and staff are commended for their commitment and dedication under the most difficult of circumstances.

The following chart details the number of key worker sessions taking place each month during the reporting period. It demonstrates a steady increase since October 2021.

April 21	May 21	June 21	July 21	Aug 21	Sept 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 22
2,615	2,562	2,180	2,063	1,177	1,908	2,197	2,535	2,039	2,060	3,217	3,470	4,078

Appendix B gives a further breakdown of key worker activity over the year.

The Board is concerned about the number and experience of new staff on the house blocks. From observing some of the case notes of key worker sessions, the quality of the reporting varies. The Board suggests that senior managers look at putting further training in place.

During the reporting year the prison has continued to look at a range of ways to attract and recruit staff, including rewarding existing staff for introducing potential staff members and looking at staff working part-time hours and weekends only. A total of 75 new staff have been trained throughout the year. In total there are 162 badged staff on the house blocks and 38 FLM and 11 E1 managerial posts.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The HMIP inspection recommended that language assistance should be provided to non-English speaking prisoners to make sure they understand reception and induction processes. The SMT have ensured that this assistance is available and

prisoners whose first language is not English now have a badge to wear that identifies this. The prison has access to the Big Word interpretation and translation service and this is used to translate when needed.

The prison had an equality action plan covering April 2021 to March 2022, with its actions and reporting reviewed at meetings of the equality action group. The plan applies to staff, prisoners and visitors and encompasses all protected characteristic areas. It broadly covers the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and travelling show people as well as foreign nationals and care leavers.

There are posters on each wing detailing the process of how to fill in a DIRF and the process is also explained on the induction wing. In 2021/22 there were 161 DIRFs raised, a comparable figure with the two previous years.

DIRF scrutiny meetings should take place with HMPs Brinsford and Featherstone but these have not taken place during the reporting year due to Covid-19. It is hoped the meetings recommence in the new reporting year and the Board is invited to observe.

Protected characteristics meetings that were previously held bi-monthly did not take place in the usual format during the lockdown period but alternative measures were introduced e.g newsletters.

An equality newsletter continued to be published, led by a safer custody officer.

Foreign nationals are seen by reception staff on arrival and induction. They are supported by other prisoners who provide language and translation support. All new arrivals are given an induction Covid-19/information booklet translated into different languages. This is supplemented by a question-and-answer leaflet sent to all house blocks. This leaflet is to help staff answer the general questions asked by foreign nationals as well as providing information on legal matters, entitlements and how such support can be accessed. Letters and five-minute phone calls are available and regularly advertised. The kiosks situated on each of the house blocks have provision for use in 20 different languages. Those affected by the crisis in the Ukraine have been given £5 credit to make contact with family.

At the end of the reporting year there were 117 foreign national prisoners with 11 detainees held under IS91 immigration detention powers. The prison works collaboratively with HMPs Huntercombe and Risley, which hold foreign national prisoners. Home Office surgeries have not taken place during the lockdown period. However, there is regular contact by staff with the Home Office team by email to deal with any issues that arise. The Board hopes that face-to-face surgeries will recommence in the next reporting year.

There are approximately 75 prisoners who have previously been employed by HM Forces. There are veterans-in-custody prisoner representatives who, outside of lockdown, meet with new prisoners on arrival to signpost them to appropriate peer group support. Due to the pandemic it has not been possible to undertake events for this group but they are planned for 2022/23.

At the end of March 2022, 512 prisoners were identified as having a disability, which equated to 25% of the population. These prisoners are spread throughout the

establishment. Within this figure, some prisoners have declared more than one disability, resulting in a total of 787 disabilities recorded. Any prisoner identified as having any disability has measures provided to give the necessary support and assistance.

Prisoners who are elderly, disabled or with reduced mobility are housed on a dedicated wing on Ash house block, where they are encouraged to develop their independence and confidence to associate with others. This unit has been moved to the lower floor during the reporting year, which has made it easier for the prisoners to get fresh air and exercise. Prisoners who are medically unfit or unable to work are encouraged to attend either workshops or education. Prisoners aged 65 or over can continue to work if they wish. Every effort has been made by staff to keep these prisoners safe during the period of the pandemic. Regrettably, during the period of the pandemic, the support groups that have previously been held for vulnerable prisoners have not been able to take place.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) recommended that data collected locally on the treatment of prisoners with protected characteristics should be analysed and investigated. The Director responded that this would be done and added to the equalities action plan and monitored as part of the equalities quarterly meeting.

An annual equality report for the period April 2021 to March 2022 has been produced by the equality lead. There is an equality action plan, which is reviewed by senior managers and a plan of work has been detailed for 2022/23, which will be monitored by the Board.

Our Voice group has been established for prisoners with learning disabilities and autism and this has proved to be helpful for the prisoners involved.

The prison is to be congratulated on the work they do in the area of equalities.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team has continued to provide excellent support throughout the lockdown period with regular visits to the CSU and throughout the prison. Bereavement and pastoral support were given to prisoners of all denominations.

