



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leyhill

**For reporting year
1 February 2021 – 31 January 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

- 2.1 HMP Leyhill is a category D open prison, located just off junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds with many attractive features. Its normal capacity is 515 prisoners, housed in three residential units. Most of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century.
- 2.2 The prison holds a highly complex group. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept those convicted of sexual offences, irrespective of sentence. The number of those held who were convicted of sexual crimes varies over time and on occasion has been above 65% of the population.
- 2.3 Over half of its prisoners are aged 50+ and over a quarter are 60+. Approximately a fifth of all prisoners have some form of disability and some have two or three disabilities.
- 2.4 At the end of 2021, there were 141 prisoners serving a life sentence, 124 were on an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) and 182 were on a determinate sentence. Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.
- 2.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, during the reporting period a variety of support to prisoners was provided by the following organisations:

Career information, advice and guidance: Prospects

Personal development, social and life skills, and work-related learning:
Weston College, Wayout TV/Way2learn, Prospects and CF03

Benefits and appointments on release: Department for Work and Pensions

Qualification support: Weston College, Open University

Specialist prison leavers employment support: New Futures Network -
Industries and Employment Support

Specialist Veterans support: SSAFA, The armed forces charity

Bank accounts: Nationwide

Healthcare services: Inspire Better Health

Mental health services: Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Integrated Mental
Health & Substance Misuse Team

Day centre for older prisoners: Resettlement and Care of Older ex-Offenders
and Prisoners (RECOOP)

Family service providers of visits and casework: Pact (The Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Other charities: Prodigal Arts; Changing Tunes; Hardman Trust

Escort services to and from the prison: GEOAmey

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Monitoring this year has proved challenging for the Board due to the changing regime at Leyhill in response to the number of Covid cases. The Board has moved towards in person monitoring with several members visiting the site regularly. During outbreaks or increasing levels of infection, monitoring was conducted remotely by Board members. The Board acknowledged that there was a risk of members transmitting the coronavirus to prisoners and limited visits to the site during peak infection rates.

The majority of Board meetings have been held at Leyhill with limited numbers in person and teleconference access for other members.

The prison management have made prisoners' safety the top priority and prisoners have shown their appreciation by complying with the regime. Prisoner morale has been maintained despite the restrictions made necessary by Covid and by the problems caused by the ongoing, long-delayed refurbishment of the shower and toilet facilities.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

In a year that has again been dominated by the pandemic, Leyhill has responded swiftly and positively in order to implement the required protocols and to take its own initiatives. The use of unit C4 to isolate prisoners for reverse cohorting and also those that had tested positive has proved to be invaluable in reducing the spread of the coronavirus. Track and trace has been used effectively on staff and prisoners, with close contacts of positive cases subjected to daily LFT testing for seven days.

Staffing levels have been significantly affected by the infection rates in the community and outbreaks at Leyhill. The staff responded to the challenges and provided cover where necessary, working extended shifts and rest days.

In keeping with its emphasis on community, a spirit of inclusivity has characterised the Leyhill regime. Whilst opportunities to speak with prisoners and staff have been limited, it is noted that the atmosphere feels positive despite some obvious frustration with the restrictions of Covid-19. In the judgement of the Board, the prison is a safe environment.

Self-harm incidents have remained low and are well-monitored (section 4.2) while cases of violence have been rare (section 4.3).

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Fair and humane treatment of the prisoners is evident in the much-improved work of the equalities team (section 5.4); the use of Samaritan-trained prisoners as Listeners, especially during times when high levels of stress and anxiety were experienced by prisoners (section 4.2); and in the different ways in which prisoners' communication with their families was supported during the times of Covid restrictions (section 7.4).

The chaplaincy continues to provide support to all prisoners.

Failure to locate missing items of property, especially in transfer from other prisons, understandably leads to many prisoner complaints (sections 5.7 & 5.8).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Leyhill is an open prison and prisoners are encouraged to access areas of the grounds during their free time, with subsequent benefits to both physical and mental health. The grounds and outdoor activities have been used extensively during the coronavirus restrictions.

A wide range of indoor and outdoor activities has been provided to enable the prisoners to engage in physical activity and to maintain morale (section 6.5).

The installation of outdoor gym equipment proved to be popular during lockdown when other facilities were closed due to Covid restrictions. The equipment continues to be used regularly by all ages.

The vaccination of 94% of the prisoners in the reporting year is to be commended (section 6.2).

Waiting times for healthcare services are in line with the community and it is noted that prisoner feedback gives more compliments than complaints.

