



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wymott

**For reporting year
1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Wymott is an adult male category C training prison. The population comprises approximately 40% mainstream category C prisoners and 60% prisoners convicted of a sexual offence (PCOSO). The majority of the prisoners are serving sentences of four or more years. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, the prison had an operating capacity of 1,174 prisoners but this was reduced to 1,020 in May 2020, to enable all prisoners to be accommodated in single cells. Due to national population pressures it was increased at the start of this reporting year to 1,035, and more recently to 1129. This has meant that 184 men are currently accommodated in double cells.

The accommodation comprises of 10 wings, a number of which offer specialist functions, including a drug therapeutic community wing and two psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) units for prisoners with personality disorders.

A wing – PCOSO, essential workers

B wing – PCOSO, including some older prisoners' landings

C wing – mainstream Cat C

D wing – mainstream Cat C, including first night and induction

E wing – mainstream Cat C

F wing – mainstream, including a PIPE unit on two landings and a care and separation unit (CSU) on the ground floor

G wing – PCOSO, including a PIPE unit on one landing

H wing – PCOSO, including first night and induction

I wing (Haven unit) – mostly PCOSO, older prisoners' care and reablement

K wing – Drug therapeutic community

The Salvation Army provides support to some of the older and disabled prisoners through a come-and-meet-each-other (CAMEO) centre, which offers a range of social activities.

Throughout the pandemic the prison has worked with Public Health England (PHE), now the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), to reconfigure the population and function of the wings, to provide a protective environment for all of the prisoners, particularly those who are clinically exceptionally vulnerable. Some wings were repurposed for shielding these prisoners, the reverse cohorting of those coming into the prison, the isolation of positive cases or essential workers' wings.

Healthcare services are provided by Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust. This includes primary care, mental health care and a range of other services. Dental services are provided by SmartDental, commissioned by the NHS. The prison also has an in-house pharmacy. Delphi Medical provides the drug and alcohol recovery service, including therapeutic community interventions.

Education is provided by Novus, and a full education programme is normally on offer, from pre-entry level up to degree level, with a particular focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. The education department consists of 12 classrooms and a well-stocked library, which is run by Lancashire County Council library Services.

The prison workshops can offer a range of employment opportunities, many of which lead to nationally accredited qualifications. Some of these workshops are operated on a commercial basis, providing quality services to external clients and effectively constitute a 'working prison'. Most of the workshops have been closed to prisoners for much of the reporting period, but during this time the prison has been exploring new opportunities for the prisoners through strengthening links with local employers.

A range of offending behaviour programmes, to help prisoners address their offending behaviour, is provided by the north-west regional psychology services and the local programmes team. These too were suspended for part of the year, although some one-to-one sessions were delivered; a restricted service is now being offered.

As Wymott is not a designated resettlement prison, the resources for preparing prisoners for release are limited. Through-the-gate (TTG) services are provided by Achieve North-West and the Probation Service. The prison has also developed its own pre-release support programme, and TTG services are also provided by probation service community offender managers.

An active chaplaincy supports a range of faiths, and the full-time chaplains are assisted by sessional ministers and volunteers. Pastoral support and family liaison are provided through the chaplaincy. Collective worship has recently recommenced, but the chaplaincy staff continue to visit individual prisoners.

The PE department consists of a large sports hall, a well-equipped gym, and a full-size outdoor sports field, although the Board is concerned that the sports field is due to be lost if / when the proposed new prison is built.

General maintenance within the prison is provided by Amey, and the visitors centre is managed by Phoenix Futures.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The fluctuating nature of the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to have a significant impact upon the prison's ability to deliver the regime as it worked its way through the recovery stages. Wymott has been designated an outbreak site for much of the year, and this has slowed down the recovery. Each wave of infection has impacted upon both prisoners and staff, leading to returns to lockdowns and restrictions to the regime, but the Board has continued to attend the prison throughout the year.

Although Covid-19 restrictions are now almost completely lifted in the outside community, the Prison Service has had to be more cautious due to the increased risk of spread in a closed community. Wymott in particular accommodates a significant number of older and extremely vulnerable prisoners, and the prison has continued to shield those most at risk.

There have been a number of staff changes at management level during the year, and this has impacted upon the Board's ability to gather information relevant to the whole of the reporting year. The prison has also experienced a significant shortage of staff, both uniformed and non-uniformed. A number of experienced officers have moved on and 23% of Band 3 officers have been at Wymott for less than two years. This means that they have never experienced the full prison regime.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board commends the prison for the lengths it went to to keep the prisoners safe through a very challenging period. Levels of self harm were higher than the previous year, as some prisoners struggled with the restricted regime, but few required hospitalisation (see paragraph 4.2.1). Incidents of violence increased slightly towards the end of the year, as prisoners began to mix more (see paragraph 4.3.1), but overall the Board considers that Wymott is a relatively safe prison.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The prolonged lockdowns undoubtedly reduced the prisoners' time out of cell, and visits from family and friends were limited, but most prisoners understood the need for this. There are still some major deficiencies in the fabric of some of the accommodation, particularly for the PCOSO (see paragraphs 5.1.1 – 5.1.5), and poor handling of prisoners' property and complaints persisted (see sections 5.7 and 5.8). There is still an unacceptably high number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP), most of whom are way over tariff (see paragraph 7.3.7). More positively, the chaplaincy has continued to support prisoners through difficult periods (see paragraph 5.5.3) and the buddy scheme has helped to improve the quality of life for increasing numbers of older and disabled prisoners (see paragraph 6.4.2).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Whilst there are still significant weaknesses in the provision of primary healthcare services, the Board has noted clear signs of improvement, particularly in relation to