Most religious denominations are catered for but at the end of the reporting period there were gaps in the team e.g. a representative for the Rastafarian movement was actively being sought. This situation appears to have been ongoing for some time. There are two full-time paid staff members. The majority of the team, whilst also paid, are part-time and usually come into the prison one or two days per week. There are 11 in total, including a bereavement specialist counsellor. To assist the team, there are four unpaid volunteers who visit the prison occasionally.

The poster that highlights the chaplaincy team is out of date and could be misleading to prisoners asking for and expecting one person, only to find they no longer work at the prison.

Despite the computers in the chaplaincy department which linked to the G4S system, the team have stated that they feel poorly communicated with.

There is now an internal TV channel available to prisoners, which gives access to faith services at specific times. For example, Sunday is primarily Christian worship and Friday is mainly for followers of Islam. Throughout the week there are further services for these and other faiths, including Sikhism and Buddhism.

Some time ago a PLI was started to engage young Muslim men to be active within the prison and keep contact with others who may need spiritual support. Over time this has developed into a multi-faith service and team members will act as a 'representative' for other faiths e.g.: by delivering a Bible to a Christian prisoner.

5.6 Incentives schemes

In November 2021 an incentives scheme forum was held with constructive discussion relating to changes that could be made to the positivity of the incentives process. The recommendations from the forum have yet to be presented to the SMT.

5.7 Complaints

This has been an area where the Board has undertaken a deep dive review, which commenced prior to lockdown. During this period the HMPPS Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework has changed or been updated many times. The Board is satisfied the procedure is followed by staff at the prison in relation to dealing with the complaints procedure.

The staff who administer the complaints system changed during the period, resulting in the system being more accessible to the Board by providing them access to the complaints database. Some years ago the SMT introduced a precursor to the complaints process, known as a request. It is the complaints manager administering the system who determines what constitutes a request, which is then dealt with by E1 managers on the house blocks via the kiosk. These are recorded and followed up by the complaints team. This gives the prisoner an additional level to raise issues that concern them but are not a complaint. This procedure is not always understood by prisoners, as it is not operated elsewhere. It can create suspicion that their requests/complaints are not being dealt with and there is no information available to advise the prisoners about this process. The Board would like to suggest that an easy-to-read information leaflet is produced for prisoners on the requests/complaints system. A further concern for the Board is the fact that the letter sent to explain how a request will be dealt with is long and not always clear for prisoners who cannot read easily or whose first language is not English. These multi-functional response letters are not dated and do not have any reference numbers assigned for easy identification in the future. The Board asks that this be reviewed.

At the start of the reporting year there was a backlog of complaints being dealt with but this was dealt with efficiently when the new complaints team was put in place.

The quality of some of the responses to complaints is of concern but the Board is aware that this is monitored closely by SMT and HMPPS.

The total number of Comp1/Comp1A complaints during the reporting period was 1,887 of which 187 were upheld.

The total number of Comp 2 complaints in the reporting period was 784 of which 16 were upheld.

5.8 Property

Throughout the year the Board has expressed concern about the disproportionate number of property applications from prisoners who claim that all, or some, of their property has not been received from the transferring prisons.

The Board has raised concerns for the past two years about the management, accountability and transfer of property across the prison estate. Little seems to have been done at a national level to improve on this.

The issue of missing property during transfers to and from the prison is still a concern to the Board.

The Board is further concerned regarding the levels of property that go missing following cell searches. The Board will continue to monitor this issue going forward.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare provider, Practice Plus Group, has been working in an urgent and emergency mode for most of the year but continued to maintain a level of care equivalent to that provided in the community. Consequently no routine interventions have taken place unless considered essential. Clinics continued to be conducted where possible with both face-to-face and telephone contact. There have been virtual calls set up with the GP, and nurses have continued to provide triage over the telephone. Where necessary for the prisoner to be seen by the GP after triaging, arrangements have been made. End of life care has been provided in one case.

Practice Plus Group now also manages the pharmacy. Monthly local and regional medicine management meetings are held, as well as safer prescribing meetings. A regional pharmacist was appointed by Practice Plus to oversee the process in January 2022.

There have been the following recurring themes reported on the Board rota reports:

- Healthcare complaint boxes not emptied and their location not being easily accessible to all prisoners
- Lack of appointments or difficulty in getting appointments with healthcare staff
- Requests by prisoners requiring their medical records for legal reasons being delayed. Healthcare has 30 days in which to supply requests.
- Late arrivals of transferring prisoners mean nursing staff have to process complex healthcare needs very quickly. An audit of late arrivals in early 2022 indicated some improvement; however, the Board continues to be concerned.

The Board is concerned that both the integrated quality assurance and improvement meeting and the incident review group did not recommence until the later part of 2021, having been cancelled since 2020 despite terms of reference stating six meetings a year. From August 2021 the meetings have in the main taken place.

A new head of healthcare arrived in August and since then monthly meetings have been scheduled with the Board chair and vice chair.

During the reporting year complaints by prisoners have increased in relation to health. The management team at Practice Plus Group have responded by ensuring that information boards are put on the wings by the medications hatch and a new complaints form has been developed.

The patient experience lead arranged three concern clinics between January and March 2022 and over 30 men attended. A waiting list is now in place and a clinic will be arranged regularly. All the concerns are recorded and documented.

