



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Berwyn

**For reporting year
1 March 2021 – 28 February 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 Berwyn is located on Wrexham Industrial Estate in North Wales. It is a remand, reception, category C resettlement and training prison, with a capacity to hold 2,106 prisoners. During the Covid-19 pandemic this was reduced to 1,801 and remains slightly below 2,000 men. There is a unit for vulnerable prisoners, including a number of prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSO).

The prison consists of three main houses: Alwen, Bala and Ceiriog. Each house is divided into eight communities. The accommodation in each community is a combination of double- and single-occupancy cells. Across the prison, 30% of cells are single occupancy and 70% are double occupancy. Alongside the main communities, the prison has a care and separation unit (CSU; Ogwen) which can hold 21 prisoners.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Since April 2021 Board members have been able to visit the establishment, although restricted by Covid-19 measures. Applications continue to be received through the 0800 system, and the boxes on each wing have now been reopened. As many prison staff were working from home throughout the period, some queries had to be made via phone. We thank the Governor and all his team for answering our phone calls and emails to support our work. It is the opinion of the Board that the Governor and his staff worked hard to minimise the effects of a curtailment of the usual rehabilitative regime at Berwyn and to manage the unsettling effect that Covid-19 caused, especially when the relaxation of measures inside the prison happened at a slower rate than those on the outside.

The Board notes that again this has been a challenging year with a reduced operational capacity for transfers to other prisons, which the Board understands to be impacted by Covid-19 related reductions in operational staffing. This continues to be an area of concern.

At the end of the reporting year:

- there were 60 vacancies out of a complement of 360 band 3 prison officers (17%)
- there were 5.5 probation officers in post out of a required 17.5 (31%)
- the prison was allocated only one Complaints administrator (OCA) by HMPPS.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board believes the establishment to be safe. (See *Section 4: Safety*)

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board believes that there is a generally courteous and respectful regime and staff-prisoner relationships are generally good. Since the end of Covid-19 restrictions there has been a perception among some prisoners that officers, who in many cases are newly recruited, have lost some communication skills and this is being rectified with additional training.

The Board believes that the accommodation offered is of a good standard.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The Board notes that the level of healthcare provision is generally as good as that in the community and in some cases better in relation to patient to healthcare professional ratios.

However, equivalence of service is important, and consideration must be given to the concentration of physical, psychological, and dental problems within the prison population. Therefore, the services offered may not be adequate, with the wait times for dental care, for instance, operating at 12 months.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

During 2021, an Accelerator project was led by an external manager to improve resettlement rates. We welcome the pilot and hope that the benefits will continue and be developed after the pilot ends. The well-appointed resettlement hub provides the information needed by prisoners who are due to be released, and the proportion of prisoners being released with no fixed address is low. *(See Section 7.5: Resettlement planning)*

Education, which was curtailed during Covid-19 restrictions, resumed in late 2021, with attendance as detailed below. *(See Section 7.1: Education, library)*

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

The Board is concerned at the lack of sufficient staff, which is the biggest destabilising factor in the prison. We hope to see increased funding to help recruit and retain frontline operational staff.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board is concerned that the establishment is regularly impacted by staffing shortages, causing restricted regimes and impacting upon important initiatives such as key work.

The Board is concerned that workshops were not fully operational in this reporting period.

TO THE GOVERNOR

As the prison population ages, the Board would like to see training for staff on recognising and dealing with dementia and other age-related needs.

3.4 Progress since the last report

- Since our previous report, the Board has been given access to suitable meeting rooms and the Board's office has been provided with additional furniture.
- The resettlement hub has now opened and is well-appointed and well attended.
- The issues with the heating system and the paint defects in the cells are being resolved. Contractor funding has been made available and remedial work is underway. This will take an estimated 2.4 years.
- Healthcare waiting times are still long – as in the community - but an additional doctor, dentist and dental nurse have been recruited.
- An additional staff member has been allocated from existing staff to OCA and the number of outstanding complaints about transfers has been reduced. Response times have also improved.
- Additional officers have been recruited, but this means that many are inexperienced and require training and support. Originally recruitment was done centrally, resulting in low retention rates. It is pleasing to see that HMP Berwyn has secured authority to develop and pilot recruitment of prison officers during 2022 and we look forward to seeing positive outcomes from this work in coming months.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

As in all areas, there have been considerable staff shortages and disruption due to Covid-19. This has resulted in some poor performance figures, and the draft HMPPS operational and system assurance group (OSAG) report from November 2021 highlighted shortcomings as well as achievements. New procedures and training have been developed to meet these challenges and training sessions have been delivered. Performance is reviewed and monitored in weekly or monthly meetings - safer custody, enhanced case management, safety intervention, drug strategy. These are attended by senior management and healthcare, and in some cases, prisoners and operational staff, and close-out of actions is monitored at subsequent meetings.