provision of medication (see paragraph 6.2.6). Delays in accessing dental and mental health interventions are still a cause for concern (see paragraph 6.2.7 and section 6.3), and limited time out of cell has clearly affected the well-being of many prisoners.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The restricted regime and the chronic shortage of staff in offender management have limited opportunities for prisoners to progress through their sentence plans (see paragraph 7.3.3). Prisoners regularly complained to the Board about lack of access to their prison offender managers (POMs), and progression transfers were rare (see paragraphs 7.3.4 and 7.3.5). Releases were less affected, but too many prisoners were released without accommodation (see paragraphs 7.5.1 and 7.5.2).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Despite last year's assurances the number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) at Wymott increased this year (see paragraphs 3.4.1 and 7.3.7). The Board again asks what the Minister intends to do to address this inhumane and unacceptable situation?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- There has been no increase in the budget for Wymott prisoners' pay for a number of years now, but the cost of items to purchase from canteen and catalogues is going up (see paragraphs 3.4.2 and 7.2.5). Can the prison expect to get an increase in the budget in the near future to enable them to pay prisoners a fair wage?
- The long awaited Prisoners' Property Framework failed to appear* and missing property continues to be of great concern to the prisoners and the Board, as evidenced by the increase in applications to the Board (see section 5.8 and page 27).
- Is the kitchen refurbishment programmed for 2022 / 23 likely to go ahead?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Despite rising food costs, the Catering Manager has continued to provide meals on a minimal daily meal allowance (see paragraph 5.1.10). The Board would like to see this increased as the current level is unsustainable in the current climate.
- On a number of occasions, poor communication between functional areas has led to conflicting information being provided to both prisoners and Board members. What strategies does the Governor have to improve this?

*The Prisoners' Property Framework was issued on 1 August 2022.

3.4 Progress since the last report

3.4.1 Last year the minister Informed the Board that the small national reduction in the number of prisoners serving IPP sentences demonstrated that there were opportunities for them to progress, and that prisons seek to progress IPP prisoners at the earliest opportunity following a parole review. However, the number of prisoners at Wymott serving IPP sentences has increased this year (see paragraph 7.3.7).

3.4.2 Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service informed the Board that:

- a start date for refurbishing A and B wings had not been finalised, but a scoping and costing exercise was planned. The Board is pleased to report that approval to go ahead has now been given, and plans to decant the prisoners to onsite temporary accommodation are ongoing (see paragraph 5.1.1).
- kitchen refurbishment is programmed in for 2022-23, but remains subject to funding and prioritisation decisions
- the much-delayed prisoners' property policy framework went out for consultation in late 2021, but was not published by the end of the reporting year (see footnote on p7). The Board has seen no reduction in the amount of property going missing, and this remains an issue of great concern (see section 5.8).
- HMP Wymott's budget for prisoner pay has not increased and remains constant. Within this, the prison has the freedom to determine rates for specific activities.

3.4.3 Responses from the prison include:

- a review of the prisoner complaints process has been initiated
- action points arising from Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) reports following a death in custody are logged by safer prisons and progress is monitored through safer prisons and local health delivery board meetings.
- the prison's resettlement programme is being revisited to provide prisoners with a programme of planned practical help and reassurance prior to release.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Receptions have gradually increased as prisoner movement around the prison estate has been freed up. Although reverse cohorting has now been lifted, new prisoners spend time on the induction wings (D and H) before locating to the appropriate accommodation. A Board member spoke to some prisoners about their experience of settling in on H wing, and the responses were positive.

4.1.2 All prisoners are subjected to a body scanner in reception, and this has picked up a number of prisoners bringing contraband into Wymott from other prisons (see paragraph 4.5.2). Any prisoner who tests positive is located in the care and separation unit (CSU).

4.1.3 The prison introduced a new carousel format for weekly prisoner inductions in March 2022, where prisoners are able to talk to staff from a range of areas on a one-to-one basis. A member of the Board has attended regularly to introduce new reception prisoners to the work of the IMB at Wymott; most prisoners appreciate this, although a few are not receptive. A prisoner 'buddy' is also in attendance to answer questions and the Board feels this is highly beneficial.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There were 286 reported incidents of self harm during the reporting year, an increase of 62 from 2020-21. These varied from minor scratches to more serious injuries. The numbers remained fairly consistent through the year, with slight peaks in August and December. The Board is satisfied that the officers and healthcare staff responded appropriately and offered support to prisoners who were struggling with the restricted regime.

4.2.2 There were 11 deaths in custody during the reporting year (see table below), all of which took place in outside hospitals. All were apparently due to natural causes, including a spike of Covid-related deaths in November/December 2021, although some inquests are yet to be completed.

Month	June 21	July 21	Aug 21	Sept 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	April 22	May 22	Total
Total	1	0	0	1	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	11

4.2.3. Of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) reports into deaths in custody received this year, there were two recommendations for the prison. One related to contact with the prisoner's next of kin, and the other to risk assessments; these should be based upon the prisoner's current state of health. There were a number of other recommendations for the healthcare provider, and the new Head of Healthcare is overseeing an action plan to address these. A Board member attends the local health delivery board meetings where the action plan is reported on.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 There were 51 reported acts of violence, which was the same as in 2020-21. Thirty-five of these were prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, 14 prisoner-on-staff and the rest were classed as fights. Levels of violence rose during the latter half of the year as prisoners spent more time out of cell and mixed more. Rigid bar cuffs were used on 77 occasions; almost all prisoners were compliant, resulting in no significant injuries.

4.3.2 There have been few reports of bullying and the prison has made effective use of the challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP) to manage violent or bullying behaviour and support vulnerable prisoners.

4.3.3 Board members attended just three incidents at height during the reporting year, all of which were resolved without injury to staff or prisoners. On one occasion the Board member was refused access to observe on the instructions of the national tactical response group. This was discussed with the Governor and escalated to the IMB and Prison Service at national level.

4.3.4 During this reporting year the number of prisoners choosing to self-isolate at any one time has fallen again to between 1 and 4. However, one prisoner has been isolating continuously since July 2020. A member of the Board visits him periodically and it is noted that his demeanour and presentation have actually improved during this time.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 The Board receives copies of the monthly use of force reports, but there are sometimes difficulties in following up specific complaints from prisoners, for example in being able to view CCTV evidence.

4.4.2 A member of the Board monitors the use of force data in relation to age, ethnicity and religion, and there are generally no concerns. However, in May 2022 nearly a quarter of the use of force incidents in the prison involved a Muslim prisoner / prisoners. This is to be investigated by the equalities manager and reported on at the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) committee meeting.