In a survey conducted in February 2021, 75% of the prisoners judged the overall quality of healthcare to be good (see section 6.1).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Prisoners' progress towards resettlement has been enhanced by the prison's success, during Covid times, in engaging 'the hard to reach' in education, while a recent survey revealed a high level of appreciation of the teaching provided at Leyhill (section 7.1).

Vocational training and work have provided purposeful activity and developed skills which enhance prisoners' chances of securing employment on release (section 7.2).

Lack of opportunities for release on temporary licence (ROTL) have delayed and limited progress made towards parole and, thus, towards resettlement. This has led to delays in release which, in the Board's opinion, is unfair and unjust (section 7.3). However, the residents consultative committee recognised an improvement in the situation towards the end of the year (section 7.3).

The community rehabilitation company has been dismantled and its responsibilities dispersed (section 7.5). In the judgment of the Board, this has led to a deterioration in the provision made for prisoners on their path to resettlement. The work of the Lobster Pot has made up for some of the shortfall (section 7.5).

The lack of approved premises, which a large percentage of Leyhill prisoners require before they can be released, results in unjust, unfair treatment and, together with the delays in ROTL, can mean prisoners' release is put back many months and, in some cases, over a year (section 7.3).

All except two of the 124 prisoners sentenced on IPP terms at Leyhill remain in prison beyond their tariff date, which in the Board's view is unfair and unjust (section 7.3).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- a) What further action will the Minister take to speed up the resettlement in the community of the prisoners serving IPP sentences, many of whom have spent far longer in custody than recommended in their indicative tariffs?
- b) What action will the Minister take to remedy the lack of spaces in approved premises which leads to many prisoners facing incarceration beyond their release dates?
- c) What action will the Minister take to restore the quality of rehabilitation lost as a result of the closing of the community rehabilitation company?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- a) What further action will be taken to deal with the recurring problem of property lost or mislaid during transfer from other prisons?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- a) The Board urges the Governor to continue to explore ways to give more prisoners the opportunity to experience external work placements.
- b) The Board urges the Governor to build on the recent improvements made in the provision of opportunities for ROTL.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The long-awaited refurbishment of the shower and toilet facilities has progressed but has been subject to contractual and design issues. Prisoners using refurbished facilities have acknowledged the significant improvements made.

Reviews of the ROTL application process to improve efficiency and communication have been welcomed by prisoners and staff.

Discussions on future investment and improvement plans have been welcomed by all parties.

Covid outbreaks have been well managed and the prison is moving toward a more normal regime.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The safer custody group, made up of staff and prisoners, has met quarterly in the past year despite the coronavirus restrictions. A few participants have attended the meetings at the prison while the majority of staff have utilised teleconference facilities. Despite the challenges of the ever-changing restrictions, the group has remained focused and aware of the impact on prisoners.

Safer custody and violence reduction representatives at Leyhill were rebranded and are now known as the safety team. A new safety strategy is in the process of being implemented.

4.1 Reception and induction

Transfers to Leyhill have been challenging because of Covid restrictions. Earlier in the reporting year, the requirements included testing and a period of isolation, known as reverse cohorting, or sometimes a combination of the two, before joining the general population. As vaccination numbers increased, the requirements were changed in line with government guidelines, requiring a negative test before transfer - allowing prisoners to move straight into general population.

Late arrivals at Leyhill provide challenges for prisoners, prison officers and healthcare. On occasion, prisoners have arrived after healthcare have left site. This often results in prisoners not being seen by healthcare until the following day (also see section 6.2).

The transfer and storage of property continues to be an area of frustration for staff and prisoners. Receptions regularly include more than the volumetric allowance. Storage at HMP Leyhill is beyond design capacity and the national distribution centre at Branston is reported to have limited capacity (also see section 5.8).

Changes in reception at HMP Leyhill have resulted in some induction delays. The induction process consists of several elements provided by different providers. Isolation required earlier in the year, and late arrivals, often resulted in some elements being omitted on the day of induction. Once the prisoners were admitted into isolation or general population, the completion of the induction process sometimes failed. This was due to lack of prisoner availability or that they were unaware of which elements they needed to complete the process.

Following a process review, a passport-style scheme with stamps has been implemented to identify which induction modules have been completed. This enables the prisoner and staff to easily identify which elements they need to complete. New receptions are provided with a letter from the chaplaincy on arrival with contact details, should they wish to speak with a member of the team.

Reception orderlies continue to provide reassurance for recently inducted prisoners.

Vulnerable prisoners are identified on arrival and given a chaplaincy contact number before induction. This allows prisoners with any concerns to speak in confidence with a member of the chaplaincy team.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Suicide and self-harm (SASH) training was suspended due to the coronavirus lockdown. Training recommenced later in the year using a new training package. All staff have been trained.