Health champions (a PLI) commenced their full role from January 2022. A number were lost during lockdown and others have been recruited to the role with training provided. New training is also to be offered to prisoners working on the health advisory service (HAS) telephone line and the concerns clinic.

In addition, the following steps have been undertaken to provide information and help prisoners understand how to follow up health related issues:

- Information given in December 2021 to prisoners about access to healthcare services and reordering repeat prescriptions
- Healthcare posters displayed across the prison
- Promotional days within the year for World Heart Day, Mental Health Awareness, Obesity Awareness, Diabetes and World Oral Health Day
- Diabetic patients with a BMI more than 40 invited in July 2021 to join a programme covering health advice
- A mobile retinal screening clinic used at the prison

The prison TV channel is used to give health information to prisoners, including promotional awareness pieces and interviews with the healthcare team. It is intended to make the format more accessible in the new reporting year, including featuring a prisoner's healthcare journey.

A discharge lounge will be operational in the new reporting year, with a nurse lead in place to give prisoners being released health-related information.

A family engagement forum was set up, the purpose being to talk to relatives about health concerns. At the first forum there was little interest shown but there are plans to run it again with a different format.

Three additional complaints boxes are to be installed outside the medications hatches on the main house blocks. The Board is concerned that the health complaints boxes are not always labelled or readily available to prisoners.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The prison is planning to be viewed as a GP hub so that information can be transferred GP to GP, provided the prisoners give consent. Funding has been made available from Practice Plus Group for the scheme. It will mean that the prison becomes a registered GP surgery from the new reporting year. The move will enable the healthcare team to have greater insight into patients' healthcare, especially for long term condition management

There were 29 recommendations from the health and social care needs assessment received in February 2022. All have been implemented and an action plan put in place to monitor progress.

Delays have been cut for appointments and NHS England gave funding for additional dentist sessions and dental equipment. Funding has also been given for permanent health night staff, paramedics and healthcare assistants.

Access to specialist care mirrors that in the community with limited access to appointments. During the reporting period 637 prisoners were referred to accident and emergency departments. As at the 31 March 2022, 14 prisoners were awaiting eye tests with 530 waiting for specialist treatment. This is made up of 368 initial appointments and 162 follow up appointments.

Dental services were greatly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions due to aerosol-generating procedures requiring a fallow time between patients. Services continued to be delivered but at a reduced capacity, mirroring the position in the community.

NHS England funded equipment to aid in the recovery of these services and the wait time was 42 days at the end of March 2022. This is showing an improvement month by month. As at the 31 March 2022, 346 prisoners are awaiting dental treatment. Of these, 152 require an initial appointment and 194 a follow up appointment.

6.3 Mental health

The mental health team became fully operational in mid-June 2021. All group work ceased at the beginning of lockdown, but the team have continued to be available to those in most need, to provide an appropriate level of support. They have used a triage service over the phone and a face-to-face service where it was felt necessary.

The aim is for routine referrals to be assessed within five working days and all urgent referrals are seen within two working days. Waiting times for routine appointments with mental health practitioners over the reporting period have varied from one to eight days, while from June 2021 all routine referrals were seen within five days. Waiting times for urgent appointments have been one to two days throughout the reporting year.

At the end of March 2022, there were 569 prisoners on mental health caseloads.

The mental health service has completed two cohorts on a Survive and Thrive programme during the reporting year but no further courses are planned until a new psychologist and assistant psychologist are appointed.

HMPPS recommendations stated that prisoners requiring a move to external mental health facilities should be transferred within the current guidelines of 28 days and assessed by the external facility within 14 days. This rarely happens for those requiring a transfer from the prison, with a number waiting months for a transfer to hospital. This is mainly due to the availability/capacity of external services which vastly prolongs the process.

6.4 Social care

At the end of March 2022, there were two prisoners in receipt of a care package, which are specifically designed to meet the needs of the prisoner. Four social workers are assigned to Oakwood along with other Staffordshire prisons. There is an allocated occupational therapist for the prison. Aids to daily living can be made available for prisoners who need reasonable adjustments for their day-to-day living. Assessments take place for prisoners who are due for transfer or for release, to ensure their support continues.

6.5 Exercise, regime

As the lockdown restrictions eased, exercise time was increased accordingly but only when deemed safe to do so. Within the confines of each individual house block, outside gym equipment has been made available for use under supervision.

The gym area and outside recreational facilities have continued to be unavailable and it is unlikely the accommodation pods of The Oaks that are occupying the space will be moved until the early part of the new reporting year. Gym equipment has been made available on the external yards of house blocks, as an alternative to the gym following the same regime.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

There are currently 272 prisoners on psychosocial caseloads, although some may also be on mental health caseloads if mental health is assessed as a primary need. As it is an integrated service prisoners can receive support for both substance misuse and mental health. Healthcare offer a range of psychosocial interventions including one-to-one support, in-cell workbooks, group interventions, and the support group SMART recovery. A 16-week drug recovery programme takes place with five prisoners taking part at any one time. There is inevitably a waiting list for joining the course. By March 2022, 284 prisoners had taken part in the programme.