4.4.3 The use of body worn video cameras to record incidents is improving. In May 2022, 13 out of 19 incidents were recorded (68%), compared to just 17% in January. The Board would hope to see this improve further.

4.4.4 Wymott has consistently compared favourably against its comparator prisons for use of force; for example in April 2022 it was the second lowest of the nine prisons in the group.

4.4.5 The use of force committee monitors the use of force in the CSU.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 In the past the prison has struggled with the amount of psychoactive substances (PS) entering the prison, but this year has seen a notable reduction in instances of PS use. A tightening up of the drugs and alcohol recovery strategy (DARS) and greater understanding by healthcare staff of how to deal with prisoners 'under the influence' has minimised hospitalisations.

4.5.2 The prison now has a body scanner which has enabled officers to identify prisoners carrying contraband/drugs on entry to the prison (see paragraph 4.1.2). However, the amount of mandatory drug testing has been very low. There is also a Rapiscan device which enables the prison to swab-test mail, although this has led to some delays in mail reaching the prisoners.

4.5.3 Mobile phones remain a problem, despite the use of the body scanner on prisoners in reception, although some good work has been done in searching and finding illicit items on the wings.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 The fabric of A and B wings has continued to be a cause for concern. As reported previously, the windows are single glazed, with metal frames which are not efficient in keeping the cold out of the cells. The wings have communal shower blocks that do not provide any privacy, which is not dignified, nor humane. Tiles continue to fall off the walls and the toilets are in a poor state. The prison has finally received approval to refurbish both wings and initial surveys have been carried out, but the refurbishment cannot start until 2023. It will be done half a wing at a time, by decanting half of the prisoners into temporary accommodation units, which have not yet arrived on site. The work will not be finished until 2026, so the current, undignified situation is likely to continue.

5.1.2 In June 2021 there was an infestation of rats in two of the night toilets on A wing, and in August rats were seen again, coming through damaged toilets. A pest control team is brought in periodically; unfortunately the rats have continued to be attracted by the prisoners throwing out food for the birds, although there has been some improvement.

5.1.3 The infrastructure for in-cell telephony has nearly been completed, but A and B buildings were found to contain asbestos. This delayed the work on these wings, whilst new plans were devised to bypass the affected areas. By the end of this reporting period, none of the telephony was live. The use of in-cell telephones will mean that prisoners will be able to have improved family contact over more hours and to speak to their children when they come home from school. It will also relieve the heavy demand for the wing PIN phones during association times, especially as these were often faulty. At the moment there are no plans for interactive screens in the cells to enable access to various other functions.

5.1.4 Over the reporting year there have been 185 fire alarm activations. Of those only four were deemed 'real alarms', 181 were classified as false alarms. The reasons for these have been adjudged as problems with the panels in the roof spaces, hot weather, prisoners cooking in their kettles and the use of vaping material in the cells. HMP Wymott has had several lockdowns due to Covid 19 with prisoners remaining in their cells for most the day. When the alarms are activated, the hot water and heating to the affected wings are automatically cut off as a safety precaution, and extraction fans are switched on. Wing officers have to report the incidents on the works database, in order to have the facilities reinstated. However, when these false alarms have occurred over the weekends or at night, it has often been many hours before the hot water and heating were restored. During the winter months this certainly impacted on the prisoners' access to fair and humane treatment. The wings most affected were C/D, E/F and G/H. The loss of heating and hot water led to a large number of complaints especially from G/H wings where many vulnerable prisoners were housed. In February Amey and the prison agreed that the on-call engineer should attend any out of hours incidents within two hours and restore the hot water and heating.

5.1.5 In addition to these outages, between the end of August 2021 and the end of March 2022, there were nine incidences of loss of heating and/or hot water to parts of the prison, including A, B and Haven wings. These mainly arose from the remedial work being carried out on the boiler house. Of the 28 applications relating to accommodation received by the Board, 15 (54%) were from prisoners complaining about the lack of heating and hot water on the wings. The most affected wings were G/H wings with 12 applications (see 'Applications to the IMB').

5.1.6 Throughout the pandemic, a high standard of hygiene has been maintained on the wings and the Board would like to commend the wing cleaners for their continued efforts to achieve high levels of cleanliness.

5.1.7 The kitchen was built in 1979 and continues to cater for more prisoners than was originally planned. The cooking equipment is old and the boiling pans, ovens and Bratt pans are regularly breaking down. When the walk-in fridges were out of use, it was not possible to do as much advance preparation, which could have affected continuity of meals provision. The kitchen flooring is pitted and the ceiling is in poor condition, which could compromise food safety. It is commendable that the kitchen staff can provide meals for more than 1,100 prisoners using equipment installed to cater for around 800, with deteriorating infrastructure and equipment that continually breaks down.

5.1.8 The Board is pleased to note that the old, heated food trollies have now been replaced and a maintenance contract has been set up to repair them when necessary. This should help ensure that the food is still hot when it arrives at the wings.

5.1.9 The Board is satisfied that the quality of the food provided is generally good, and there is a vegan choice at every meal, which is available to all prisoners. A range of religious and dietary requirements is also catered for. Recently the kitchen has had to make late meal replacements, as the food suppliers substituted some items that were not available. Whilst there were some complaints, most prisoners understood the reason for the replacements.

5.1.10 The increase in food prices is a major concern for the catering manager. Maintaining the standard of provision on £2.05 per prisoner per day is proving not to be achievable, and the Board would strongly recommend that the allowance be increased.

5.1.11 Throughout the reporting period, staffing levels fluctuated due to Covid cases and track and trace. This impacted on the number of prisoners who could work in the kitchen. Contingency plans are in place, with several members of staff able to step in and ensure the kitchen is able to provide meals for the prisoners. Some prisoner orderlies also stepped in and worked extra shifts.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The CSU has gradually been reduced in capacity and now comprises 15 cells, including two safer cells and one special accommodation cell, plus an unfurnished 'search' cell, and one constant watch cell. Other cells have been converted into store

rooms, an interview room and a rest room for the orderlies. There is also a kitchen, a room for adjudications / reviews and a telephone room that prisoners can use on request. There are two exercise yards, but one was out of use for part of the year due to an issue with the gate. The unit is kept clean and fresh clothing and bedding supplies are maintained by the orderlies and staff.

