



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ford

**For reporting year
1 November 2020 – 31 October 2021**

Published April 2022



Contents

Introductory sections 1 - 3		Page
1.	Statutory role of the IMB	3
2.	Description of establishment	4
3.	Executive summary	6
Evidence sections 4 – 7		
4.	Safety	9
5.	Fair and humane treatment	11
6.	Health and wellbeing	15
7.	Progression and resettlement	18
The work of the IMB		
	Board support	21

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 Ford is a category D open prison with an emphasis on resettlement.

It was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station. It is situated in West Sussex, two miles from the coast and three miles south of Arundel. It covers an area of 110 acres bisected by a busy class B public road. Ford railway station is a mile away.

The open estate is required to cater for category D prisoners assessed as suitable for open conditions within the criteria agreed between the Governor and the prison group director for Kent, Surrey and Sussex prisons. Prisoners selected for transfer to HMP Ford should present a low risk of absconding and a low risk to the public.

The details of the operational capacity of the prison during the year to 31 October 2021 (the current reporting year *or* the year) are set out in detail in section 5.1 but in summary an adverse fire inspection report in November 2020 required the prompt closure of B wing, the old wartime wooden accommodation huts, and the partial replacement of the resulting loss of capacity with converted containers (pods). As a result the operational capacity started the year at 520 and ended it at 389. The prison does not take prisoners serving sentences for sex offences. All available spaces are offered to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS's) population management unit.

The accommodation, all of which is now single occupancy, is comprised of a brick-built block with 274 single rooms (A wing), two other brick-built billets and 120 pods. The brick-built accommodation all has shared washing and toilet facilities but the pods each have their own facilities. There is accommodation for 15 prisoners with some degree of disability.

The 40 individual pods mentioned in our last report were commissioned during the current reporting year and a further 80 pods were commissioned in May 2021. Plans have been approved for a major expansion in the current reporting year.

Prisoners have access to a well-equipped gymnasium and outdoor exercise equipment.

The prison infrastructure is maintained by Government Facility Services Limited.

Resettlement assistance for low to medium risk prisoners was offered by the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (KSSCRC, part of the Seetec group) until the end of June 2022. This work was then taken up by the Pre-Release and Resettlement Team.

On-site academic education is provided by Weston College and vocational training by Chichester College. Both are supplemented by prison staff.

The Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction opened just before the start of the reporting year, and has provided practical qualifications and training to prepare prisoners for work after release. Other on-site opportunities for prisoners to work or be trained include those at DHL (distribution warehouse for prisoners' 'canteen'), waste management, bicycle refurbishing and the IT Academy (formerly PICTA). The prison runs engineering, horticulture and injection-moulding workshops and has amalgamated a number of scattered workshops into the Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction, officially opened in October 2020. Land-based activities supply local municipal planting as well as providing HMP Ford and other prisons with plants. The prisoner-run café/gift shop Serving Thyme continues to be

popular with the local neighbourhood. These working opportunities were inevitably heavily impacted by Covid.

Voluntary organisations providing support to prisoners include the Prison Advice and Care Trust, Spurgeons, Samaritans, Citizens Advice, the Terence Higgins Trust, the Shannon Trust, Cruse, Relate, the Sycamore Trust, the armed forces charity SSAFA and several other veterans' support organisations.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This report covers the 12-month period ending 31 October 2021 and tracks improvement and deterioration from year to year. This is not a one-off snapshot assessment of the prison.

Due to Covid-19, the Board started the year with only four members attending in person and this reduced to just two by December. However, all members participated in remote monitoring and the prison staff were helpful in facilitating this. Numbers visiting the prison to monitor in person steadily increased from March and by July all members were attending regularly. During regime restrictions most of the face to face monitoring was done by attending the Governor's and the offenders' consultative committee's (OCC's) regular forums. Remote monitoring included access to all on-site reports, telephone calls to departmental staff, review of the daily operational reports and oversight of minutes and similar documentation. Applications to see the IMB continued to be held face to face unless the issues could be resolved remotely.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board believes the prison to be fundamentally safe. It is pleasing to note that, in spite of the frustrations and boredom of regime restrictions, the violence statistics in section 4 were well down on the previous year.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The regime at HMP Ford is generally both fair and humane and the Board believes that when genuine grievances arise they are consistently well resolved.