The number of self-harm incidents and ACCT (assessment care in custody teamwork) cases opened has remained very low at Leyhill. There were no worrying trends in the ethnicity and/or ages of the prisoners concerned nor of the prisoners transferred to closed conditions. The paperwork monitored by the Board demonstrated the thoroughness of the process. Quality assurance checks on ACCTs have been routinely carried out by staff and any shortfalls addressed. All forms of self-harm have been reported.

The HMP Leyhill 'GOBOFF' scheme, which enables prisoners to talk with a Samaritan-trained prisoner (Listener) for emotional support, was used on average about 450 times per month. This is an increase on the previous year with spikes coinciding with changing Covid restrictions, lockdown and festive periods. This scheme has undoubtedly made for a more safe and humane environment.

Security clearance of Samaritans volunteers continues to be a problem, often taking three months to obtain a response. If there is an issue with the information provided the application has to be submitted again which can take another three months to receive clearance.

Leyhill celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Listener scheme. Staff and prisoners shared their appreciation of the scheme with an afternoon of events focused around the Samaritans and Listeners.

The safety hotline was monitored by the duty governor on a daily basis.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents at Leyhill has remained low. CSIPs (challenge, support and intervention plans) have been opened and reviewed regularly. No significant trends have been identified. A change in the procedure has effectively doubled the number recorded as the new process requires a CSIP to be raised for both the victim and the perpetrator.

4.4 Use of force

Use of force is very rare at HMP Leyhill. The Board is aware of two occasions during the year where force was required to be used.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Substance misuse varies and has often been linked to new receptions. Targeted searches and subsequent transfers to closed conditions have resulted in a more settled prison. The prison population welcomed the attempts to deal with the supply and distribution of drugs, alcohol, the impact of debt, violence and self-harm.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The long-awaited refurbishment of the toilets and showers began but had still not been completed by the end of the reporting year. There have been several delays due to unforeseen problems resulting in additional work, changes to specifications and contract. The temporary facilities have also been the subject of several complaints. The delays have been frustrating for staff, prisoners and contractors. However, prisoners who have been able to use refurbished facilities have shown much appreciation.

Social distancing requirements have resulted in a reduced number of contractors being able to work in a confined area, leading to further delays. Prisoners have accepted that the sharing of facilities and noise are necessary to achieve improvements. This has not been ideal during Covid outbreaks. Unfortunately, there have been several reported incidents of vandalism with toilets and drains being deliberately blocked.

The repair of the kitchen, workshops and laundry roofs has been completed.

New TV reception devices have been supplied to all prisoners providing extra channels including Wayout TV that provides what is known as 'in cell learning' and up to date communication.

Dependent on the coronavirus restrictions, the kitchen has adapted accordingly. During lockdown the kitchen provided a hot lunch and cold evening meal. As government restrictions were relaxed, the regime returned to normal with the kitchen providing three meals a day, including a hot evening meal in the evening.

The failure of kitchen equipment and delays in repair have been a continuous frustration to staff. Contractual problems have been the source of some delays in repair.

Kitchen staff were complimented on the Ramadan meal and Christmas menu.

5.2 Segregation

There are no segregation units at HMP Leyhill.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The personal officer scheme has been reinstated following a pause earlier in the pandemic. Prison officers have been tasked with having a meaningful conversation with each of their allocated prisoners and recording the salient points. The reinstatement of the scheme has been relatively slow due to the availability of staff and further Covid outbreaks. (Also see section 7.3).

5.4 Equality and diversity

Focus groups were held for each of the protected characteristics (as set out in the Equality Act), with frequency dependent upon needs - although never less than one per quarter. All groups were led by members of the senior management team (SMT) while the diversity and race equality team was managed by a particularly experienced high-ranking member of the SMT. The issues highlighted, both by

statistics and by discussion with the prisoners of a particular group, led to recommendations and generally to improvements for the prisoners.

Examples of these were: (a) dropping the kerbs in some pathways to make it easier for older and disabled prisoners to use them; (b) an authorised sign was perceived to be racist/inappropriate, leading to the investigation of all signs in the prison, and appropriate action was taken; (c) outside specialists were invited to speak to designated groups, such as the four transgender prisoners.

During Black History Month, a festival of music and food was held. Thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, including the Governor, it was a credit to the equalities team, both staff and prisoner representatives. It is also indicative of an inclusive community.

Fifty-nine discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were received and 27 were audited by the IMB. The main areas of complaint were name-calling, employment and delays in ROTL. Each complaint was acknowledged, in writing, by the equality action team (EAT) within two days of receipt. The investigation time improved to 26 days from the date of the submission. A final letter was sent at the end of every investigation to explain how the issue had been resolved. The investigation team used various methods to resolve the issues, including conflict resolution, mediation and adjudication where victimisation was proven. The EAT are to be commended for what they have achieved since the HMIP scrutiny inspection in March 2021.

Examples of issues resolved included: (a) following a complaint of discrimination from a prisoner, it was recommended that all posts which are not considered to be keyworker posts, be advertised, and appointments made via the employment board; (b) a prisoner who was proved to be victimising a fellow prisoner was placed on report, suspended from his job and an information report (IR) was sent to security.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy caters for 27 faiths/beliefs and veganism, providing adherents with congregational services where possible and if not, with faith materials and one-to-one faith and pastoral support. Also, religious festival meals were provided in consultation with the Governor.

All community group visits were suspended due to Covid-19. The bereavement counselling service was not provided for financial reasons. However, a number of funeral services were conducted for Leyhill prisoners with the chaplaincy providing support for prisoners in their grief.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The fairness of the scheme has been questioned by some prisoners on several occasions, however the Board found no evidence that the scheme had been used unfairly or inconsistently.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints did not significantly change through the year, regardless of the coronavirus restrictions in place. The subject matter did change with fewer offender management unit (OMU) complaints due to reduced ROTL and more complaints regarding food and residential facilities during the refurbishment. Pre-

release/release remained the highest subject of complaint. Property was the second highest reason for complaint.

The complaints were dealt with efficiently and in accordance with prisoner complaints policy.

5.8 Property

Property continues to be the subject of many complaints and applications. Transfer from other prisons regularly includes more than the volumetric allowance (also see section 4.1).

Processing complaints and applications relating to property is time-consuming, as it generally requires contact with other prisons, who occasionally do not respond. A recent complaint from an ex-Leyhill prisoner regarding missing property involved three other prisons and Branston. The complaint has been in progress for more than 12 months and has yet to be resolved. Failure to locate missing items often results in compensation.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare at Leyhill provides a team of well-qualified and caring staff who have maintained an excellent level of service over the past 12 months to help keep the prisoners safe.

2021 proved to be a trying year for everyone, not least the prisoners within Leyhill.

Despite the frustrations of social distancing, mask-wearing and the lack of normal activities, the prisoners responded well and put their faith in the healthcare team.

Appreciation of this was shown with healthcare being one of the recipients of a Hidden Heroes Award, the brainchild of a group of prisoners.

The HMIP scrutiny visit in March 2021 conducted a survey amongst the prisoners where 75% said that the overall quality of healthcare was good.

Covid-safe measures were in evidence during this visit and noted by the inspectors

6.2 Physical healthcare

The number of appointments was restricted due to social distancing, although the GPs, dentist and nurses remained available throughout the reporting year. Visiting practitioners could not attend for several months but are now attending again. Waiting times for physical health appointments are now fairly close to pre-Covid numbers.

The awaited iPads to allow nurses to input clinical information while away from PCs and the use of telemedicine with local hospitals have both been delayed due to technical issues, but phone consultations with hospital doctors have been highly effective.

Covid-19 infections were few and Leyhill was able to use both the palliative care unit and a pre-fabricated unit with 39 single rooms, with in-room sanitation, for isolation needs. The Covid vaccination programme had an uptake of 94% among prisoners, with boosters started in November. Flu vaccines and Pneumovax were also offered.

Self-care is encouraged and the Health Bar, an in-house pharmacy shop, continues to be well used, with the range of goods expanding and changing according to the needs and requests of the prisoners.

The age profile at Leyhill remains in the upper range, with more than half of the prisoners aged over 50. There are also 170 prisoners with chronic conditions such as diabetes, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma and hypertension necessitating extra care and time from the healthcare staff.

The health information group, a forum for health staff and prisoners where frank and open discussions about healthcare provision take place, had to be suspended due to COVID restrictions but is expected to resume in March 2022.

The IMB has been concerned about the many late arrivals from other prisons at reception. The requirement for new prisoners to be seen by healthcare on arrival has proved difficult as transport delivered many prisoners after healthcare personnel had left for the day. They have tried to be available as long as the ETA is known and, if

too late, the prisoners have been seen first thing the following morning. However, this is not ideal.

There were three deaths in custody during the year from non-Covid related natural causes.

6.3 Mental health

The wellbeing team provides mental health and substance abuse services at Leyhill. The open referral system, which allows anyone to self-refer to the team, works well. However, the waiting list for mental health services has grown during the past year as group leaders were unable to come to the prison and run the sessions of self-help groups such as Cocaine Anonymous, SMART Recovery and Alcoholics Anonymous. This has delayed access to self-help groups for up to a year.

Anyone on a waiting list to see a member of the wellbeing team has had their case reviewed every four weeks and urgent cases have been seen within 72 hours. Pre-release prisoners have been offered one-to-one sessions so that they do not lose the opportunity to be seen before their release.

Prisoners working as peer mentors and Listeners have been much in demand. Peer mentors, in particular, were able to run small groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous in a Covid-compliant manner. The use of the chapel facilities has enabled larger groups of six to eight prisoners to be accommodated.

6.4 Social care

Social care is provided by South Gloucestershire Council, although few prisoners need their services. Disability orderlies, however, are much needed by the prisoners for non-personal care, such as for those in wheelchairs.

6.5 Exercise, regime

As Leyhill is an open establishment there was no significant reduction in the time prisoners spent out of their rooms. Deep cleaning throughout the year has made it possible for a range of activities and courses to be offered in the gym. Four first aid courses at level 1 were run between January and May. Each had four prisoners enrolled and all passed successfully. A new award in fitness and physical activity at level 1 was introduced and level 2 gym instructors courses, which involve mentoring, began in November. Park runs have continued and there have been many opportunities for prisoners and staff to raise money for charity. Staff versus prisoners football six-a-side, held in Black History Month, recruited more than eight teams. Twice weekly slots for exercise referrals have been available, particularly to meet the needs of the 50+ community. These courses and activities are just some of those offered and are examples of ways in which prisoners' physical and mental wellbeing is enhanced.

Prisoners have also been able to take advantage of the large grounds at Leyhill, enabling them to take exercise when the gym has been closed by Covid restrictions, while the cultivation of 38 allotment plots has contributed to the wellbeing of, and provided purposeful activity for, older prisoners. Outdoor gym equipment installed during lockdown has proved popular.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

These services are provided by the wellness team and are therefore referenced under 6.3.

6.7 Soft skills

To relieve boredom, distraction packs have been available as well as items such as stress balls to borrow from the hubs, which are in the residential units.

As part of the creative arts programme, a Shakespeare performance was prepared for production but had to be postponed due to Covid. The potential of creative arts for personal and social development is fully appreciated by the learning and skills (L&S) team and is recognised as worthy of inclusion in sentence planning. Leyhill prison intranet has recently launched a language (literacy) service called the Big Word. It is new and yet to be evaluated.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education at Leyhill is provided by Weston College.

Throughout this challenging year, staff morale has remained high, with much positive feedback from the prisoners. Learning packs (for the completion of which some small cash incentives were offered) and, later in the year, some small group face-to-face teaching (a blended approach) has been the strategy adopted to keep all prisoners safe. Some one-to-one teaching has enabled staff to pull in more hesitant learners over a six-month period, partly in response to an HMIP report in February 2021 which asked the question “How do you reach the hard to reach?”. In their evaluations, both staff and prisoners applauded the one-to-one approach. For example, a man with a brain injury was able to achieve entry level 3 in functional skills and his next skill will be English at level 1. Additionally, in response to prisoners’ feedback, the letter inviting prisoners to attend courses was rewritten as the earlier version was identified as being ‘unnecessarily threatening and confrontational’. Staff have also introduced a new system of ‘meet the teachers’ meetings which happen before the start of courses and informally provide information and advice about the courses. This aspect has been positively evaluated and goes some way to engage more nervous and reluctant prisoners i.e. ‘the hard to reach’.

These developments have reflected the focus which the new leadership in learning and skills (L&S) has put on listening to the prisoners’ needs and expanding their opportunities. On 25 November, a prisoner-student forum was held to analyse strengths and weaknesses of education provided at Leyhill. Prisoners much preferred face-to-face teaching to learning packs: one commented that ‘packs are not useful because it is not conducive to learning because people need to learn with people’. In the feedback, there was much recognition of high-quality teaching and several comments highlighted the positivity which prisoners felt towards staff and the courses: ‘my tutor was very professional and observant and made me feel welcome and comfortable from the very start’. Another showed appreciation of the atmosphere for learning created by the tutor: ‘great maths teaching. Enjoyed the lesson. Music a ‘big help. Teacher was fantastic’. Of level 2 English, one commented: ‘The only thing I found challenging was the belief in myself.’ The IMB observed, first-hand, high levels of teacher competence and prisoner engagement.

A new initiative is the ‘learner of the month’ award which is now given for ‘furthest distance travelled’, which enables even the least able to succeed and gain recognition. This is reported regularly in Leyhill Matters, the in-house monthly prison journal. In L&S, prisoners’ wellbeing is seen as central to their work as well as to their progression towards resettlement.

In the forum, prisoners requested an expansion of courses and the establishment of weekend clubs and workshops. A proposal was put to Weston College by the L&S department, the response to which will be determined by staffing and funding. There will be a new deputy coordinator in L&S.

A feedback question, asking if prisoners felt they had developed skills for work, showed 90% positive responses. In independent living skills (to enable prisoners to lead independent lives when released), 100% of those on the cookery course

reported feeling 'more confident in this subject'. Some felt the writing element was a challenge. All prisoners felt they had been treated fairly during the courses and were confident to raise concerns and complaints. One complaint from a small number of prisoners requested the need for new measuring jugs as they could not read the markings as the jugs were so well used. This, in itself, is indicative of their high level of engagement.

Eighteen prisoners have been pursuing Open University (OU) courses which, when completed, will leave them with higher level qualifications when they seek employment on release. The courses have ranged from business, finance and management to arts and humanities, science and the environment. Two prisoners have successfully applied for MAs but it is difficult to secure funding as the protocols on funding have been designed for closed conditions. During the year Leyhill has lent Weston College, the providers of the prison's education services, extra computers but there is still a shortage, which staff and prisoners have found very frustrating. The testing of computers on site resulted in restrictions on computer use and prisoners were unable to access learning materials unsupervised.

An open day in August to celebrate 75 years of Leyhill was well-received. Prisoners raised money for charity as they went about maths and English-related games. A wide range of animals were brought in, some for handling, which had a highly therapeutic effect for some prisoners. An evaluation of the day revealed many positive comments and no negatives. A successful enterprise day on self-employment engaged 65 prisoners.

This has been a successful year in keeping learning alive, as evidenced by prisoner evaluations. Issues remaining include: access to more computers, funding for MA students, the replacement of a horticulture assessor and embedding learning in all areas of prisoner's work.

In the library, the effort and enthusiasm of the prisoner orderlies meant that the booking-out system for visiting the library (eight sessions for six prisoners at a time per week) and delivery of books requested was continued and a particular slot was created for prisoners who were shielding. The library continued to provide resources for courses run in the prison, for research for distance learning, for entertainment and for keeping in touch with wider society.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Prisoner responses to a questionnaire about NVQs taught at Leyhill have been positive and more such courses have been requested. Suggestions included: electronics, scooter and wheelchair repair, computer repairs, waste management and self-employment. Fork lift training was requested, as it has been over a few years. New bids for courses have been submitted by the Head of L&S to Weston College e.g. tractor training, Woodwise for joinery, and training to achieve the building site card. Leyhill is now part of the DHL Academy which offers five jobs on a keyworker scheme paid at £100 weekly.

Leyhill's contribution to the rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders is exemplified by the testimony of a former prisoner:

'I was a prisoner at Leyhill. I took advantage of as many of the vocational courses [joinery, carpentry, plumbing, painting and decorating, electrical] as I could. Initially to

give me something to do and focus on, I decided that I could use the skills and qualifications to forge a new path for my life.

‘Armed with these fantastic qualifications, I started up my own business offering all those services. I started doing a few jobs for friends and family, but quickly began being recommended to others. I’m currently working along with a building services company as a subcontractor doing various things on sites and in houses.

‘None of this would have been possible without these courses and qualifications I achieved whilst in custody. The help, guidance and support I received from all of the tutors has really given me a chance to rebuild my life after losing pretty much everything. I really can't thank those tutors enough’.

Opportunities for external work have been limited by Covid restrictions and, in February, HMIP expressed concern, in their scrutiny visit report, that ‘at the time of our visit Leyhill had confirmed plans for only 26 prisoners, about 5% of the population to work, in the community’. In August, 35 prisoners were working outside. HMIP also highlighted a lack of employer links, a situation which the prison has endeavoured to remedy. However, finding more external work placements is difficult because of the nature of the prison population, as many have been sentenced for sexual offences and employers have shown reluctance to employ such prisoners. Furthermore, a lack of vehicles and prisoner-drivers, especially when the need for social distancing limited the numbers which the minibuses could accommodate, has exacerbated the problem.

Most of those of working age have been employed inside the prison. DHL has been the biggest employer, with 35 on both morning and afternoon shifts, packaging goods for other prisons. At times of Covid restrictions, the prisoners have worked in shifts. At the start of the year, the prison was the hub for supplying PPE equipment for prisons in the south west, with seven prisoners delivering the equipment by minibus to other prisons.