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception is well organised, with a clear process reflected in the layout of the light, airy reception area. There are separate rooms for healthcare interviews and property. Arrivals are given food which is kept in a heated food service trolley.

When prisoners arrive on transfer or return from hospital, they are accompanied by a person escort record (PER) form which is adequate and collects relevant information. These forms are now mainly digital, but some hard copies are on file. New prisoners are assessed by security analysts who complete a PER form for them which is filed with security. A needs questionnaire is completed for each prisoner and is adequate and contains relevant information. Arrivals can be assisted in this by orderlies. If a prisoner cannot communicate well in English or Welsh, there are Welsh speakers available, and a language app. If the prisoner cannot read or write, staff or orderlies help them to complete the form.

If there are known gang members, there is adequate space in the establishment to house them apart from each other. A non-association marker highlighting risk is entered on the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS).

If the PER form indicates a man is vulnerable or is a PCOSO, he is placed separately on the wing for vulnerable prisoners. Reception emails safer custody staff, who visit them within two days.

When prisoners arrive on an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) self-harm monitoring document, generally safer custody have been informed via email by the transferring establishment. On occasion this does not happen, but a suicide and self-harm (SASH) prevention form is entered on NOMIS and on the wing file.

All existing prescriptions are reviewed on arrival and are not automatically renewed, to ensure they are both clinically and cost effective. Staff concede this does not

always happen quickly, resulting in complaints and non-compliance. The most common concern raised with the Board regarding induction is the medicine optimisation programme. (See section 6.1: *healthcare general*).

Officers are assisted by between three and five peer mentors (numbers have sometimes been lower due to Covid-19 isolation). Those interviewed were aware of the particular needs of young adults. Induction is delivered by peers within two days, and face-to-face inductions resumed in February 2022.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There were 1,638 incidents of self-harm, which is a 14.5% increase on the 1,431 incidents recorded in the last reporting year, whilst the prison population rose by 6%. There were 850 ACCTs opened during the reporting year compared with 958 in the previous reporting period. Senior management are aware that not all ACCTs are completed correctly and from February 2022, weekly quality monitoring has been taking place, checking between 20% and 30% of all ACCTs. All overdue ACCT reviews are recorded on the log and the night orderly officer now assesses if an ACCT review should be conducted overnight or if additional measures (such as changes in observations/conversations) are required before the case review is conducted the next working day. Additional ACCT training has been delivered.

Since October 2021, self-isolators, and the reasons, have been recorded in the self-isolation log. A detailed summary of the previous 24 hours is discussed at the daily safety intervention meeting (SIM), including prisoners of key concern, food refusers, isolating individuals, prisoners who have self-harmed, ACCTs opened, number of ACCTs due for review, prisoners awaiting transfer to a secure unit, violent incidents, challenge, support, and intervention plan (CSIP) reviews due and information about new admissions. SIMs are attended by senior prison staff, offender management unit (OMU) and healthcare representatives, with actions monitored at subsequent meetings.

The Board notes with sadness that there were two deaths in custody, both apparently due to natural causes. Coroner's reports have not yet been completed.

The Board receives a daily orderly officer's report from the governor which details all incidents in the previous 24 hours. The report also provides an update on the most vulnerable and at-risk prisoners, and prisoners on ACCTs.

Eleven new Listeners have been trained, bringing the number to ten for each community. Listeners are trained by the Samaritans, to provide emotional support to those contemplating suicide or self-harm in prison.