During the year the Governor and his team have worked hard to ensure that racial bias forms no part in the treatment of different ethnicities. This is not always reflected in the perceptions of the prisoners but when we investigated, for instance, claims that white prisoners were unfairly favoured for outside paid work the statistics did not bear this out. This is a marked improvement on the position last year. See section 5.4.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Healthcare is well run and provides a good service to the prisoners. The Board was however concerned to note that the protocol agreed in 2019 concerning the treatment of prisoners' long-term medical conditions had not been followed in the case of a prisoner who died in 2020. See section 6.8.1 and 6.8.2, as well as the comment to the Governor in section 3.3 below.

The Board congratulates the prison management and staff on the care taken to protect the prisoners from Covid. Section 6 includes further details on this.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Good work to recover from the first set of restrictions was beginning at the start of the year, but was shortly thereafter set back by the second set of restrictions. Since those were lifted, good progress has been made in obtaining outside paid work for prisoners. See section 7.2.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

1. It is a pity that after many years of submissions by the senior management and criticism in our last 13 annual reports, your predecessors appeared to have no plan in place for the replacement of the wooden billets on B wing when they were finally condemned following a fire inspection in November 2020. This failure to plan ahead meant that there was no structured strategy for a gradual closure and rebuild of the huts and the operating capacity of the prison had to be drastically reduced. The subsequent panic measure of trying to put two prisoners in the new pods which were designed for one was an elementary mistake and, though they were then returned to single use, by the reporting year end there still appeared to be no urgency in getting the two-tier bunks restored to single beds. Meanwhile, prisoners could not sit on their beds as there was not enough headroom in either the top or bottom bunks to allow this. See section 5.1.3.
2. We would also draw to your attention the lack of planning for the replacement of kitchen equipment or washing machines. In the latter case we understand that, since the end of the reporting year, a leasing scheme is being planned for washing machines. However the current arrangement of putting in annual bids for funding for kitchen equipment is slow, bureaucratic and does not provide any guarantee that these essential items will be replaced in a timely manner. See section 5.1.5.
3. The doubling of the capacity of the prison in the current year will require close monitoring to avoid further expensive mistakes.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. As mentioned above, we are delighted that at last the wooden accommodation billets have been condemned and are emptied. However we fail to understand why action was not taken earlier in view of the complaints made over many years. The subsequent attempt to turn the pods into double accommodation was completely unrealistic and in the opinion of the Board would undoubtedly have led to serious accidents. The policy was reversed promptly by the prison but four months later, at the end of the reporting year, the bunks had not been converted back to single beds and the occupants were left in uncomfortable and unsuitable conditions (see section 5.1.3). In the Board's view the whole exercise was a complete waste of public funds.
2. We are concerned about the very limited importance given to IT training for the prisoners. It is now a requirement of most jobs and the reasons for not allowing a controlled access to wifi on the premises are somewhat negated by the prisoners who go out on ROTL to work or education being allowed mobiles when outside the prison.
3. Although we were assured last year that HMPPS was looking to increase the number of ethnic minority staff in its workforce, the proportion at HMP Ford remains totally different from that in its prisoner community. We appreciate the difficulty, given the racial balance in the local community, but we have seen little sign of any proactive moves on the part of the Prison Service to redress the balance.
4. Property remains an issue. Prisoners frequently arrive at HMP Ford having had to leave some of their property at their previous prison due to different practices among and within the companies transporting them. This leads to losses and corresponding claims. There also seems to be no consistency between prisons as to the rules relating to the types of

property each prisoner is allowed. Prisoners frequently arrive at HMP Ford with items bought legitimately whilst at their previous prison, only to be told the items are not allowed. This is deeply demotivating given that transfer to an open prison is supposed to be a promotion. Whilst there used to be a greater fire risk at HMP Ford than elsewhere because of the wooden billets, this is no longer the case and we would urge you to bring in consistent rules.