The recycling workshop has achieved a 95% recycling rate so that only 5% of Leyhill waste goes to landfill sites. Hazardous waste is collected by two specially trained prisoners while two operate forklift trucks and six carry out the recycling. Together with print and wood workshops, market gardening and kitchen, to name but a few, Leyhill provides purposeful activity and develops skills which will enhance prisoners’ chances of securing employment on release.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Covid restrictions have delayed many prisoners from making an accompanied half-day local visit which is the first step in the process of ROTL. ROTL restarted at the end of March 2021 on a very limited basis and began to improve in late May. Initially, due to Covid restrictions, only three prisoners and one officer were permitted per vehicle. This improved in late June, where two vehicles were going out four days per week and, allowing for social distancing, a maximum of eight prisoners were allowed in a vehicle which would normally take 15.

The complaints over delays to ROTL have continued to be a major issue, both amongst the prisoners and prison staff. Some of this originated in staff shortages resulting from members of staff having to self-isolate. The subsequent lack of opportunity for progression opportunities has delayed some prisoners from

demonstrating their suitability for release to the parole board. This is a major concern at Leyhill where, in early January 2022, 32% (141) of prisoners were serving life sentences and 28% (124) serving IPP sentences and thus need to demonstrate to the Parole Board that they have made progress in their offending behaviour. Over 98% (122) of those sentenced to IPP at Leyhill are beyond their tariff date. The IMB regards this as deeply unjust while Parliament has itself accepted that the sentence was unjust in the first place.

Towards the end of the year, there were significant improvements in the ROTL process, as the number of applications (apps) received by the OMU for ROTL continued to rise. In October there were 259 apps and over 300 in November. It was clear that communication between staff and offenders had improved, with the apps now being recorded on the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) and with nine staff working exclusively on ROTL. On one day at the end of November, there were 39 prisoners out on ROTL, 33 on external work and eight on supervised work placements, totalling 80 prisoners out on one day. This improvement was picked up by the residents consultative committee (RCC) where they stated: 'a marked improvement in the timings, notice and clarity of Resettlement on Day Release (RDR) and Resettlement on Overnight Release approvals had been experienced as the backlog of Apps reduced.' The OMU was, in January 2022, up-to-date with the process, despite hundreds of apps and the need for some staff to isolate.

Another improvement in the service was made by introducing OMU surgeries twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, and then in August, a third surgery carried out in the wings by the duty officers. Nevertheless, prisoners still felt that communication could be improved, that they sometimes did not get a receipt for their apps, which could mean that the submission date for their app could be disputed when they attended a surgery. In some cases, this caused prisoners much stress, particularly when they had to plan family and home visits, job applications etc. yet had only been told that they had been granted ROTL at short notice. In September, the RCC produced a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, with the endorsement of the OMU, the Governor and custodial managers, in order to assist prisoners navigate the ROTL process and to reduce the need for so many OMU surgeries. This FAQ document has proved useful to the prisoners and also to other groups within the prison, including the IMB.

Despite the improvements to the ROTL process, prisoners, prison offender managers and other prison staff still perceive that communication could be improved. Any delays in the ROTL process directly impinge on fixed parole dates, which can make it far more difficult to satisfy the prescribed requirements in the time available. Understandably, this can result in high stress and anxiety amongst the prisoners.

A major concern, exacerbated by Covid, is the lack of places in approved premises APs, where a high proportion of Leyhill prisoners are obliged to stay when on restricted overnight release (ROR). This means that there are now far more prisoners going out on RDR, rather than overnight, resulting in a somewhat misleading upturn in the ROTL numbers. In November 2021, there were 1,207 prisoners going out on ROTL as compared to 160 for November 2020, and 1,079 for December 2021 as compared to 360 for December 2020. The lack of APs can result in the length of a ROR being reduced from a maximum of four nights to one night. Thus a prisoner can spend an inordinate amount of time travelling, just for one night

away. Late changes to the location of APs has also caused concern to the extent that some prisoners think 'Is it worth it?' Although the lack of APs' availability can partly be attributed to Covid, it still results in unjust, inhumane treatment of prisoners and, together with the delays in ROTL, can mean prisoners' release is put back many months and, in some cases, over a year.

A recent initiative has been the development of the personal officer (PO) role. The PO has to hold face to face conversations with a specified number of prisoners each month, the substance of which is recorded. This enables the PO to alert management to any further needs (e.g. regarding family, ROTL or work issues) which the prisoner has in order to progress on his journey towards release. In November, 171 conversations were held between prisoners and their allocated PO, and 126 in December. Quality assurance checks were carried out to ensure the conversations are 'meaningful and productive'.

The IMB will be in a better position next year to assess the impact of this scheme.