During lockdown, helpline orderlies and workshop staff who were unable to carry out their duties made daily telephone contact with prisoners who were self-isolating following a positive Covid test, or prisoners on ACCTs. Since lockdown eased,

prisoners who have not received family visits for over a month are contacted regularly. The Board notes this is an example of excellent practice.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

When prisoners report feeling unsafe, they are usually relocated to other communities or the care and separation unit (CSU), if their concerns are backed up by evidence. When Board members questioned prisoners, most said they felt safe, but there were 405 assaults by prisoners on prisoners, including five sexual assaults, of which 29, or 7.2%, were classed as serious assaults. In the previous reporting year, the corresponding figures were 301, 38 of which were serious assaults. The proportion of serious assaults has reduced since lockdown restrictions were lifted, while the prison population rose by 6%, which the Board notes as good improvement. There were 242 assaults on staff, of which 17, or 7% were classed as serious.

Current CSIPs (care and support intervention plans) are reviewed at weekly enhanced case management meetings attended by senior staff and mental health representatives. CSIP upskilling training is being delivered to all wing staff.

4.4 Use of force

There has been a significant improvement in use of force data collection and analysis, a process described in the OSAG report as 'robust'. This has resulted in better de-escalation training, guidance on avoiding face strikes, and improved feedback at debriefs (which include the prisoner who was involved) following use of force. Form F213 is completed by healthcare for 100% of incidents. The data is discussed at weekly safety meetings, with analysis of specific incidents including officer responses, and evidence of actions closed out. There are still occasions when body-worn video cameras (BWVC) are not switched on. Use of BWVCs is included in the post-incident investigation, where reasons why BWVCs were not used are analysed. These may be broken BWVCs or, failure to issue them, but prompt analysis allows action to be taken, and practical, disciplinary or other measures implemented. This improved oversight and training may have contributed to the decrease in use of force incidents since early 2022.

1,538 incidents of use of force were recorded between March 2021 and February 2022. This was a 16% increase from the corresponding period between 2020 and 2021, when there were 1,326 incidents of force.

The 1,538 can be broken down as follows:

Full control and restraint	634 (41.2%)
Guiding holds	349 (22.7%)
Reasonable force (cuffs applied to escort)	296 (19.2%)
Reasonable force	152 (9.9%)
Personal protection only	108 (7%)

The Board notes that the total monthly figures in 2022 so far are lower than in 2021, e.g. February 2021 recorded 158 and February 2022 saw 98 (a 38% reduction in use of force, compared to a 4% increase in the population between these two time periods).

The reporting year of March 2021 to February 2022 saw an increase in the use of guiding holds, with an improvement in the success of guiding holds (i.e. fewer guiding holds escalating into full control and restraint).

The overall use of handcuffs is starting to fall, notably during escort to CSU, where more prisoners are being walked by staff, having determined there is no necessity for handcuffs.

Since November 2022 there has been a reduction in the use of strikes being delivered for personal protection, all incidents of which have been scrutinised by the prison management team via the completion of a decision log. The prison has also raised awareness around this matter in a newsletter and via a video presentation at the gate, highlighting risk areas.

There was one incident of the use of PAVA on a prisoner – this was delivered by a member of the national tactical response group team.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

As noted in section 6.1, each prisoner is seen by a doctor on arrival. Where there are issues with drug or alcohol, these are entered on the wing file and prisoners are housed as appropriate.

All arrivals must use the drug detection machine. Drug detection dogs are present in reception. From 28 March 2022, all domestic mail will be photocopied, and originals will not be given to prisoners.

In HMP Berwyn, gangs are not postcode related, but are linked to organised crime groups. This means that they interact more with each other to try to facilitate business and are more difficult to isolate. A debt database details any known debts, how many times individuals have been in debt, and details of those involved.

Data on drug finds for each community is published in the weekly tactical intelligence gathering report (TIGIR). This shows an increase in drug finds but the numbers of throwovers have decreased and the cost to prisoners for a page of new psychoactive substances (NPS) has risen from £80 to £500, indicating that it is becoming more difficult to bring drugs into the establishment or there are less drugs circulating.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

It is the opinion of the Board that the environment of the establishment is spacious, light and conducive to wellbeing. There are showers in each cell, including in the CSU. Common areas are clean, and prisoners are given cleaning materials when they want to clean their cells. In previous years the Board highlighted the poor condition of cells, with paint coming off the walls, and defects in the heating system. The original contractor has now accepted responsibility and, following a six-month test to check paint remains on the walls, there is an ongoing programme of refurbishment. The heating pipe valves are being replaced, which will mean the heating is consistent throughout the establishment.