TO THE GOVERNOR

1. The Board commends the action taken by you and your staff in preventing the spread of Covid by effective safety measures. When the restrictions ended, the return of prisoners to outside work was impressive.
2. The Board was particularly impressed by the reaction of you and your staff to comments made in our last report concerning diversity and inclusion. Monthly diversity meetings were set up to ensure that the importance of diversity and inclusion filtered down to every aspect of prison life. See section 5.4.
3. Communication has continued to be a problem. During lockdown you held regular forums attended by a representative from each corridor but the information given out did not seem to reach the other prisoners in spite of the fact that the forums were each followed up by a notice to the community. Prisoners also reported that communication with staff, particularly the offender management unit (OMU), was a problem. See section 5.3.1.
4. The Board is very concerned by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) report into the death in custody in 2020, which criticised the treatment of long-term medical conditions. We appreciate that the healthcare provider has changed since then but it is essential that the protocol is adhered to in all cases. See sections 6.8.1 and 6.8.2.

3.4 Progress in the last year

This has been a difficult year for the Governor and his team at HMP Ford. For much of the year they were seeking to prevent the spread of Covid whilst coping with the risk of infection, not only from staff movements in and out of the prison but also from new prisoners transferred from other establishments. The few cases which occurred among the prisoners are a testament to their success.

The other main change was in the accommodation. The long overdue condemnation of B wing resulted in the introduction of new pods and a major reduction in the operating capacity of some 35%. This brought its own problems when outside paid work on ROTL resumed, as enough prisoners had to be kept on-site to enable the prison to function, whereas many prisoners had arrived expecting unrealistically to get paid work immediately. However, as mentioned in section 7.2.5 below, the efforts of the prison to increase effective outside employment were impressive.

The Board congratulates the Governor on the way he and his staff coped in a difficult year.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

Once again, the overarching concern for the prisoners was Covid and its effects on the regime. As the reporting year started, the prison was making good progress towards a return to normality from the first set of restrictions. However, in December restrictions once again had to be imposed, with all the resulting lack of outside work, face to face education and family contact. There was inevitably a build-up of frustration and disappointment that transfer to an open prison was not giving the prisoners the benefits they had been led to expect. It was good to see that there was a greater acceptance of the situation, with lower figures for violence and assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents (ACCTs) than in the previous year. The management were very successful in containing the pandemic and, in spite of new prisoners being transferred in from worse affected prisons and the daily movements of staff between the prison and the outside world, only 19 prisoners in total tested positive during the year. We believe this is an excellent outcome and the staff and prisoners are to be commended.

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 When restrictions were not in force the prisoners had a one-week course on arrival, with face-to-face presentations from each area of the prison, to help them settle in to what should be a very different daily routine to that in a closed environment. With further restrictions, this stopped and the handouts given to each prisoner were reintroduced. Whilst providing the basic information necessary, this undoubtedly made the initial process harder for the new prisoners.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There was one death in custody during the year. The prisoner died in his cell of what have been confirmed as natural causes and the situation appears to have been dealt with very sympathetically by staff, who went to great lengths to identify and contact the prisoner's family in Africa. He was by all accounts a popular member of the establishment and it was encouraging that the prisoners themselves collected funds to enable his possessions to be returned to his family.

4.2.2 Notwithstanding the above, a subsequent PPO report was critical of HMP Ford's treatment of the long-term medical conditions of some prisoners. This was the second year running that this criticism has been made (see section 6.8.2 below) and is a cause of concern to the Board.

4.2.3 There were two instances of self-harm during the year, compared to three the previous year.

4.2.4 There were nine ACCTs opened during the year. This compares with 18 in the previous year and 11 the year before. ACCTs are well managed and make full use of the prison's facilities. The prisoners concerned are fully involved in the process.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

4.3.1 Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults were well down on last year, with five reported against 18 in the previous year.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 During the reporting year there was one use of PAVA spray.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation and clothing

5.1.1 At the year end the prisoner population totalled 389, of which 214 were housed in the brick-built A wing, 55 in two separate brick billets and 120 in pods.

5.1.2 The Board was delighted when an HMPPS fire safety inspection in November 2020 condemned the wooden billets comprising the old B wing. We had complained about this accommodation in our previous 13 annual reports and when action was finally taken the position was deemed so serious that the billets had to be closed within two weeks. We believe that the Prison Service had been negligent in not taking action earlier and also that a succession of Prison Ministers over the years did not appear to have any contingency plan for managing the demolition and replacement of B wing in a properly funded staged programme (see section 3.3).