All prisoners are trained by the inclusion team in naloxone awareness (a medication used to reverse the effects of opioids) prior to their release. Peer mentors and the naloxone team on Elm house block have received training in Class A drug addiction awareness. Prison custody officers (PCOs) and clinical staff have been trained throughout the year with further sessions scheduled for the new reporting year.

In April 2021 an overdose and naloxone/prenoxad usage campaign was undertaken that mirrored work in the community. Prison custody officers (PCOs) and clinical staff have been trained throughout the year with further sessions scheduled for the new reporting year.

Elm is a dedicated DRU having a maximum of 80 prisoners who participate in a 16-week course. During the lockdown it was moved to Beech house block, so that Elm could be used a reverse cohort unit.

The DRU returned to Elm later in the lockdown period with a reduced capacity of prisoners. All prisoners moving onto the unit are fully searched to stop illicit substances coming onto the unit and there are recovery champions (a PLI) helping them throughout their time there.

The New Beginnings course on Elm is facilitated by the PLIs based on the house block; one of the recovery workers assisted in drafting the programme. The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support continues to be provided by one of the prisoners who is part of the AA Fellowship.

6.7 Soft skills

There are over 20 peer-led groups operating within the prison. Most ceased working or meeting at the start of lockdown and had not all restarted at the end of the reporting period.

A new peer group commenced for care leavers in the summer of 2020. One of the main purposes of the group was to make people aware of care leavers and how they could offer more support to them.

The following have also been introduced:

- Hidden disabilities project – identified prisoners and put personal care plans in place
- Dig for Health project – two prisoners on Douglas working with the gardener to develop the project
- Cuts for staff – a prisoner-led initiative based on Ash for barbering

Ash and Douglas house blocks are to be congratulated on arranging activities for the prisoners, namely Dig for Health, quizzes and bingo. An aviary team has been established with prisoners caring for budgerigars and some have the birds in their cells to care for. In addition, plans are in place to have fish and possibly rabbits available for the prisoners look after, which should contribute to the wellbeing agenda.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education

The recent review of reading education in prisons published on 22 March 2022 commented “*Early reading provision in prisons relies heavily on delivery by voluntary organisations*”. At HMP Oakwood there are Novus tutors able to teach prisoners to meet at least the minimum standard required. For those unable to read, help is given by a fellow prisoner as there is no specialist tutor. The prison works with the literacy charity Shannon Trust, which is now run on the same lines as a PLI. The Board would like to see more support given for those who are unable to read and write.

Novus staff returned to the site in May 2021 and provided in-cell and blended learning until the prison moved to stage 2 of Covid control measures when Novus began some face-to-face class delivery. Initially five prisoners were allowed in a group session and four within vocational areas. It then moved to eight and ten in a class as the establishment moved through the stages. This would have fluctuated dependent on the number of positive cases and risk levels within the establishment.

The information advice guidance (IAG) contract is delivered by an external contractor, which in the view of the Board has been slow to become fully operational. Whilst Novus works closely with the IAG team this does not enable the full range of services to be offered.

The following were developed to assist prisoners:

- During one quarter there were 31 class courses running across Ash, Beech, Cedar and Skills A and three courses delivered as outreach
- A new course covering customer service commenced; the first for quite some time. It is hoped that it will be transferable to prisoners’ employment plans

The Board undertook a survey of prisoners during the reporting year in relation to education. The following is a summary of the findings:

The varying Covid restrictions during the reporting year resulted in short periods of solely in-cell course provision and longer periods when classroom teaching returned. This meant education was delivered as a blend of both methods. In a survey of learners carried out in early 2022, over 80% of respondents had experienced a mix of both and just 19% took part in in-cell courses alone. Prisoners felt they benefited much more from classroom teaching. Significant mention was made of the lack of tutor feedback when completing in-cell courses, as well as limited study materials and a shared cell being an inappropriate place to study.

The educational experience was highly variable. Prisoners continued to speak highly of the support and commitment of teaching staff. Accessing courses in the first place could be difficult, relying on factors such as persistence in using the kiosk system and opportunities to speak to staff to reinforce requests.

A quarter of learners who responded to the survey said they did not receive an educational assessment. While the majority (72%) did have an assessment, this appears not to translate into an action plan: 65% of respondents said they did not have an action plan and two-thirds of those who did have a plan, believed it did not help them get the support they needed to take part in education.

This sentiment corresponds with the findings of the Ofsted inspection at the prison in May 2021, which found that prisoners did not receive support to identify and follow appropriate skills action plans to help them decide on their learning and work activities. Little more than half of respondents (56%) in the survey thought overall that they had been helped to progress and achieve what they wanted from taking part in education. Many others did not experience the education offer.

Participation numbers reported to the Board remain consistently low and it is difficult to see how delivery plan commitments are being achieved. This is of concern when research shows that undertaking any form of prison learning, regardless of qualification, significantly reduces reoffending on release. It also has benefits within the prison itself, improving prisoner wellbeing and reducing boredom and risk.

Appendix A gives more details on the survey undertaken.

Sample quotes from prisoners from education survey:

"I feel that the tutors here at Oakwood have restored my confidence. They helped me see that although I left school at 13 with no education, I could achieve the things I wanted to when younger!"