There are laundries in each community, with several washing machines and dryers. Amey, the maintenance contractor, triages defects so it sometimes takes up to eight weeks for dryers to be repaired.

The kitchens are well equipped and staffed by prisoners, supervised by staff. The kitchens are clean, and equipment checks, including daily checks, are recorded and were up to date when checked by the Board. Specific diets are available, with provision for delivery of hot food during Ramadan. There were five complaints about food in 2021, compared with thirteen in 2020.

5.2 Segregation

The unit is in good condition. There is accommodation for 21 prisoners in the CSU, which rarely has over 14 people. The Board has observed that the staff on the CSU are supportive, and knowledgeable about the circumstances of each prisoner.

A number of prisoners have been held on CSU for over 42 days, because they were waiting for secure hospitals to accept them. If prisoners need to be segregated for more than 42 days, authority needs to be sought from a senior official at the Prison Group Director's office.

The ACCT files checked periodically by the Board were up to date.

One hundred percent of healthcare interviews and reviews were completed in date. Rule 45 reviews are attended by a governor and a representative from healthcare. The Board was unable to attend during lockdown, but this has been reinstated since late 2021. The vast majority of the prisoners accepted that they had been put in the CSU for good reason.

Fourteen out of 16 current officers in CSU have had adjudication liaison officer (ALO) training. There are a number of new recruits who will be given training on Zoom.

The Board has consistently noticed that the CSU is well run and staffed by empathetic and dedicated officers creating an exceptionally calm and positive unit.

Segregation reviews which were attended by the Board followed due process and evidenced constructive compassion.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

It is the opinion of the Board that generally relations are good. The Board notes examples of good practice such as a regular staff and prisoner combined park run, which encourages better relationships.

However, several prisoners have commented to the Board that they felt staff do not show sufficient respect. The Board recognises the steep learning curve for new staff to learn how to operate within a prison, which has not been helped by many officers starting employment in a Covid-19 restricted regime with prisoners under long periods of confinement in their cells. The prison management team is aware of this and has applied for and been granted funding for a standard coaching team to work on-site and upskill the workforce.

The establishment is slow to allocate key workers. There are plans to incrementally increase the level of key work as the prison progresses through its Covid recovery plan; the Board will monitor this over the coming year. CSIP management training information has been issued to all staff.

Where use of force data mentions particular officers several times, this is investigated, and corrective action taken. (*See section 4.4: use of force*)

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison has staff designated as representatives for each of the protected characteristics, along with equality representatives from prisoners on each house block. Equality meetings generally take place every month and the Governor has a leading role. Meetings have remained limited in personnel attending due to the pandemic and social distancing measures. The IMB reviews the minutes of the meetings and has the opportunity to raise queries as they arise.

The protected characteristic leads host forums across the prison. These are attended by prison staff and up to seven prisoners, who are selected partly on the basis of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted. In the reporting period, forums included: race, dementia, age (older), age (18), LGBTQ+ and female staff. Set questions are discussed and actions recorded and monitored.

Staff are encouraged to raise issues and submit DIRFs. It was stated during several equality meetings held for female officers that female officers suffer gender abuse from other officers and do not report it. A female staff support group was launched in September.

Over the reporting period, the Board received ten applications recorded in the equality and diversity category, of which two were found to be concerning but were reviewed by the Governor and resolved.

The number of Welsh-speaking prisoners in the prison is currently in decline. Amongst staff, the Welsh lead has provided a Welsh language awareness session across the senior management team (SMT), and this has resulted in two senior managers learning Welsh. The prison aims to increase employment or education for all groups within the prison, which the Board will monitor during the ensuing monitoring year.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Prayer groups had initially been thwarted at the start of the reporting year due to the continuing pandemic restrictions in place on groups meeting. By the end of July, all prisoners were able to attend religious services.

Emphasis was placed on ensuring prisoners could attend their prayer sessions on time and the Governor commits to monitoring this to ensure improvement. This will be monitored by the Board over the course of the next reporting year.

5.6 Incentives schemes

There is a clear system, with a how-to guide for managing incentive levels. which is also explained during induction. The Board believes the incentive scheme to be consistently applied across different demographic groups, in part due to the incentive level review records on NOMIS monitored throughout the reporting year. The reviews monitored were conducted within required timescales and contained specific actions.