5.1.3 When B wing was closed, the prison initially commissioned 40 pods for single occupancy, followed in April and May by a further 80. Each pod has its own shower room and toilet and each block of 40 pods has shared kitchen, laundry and payphone facilities. The second block of 80 was also designed to be for single occupancy, but because of the pressure on accommodation the Prison Service insisted, against the advice of the Governor, that half of these should be converted to double occupancy. It was obvious from the outset that the bunks would be cramped and dangerous. There was not room for the occupants to sit upright on either the upper or lower bunks and each pod was only provided with one chair. In addition, the bunks were too small and began to come away from the wall. The Governor acted swiftly to change them back to single use. However, by the end of the reporting year, funding had not been obtained for the conversion of these 40 bunks back to single beds and whilst the Prison Service appeared to be unable or unwilling to fund the remedy for its own mistake, the prisoners affected remained with beds on which they could not sit upright. This was neither fair nor humane. See section 3.3.

5.1.4 The accommodation in A wing and the two brick billets is tired and difficult to maintain and keep clean. Washing facilities are communal and a number of the kitchens do not have sinks, so that crockery and cutlery have to be washed in the shower rooms. We have mentioned this in several reports and are disappointed to note that by the year end the situation had still not been addressed.

5.1.5 We have commented before on the absence of planning for the regular replacement of kitchen and laundry equipment. It does seem now that the washing machines will be leased in future, which will hopefully avoid prisoners only being able to wash their clothes every six weeks whilst still being expected to go out to work properly dressed. Kitchen equipment, however, still seems to be run on the basis of 'fingers crossed' that the items will last until funds are available to replace them. Until a proper programme of regular servicing or replacement is introduced, the kitchens will be plagued by breakdowns such as the one that meant the prisoners had no hot puddings for several months while waiting for a part for a mixer which had to be obtained from the United States. We believe that the current system of bidding annually for funding is bureaucratic and unfit for the running of a substantial catering service. See section 3.3.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 As an open prison, HMP Ford does not have a segregation unit. Instead it has four secure cells used to house prisoners who are to be returned to closed conditions. They are

adequate and the prisoners are rarely held overnight. The processing of these prisoners has been observed as fair and consistent. They are told where they are going and why and are visited by healthcare staff before they leave. The IMB is informed as a matter of course when a prisoner is admitted to the cells and the prisoners are asked if they want to be visited by a member of the Board.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships

5.3.1 The pressures of Covid regimes had a large effect on the morale of the prisoners, with many complaining about lack of communication. Both the Governor and the OCC held separate forums weekly during lockdown, but in spite of their best efforts the information did not trickle down to those prisoners who did not attend. See section 3.3. (Comments to the Governor)

5.3.2 The area of most complaints about communication centred on the OMU. As restrictions eased, this improved with the introduction of the offender management in custody system (OMiC), whereby the uniformed staff are much less likely to be called away for other duties (particularly night shifts followed by days off in lieu). This has meant that the prisoner offender managers (POMs), formerly offender supervisors, are much easier to contact than previously.

5.3.3 The reduced operational capacity has put constraints on the number of prisoners who can be spared to go to outside paid work, as sufficient numbers need to be employed by the prison to keep it running. This affected morale, as prisoners often arrived at HMP Ford with unrealistic expectations that they would be immediately eligible for home leave and to go out on paid work. The prompt response of the prison in getting more job opportunities as restrictions were lifted was very successful and by the end of the year there were more going out to work than before the restrictions were imposed, in spite of the reduced population.

5.4 Diversity and inclusion

5.4.1 The Board was pleased to note the very successful efforts during the year to improve perceptions around fairness, diversity and inclusion. The Governor has led a drive towards proactive monitoring of all working areas of activity including access to work, education, use of healthcare, accommodation, returns to closed conditions and levels of privilege. All are in line with expectation. It is pleasing to note that the ethnicity pattern of prisoners accessing paid outside work, which has been the subject of criticism in the past, was brought in line with the demographics of the prison population during the year.