7.4 Family contact

Prisoners' communication with their families was supported in a number of ways: social visits and ROTL (when not suspended by Covid restrictions), secure video calling and telephone subsidy (of £5/week to a maximum of £40). Use was also made of 'Emailprisoner', a system whereby an individual, such as a relative, can communicate with a prisoner. The former sends an email to the prison and after vetting by security, it is sent on, in hard copy, to the prisoner. The latter can then reply, if he wishes, again subject to vetting by security.

A prisoner who used the secure video calling service was very impressed and said, 'This is the first time I have seen my son for 30 years'. The service gave the prisoners experience of being at home, although it was only available for one day per week due to staff shortages.

The charity Sixty-One delivered Christmas parcels for each prisoner. These parcels are greatly appreciated, especially by the many prisoners who have no contact with anyone outside of the prison environment.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Until June, Catch 22 (the community rehabilitation company) played a major role in resettlement. It contacted prisoners, 12 weeks prior to their release date, in order to offer advice which covered accommodation, finance, establishing contact with the DWP for help with universal credit, and ensuring contact with families, doctors and potential employers.

In June control of all probation services passed to the National Probation Service and Catch 22 ceased to exist. Their work was taken over by the probation pre-release team with, initially, a limited contract and only one member of staff. The IMB raised concerns over this change, as it saw a significant reduction in the service offered to prisoners. In December, the IMB was told that the work covered by Catch 22 had been broken up and contracted out to external bodies working 'closely', we were assured, with the prison offender managers (POMs) and community offender managers (COMs). There have been problems with coordinating the external

contracts and in late January there were areas not covered e.g. finance, debt and benefits, which are still to be put out for tender. The result is that the level of work delivered was below expectations at the end of the reporting year.

The two staff at the Lobster Pot, which is a recreational centre for the over-50s, have stepped in and have helped prisoners, both under- and over-50, in areas not yet covered by the external contract, for example by giving advice on finance and housing. They have also brokered relations between the OMU and offender managers, both inside and outside the prison, and generally endeavoured to compensate for the lack of communication. The Lobster Pot has been providing prisoners with resettlement packs, which provide information on towns to be visited, transport, bus passes, day centres and charities that support prisoners. The Lobster Pot has thus proved invaluable in the work of resettlement by supporting prisoners, both within Leyhill and when they go out into the community, thereby helping to build up their confidence and readiness for release.

Overall, however, the IMB is yet to be assured that the new arrangements will not result in a reduced service offered to the prisoners on their path to resettlement.

By contrast, progress towards resettlement has definitely been helped by the development of the role of resettlement champions: prisoners who engage with fellow prisoners in order to help identify opportunities for internal and external work, additional education and training and to advise on resettlement needs. Over the last year, six resettlement champions have been helping and encouraging prisoners in maintenance and repair work: installing shelves and work tops, carrying out TV repairs, Covid cleaning and giving advice on internal employment in preparation for external employment. The new Wayout TV, which went live in December, was supported by the resettlement champions who helped to retune TVs and provide information on the various channels. The resettlement champions have also consulted the prison population and, in their regular meetings with prison staff, have thus been able to improve channels of communication. In this way, prisoners themselves have been involved in enhancing the resettlement process over the last year.

The chaplaincy continues to be involved in resettlement by mentoring prisoners, offering advice and, if wanted, providing links to outside churches and faith groups. The chaplaincy has also provided a link for prisoners to contact an outside mentoring service provided by the Bristol church-based charity MentorMe.

The work of the IMB

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of visits to the prison made by the Board varied monthly, dependent on coronavirus restrictions and infection levels at Leyhill.

There were 48 visits in 2021/2022 compared to 42 in 2020/2021. Throughout the reporting year some members have visited on a regular basis whilst the rest of the Board continued to monitor remotely.

The national 0800 number for prisoner IMB applications received very few calls from Leyhill prisoners.

The Governor, senior members of the team and staff have all been cooperative and supportive of the Board. The Board also benefited from the knowledgeable assistance of the clerk and the business hub where necessary.

Board meetings were held remotely in the earlier part of the year and at Leyhill in the latter part of the year, with some Board members still choosing to attend by teleconference. The annual team performance review was also held on 24 November 2021.

A weekly rota has been maintained throughout, with members in regular contact with staff and each other. A weekly report is prepared, with a copy sent to the Governor. There has been regular contact between the Governor and the Board Chair.

A discharge survey for prisoners was implemented in October.

One member retired.

One new member was appointed in November.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	48
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	n/a
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	5
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	3	3
C	Equality	0	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	1	2
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	3
F	Food and kitchens	3	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	1	6
H1	Property within this establishment	2	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	2	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	3	13
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	2	8
K	Transfers	0	2
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	0
	Total number of applications	25	62



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