Changes in incentive levels are generally clearly explained to prisoners, who also have an opportunity to appeal decisions. The Board has seen evidence that regaining incentive levels is a strong incentive to good behaviour and that this good behaviour is acknowledged in writing to the prisoners involved.

5.7 Complaints

The Board advises prisoners to use the internal processes and procedures which exist in order to resolve their problems before putting in applications. However, prisoners frequently say that they have little confidence in the prison's formal complaints system.

The Board's experience when dealing with applications regularly identifies that prisoner complaints are not responded to within the required timescale.

In terms of timeliness of responses, only 46% of all complaints in 2021 received responses within the nationally prescribed target time. For the three areas with the highest record complaints, the proportion of responses completed within the prescribed time were 44% for the accommodation blocks; 39% for offender management/sentence planning; and 44% for reception (property).

In terms of possible reasons for this poor performance, the prison reported major staff recruitment problems (see *section 3.1*).

5.8 Property

Applications about property problems within the prison rose from 40 in the last reporting year to 60 in this reporting year. Some of them refer to property which was not authorised to be in possession. Applications in relation to property losses on transfer fell in the same period from fourteen to nine, but this low number may be due to the overall fall in transfers.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board continues to deliver healthcare services at Berwyn. The monthly health and wellbeing focus group, which is attended by healthcare staff, peer mentors and prisoners, was suspended during Covid-19. In December 2020, a question-and-answer session was held where residents were encouraged to submit questions via UniLink to a panel of healthcare staff and peer mentors, but this was discontinued for the time being as it was considered to be unproductive. The focus group resumed on 26 January 2021, attended by eight healthcare staff and sixteen prisoners, including peer mentors.

A healthcare representative has an office in reception and any issues raised there are entered on System-1.

A healthcare representative is present at segregation and ACCT reviews and at weekly SIM meetings (*see section 4.2: suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody*). Not all ACCTs are completed in full, nor signed and dated (*see section 4.2*). Staff are not always recording the quality of conversations with prisoners on ACCT documents, and this is being monitored and challenged through regular quality assurance checks.

In 2021, the highest number of applications to the IMB were again about healthcare, including medication. This has decreased from 135 to 106 compared with the previous reporting year. A significant proportion of applications are about withdrawal of medication on arrival at the prison, which is done to check for drugs levels in blood, and to ensure that prisoners are not given medication they no longer need and whether they could receive a more effective, possibly non-medication, intervention. Where prisoners have been on medication for decades, reinstatement of drugs can be too slow, but many of the complaints on this subject are because they had been accustomed to automatic prescription renewal, or because the medication is tradable and loss of it means a loss of income.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There is no inpatient provision in Berwyn.

All prisoners were encouraged to take up Covid-19 vaccinations. As of 28 February 2022, 52% of prisoners had received two vaccinations and 35% had had two vaccinations and one booster. Many of those who refused said they did not see the point when they were locked up anyway.

There are 120 healthcare staff, including admin, physio, nurses, a general practitioner (GP) and the substance misuse team. There are also four peer mentors who have completed a three-month information, advice, guidance Level 2 training

course. An additional GP began work on 7 February 2022. Each GP deals with 30 prisoners a day.

Monthly reports detail did not attend (DNA) and could not attend (CNA) rates for all healthcare appointments and show a 50/50 split for all non-attendance. In December 2021, the percentage of missed appointments reached 9.8%.

Betsi Cadwaladr have a health and wellbeing helpline and centre predominantly staffed by men, who are supported by healthcare staff. These prisoners act as health and wellbeing peer mentors and are specifically chosen and trained for the role. These prisoners sign and agree to abide by the requisite confidentiality requirements. The peer mentors support prisoners in a general GP receptionist type role, alongside providing more detailed prison-specific support and guidance. If prisoners have difficulty reading GP appointment letters or letters explaining why their medication has been stopped, they can ask to see the mentor or officers on the wing.

The peer mentors remind prisoners about appointments and anyone who misses three or more appointments in one month are again contacted to try to establish the reasons behind the non-attendance. Reasons are mainly that appointments clash with gym or exercise, so prisoners are being encouraged to contact the helpline or submit a 'cancel my appointment' via the prison intranet application Unilink when they are not going to be able to attend. In some cases, staff have not been unlocking prisoners for appointments and healthcare staff now carry out spot checks for unlocks.