5.4.2 Individual monitoring statistics are shared openly with the prisoners at regular diversity and inclusion meetings chaired by the Governor. Senior members of staff are encouraged to attend and actively engage in these meetings. There are also regular meetings covering the various strands of diversity. Attendance varies at these, though the Board understands from conversations with prisoners that the reason for this lack of attendance on their part is because the issue is not perceived to be a problem. By the end of the reporting period, the diversity strand leaders and the Governor decided that the diversity and inclusion meetings could be held quarterly rather than monthly without impacting on the needs of the prison population.

5.4.3 The number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted in this reporting year was down from 23 to 11 and it was encouraging to note that there were none

during the quarter from June to September. Of those that were submitted, less than half were found to have a case.

5.4.4 The Board particularly commends the work done for Black History Month, Ramadan, Eid and many other festivals with posters, pamphlets and leaflets placed around the prison. Events and special meals are laid on by the kitchens.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The Board continues to be impressed by the excellent service provided by the chaplaincy team. They provided pastoral care for those of all faiths and none, which was much appreciated by the prisoners, especially during the period of restrictions. This accounted for 80% of the chaplaincy's work.

5.5.2 An innovation, which many found very helpful at a time when social distancing meant normal services could not be held in the chapel, was meditation sessions held outdoors and led by one of the chaplains.

5.5.3 The chapel is the largest high-ceilinged and well-ventilated room at HMP Ford and was offered to other departments for the necessary meetings which still had to take place during the restrictions. This increased the feeling of reassurance and comfort to the whole community and maintained the central profile of the chapel.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEPs)

5.6.1 The majority of the prisoners are on an enhanced regime, as would be expected in an open prison. Generally less than 15% of the population is on standard regime, usually only temporarily after an adjudication. None of the population is on basic regime.

5.6.2 The IEP levels are regularly reviewed by a senior officer and are monitored by the diversity and inclusion team to check the ethnicity and faith percentages in each category.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The prison has good systems in place for dealing with complaints from its population in a generally timely fashion. All complaints are logged and responses are chased up if necessary.

5.7.2 The largest volume of unresolved complaints are from HMP Ford prisoners to previous establishments where they have been held. As we have reported before, the majority of these relate to property issues and are set out in more detail in section 5.8 below. Some of these complaints are over six months old and many others take longer to sort out than should be expected, in spite of regular reminders from HMP Ford.

5.7.3 HMP Ford also receives complaints from other establishments and these again centre on property. However, these are small in number and responses tend to be made in a timely fashion.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 As mentioned in the Complaints section above, property is an ongoing issue, with items in store being lost and bags being lost in transit when prisoners are transferred. This may be because a prisoner has over time accumulated a larger amount of property bags than the carrier is contracted to move. Much depends on the goodwill or otherwise of the individual drivers, which leads to inconsistency and a feeling of unfairness. Overnight stops during a transfer can make it worse, as the extra bags may get left at the stopover prison and not properly recorded.

5.8.2 Another common property grievance is the lack of consistency between prisons as to what items are allowed to be held. Prisoners frequently arrive with items which were bought perfectly legitimately at their previous establishments but which are not permitted at HMP Ford. This gives rise to complaints and a feeling that a promotion to category D status is not what it was made out to be. The often-cited reason for items being banned is the extra fire risks at HMP Ford due to the wooden accommodation. Now that this is being demolished, the Board believes that the regulations should be reviewed.

5.8.3 The proposed national property framework, which is long overdue, made many recommendations, such as electronic property lists which could accompany a prisoner throughout his or her sentence, thereby making 'traceability' more effective. It also recommended having a named property officer to 'own' the property aspect in each establishment. The Board regrets that these ideas, even after a lengthy consultation period, seem never to have been implemented across the estate. Reception staff at HMP Ford have been proactive in tracing lost property from sending prisons, with some success. This is a local initiative and to be commended.

5.9 Food

5.9.1 The quality and quantity of the food is important to the men in terms of morale and welfare as well as nutrition. Lockdown provided a testing environment in terms of the safe delivery of meals to the population and the staff are to be commended for the efforts they went to.

5.9.2 The Board continues to receive complaints about the food. Although the menus are rotated on a four-weekly basis they still feel repetitive to the prisoners. Board members regularly taste the food and it is clear that the ingredients, which are supplied through nationally negotiated contracts, are of poor quality. We understand that these contracts have been in place for a number of years and have not been recently tested for quality or value.