"Never had an initial assessment"

"Had an assessment in classroom but not given any help. It's easy to start education but a nightmare when they take you off a course and put you on another when you have not completed the first one"

"Education in this place is no good no communication"

"Initial assessment on arrival"

"You cannot get on courses that you want to do "

"No skills action plan – need a quiet space out of cell to study"

"The assessment was undertaken after a 48 hour journey and assessment mainly maths was not explained"

"I like to go to classroom and teacher very helpful"

"I need to be in a classroom environment to be able to learn properly – I cannot find motivation in cell"

“I do have an education pathway put together with the help of staff. Relying on the kiosk to communicate with staff is difficult. I do not learn as much in cell as I do in class”

The Board will be undertaking further work in relation to the education provided by Novus.

Library service

The library was reopened in the prison during the reporting period. During periods of stages 3/4 (24 December 2021 to 7 March 2022) when the library was not able to host visitors, the staff ran outreach services with prison staff and orderlies facilitating requests sent through the kiosk.

During the reporting period the library has facilitated:

- Storybook Dads (with delivery being on the house blocks during lockdown and in the library when restrictions allowed)
- The book club on Elm
- Two writing competitions that included writing workshops
- Two poetry competitions
- A Christmas craft competition
- Two Books Unlocked initiatives (where residents receive a free Booker prize book in exchange for reviews, usually run as a book club but restrictions did not allow at the time)

During lockdown library staff were also delivering activity packs such as puzzles and colouring to the wings, as well as performing regular wing visits to encourage use of the library facilities through the kiosk.

Inductions were provided through a library induction pack handed out to arriving prisoners and with library orderlies on Beech House block providing inductions when face-to-face inductions restarted. Library staff also established a regular delivery of donated books and had bookshelves set up on Willow, Chestnut and Elm – building on what was already in place in the CSU. Most residents on those wings do not have regular access to the library so a mini-library allows them access to a continually changing selection of books. Prisoners unable to access the library are all entitled to outreach even during times of lockdown.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There has been some vocational work gradually introduced as restrictions eased e.g. a bricklaying course took place, and during the year Skills C workshop was running with 120 participants due to the essential work undertaken.

However, in October 2021 due to staff shortages only the barista training and four other courses were running.

Total ran a welding workshop in 2022 for pre-release and release on temporary licence (ROTL) prisoners. The company is working with the HS2 project and has a potential 150 vacancies, some of which will be available for those released from Oakwood.

The work undertaken in farms and gardens continued to go well, producing all the flowers in the grounds of the prison and also sales of vegetables to staff.

Plans are in hand as the prison moves into stage 1 in the new reporting year for all workshops to become fully operational.

In December 2021 a new initiative, facilities work party, was established. It involves prisoners undertaking work such as repairs, maintenance, cell refurbishments and plumbing. Four prisoners are currently involved but plans are in place to expand.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management team has worked on a full-time basis throughout lockdown although they have not had face-to-face contact with prisoners. Eventually, access to prisoners via cell phones was arranged. Remote access to Parole Boards was also arranged and a number of prisoners reported they felt more comfortable using this medium rather than a face-to-face meeting.

There have been delays in long-term prisoners receiving their offender assessment system (OASys) reports, without which they are unable to progress to category D status. There are also some long-term prisoners who are not candidates for category D waiting up to 12 months for an OASys assessment whilst their reviews are still being carried out. This is an area of concern for the Board.

The waiting list at the end of the reporting year is 84 for category D and there were six on ROTL.

Throughout the year there has been a backlog in completing OASys reports, with the situation made worse by prisoners transferring in without one. In October 2021, OASys overtime was offered to all prison offender managers (POMs). By February 2022 the OMU was processing 120 OASys reports per month, which has reduced the backlog.

The public protection meeting, now called the interdepartmental risk management meeting has undergone significant changes. It is held monthly and captures all high-risk prisoners who are due for release within the next six months including multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) cases and any other complex cases.

The National Probation Service was re-branded as the Probation Service. The prison currently has a team of 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) probation officers and one head of offender management delivery (a senior probation officer (SPO)). Figures received from HMPPS state Oakwood's figures should be 12 FTE probation officers and 3.5 SPOs.

The pre-release team (previously resettlement) meet with all prisoners 12 weeks prior to release and complete a basic custody screening, establishing any needs that need to be addressed. It is then the community offender managers' responsibility to submit referrals via commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS).

Oakwood does not offer Horizon or Kaizen sex offender treatment programmes but is able to offer one-to-one work specifically for those convicted of sexual offences.

Several POMs are able to offer this. For those requiring programmes the prison seeks to transfer prisoners to HMPs Stafford or Watton.

The prison offers the courses Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) and Building Better Relationships (BBR). Resolve has been withdrawn nationally during the reporting period. The waiting list for TSP is approximately 100 and 30 for BBR. Priority is given to those in their last 12 months of sentence or parole window.

The Board has been concerned that prisoners who have less than eight weeks to serve and are prescribed methadone/esprinol have been transferred to HMP Oakwood. They do not have sufficient time for effective treatment before release.