In the last reporting year there was an average of over 700 prisoners waiting for dental appointments. At the end of the reporting year an additional dentist and two additional dental nurses had been appointed.

There are numerous health promotion initiatives, and up-to-date information is provided on the Berwyn TV channel. If televisions are removed for disciplinary reasons, the information is also on in-cell laptops.

There are often long waiting times for transfer to secure mental health facilities. Betsi Cadwaladr informed the Board that this was because of a lack of beds in the receiving establishments, and because prisoners are triaged as low, medium and high priority so low priority prisoners wait longer.

6.3 Mental health

There is a specialist mental health community, with peer mentors who have received training from the mental health team. Listeners who were interviewed by the Board said there is good awareness and information on mental health on Berwyn TV. From September 2021, several mental health primary care groups were set up, supporting prisoners to cope with non-medical issues like low mood. A new mental health

programme, Breaking Free, is available as an IT session only following a referral from healthcare or safer custody.

HMP Berwyn has a peer support system known as Chain-breakers. They are based in the Chain-breaker hub in the Chapel and are supported by staff, who ensure that Chain-breakers are unlocked and available on their wings during the daytime. Chain-breakers are located on every wing and offer one-to-one support, guidance and signposting for prisoners who display cycles of challenging behaviours and have difficulty coping or expressing themselves. Wing staff work with Chain-breakers to resolve general applications submitted and all Chain-breaker contact is logged for transparency and reference. All operational staff must have mental health training, much of which is online. Refresher training is available and additional training can be accessed through multiple sources. Staff who had been interviewed by the Board felt they need more training in mental health, personality disorders and Alzheimer's – as there are more older prisoners in the establishment. 95% of older prisoners who were surveyed also asked for staff training in dementia.

There is a six-week waiting time for Wrexham adult social care, and delays in transfers to suitable accommodation have been exacerbated by Covid-19.

6.4 Social care

Over the last reporting year, two social workers covered evenings but not weekends.

6.5 Exercise, regime

During the pandemic, gyms were closed but since early 2022 they have re-opened and sport has recommenced on the football field. There are regular park runs. A priority of the drug strategy is providing meaningful occupation, and this is improving as workshops reopen. Time out of cell during lockdown was in line with national guidelines.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

A drug strategy lead has been in post since July 2021. Prison substance misuse officers (SMOs) work with the substance misuse services (SMS) team from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. A three-year substance misuse strategy was launched in November 2021 and training has been delivered to support this. A drug strategy meeting is held every month.

Prison substance misuse officers (SMOs) monitor the medication queues to prevent stockpiling medication. Twelve former substance misusers have been trained as recovery champions and deliver detox training. Provision of distraction and meaningful activity is prioritised to help reduce demand for drugs.

There are no specialised drug rehabilitation wings. During the pandemic, support was only available online, with good uptake – accessed by an average of 800 prisoners per quarter.

A comprehensive drug strategy was presented in February 2022. This addresses better communication between agencies, including external agencies.

Support groups have been set up within the prison, some of which are peer led. There is a drop-in centre, and a separate group for prisoners convicted of sexual offences.

The SMS team currently has a caseload of 500 prisoners on their withdrawal programme. Although this was curtailed during lockdown, as this has been relaxed, three-hour face-to-face sessions are offered over four weeks.

6.7 Soft skills

The mental health provision in Berwyn includes mindfulness. There are self-help and coping strategies on Berwyn TV, and self-help packs are sent out to prisoners who then receive follow-up calls.

Healthcare support workers are nongraduate staff members (who have NVQs) who go out to check on prisoners and report back on their condition.

7. Progression and resettlement

During the reporting year, of the accredited courses undertaken, 1,808 qualifications have been achieved (this does not include non-accredited course completions) in several areas including City and Guilds Level 1/2 in IT user skills (10 awards); CSCS Level 1 health and safety (620 awards) and Level 2 health and safety and food safety (570 awards); anger management (four awards); emotional intelligence (89 awards); Welsh language, traditions and customs (12 awards).

7.1 Education, library

Novus Cambria/Coleg Berwyn provides education facilities to HMP Berwyn. Performance is monitored by a Welsh Assembly contract management team (ESTYN). During this reporting period the college produced a self-assessment report. Out of five areas, ESTYN rated two as excellent and the remaining three as good. In addition to the scheduled courses, the college also provides an education function for remand prisoners where required, to a small number of young offenders (north Wales residents only), to PCOSO and vulnerable prisoners.

Coleg Berwyn also provides Essential Skills Wales education in literacy, numeracy and Welsh alongside IT, digital media, catering, mentoring, art, performance arts together with a further range of employability courses including bricklaying, plastering, site and bench joinery horticulture and industrial cleaning.

The number of prisoners who commenced courses was 4,093. The retention rate was 97%, the completion rate was 96% and 91% achieved a certificate. The attendance rate (including authorised absence) was 84.16% which, in view of the difficulties experienced during the year, was reasonable.

Over this reporting period, many changes and restrictions took place, mainly Covid imposed. This resulted in a reduction in the curriculum at one point, later returning to the full curriculum and in-cell provision.

Coleg Berwyn also worked closely with the resettlement hub to ensure the learning provided matched employment needs and supported what the prisoners needed in order to obtain their preferred work on release.

Wrexham County Borough Council continues to provide the in-house library service to Berwyn. Because of the pandemic this is a delivery service. To accommodate this, the library produces a fortnightly factsheet with all the available information. Specialist books are also available such as audio, large print, foreign languages, children's books and mandatory legal publications.

For the last nine months, the library has been holding listen and relax sessions. It was noted that an average 430 prisoners use this facility each month.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The Board is aware that workshop provision was severely hit by Covid-19, with some of the previous external providers taking the decision not to return.

During the pandemic, an average of 470 prisoners were in full-time employment. The recovery plan has been to provide all prisoners, where applicable, with a minimum of part-time activity allocation, by the 31 July 2022. Progress is being monitored by the Board.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The Board notes that again this has been a challenging year with a reduced operational capacity for transfers, which the Board understands to be impacted by Covid-19 related reductions in operational staffing. This continues to be an area of concern.

There was a backlog of 56 on the offender assessment system (OASys) at the end of this reporting period, which impacts on service delivery. Significant effort has gone into reducing the backlog but there are still areas to be addressed. The staffing of the OCA team is set at a national level; however, the considerable OCA workload has now been recognised locally and an additional OCA administrator has been allocated from existing prison staff since 1 March 2022.

A number of probation staff work within OMU. There are regular meetings within the unit between the two areas to maintain an oversight of offender management in custody (OMiC) delivery within the prison. There is specific focus on the handover of responsibility for offender management to the community prior to release.

The head of offender management services makes the decisions for the home detention curfew (HDC) process. During the reporting period, 218 prisoners were released on the HDC scheme.

Offender programmes, including Kaizen and Thinking Skills, have been run, but to accommodate Covid-19 restrictions at the time, there were smaller groups of between five and 13 prisoners. This has caused consternation with some of the prisoners who have been advised to transfer to Berwyn specifically to undertake one of the courses, only to find that places are very limited.

7.4 Family contact

Each cell has a telephone, and the prisoners are given pin numbers which allow them access to approved external telephone numbers. The ability to purchase additional phone credit is linked to a prisoner's incentive level. The prisoners are encouraged to have children's books delivered from the library so they can read bedtime stories to their children over the phone. *(See section 7.1: Education, library)*

Incoming mail is processed through a central mail room and distributed to each of the respective houses. The Board notes a change in process for the next reporting year *(see section 4.5: illicit items)*.

Visits are booked online, which the Board notes has contributed to a reduction in applications on this subject. During Covid, all visitors were tested prior to entry. Hourly sessions were run twice a day with a maximum of 35 in-person places per session, and 15 prisoners per social video call session.

The Board notes examples of good practice from the Prison Advice and Care Trust such as virtual homework clubs, whereby fathers can help their children, meetings with a health visitor with their partner to talk through aspects of pregnancy and allowing first time fathers visits, where a photograph is taken with the new-born baby.

The education section facilitates relevant courses but with Covid restrictions the curriculum has been run part-time. Of the 283 morning and afternoon sessions scheduled, 100 had to be cancelled to take account of issues such as shutdown days, restricted movement due to Covid and learner non-attendance. 53 of the 56 enrolled prisoners completed the courses.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As reported last year, Berwyn worked with the St. Giles resettlement team to deliver support services. This continued until June 2021, when a new operating model was introduced, and the probation aspect was unified. Probation now works with commissioned rehabilitative services facilitating accommodation for prisoners at Berwyn who have been released to North Wales. Prisoners about to leave prison are supported by a community offender manager, prison offender manager and resettlement practitioner in the planning and delivery of interventions for release.

Over the reporting period, 1,419 prisoners were released. Prisoners are released from Berwyn to all areas of England and Wales but predominantly to northwest England and North Wales. Of those released, 92% had first night accommodation.

The Board notes an example of excellent practice with the introduction of a resettlement hub. This is a welcoming environment where prisoners can meet key members of the resettlement staff. The hub is equipped with private meeting pods and banks of laptops for prisoners to access key services.

As part of the work of the hub, during the period of this report, a pilot has been undertaken at Berwyn in respect of the reducing reoffending Accelerator project. This was facilitated by a team and covered the particular areas of accommodation, curriculum learning progression and neurodiversity (CLPNL) and employment.

Positive relationships were developed with 23 local authorities in the North Wales region to improve accommodation outcomes upon release, targeting the areas where prisoners from Berwyn are likely to be released to. Local authority assessments are generally made by telephone or video link. The revised OMiC process is live in North Wales and is being extended to other regions, and in the meantime HMP Berwyn is making efforts to bridge the gap. To provide accessible information for staff and prisoners a Monopoly inspired game was developed called H.O.M.E (home options made easier). The Board notes that these initiatives together with others within this subject have directly related to an improvement in fewer prisoners being released with no fixed abode (NFA).

Berwyn does not have its own processes in place to quality assure the CLPNL provision within the education, skills and work areas of the prison; a quality improvement group was developed. Referrals are put in place for individuals with additional needs on entry to the establishment rather than when they have reached crisis point.

It is noted there has been an improvement in release on temporary licence (ROTL) placements. To date, these have been largely limited to areas with transport links to Berwyn. Due to Covid-19, the scheme only recommenced in August 2021 and since then ten prisoners have been placed. Four have been released and offered employment with their respective companies, of which three accepted, two are at another company for assessment and the remainder are still at their respective placements.

In this reporting year, starting in November 2021, three employment drives have been held, involving companies in the catering, construction and haulage industries. Local employers were invited into the establishment and supported to successfully offer and provide continuing employment to prisoners prior to and upon release.

Prisoners are assisted by Novus Cambria with interview skills and compiling a CV. The prospective employers meet the prisoners who have shown an interest and identify suitable candidates, culminating in a one-to-one interview.

Following the catering and construction events, twenty-six job offers were made out of forty-eight interviews and following the haulage interviews, training requirements were identified which could take place both internally and externally upon release and the Board notes that a driving simulator has since been installed in the resettlement hub.

Towards the end of this reporting year the Board has seen increased levels of employment on release as a result of this pilot's work. As these initiatives were not in place in previous years, the Board will watch with interest how the areas progress over the coming year and will monitor them accordingly.

The work of the IMB

The Board were able to resume attending the prison from April 2021. At the annual review meeting, as numbers of Board members are still low, the Board identified focus areas, and how best to use the resources available. This has resulted in more targeted activities and better communication. Members have also been able to identify and meet their own training needs.

Relations with the prison's senior management team are good and productive. The SMT responds well to questions and requests for information.

One new member joined the Board mid-year, but other potential members were unable to join due to procedural issues. Three Board members resigned, and one has sadly passed away whilst on the Board. Two members remain on sabbatical. Recruitment for new members continues.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12 members, 2 of whom are on sabbatical
Total number of visits to the establishment	367
Total number of segregation reviews attended	107

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	40	54
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	37	28
C	Equality	11	10
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	34	22
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	72	48
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	16	19
F	Food and kitchens	13	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	135	110
H1	Property within this establishment	40	60
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	9	28
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	11	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	81	96
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	86	72
K	Transfers	22	34
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	98	97
	Total number of applications	705	689

This report was agreed upon at the August Board meeting of the IMB at HMP Berwyn and signed off by

Chairman John Atherton and Vice-Chairs. Mitchell Long, Ceri Smith Robert Selby



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