5.9.3 The main complaints centre around the perceived lack of good quality protein, the high fat content of the meat and the small quantity of actual fish in breaded portions. Particular issues were the absence of hot puddings for an extended period (see section 5.1.5 above) and the lack of facilities to produce 'proper chips', which are not hot when they leave the distant kitchens.

5.9.4 The Board recognises that it is difficult to improve the food when limited to a daily budget of only £2.19 per prisoner per day, despite the best efforts of the catering staff to manage the budget imaginatively. However, it is disappointing to hear that the previous quality forum across the prison catering estate no longer meets, even virtually.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1 Covid has been the main issue facing all aspects of the prison this year. The Board commends the healthcare team for the care it managed to provide for general medical complaints as well as arranging for inoculations and coping with the restrictions of social distancing in a very cramped building. The uptake of inoculations, although slow at first, quickly became acceptable, with a very low number of prisoners refusing to be inoculated. PCR testing for prisoners began in earnest on 22 March 2021. This included any prisoner being transferred into HMP Ford. Some new arrivals and those over 70 years of age or deemed vulnerable received their first vaccine on 2 February 2021.

Standards of care and treatment were maintained during May's rebranding of mental health services, bringing together ISMS (integrated substance misuse service) and healthcare as one, as well as the recruitment of staff: two new nurses, one clinical lead and one administrative and data lead. These appointments, together with the proposed health facility rebuild (timeline unknown), are welcomed by the Board. The present facility is claustrophobic and poorly lit making it very difficult both for distancing during Covid and for privacy.

6.1.2 A full service slowly began to return after the regime restrictions in the previous year. GP, dental, optometry, physiotherapy and podiatry services had all returned to their contracted sessions by December 2020. Following the imposition of the second set of restrictions, emergency access to these services was only available in line with NHS England's Covid guidelines and the dental service was available only as a last resort.

6.1.3 The Board was disappointed by the length of time it took to install the new dental chair and then the further delay before it was put into service. During this time, the NHS emergency dental service had to be called on when and if an appointment could be facilitated. After the Covid outbreak, HMP Ford had to use a mobile dental facility that was available on a limited basis each week, but this had its limitations on treatment. The dentist in healthcare arranges his own appointments, including follow-ups inside the core working day.

6.1.4 Healthcare is now available Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 17.00 and on Saturday and bank holidays from 08.00 to 12.00. All medicines are dispensed at 15.45 each weekday afternoon and are available at weekends. Weekend nursing and mental health sessions have continued. These have been well used, especially by prisoners who either work outside or are in education all week.

6.1.5 Throughout this reporting period, only 19 prisoners tested positive for Covid. All of these have made a full recovery. Some prisoners have isolated at home on ROTL, but only if they contracted Covid while at home. The prisoners who received a positive test whilst residing at HMP Ford were put into isolation either on the pods or on the wings that could be isolated.

6.1.6 During the reporting year, only one member of healthcare staff tested positive for Covid. They isolated at home and it is believed it was contracted from a family member.

6.1.7 There were in the region of 13,800 appointments in the reporting year, of which just over 60% were seen by either a nurse or healthcare's own GP, who retired on 28 October 2021. A replacement has been confirmed. Mental health appointments were approximately 17% of the total and dentist appointments were a low 6%.

6.2 Mental health

6.2.1 The mental health team have relocated to the ISMS building and have formed the emotional health and wellbeing centre. The service is led by a clinical nurse with support from a cognitive behavioural therapist and a mental health practitioner plus a mental health nurse and two part-time occupational therapists.

6.2.2 This new service has been very well received by the prisoner population. There has been an increase in the number of prisoners presenting with anxiety issues. The average caseload per month is approximately 70 patients. Those believed to be at a heightened risk continued to be seen by staff throughout lockdown.

6.3 Social care

6.3.1 Approximately 6% of the prisoners at HMP Ford are over the age of 60 years. Healthcare continues to monitor and provide additional care for this part of the population, including dementia care if this is required. At the end of the reporting year, no prisoners were requesting this service.

6.3.2 A new position of an occupational therapist is now in place, part of whose role is to engage with community services for prisoners on release. No figures are available for this.