7.4 Family contact

The help and advice line for offenders' wives (HALOW) has been open and supported both prisoners and families during lockdown. HALOW has also telephoned families regularly and sent gifts to children. A Facebook page was set up for children with activities for them to take part in. HALOW has also provided the visits and family intervention team (FIT) with family support workers (FSW).

The support network for families and residents has expanded over the pandemic and continues to grow. For example, the FSW has dealt with:

- 151 in-cell wellbeing calls to prisoners, with any issues conveyed to the relevant department for appropriate interventions
- 543 meaningful faces-to-face conversations with prisoners about family, children or court matters.
- 63 family-related incidents talking with family members.

Email a prisoner service is in place, operated by Unilink. Around 180 to 200 incoming emails are received daily and 90 to 100 replies go out from the prison. Replies have to be paid for by the prisoner. Hard copy is made of the incoming email and a copy is posted to the prisoner. Most of the correspondence is from family and friends but the Probation Service and solicitors also use the service.

A kids' club runs every Saturday morning for 8 to 10 residents in the visits small hall and children's work continues to develop as restrictions start to ease.

In a community garden project, two pythons have been adopted. They are used to build confidence in prisoners and give children an opportunity to learn.

The prison's family support service should be congratulated on the work it does in the prison and the support it gave to prisoners' families and children, particularly during the pandemic.

7.5 Resettlement planning

In June 2021, the National Probation Service assumed responsibility for resettlement services. Housing referrals now go to the charity Nacro but there appear to be problems in obtaining accommodation. Nacro, which has taken over from the CRC, is having problems locating accommodation for prisoners (especially high-risk

prisoners) and is only achieving a 40-50% success rate in comparison to the 96% recorded by CRC. It does not deal with prisoners requiring relocation out of the local area

Information regarding addressing debt has been issued by the West Midlands Prison Group and is being used by the prison.

In January 2022, the community enterprise Restart employed an operational manager from core funding to support its work in the prison.

The St Giles Trust is now running a course for red band trusted prisoners to help them gain a Level 3 qualification in information, advice and guidance.

During the reporting year, Job Centre staff began to have face-to-face meetings with prisoners. The team is being proactive in following up prisoners due for release to help them to obtain employment or to apply for benefits. There is also a debt counsellor who comes in on a regular basis to assist prisoners with complex needs.

Some of the issues raised include:

- In-cell phone access has been invaluable to continue the work
- The resettlement team receive mixed messages from probation as to what they can and cannot do, for example, no longer able to deal with bank accounts, passports and driving licences
- The community offender managers are not always helpful in getting access to accommodation but the team at Oakwood are continuing to help where they can
- The resettlement team has three members and are short staffed but have been asked also to provide support to HMPs Featherstone and Brinsford
- The RALPH team are looking forward to being able to run 'Through the Gate' support sessions.

The Board undertook a small survey of those being released from the prison. The responses are as follows:

- One prisoner thanked staff at Oakwood for the help and support given to him while he was grieving, saying he was leaving Oakwood a better person. He named mental health mentors LIFT, NHS staff and his wing officers for supporting him.
- Resettlement and OMU comments were mostly negative. Some prisoners had received positive assistance from the teams, but their comments suggest it was the most persistent who obtained the most help, giving positive comments and naming the team members who had helped them; the others just gave up. The major reorganisation during the year may have been a factor. A respondent stated that *"I'm truly disappointed in OMU as it seems their aim is to make me fail on release although I've tried to keep them informed of what I was trying to achieve I was ignored."*

- Similarly, finance support varied greatly, although some of the respondents were already financially aware or had supportive partners to re-join on discharge. The need for help with obtaining ID and bank accounts was mentioned. Several respondents said they knew how to claim universal credit; one had his appointment already arranged and another said all his paperwork was arranged.
- Housing was less of an issue in this year's survey, as seven respondents were returning to the family home. One response was "*unknown*" 14 days before release, as nothing had been confirmed, while others were hoping for hostel places or had been referred to Nacro.
- On health matters, respondents were aware of how to register with a GP and aware of the current Covid-19 rules and regulations. Most were already registered with their GP and would be leaving with sufficient prescription medicine for their immediate needs.
- "*I took advantage of getting some qualifications but what of the sentence plan?*" Disappointment with not completing their sentence plan was a common complaint, while a few said they did not know what a sentence plan was. Some had tried to obtain education or workshop places during their time at Oakwood but not been successful. This may have been due to their arrival at Oakwood being during lockdown and the usual education and training not being available at the time.
- The response to the question about joining PLIs was surprisingly negative. However, one respondent said being a wing cleaner for part of lockdown and then a carer buddy had helped him through a difficult time.

The Board will be monitoring the work of the resettlement team due to the changes being made over the new reporting year

The work of the IMB

During the course of the year, the Board at HMP Oakwood has continued to work both in the prison and remotely, but by the end of the reporting year. all except one member were back in the prison.

The Board continued with the recruitment of new members but of the three that were appointed in the last reporting year, only one completed the training and became a full member. A further recruitment campaign took place in November and two new members are now in training.

By way of monitoring remotely during the year, the Board has:

- Observed use of force meetings
- Continued to 'attend' reviews and adjudications
- Provided prisoners arriving in reception with a letter explaining how to contact the Board during remote monitoring and have now produced an information leaflet for new arrivals on the work of the Board
- Revised a letter from the Board for prisoners moved to the CSU
- Undertaken surveys to seek the views of a wide range of prisoners in relation to resettlement and education
- Revised guidance to members on aspects of monitoring
- Held two recruitment campaigns and successfully appointed two new members
- Developed the use of the Kahootz collaboration platform for members

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9 with 2 in training
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9 with 1 in training
Total number of visits to the establishment	444
Total number of segregation reviews attended	343

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	42	16
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	10	5
C	Equality	16	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	33	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	5	5
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	24	2
F	Food and kitchens	10	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	98	29
H1	Property within this establishment	22	7
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	44	21
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	8	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	49	15
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	53	20
K	Transfers	11	4
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	76	25
	Total number of applications	501	168

Appendix A

IMB - Education Survey Findings

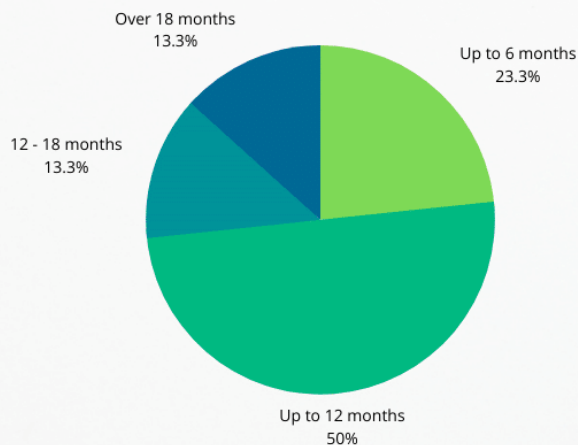
The respondents

We requested a list of learners from Novus and the prison in February 2022. It was not supplied so we sent 80 prisoners selected at random a survey. Only a couple of replies were received. After further requests, a learners list was supplied. It had 28 duplicate names on it. These were removed to give a list of **139 learners** who were sent the survey in **March 2022**.

30 survey responses were received by the end of March 2022 = **22% response rate**

All but one respondent had tried or completed an educational course. A third (10) were doing a course at the time of the survey.

How long respondents have been at HMP Oakwood



Houseblock location of respondents

ASH

12 respondents

BEECH

9 respondents

CEDAR

8 respondents

ELM

1 respondent

page 1

Assessments

A skills/education assessment is carried out on entry to Oakwood, unless the prisoner already has a current one completed within the last 6 months.

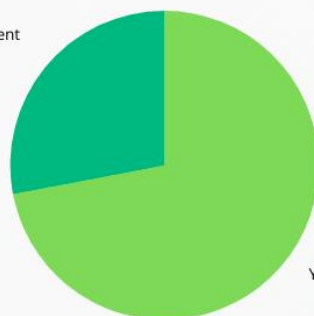
Most respondents (25) answered the question about their most recent assessment.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents said they'd had an assessment, with a quarter (28%) saying they hadn't done one.

Of those who have, 61% said they completed a self-assessment form while 39% referred to having tutor support to complete it.

Respondents with assessments

No - not had an assessment
28%



How assessment was done

Self-assessment
61 %

With tutor
support
39 %



page 2

Skills action plans

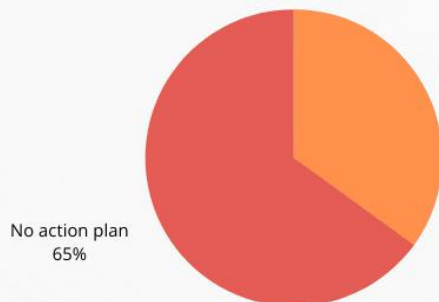
Just over half of respondents (17) answered the question about having a skills action plan.

A third (35%) said they had a plan and it was reviewed, while two-thirds (65%) said they didn't have an action plan.

Those with an action plan said it had helped them to get the support they needed to take part in education (33%). But double the number (67%) felt it hadn't helped, with some citing reasons such as waiting for courses or courses not being on due to Covid restrictions.

This sentiment chimes with the findings of Ofsted at Oakwood (May 2021) which found that prisoners did not receive support to identify and follow appropriate skills action plans to help them decide on their learning and work activities. It gave a recommendation that they should.

Respondents with an action plan



Perception of the action plan



page 3

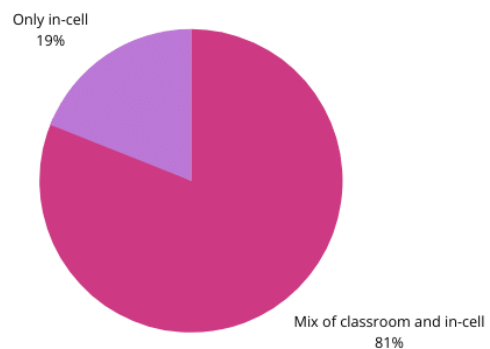
Learning experience

Prisoners' experience of accessing educational opportunities was mixed, with 53% saying it is easy and 35% finding it difficult. A further 12% said it was variable.