5.2.2 Quarterly prison data show that the average number of prisoners held in the CSU increased through the year from 1.3 in the first quarter to 11.0 in the fourth quarter. This is indicative of the increased frustration felt by some of the men as the Covid restrictions progressed. The latter figure still compares favourably with the last pre-Covid figure of 18.5, which reflects the effort that the prison has put into dealing with issues on the wings wherever possible.

5.2.3 The average length of stay in the CSU was relatively stable for the first three quarters, at around 7.0 days, but rose in the fourth quarter to 13 largely due to a spike in January / February. This was in part due to a small number of complex prisoners who proved difficult to progress (see paragraph 5.2.4). The year average of 8.8 days was still an improvement from the pre-Covid average of 17 days, and the Board has welcomed the work the prison has done to reintegrate prisoners back onto the wings as quickly as possible.

5.2.4 Three prisoners remained in the CSU for more than 42 days in January and February, including one for more than 133 days. This man was waiting to be transferred to a resettlement prison in the south-west of England and had complex issues that meant he could not cope on normal location. He was reviewed fortnightly by a governor and mental health nurse, and visited regularly by Board members.

5.2.5 A Board member attends most of the Rule 45 reviews to confirm that the correct procedures are followed, and any decisions are appropriate. On a small number of occasions the attending member declined to sign the documentation when either the governor conducting the review was the same one that authorised initial segregation or there was no healthcare representative present.

5.2.6 In total, 62 prisoners held in the CSU during the year were on an open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document, and the Board remains concerned that 50 of them were already on the ACCT before coming to the CSU and only 12 of them were closed before leaving. However, no prisoners were removed from the CSU because their risk was too high, and the Board accepts that their standard of care was good.

5.2.7 Data in relation to the segregation of prisoners with protected characteristics are reviewed at the DEI committee meetings (see paragraph 5.4.6).

5.2.8 The special accommodation cell was used just twice during the year, and each time the Board was informed and visited the prisoner. Mechanical restraints were not used at all.

5.2.9 There were two dirty protests, down from five last year. Board members do not visit prisoners while they are on dirty protest, but monitor all documentation relating to their management.

5.2.10 There were 1,266 adjudications over the prison's reporting year (April 2021-March 2022). The numbers fluctuated across the quarters due to returns to lockdown, but the overall total is significantly higher than 2020-21. The most

common reasons were possession of an unauthorised article, disobeying an order and failing to comply. The average percentage of adjudications for young adults was 7.5%, with a small number of prisoners responsible for more than one. This figure is consistent with the percentage of young adults in the prison. A small number of adjudications were referred to the police, and these seemed to take an excessively long time to resolve. One prisoner's case was referred in February and is still outstanding at the time of writing.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The proportion of inexperienced officers in the prison has increased, and there have been instances where a more experienced officer might have had the confidence to be more flexible in dealing with a minor infringement or in de-escalating a situation.

5.3.2 A prisoner's key worker is intended to be a consistent point of contact and support, and his link to his offender manager. The offender management in custody (OMiC) model requires regular meetings to facilitate this, but key work expectations were reduced nationally for much of the year due to staff shortages and regime restrictions. Prisoners complained to the Board about lack of access to their key worker, or even not knowing who their key worker was. This was mitigated to some extent by the presence of officers on the landings during domestic periods to answer routine queries, but more in-depth conversations were limited and there was a lack of continuity.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The prison's DEI committee has resumed its bi-monthly meetings, chaired by a governor. A member of the Board attends as an observer. Throughout the year, the prison has collected a wide range of data related to the protected characteristics and this is presented to the DEI meeting. The Board is satisfied that there are no continuing trends of concern.

5.4.2 The prison continues to struggle to recruit prisoner representatives to the DEI committee, but the equalities manager is actively advertising on the wings.

5.4.3 Prisoners can complain about issues related to protected characteristics via a discrimination incident report form (DIRF). During the reporting year 46 DIRFs were submitted, compared to 25 during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21 and 59 pre-Covid in 2019-20. Of those 46, 13 were related to race, 6 to religion / belief, 11 to disability and 14 to sexual orientation. Two were submitted by visitors. A Board member has sampled the DIRF responses and found them to be clear and timely.

5.4.4 The age range of prisoners is wide. Thirty-one percent are over 50 years old and a number are over 80. Twenty-four percent of over-50s are on the PCOSO side. The CAMEO unit, run by the Salvation Army, reopened towards the end of the reporting year to offer social support and activities for some of the older, retired prisoners.

5.4.5 Seven percent of prisoners are under 25, around half of whom are care-experienced. These young men can be referred to the local authorities for support if they wish.

5.4.6 The DEI committee monitors the protected characteristics of prisoners held in the CSU. The quarterly reports show that there were no prisoners with registered disabilities; the percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners varied widely as the numbers in CSU were small, but no issues of on-going concern in relation to ethnicity or religion were reported between April 2021 and March 2022.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 Collective worship recommenced with a reduced capacity in August and September 2021, but then had to be suspended due to further cases of the Covid Omicron variant. Full capacity services recommenced from February 2022.

5.5.2 The chaplaincy team continued to produce over 200 weekly faith packs for prisoners to maintain in-cell worship until February 2022.

5.5.2 Religious festivals began to be celebrated in the chapel again towards the end of the reporting year, with staff being invited to share culturally appropriate food with prisoners.

5.5.3 The chaplaincy has been active in facilitating the use of iPads to allow prisoners contact with families at emotionally challenging times, including remote attendance at funerals and contact with dying relatives. Bereaved prisoners were able to visit the chapel and light a candle for their loved ones, and the family liaison team has continued to support bereaved families.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The prison continued to follow the national policy of not reducing prisoners to basic level (known as the support level in Wymott) during the restrictions. Near the end of the reporting period this was reversed, and prisoners may now have their incentives status reduced to support level, but they do not have their television removed.

5.6.2 At the time of writing, 59 prisoners are on the top incentives level of community leader. Of these, 28 are PCOSOs and 31 mainstream category C prisoners. Seventy-six percent are White British, compared to 82% of the prison population.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The complaints desk within the business hub has seen a number of staff changes and absences, and the Board is sympathetic to the difficulties this creates. However, the service has continued to fall short of what the prisoners should expect to receive (see paragraph 5.7.2).

5.7.2 The Board continued to receive applications from prisoners saying that their complaints had either not been answered within an acceptable time, or not answered at all. The complaints database showed that many of these were true, and were not followed up. Scanning the forms and emailing them to the appropriate staff member has had only limited success.

5.7.3 The Board had been unable to check whether confidential access complaints to the Governor had been responded to, as no record was kept by the prison. As a result of the Board raising its concerns, it is noted that this has now been addressed (see paragraph 5.7.4).

5.7.4 Following the concerns raised by the Board, a major overhaul of the complaints system was begun at the end of the reporting year. It is hoped that this will see a significant improvement for next year's report.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 The Board remains greatly concerned about the length of time it takes for property to be transferred to HMP Wymott from some other prisons. Indeed there have been a number of instances where property has never arrived. Without a coherent, nationwide system that resolves this issue, the transferring of property will remain a major area of concern.

5.8.2 There is also concern about the way in which the prison responds to prisoners' complaints about missing property. This is reflected in the huge increase in the number of applications to the Board (see 'Applications to the Board').

5.8.3 Legal papers needed for parole hearings, photos and letters from family are often held up or the prisoner never receives them. This is unacceptable, especially as prisoners' responses to legal mail are usually time limited.

5.8.4 Some prisons appear to be reluctant to send property on when a prisoner has moved, and wait for another van bringing a prisoner to HMP Wymott which may take weeks. As prisoners who are moved for security reasons are often transferred without their in-possession or stored property, they often find it difficult to retrieve it.

5.8.5 There has also been a problem with property that is sent or brought in for prisoners by family members. Prisoners have to obtain permission to have a parcel sent in, and some prisoners claim to be unaware of this – leading to deliveries being refused at the gate. However, the Board has dealt with a number of instances where permission was obtained, but the parcel was either refused at the gate or somehow disappeared within the prison. One man has been waiting many months for some books which have been refused several times, despite him having permission, and which have now disappeared*.

*They have since been found sitting on a shelf in reception.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on the provision of primary healthcare. The nurses have continued to roll out the vaccination programme with a high degree of success; in excess of 70% of prisoners have been fully vaccinated. Sadly, several Covid-related deaths occurred in late 2021, although all of these were among men aged over 60 with underlying health problems (see paragraph 4.2.2).

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 The healthcare centre, much criticised by the Care Quality Commission, remains too small, with insufficient treatment rooms and small badly ventilated waiting areas.

6.2.2 The receptionist in the healthcare centre has not been replaced as the position was not included in the latest contract, so the role is still being carried out by untrained prison officers. This has led to confusion and at times non-attendance at appointments.

6.2.3 Communication has remained a problem in relation to the appointment system. Although a small number of prisoners refuse to attend, far more complain that they did not receive their appointment slips, they do not know why they are waiting or, having attended the previous day, they are called again needlessly. It is also the case that their appointments may clash with visits.

6.2.4 The situation regarding escorts back to the wings has improved however, and few prisoners now face the previous excessively long waits in under-ventilated rooms.

6.2.5 Over-reliance on agency staff has remained a major problem in healthcare. This has led to problems in nursing staffing at weekends when healthcare managers have occasionally had to cover overnight and at weekends.

6.2.6 Lack of staff was a problem in pharmacy during the first part of the reporting period, but the situation has significantly improved in the second half. This improvement, alongside some very good work by the pharmacy lead, has led to significant improvements in the delivery of medication. Some problems persist, however, and the supervision of the dispensing hatch queues remains inadequate on several wings.

6.2.7 At the time of writing, the waiting list for dental care remains very long (up to 173 days) and there are still some problems with certain treatments due to Covid restrictions. The GP waiting lists have been reduced by the introduction of extra GP sessions in the latter part of the reporting period.

6.2.8 A major concern for the Board was the way in which complaints about healthcare were being dealt with and the lack of an audit trail in relation to these. The new healthcare manager has implemented a tracking system for dealing with this.

6.2.9 Once again, the healthcare forum meetings were not held regularly, due to lockdowns and shielding. Consequently, prisoners had limited opportunity to express their views directly to managers.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on the provision of mental health services. Staffing shortages have persisted, although towards the end of the reporting period there was some improvement and agency staff are, in the main, long term.

6.3.2 It has continued to be the case that prisoners with mental health problems are seen on the wings but with very limited follow-up treatment. Initial screening has been carried out, but therapies have not been implemented as there was still no group work.

6.3.3 It has been possible for those in difficulties to see the psychologist or a mental health nurse. However, this access was very limited as the psychologist is only available one day a week and so the waiting lists are very long.

6.3.4 Some members of the mental health team have had health problems themselves, leading to long waiting lists. Prisoners have all been informed of the situation and they have been given self-help activities or medication.

6.3.5 It is still the case that too many prisoners spend lengthy periods waiting for places in appropriate treatment centres and this is a major concern for the Board.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 Many of the older prisoners have complex health and social care needs. Social care is provided by Lancashire Social Services, and the prisoners benefit from regular visits by a social worker. The number of carers on the Haven wing, where many of these prisoners are located, has improved and they are no longer short staffed. The prison staff on the wing are to be praised for consistently going above and beyond duty.

6.4.2 The 'buddy system' supported by Recoop has been a resounding success and has been expanded. There are now 16 trained buddies providing support to around 90 older and disabled prisoners across several wings. The trial period at Wymott has led to Lancashire County Council procuring a buddy system for all Lancashire prisons.

6.4.3 The older prisoners on B and Haven wings have benefitted greatly from the access they now have to the CAMEO centre (see paragraph 5.4.4), but those on G/H wings have not yet been able to attend.

6.4.4 Repairing living aids such as wheelchairs and grab rails often remains a lengthy process which impacts the quality of life for some prisoners.

6.4.5 The prison staff are to be commended for the work they put in to obtain a place in a secure facility for a prisoner with advanced dementia.

6.5 Exercise, regime

6.5.1 Throughout the reporting period there has been limited access to gym sessions. Indoor sessions were curtailed during periods when Wymott was classified as a Covid-19 outbreak site, although some outdoor sessions were facilitated. Exercise yards do have limited equipment, and this is well used.

6.5.2 Although the sports field was little used during the reporting year, but the Board is concerned that it may be permanently lost if the proposed new prison goes ahead.

6.5.3 Prisoners continued to be given 45 minutes out of cell morning and afternoon. They were expected to use this time for exercise, showers and phone calls. On occasion even this regime was reduced to just a single 45 minute period due to extreme staff shortages.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 Drug programmes and support continue to be provided by Delphi through its drugs and alcohol recovery service. Therapeutic programmes have been tied to national guidance and although Delphi staff have maximised delivery their input has been limited. Some group work did recommence towards the end of the reporting year, and prior to that they did produce workbooks for the prisoners to work on in their cells.

6.6.2. The therapeutic community on K wing was reinstated during the reporting period and now occupies all top floor spurs on the wing. Prisoner feedback about the programme is very positive.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 Prisoners have continued to receive distraction packs when requested and where possible artistic activities such as murals and paintings were encouraged.

6.7.2 During the reporting period prisoners continued to be able to access library services on the wings. It is hoped that all will be have full access to the main library itself with the implementation of the new regime in September (see paragraphs 7.1.5 and 7.1.6).

6.7.3 Towards the end of the reporting year, prisoners on the two psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) wings were able to make use of musical instruments and a kitchen to develop their daily living skills.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 During the early stages of the pandemic education staff did not attend the prison and opportunities for prisoners to engage in study were limited. At the beginning of this reporting year, education tutors were attending the prison in bubbles, delivering a remote learning model, including visiting residential wings to undertake one-to-one work. Some limited face-to-face delivery resumed at the end of June 2021 with very small class sizes, with full face-to-face delivery resuming in September 2021, albeit with smaller groups (an average of five per class). A part-time model was implemented which inevitably doubled the time that learners would take to complete some formerly full-time courses and the education team adapted the curriculum to accommodate this. Unfortunately, Wymott once again became an outbreak site in October 2021, with a return to remote delivery. Education staff numbers permitted on site were reduced once again and learning packs were delivered through the internal post. By then the education staff had improved their offer from earlier in the pandemic and learning packs had become more targeted.

7.1.2 Some prisoners reported difficulties with Open University (OU) courses, particularly with access to telephone tutorials which was not always facilitated. The prison carried an OU coordinator vacancy for some time, but a new tutor has since been appointed and the Board looks forward to an improvement in this area.

7.1.3 In March 2022 face-to-face delivery recommenced, with some adaptations to increase parity of access to courses between mainstream prisoners and PCOSOs and a 50% classroom capacity. A two-week closure period in April 2022 was mandated by the prison as a response to staff sickness levels. By the end of the reporting year all courses had reopened, although several staff on long-term sickness and a number of vacancies have resulted in some vocational workshops remaining closed. The education department was reporting attendances of between 80% and 90% capacity on a daily basis in late May 2022.

7.1.4 The Board is pleased to report that, after two and a half years of disruption to provision, plans are underway for a full reopening of all education classes, with full-time delivery, in September 2022.

7.1.5 The Board welcomed the appointment of two library officers after a period of instability in staffing. During the lockdown the library staff took the opportunity to refresh and restock the library. They have maintained a good service for prisoners, visiting wings, updating and restocking wing libraries and responding to requests for items. During the reporting period they made 2,353 physical visits to wings, issued 8,497 items of stock, recruited 495 new library members and dealt with 1,585 requests. Attempts were made to continue with reading groups remotely, but perhaps inevitably, these were less successful than face-to-face groups. The Storybook Dads project was continued through the medium of social video calls (delivered by Purple Visits).

7.1.6 Once prisoners returned to education classes a secondary library was set up to cater for PCOSO prisoners, who for safety reasons were not permitted to access the main library. However, library staff expressed concern that this provided only a

limited service, with prisoners unable to browse or access reference works, and that when they were short staffed this secondary library was unable to open. The secondary library is due to close in September 2022, with the full re-opening of the main library service.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Inevitably vocational training and work opportunities have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Data from the prison indicates that in February 2020, prior to the Covid-19 restrictions, a total of 669 full-time employment places were available, while this number reduced to 263 once the restrictions were implemented; the majority of these were essential workers in areas such as cleaning, kitchen work and DHL retail work. By the time the prison entered Stage 2 of its recovery plan in September 2021 this number had increased to 539 and in April 2022, at Stage 1, the number of employment places was 601, although by far the majority of these were part-time. At that time a total of only 208 prisoners were in full-time employment, primarily as wing cleaners and kitchen staff.

7.2.2 A number of prisoners have expressed disappointment that they were only able to access part-time employment; however, the Board is pleased to note that from September 2022 all employment opportunities will be full-time. The laundry re-opened with a limited capacity and faced the challenge of rebuilding its external client base. The tailors shop has also faced challenges, with continuity of its production lines impacted by the part-time model. Again, a resumption of full-time work in September should alleviate this.

7.2.3 During the early stages of opening up employment opportunities in the prison, a new centralised system of escorting prisoners to work was introduced. This resulted in some prisoners either arriving late to work or not at all. The prison later reverted to a system of mass movement of prisoners, which was reported by staff to be more effective in enabling more prisoners to access work, as well as other activities.

7.2.4 The Board monitored the number of prisoners who returned to work through the prison's daily reporting and was pleased to note that, by the end of May, this had exceeded 90% for PCOSO prisoners; however, numbers for mainstream prisoners remained disappointingly low, at between 50% and 60%. The prison is planning to reintroduce a range of incentives and sanctions within adjudication tariffs to encourage prisoners to attend work, including warnings, removal of privileges and reductions in pay. From September 2022 jobs will once again be allocated to all who are eligible and subsequent refusal to attend will result in loss of pay.

7.2.5 During the pandemic, essential workers received pay of £1.90 per session and all other workers were paid £10.60 per week. The prison is currently undertaking a prisoner pay review and it is unlikely that the current pro-rata rate will be maintained once work returns to full-time. The Board will monitor the impact of the revised pay structure in the coming year.

7.2.6 Another welcome recent change is the re-designation of prisoners who are not required at work. Previously these were sent back to the wing as being 'not required', but in future instructors will be expected to specify a reason for this.

7.2.7 In previous years the Board has expressed concerns that the industries roof on the PCOSO side of the prison has been in very poor repair, with numerous leaks and consequent closures of workshops. The repair has now been completed and the roof is sound; however, there are leaks to the roof of the workshops on the mainstream side of the prison. Some engineering workshop areas are not useable, and the powder coating workshop has to close during wet weather.

7.2.8 The prison is currently facing a number of instructor shortages, particularly as recruitment was on hold during the pandemic. There is no provision for cover for those who are off sick or on leave and, as a consequence, workshop shutdowns continue.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 As Wymott spent a large part of the reporting year as a Covid outbreak site, intervention programmes were suspended. This impacted heavily on those prisoners who required interventions to evidence a risk reduction in custody, and slowed their progress. Most programmes have now begun again, but with much reduced numbers, so there are significant backlogs. This is reflected in the number of applications to the Board (see 'Applications to the Board').

7.3.2 Prisoners have an initial risk screen on reception. Those whose risk of reoffending is high are referred to psychology for a programme needs assessment before they are allocated to specific programmes, and a significant backlog has developed at this point. The Board has received a number of complaints about the delays. Places are allocated on the basis of release date, not parole windows or recategorisation reviews, and this has caused some misunderstanding and frustration.

7.3.3 Prison offender managers' (POM) work with the prisoners was also restricted, and probation officers worked partially from home. There have been a number of probation and POM vacancies that has seriously impacted their ability to maintain the service, and prisoners regularly complained to the Board that they had no contact with their offender manager. In May 2022 the prison requested funding for temporary POMs to cover the vacancies.

7.3.4 Transfers were vastly reduced or stopped completely, which halted progress. This improved towards the end of the year, and progressive moves began again, but there is pressure on the prison population nationally and places are limited.

7.3.5 Recategorisation reviews and parole boards were completed largely remotely, so that no backlog developed. However, some prisoners who received their category D status could not move due to the transfer restrictions and the availability of places.

7.3.6 Prisoners may be moved on from local prisons before their sentence plan has been completed. This means that they are unable to begin work on interventions aimed at addressing their offending behaviour. In May 2022 17 prisoners arrived at Wymott with no initial OASys.

7.3.7 As reported last year, the Board remains deeply concerned about the number of prisoners at Wymott serving IPP sentences (see paragraph 3.4.1). At the end of the reporting period there were 122 prisoners serving IPP sentences, most of whom had served many years over tariff. There is little incentive or opportunity for these men to progress. There were also 131 prisoners serving life sentences.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 This has again been a difficult year for maintaining family contact through face-to-face visits. Whilst Covid restrictions were in place, visits were limited to one hour, with social distancing in place and no access to the To Go shop for visitors to buy refreshments. The number of visitors remained very low, at times only two prisoners having a family visit. The number of visitors per session has been increasing during 2022, and visitors have told Board members that they are treated with respect and are fully informed of the expectations regarding their visit. The prison has also installed new visits furniture, which has been appreciated.

7.4.2 The use of social video calls has been appreciated by the prisoners, especially those prisoners whose families were unable to travel to HMP Wymott. The Board are pleased that this type of family contact will remain in place.

7.4.3 The temporary use of wing mobile phones enabled prisoners to stay in touch with their families even when their wing/spur was in isolation. The anticipated introduction of in-cell telephony will be very much welcomed by the prisoners.

7.4.4 The correspondence office has on a number of occasions been understaffed and mail has been delayed. Some prisoners have complained to the Board that letters and emails have taken an excessive length of time to come through. Visiting orders have sometimes been delayed to such an extent that visits were unable to take place.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 As a training prison, Wymott should not be releasing prisoners; they should be moved on to resettlement prisons. This is not always possible, particularly for PCOSO, as places are limited. Consequently Wymott continues to release around 25 prisoners each month (see table). Releases have fallen slightly from 312 to 272, possibly as opportunities to transfer to resettlement prisons have increased.

June 2021 – May 2022	PCOSO	Main category C	Total
Approved premises	83	68	151
Permanent accommodation	25	48	73
Temporary / transient accommodation	1	7	8
Home detention address	0	5	5
Supported housing	0	6	6
Hospital	1	4	5
Care home	2	0	2
Deportation	1	1	2
Rehabilitation	0	1	1
No fixed abode	8	11	19
Total releases	121	151	272

7.5.2 The number of prisoners reported as released without accommodation is worrying. However, no fixed abode data is gathered just prior to release, and since March some prisoners have been found accommodation by their community offender manager (COM) immediately on release, so the figure may be slightly too high. The closure of some approved premises during the pandemic may also have had an impact.

7.5.3 When the community rehabilitation companies were wound up in 2021 housing became the responsibility of the COM. Under the new OMiC model prisons just have a 'duty to refer', but this is taking time to bed in. It is also unsatisfactory because there is no direct contact between the prisoner and the person responsible for meeting their housing concerns (which used to be a specialist housing adviser).

7.5.4 Under the umbrella of Career Connect, Achieve North West works with prisoners from 12 months prior to release, helping them to prepare for work. This can continue for three months after release. It is the COM's responsibility to log employment outcomes three months after release, but prison staff informed the Board that this does not always happen, so it is difficult to get an accurate picture.

7.5.5 An employment hub has been developed where prisoners can learn about employment opportunities in the local area, and plans for liaising with employers through employment fairs within the prison are under way.

7.5.6 Towards the end of the reporting year the prison further developed its own resettlement programme. Six weeks prior to release prisoners are helped to get a bank account, and on release they are provided with two weeks medication. If necessary they are referred to the Department of Work and Pensions for benefits claims.

The work of the IMB

The Board membership remains well below the allocated complement (see table below), but the five current members are a hard-working and committed team. All have been on the Board for at least six years and can act as mentors for new members. During the course of the year two new members joined the Board, but only stayed for a short time. Three other relatively new members also left the Board for work and / or family reasons. There have been several recruitment campaigns through the year, but recruiting and retaining suitable members is a continuing challenge.

All Board members have regularly attended the prison to carry out monitoring duties and answer prisoners' applications, but with such low membership it has inevitably meant that any additional in-depth studies have not been possible.

The monthly Board meetings have taken place in the prison, and have been attended by either the Governor or his deputy. Meetings were preceded by a half hour training session, and these were usually delivered by an invited representative of one of the prison's functional areas. These included control and restraint, family liaison development, catering and library services. Board members have also completed on-line training on anti-corruption and other topics.

Board members have regularly attended reviews of prisoners held in the segregation unit under Prison Rule 45 as part of the weekly monitoring rota (see table below). The Board also monitors adjudications, and attends a range of prison meetings as observer.

Each Board member has taken particular interest in one monitoring area, and their work has contributed to the findings presented in this report.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	430
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	3*
Total number of segregation reviews attended	164

*One board member volunteered for this role, but the shifts reduced as boards recommenced face-to-face work.

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

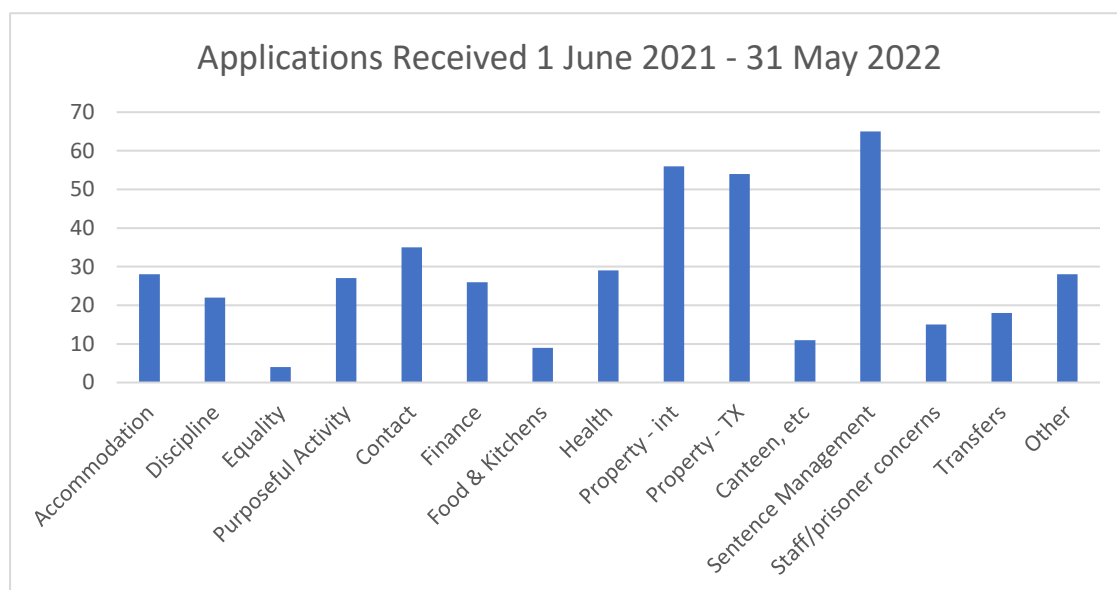
Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	28
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	22
C	Equality	2	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	17	27
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	32	35
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	26
F	Food and kitchens	1	9
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	29	29
H1	Property within this establishment	11	56
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	13	54
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	11
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	21	65
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	15	15
K	Transfers	5	18
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	23	28
	Total number of applications	192	427

The Board has been operating as normal throughout the 2021-2022 reporting year, attending the prison and speaking face-to-face with prisoners who have submitted applications. This makes comparisons with the previous year relatively meaningless, although it may be worth noting that in the 2019-20 reporting year, during which only two months fell within the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board received 353 applications.

The number of applications received during the 2021-22 reporting year has been steadily increasing, and the last quarter was particularly high, averaging higher than any previous three-month period. May 2022 saw a record 60 applications received in a single month. A quarter of these concerned property, either missing within Wymott or on transfer from elsewhere. Perhaps inevitably, as increasing numbers of prisoners were transferred into Wymott or were moved within the prison, more property was reported as missing. A number of prisoners experienced difficulties in accessing property from forwarding prisons on transfer and many complaints sent to other prisons went unanswered (see paragraphs 5.8.1 and 5.8.3).

That month also saw the highest number of applications concerning sentence management received over the past four years, reflecting the staffing shortages within the OMU (see paragraph 7.3.2), the part-time attendance model of OMU staff and the increasing concerns that prisoners had regarding their progression.

The Board was pleased to note that only 29 applications were received regarding healthcare in the 2021-22 reporting year, which was considerably lower than the period prior to the change in healthcare contract. However, accommodation issues generated more applications than previously, largely due to problems with heating and hot water supplies on some of the residential wings (see paragraph 5.1.5). This was particularly highlighted when prisoners who were classified as shielding were moved onto a wing with cellular accommodation and then experienced a lack of adequate heating.



A number of applications referenced the lack of a response to a Comp 1, and this was often reported by prisoners in the discussions held during visits by Board members. Again, staff shortages, particularly in the business hub, caused delays in processing complaints, along with IT difficulties and staff shortages elsewhere. The Board will continue to monitor these as an area of concern; however it is encouraging to note that plans are in place for the more effective management of complaints within the prison (see section 5.7).



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