6.4 Exercise, regime

6.4.1 At the end of restrictions, the gym reopened full-time. By the end of the reporting year all prisoners were entitled to receive two sessions per week inside the gym, as well as tennis, cricket and football outside if weather permitted and if there were sufficient staff available. They were also able to use the gym equipment that is a permanent fixture in the grounds of the prison and which had to be off limits during the restrictions period. The gym staff also maintained remedial and mental health sessions.

6.4.2 While the restrictions were in force, the two physical exercise (PE) officers were utilised on separate wings. They arranged structured exercise periods with morning, afternoon and evening sessions. This was made possible by enabling prisoners in 'households' to remain in their bubbles and consisted of one session per bubble per week.

6.4.3 The Board commends the work done by the gym staff to support the prisoners' physical and mental health. We have commented before that the fact that there are only two dedicated PE officers limits what they are able to accomplish and this will have to be given serious consideration if the prison population is expanded as planned. There were several attempts made to recruit more PE officers during the year, but there were no applicants. This is apparently a situation that is not unique to HMP Ford.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.5.1 The ISMS team continued its engagement with the prison community during the restrictions, apart from group sessions that were suspended throughout January and February 2021. The average monthly appointments were 167, with an average of six prisoners failing to attend.

6.5.2 The Board is disappointed to note that there is still a large quantity of drugs, particularly steroids, getting into HMP Ford, adding to the pressure on prisoners and possibly on the caseload of the ISMS team. There are still no external support meetings taking place on site.

This is due to vetting issues and the lack of contact from support groups, e.g. Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous.

6.6 Management of long-term conditions

6.6.1 A report from the Prison and Probation Ombudsman on a death in custody at HMP Ford in July 2020 was published in July 2021. Whilst the report found that there had been failings in some of the contact between the prisoner and healthcare, it was deemed that this was no worse than might have occurred in the community. However the report noted some serious shortcomings in the prisoner's care due to a lack of documentation by staff and a failure to carry out regular reviews for two chronic conditions from which he suffered or a risk assessment of a third chronic condition which he was at risk of contracting. This raised concerns around the management of long-term health conditions, particularly as an earlier report into a death in custody the previous year had also criticised the management of such conditions at HMP Ford.

6.6.2 As a result of a previous death in custody in 2019, the healthcare provider at the time produced in November 2019 a patient journey protocol for all long-term conditions. This protocol was not followed in the case of the 2020 death. In particular, the PPO report stated that staff did not note all of the prisoner's medical conditions or medication on his arrival at HMP Ford, the secondary screen was not completed within the seven-day period and the prisoner's treatment was limited to managing his symptoms. It is essential in the Board's view that the protocol is followed strictly in future cases where prisoners have long-term medical conditions.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 It was disappointing to note that during the period of restrictions Weston College continued to charge HMP Ford a figure close to the full rate for their services but the tutors did not come into the prison and had no direct contact with the prisoners other than the provision of workbooks. This was in marked contrast to Chichester College, which supported the prison training staff in refreshing their skills along with existing Chichester staff and also adding to the new workshops.

7.1.2 The head of Weston College and the HMP Ford learning and skills manager continued to run basic assessments in maths and English and issued official learning packs to enable prisoners to prepare in their cells for their City & Guilds Level 2 qualifications. This was critical in view of the rule within Ford that prisoners were not generally allowed to do paid work outside the prison unless they had achieved this level. Classrooms reopened in March, at half capacity to allow for both social distancing and the reduced prison population. Excellent results are now being achieved in both maths and English.

7.1.3 The Board particularly commends the work done in keeping the Ford virtual campus operating throughout the pandemic. We understand this was the only one of its kind in the prison system to do so and we commend the dedication of the tutor in charge.

7.1.4 In the course of refreshing the IT systems in June, a crucial cable was disconnected which caused disruption to students. Although they could do Open University work and prepare for exams, there was no access for online City & Guilds qualifications, including those in construction skills. This cable had not been replaced at the year end.

7.1.5 During the restrictions, the library continued to provide an excellent service. Books could be ordered and were then delivered to the billets and landings. These facilities were well used and appreciated by the prisoners during what was for them a frustrating and boring period.