- “ When I can speak to education staff it is easy to get placed on educational courses. If I rely only on the kiosk I find it difficult. ”
- “ Courses are not advertised eg. start dates, duration, location or available to be in cell. ”



Where did learning take place?



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Progression

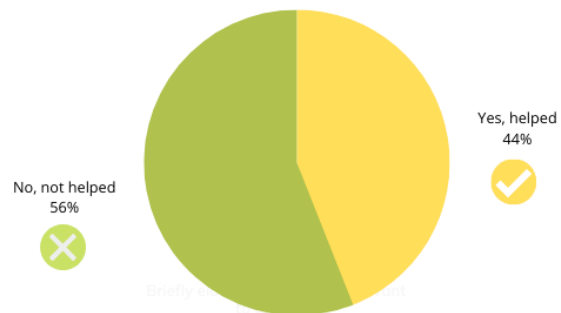
There are also dissimilar views from prisoners about whether they'd been helped to make progress and achieve what they want. Just over half (56%) said they had not been supported, compared to 44% who said they had been helped.

What would make your learning easier?

- A quiet and appropriate place to study
- Clearer advertisement of courses
- No loss of pay, or being penalised by the workshops, for participating in education
- Easier to get on the courses
- A cell mate to help
- Tutor on the wings
- Consistency with classes regardless of Covid
- Career advisors alongside education
- A classroom environment so there is someone to ask
- For me to keep revising
- Access to beneficial study materials



Have you been helped to progress and achieve?



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Sample comments from the survey

Access to education:

There's a long waiting list and hard to get on to.

It's fairly easy to get involved as long as you know how to use the kiosk to contact an education mentor.

I find it hard because there is a long wait. I apply for all my courses on the kiosk but it is taking long or the people in charge find a lot of excuses.

I have applied for every course on the CMS and have been waiting for weeks.

It's easy to start education but a nightmare when they take you off a course and put you on something else when you've not completed the first one. No communication.

In-cell and classroom:

It's been all in-cell work, with next to no access to study materials or tutor feedback.

I do not learn as much in the cell as I do in class. I believe this to be due to the lack of tutor feedback and discussion.

My in-cell course took time to be collected, with no real feedback or input from qualified staff.

I didn't like the in-cell workbooks because when you get stuck on questions you have no one to ask. When working with tutors all the help I've needed has been at hand.

I've supported men on the wing who become frustrated when they have cell workbooks from OMU pushed under their door and struggle to read and write. Many know what to say but can't get it written down.

In-cell you are limited as in what you can do. In the classroom you get more time with the tutor.



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Learning environments:

A proper study environment would help, like the library where it's quiet and can concentrate. The cell is not appropriate.



Due to lockdown/shielding measures it wasn't easy to get tutor help or find a quiet corner.

I need to be in a classroom environment to be able to learn properly. If it is left to me in cell I cannot find the motivation.

It is more profitable for the prison for you to do courses unpaid in your cell than to be paid in a classroom. I've had to manage on my savings.

The teachers:

The tutors are brilliant. They are very patient and understanding.

I feel that the tutors here at Oakwood have restored my confidence. They helped me see that although I left school at 13 with no education, I could achieve the things I wanted to when younger.

If it wasn't for the tutors I wouldn't have got to where I am with all my certificates. I am grateful for their help.

The teachers of ESOL are very helpful and they done excellent work to help me achieve what I need.

Support to progress:

I am trying to start multi-skills in construction but still have to finish my level 2 Maths which I'm still waiting for someone to get back to me. I don't think I have been helped enough yet, to be able to start or know when I can start.

No-one wants to help you ask a question and you get passed around like you're dirt on the bottom of your shoe.

Have achieved remarkable results. Very happy.

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Observations on survey

- The majority of learning in 2021/22 was done as a blend of classroom and in-cell learning.
- Figures supplied by the prison in March 2022, stated that there had been over 900 requests from learners since the start of 2022 and listed 28 courses provided during that time. This list included Functional Skills but did not include one of the new courses we have visited, Customer Service. The 900 requests are likely to be for individual courses (and repeat requests) and not the number of prisoners making requests.
- Few courses were specifically mentioned by our survey respondents. Along with English and Maths, the courses most named by respondents were Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Setting up in Business.
- Comments made in the survey, and heard in a classroom visit, indicate that pay for participation in education is notably lower than working in the workshops and so a disincentive to taking education classes.
- The educational experience is highly variable. Prisoners speak highly of the support of teaching staff. But participation rates appear low. Accessing courses in the first place can be difficult, relying not on effective action plans but on factors such as persistence in using the kiosk system and speaking to staff to reinforce requests. Waiting times and lack of communication were frequent themes.

Appendix B

Displaying statistics from 01 April 2021 to 30 March 2022. Comparing against statistics from 03 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Total number of active key workers

159

-5 decrease

Percentage of prisoners with an allocated key worker

79.59%

-10.19% decrease

Average time from reception to key worker allocation

53 days

+25 days increase

Average time from reception to first key worker session

38 days

-20 days decrease

Number of projected key worker sessions

105768

+2496 increase

Number of recorded key worker sessions

27763

+17496 increase

Compliance rate

26.25%

+16.31% increase



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