7.1.6 When the restrictions were eased, the library staff mounted a publicity campaign to remind prisoners of what could be accessed in the library. This included placing a large sandwich board on the outside path showing the hours of opening. There were many prisoners who had arrived during restrictions who had no idea of the facilities on offer. This campaign was very effective and by the end of the reporting period the library was well on the way to being fully used again.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 The Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction was opened just before the start of the year and the College worked tirelessly throughout the period of restrictions, with tutors developing their courses and qualifications. They also undertook other projects, including refurbishing Cafe 60 (the old staff bistro), making a new altar for the chapel and other work. Courses started in March and by the end of the reporting year these included carpentry, dry lining, painting and decorating. It is hoped that bricklaying will resume shortly.

7.2.2 Processing student applications for the college campus in Chichester was problematic as there was a large backlog of students in the local community from last year. Additionally, many courses were completely or partially online, which excluded prisoners who did not have access to the internet. This lack of internet access for prisoners was highlighted in our report

last year and continues to be of concern to the Board. both from the point of view of work and education while in prison and also as preparation for normal living after release.

7.2.3 The training kitchen, which offered qualifications, had not reopened by the year end. The Board hopes that it will do so in the near future.

7.2.4 One of the most important aspects of reducing reoffending is enabling prisoners to obtain paid work outside the prison. This not only means they can end their sentences with cash in their bank accounts, but work experience helps them to get a job post-release as they will have a provable employment record. The Board commends the efforts made by the staff at HMP Ford to persuade local employers, particularly those who operate nationally, to offer jobs to the prisoners and to focus on work which is likely to lead to employment after release, either in the local area or wherever they choose to live. An example of this is that during the year prisoners began to qualify as HGV drivers. At the end of the reporting year, seven prisoners were employed as drivers and four more were waiting for their results. This programme has been extended in the current year.

7.2.5 Outside employment has again been dramatically affected by Covid restrictions. At the start of the reporting year which followed the end of the first restrictions, numbers in paid work outside had risen to 77 but this ended when they were reimposed. Outside paid work started again in January, at which time 14 men were employed but there was nobody in education. It is encouraging to note that at the end of the reporting year there were 96 prisoners working outside in paid work, 11 working in the cafe Serving Thyme, nine in unpaid community service roles and eight doing work experience. 84 were working in industries within the prison and 93 were employed by the prison itself. Two were doing short educational courses and applications were being processed for courses to start in the next academic year.

7.2.6 The other factor affecting the opportunities for both paid work and outside education was the reduction in the numbers of prisoners due to the condemning of B wing. The prison needs 169 men working as orderlies, cleaners or in the kitchen, laundry, horticulture and other workshops. In spite of the smaller available labour pool and due in part to the fact that fewer prisoners were out on education, the situation regarding paid work had improved greatly by the year end due to the efforts of the staff in finding more and better-focused opportunities to work outside and the change in policy to allow prisoners to source their own work, subject to checks by the prison staff.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The Board welcomes the introduction of OMiC to the OMU which was described in section 5.3.2. It caused some disruption in the initial weeks but it has settled down and the workflow can now be more easily shared out and logjams avoided.

7.3.2 In light of the above, it is disappointing that there still seems to be a problem with communication between the OMU and the prisoners. This was particularly noticeable during the restricted regime.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Family visits had to be cancelled during the restrictions. Purple Visits, whereby prisoners could call home on videocalls, were available but were not popular. One problem was that

they were not available except on weekdays, which caused problems with contacting working partners or children of school age. Cabling was ordered to enable these calls to take place at the same time as ordinary visits but was not in place by the year end. Funding has been agreed and the job is out to external tender. When this is resolved, we are pleased that Purple Visits will be on offer in separate private rooms in the visits hall during normal visiting hours, including weekends.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 KSSCRC continued to operate throughout the restrictions until June 2021 with the work thereafter being picked up by the Pre-Release and Resettlement Team. Much of the work was done remotely and the surveys the Board conducted with prisoners being discharged suggested that a number of prisoners were missing out on the help that should have been available

7.5.2 During the year under review, five prisoners are known to have been released from HMP Ford with no fixed abode to go to.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7 (of whom one was on extended sick leave)
Total number of visits to the establishment	n/a
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a



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

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

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

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk