



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Holme House

**For reporting year
1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021**

Published June 2022



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	6
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and humane treatment	15
6. Health and wellbeing	21
7. Progression and resettlement	24
The work of the IMB	
Board support	28
Applications to the IMB	29

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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 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 Holme House is a category C training and resettlement prison, holding convicted adult male prisoners (aged 21 and over), and a small number of young adult men (aged 18 to 21). It is part of the Tees and Wear Prison Group, together with HMP Durham, HMP Kirklevington Grange and HMP/YOI Deerbolt. The majority of the prisoners are from the local region, with a small number from further afield. Most prisoners arrive from HMP Durham.
- 2.2 The operational capacity is 1,159 with a certified normal accommodation (CNA) of 1,034. During the year the numbers changed to accommodate the development of the PIPE (psychologically informed planned environment). The prison population is roughly made up of:
- prisoners serving less than two years – 200,
 - prisoners serving between two and four years – 300
 - prisoners serving longer than four years – 700
- 2.3 Reception rates continue to be between 30 and 60 per month.
- 2.4 The prison consists of seven house blocks, including one for prisoners convicted of sexual offences, which accommodates 200 men. One houseblock is now operated as the PIPE for about 50 men.
- 2.5 The prison has many classrooms, workshops, a gym, an inpatient healthcare facility with 14 beds, and a palliative care suite with two beds. Catering training is delivered, with a bistro opening two days per week during normal times. The separation and integration unit (SIU) has a CNA of 28, which includes two special accommodation units.
- 2.6 The prison continued to be a drug recovery prison (DRP), a joint Department of Health and Ministry of Justice-funded initiative, jointly run by Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) and NHS England.
- 2.7 Services within the prison were delivered by the following organisations:
- Novus – education, learning and skills
 - First Point – training
 - Changing Lives – training
 - Spectrum– healthcare, including nursing, administration support, clinical drug and alcohol treatment (DART), GP and pharmacy services and overseeing dental services
 - Burgess and Hyder Dental Group – dental services
 - Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Mental Health Trust – mental health services
 - Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company
 - North Eastern Prison Aftercare Society (NEPACS) – visitors centre services and family support
 - Amey – works and stores
 - The Samaritans – Listener training

- Stockton on Tees Borough Council – library services and occupational therapy assessment and equipment provision
- Geo Amey - prisoner transport.
- DHL - prisoner canteen

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This annual report is set, as last year, against a background of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the prison and the local community.

During the year, the prison operated in a range of regime stages (stage 4 being the most restrictive):

January to May - stage 4

May to September - stage 3

September to November - stage 2

November to 16 December - stage 1

16 December - stage 2

22 December - stage 3

The prison leadership team worked hard to ensure that activities and the regime followed these constraints whilst enabling the prisoners to have a reasonable quality of life.

Notifications to the prisoners were timely and comprehensive. We were impressed about the way in which the sudden changes in regime two weeks before Christmas were handled and lockdown benefits, that had been removed, were reinstated expediently.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

There was a slight increase in self-harm during the year and there were two self-inflicted deaths. Evidence and detail of this is provided in section 4.2.

The reduction in violence starting in September 2020 has continued. The levels of violence are low compared with other establishments.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The prisoners were, in the main, treated fairly and evidence of this is in section 5.

For many periods of the year, time out of cell was constrained because of Covid-19. Despite this, officers worked hard to help prisoners cope with the situation.

Gym services were delivered throughout the year on a restricted basis with each prisoner being offered at least an hour per week.

Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic has not been as expeditious as was expected, with prisoners still having long periods of time locked in their cells throughout the year.

Sadly, we report that there is still an unsatisfactory level of unscreened toilets in cells, many of which are shared (evidence in section 5.1). This remains non-compliant with the national standard for the physical cleanliness and physical decency of prisons, published in April 2019. It cannot be considered

to be a humane situation, especially considering the length of time the prisoners were locked in their cells and must eat their meals there as there are no communal dining facilities.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

In general healthcare services have improved during the year with the community (houseblock-based) model being established. Waiting lists to consult a GP were reduced, as some consultations were held by telephone and houseblock-based nurses carried out triage.

The waiting time to see a dentist has been unacceptable with only emergencies, in the main, getting attention. This situation is not comparable with services in the local community nor our neighbouring prison, HMP Kirklevington Grange, or a similar prison, HMP Northumberland. Details of these matters are found in section 6.1.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Face to face education was limited and only returned towards the end of the year, with very few prisoners being invited to attend classroom work. Evidence and detail of this is shown in section 7.1.

The library remained closed throughout the year, although red band prisoners offered a delivery service.

Despite staff absences and the constraints imposed by Covid-19 the OMU team was resourceful in enabling much of their work to continue. We congratulate the team for its diligence and commitment.

3.3 Main areas for development

It is imperative that dental services be improved. The service was reported in our annual report for 2019 as *"Dental services also provided a poor service, with waiting lists for first consultations being up to 21 weeks, with the wait for on-going treatment and oral health education, being eight weeks and dental therapy nine weeks"*. Sadly, almost two years of Covid-19 pandemic have left this area of care for prisoners significantly worse.

Education and training require improvement. These services are not as good as they were three to four years ago when active classrooms, with attendance in the region of 100 prisoners a week, delivered a meaningful education and prisoners were achieving level one and level two qualifications. Covid-19 arrangements were in place to accommodate in-cell learning.

There have been issues regarding access to distance learning and Open University programmes. This has resulted in some prisoners not being able to achieve their aims and aspirations.

TO THE MINISTER

We are pleased with improvements to the prison over the year. There is still funding needed to ensure a reasonable level of decency within cells. We would however ask the Minister to take action in connection with dental services at HMP Holme House.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

We are concerned that the prison service has not acted expediently in connection with the poor dental services at the prison.

We would also like to comment on the cumbersome content and lack of clarity around some contracts with external service providers. The Board must monitor against standards and understanding the content of contracts is critical to this. We do not have access to those contracts and seemingly the prison does not. We do measure healthcare standards against those within the community. Some other matters, such as waiting times for repairs, are inaccessible to the Board.

The constraints about property transport are unclear and can cause distress to prisoners. This links to the issues regarding contracts detailed above where there is not clarity about what is expected. Too many prisoners arrive at Holme House not really understanding where their property is and when they will get it. Prisoners leaving the prison to move to other prisons, particularly out of the region, sometimes have considerable delays.

Some areas of education could not progress because of repairs not being carried out. These included the ventilation to the bistro and the ceilings to the toilets in the engagement centre.

This situation is unacceptable as there were restrictions because of Covid-19 on some repairs in house blocks and cells. It could be reasonably expected that the resources could be redirected to those areas where they are required.

TO THE GOVERNOR

There are improvements to be made in certain areas, such as dental care and education. The Board monitors against agreed standards and it is difficult to know what they are in some areas as contract details are not available

We would like to see the leadership team in the prison take an increased interest in healthcare complaints in a similar way to prison complaints. Responses to healthcare complaints did not meet their longer response timescales over several months and should be comparable.

3.4 Progress since the last report

We have seen a considerable improvement in the culture and ambiance within the prison. The art work, cleanliness and atmosphere within the prison are excellent.

We were impressed by the caring way that benefits to the prisoners were implemented when Covid-19 restrictions were imposed during the year.

There has been progress regarding the living environment within the prison, with improvements in cleanliness and the living environment is now pleasant.

Improvements to new prisoner induction are welcome and it is essential that this is worked on and is sustainable.

Services provided by healthcare have significantly improved, with waiting times to see a GP or nurse no longer being an issue.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and Induction

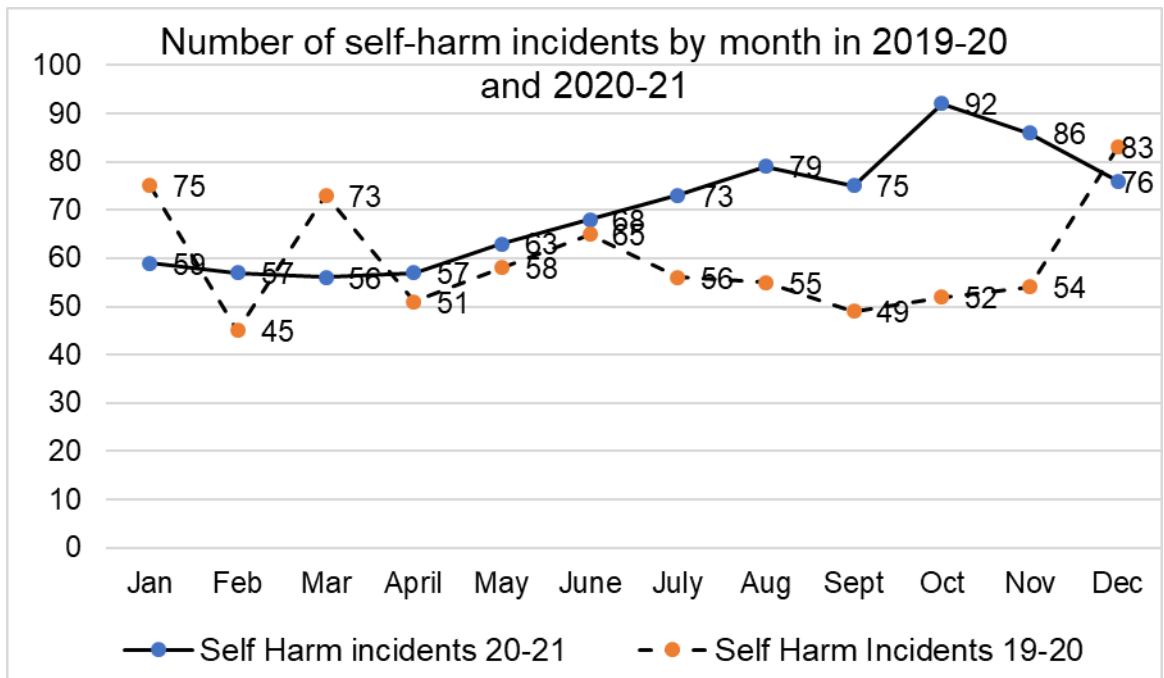
On average, six prisoners arrived each day and improvements in the reception of new arrivals continued through the year. Healthcare staff attended every day and the healthcare screening was carried out in privacy. Reception staff made the safer custody team aware of any special needs which they followed up. Listeners attended receptions and showed the Samaritans DVD to the new arrivals. First night officers and the safer custody team carried out inductions on arrival. All prisoners, apart from those with security concerns, were then moved to the Covid-19 isolation wing. On the next day, the safer custody team carried out the full induction. The prisoner was placed in the SIU if any security concerns were identified during scanning.

The current prisoner induction is an improvement on previous years when the Board had been disappointed by the lack of proper initial induction.

We observed that prisoners sometimes arrived late in the day (2-3 pm) after being held in their previous prison ready for departure from as early as 9.30 am. This was due to lack of available GeoAmey transport or staff to bring them to Holme House. The staff and Listeners in reception have done their best to enable a smooth transition to the first night accommodation.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

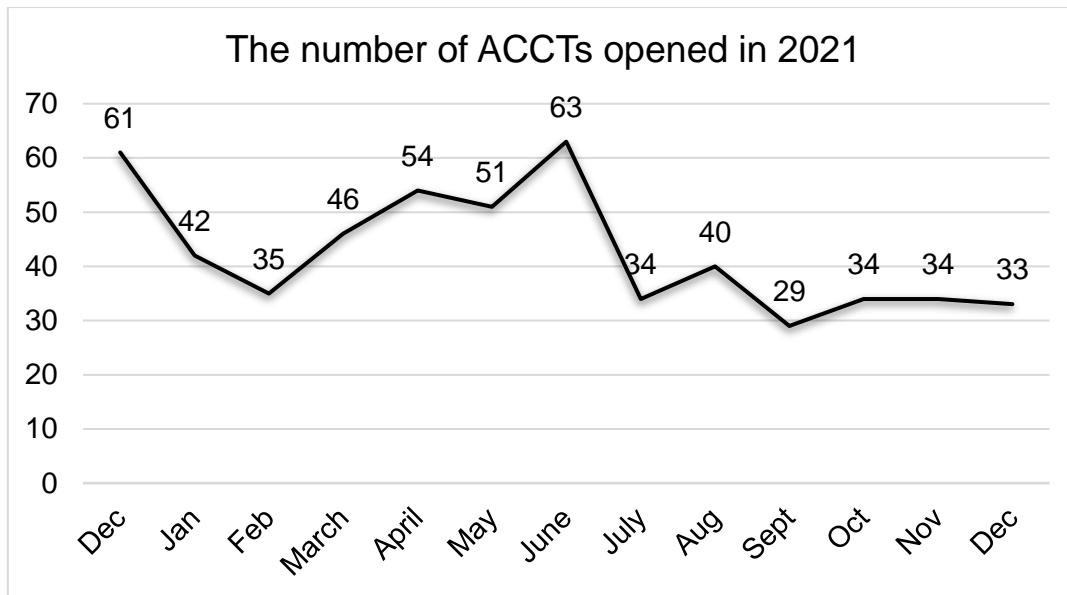
Since April 2021, incidents of self-harm have increased month on month apart from a slight decrease in September. The trend the previous year was upwards until July when numbers reduced (see graphical presentation below).



In October, 34 prisoners accounted for 92 acts of self-harm, the highest number during a month in 2021. Twelve prisoners self-harmed three times or more and seven prisoners self-harmed twice. Five prisoners were responsible for 40% of self-harm incidents, with one prisoner responsible for 16% of all self-harm incidents. The most used methods for self-harming were cutting, then reopened wounds/wound aggravation, ligature and overdose.

In 2021, 47% of prisoners who self-harmed had been in Holme House for three months or less. Holme House received some transferred prisoners for whom the prison did not receive a proper handover in terms of detailed information on their behaviour and risk. A few had arrived displaying complex and erratic behaviour from the outset.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork plans (ACCTs) are opened for prisoners identified at risk of suicide or self-harm. The safer custody team adopted a new quality assurance process for monitoring how ACCTs are implemented. This enables greater analysis of trends and identifies where staff need support in managing ACCTs.



Prisoners who self-harmed were invited to explain the factors behind their actions. The most common reasons for self-harm given were external factors, with not being able to contact family, contact outside and family issues the most frequently cited. Other frequent external triggers included recall, parole and facing further charges.

There have been reports of some prisoners self-harming to gain something such as a houseblock move, a single cell or telephone credit. When the national surge in infections due to the Omicron variant of Covid-19 began in December 2021, the Governor restored the £5 per week telephone credit for all prisoners with immediate effect, since visits and other planned and anticipated activities were to be curtailed.

The prison has 23 Samaritan-trained and supervised Listeners. Twelve of them are based in the main houseblocks and 11 in houseblock 7. At times during the restricted Covid-19 regime and house block isolations, there were problems with Listener availability.

The principal issues raised with Listeners in late 2021 are summarised below:

Issue	%
Self-harm	64%
Family	61%
Suicidal thoughts	48%
Mental health	45%
Pre-/post-release	10%

The prison held a suicide summit on World Suicide Prevention Day in September. The attendees included the clinical lead from the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation NHS Trust (TEWV), the mental health service provider, the head of safer custody, two Samaritans, two Listeners and six prisoners who regularly self-harmed. The forum discussed why people self-harm and what actions can be taken to help reduce levels of self-harm. The prison made the notes about the event and the actions available to all

prisoners as a prisoner information notice on the kiosk system. Actions include the establishment of a regular forum for prisoners who self-harm.

The PIPE specialises in the management of prisoners with more complex needs who may have more prolific rates of self-harm.

Deaths in custody

There were five deaths in custody during 2021. Two were apparently self-inflicted.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Intelligence suggests that the main reasons for violence and threats to prisoners are drugs, medication, cell sharing, debt issues and issues from the community. The downward trend in violence from September 2020 has continued through 2021.

	Prisoner-on-prisoner violent incidents	Prisoner-on-staff violent incidents
September 2020	17	5
October 2020	11	3
November 2020	15	3
December 2020	14	3
January 2021	13	3
February 2021	9	0
March 2021	14	1
April 2021	16	5
May 2021	9	2
June 2021	9	4
July 2021	7	6
August 2021	13	6
September 2021	8	3
October 2021	7	2
November 2021	6	4
December 2021	15	3

Holme House was significantly below the average for comparator prisons for violence, staff assaults and prisoner-on-prisoner violence when considering the annualised figures in October 2021.

The prison observed anti-bullying week 2021, co-ordinated by the Anti-Bullying Alliance in November with the theme 'one kind word'. The week started with 'odd socks day' participated in by staff and prisoners.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), the national case management model, are used in managing prisoners who harm others through violent behaviour. Fortnightly CSIP meetings checked that reviews of the plans were completed on time and documented the facts and improvements.

The violence reduction plan focusses on respect, communication, honouring commitments and improving relationships between prisoner and staff. The plan helps prisoners feel they are treated equally, staff are visible, managers support staff and problems are recorded and not forgotten during handovers. The information provided to prisoners explained the purpose of the plan and signposted them to support if they require it. The intended outcome is that prisoners feel that they are listened to, and staff genuinely want to help, thus reinforcing good relations between staff and prisoners.

4.4 Use of force

Because of Covid-19 precautions the Board observed only one planned use of force incident during the year. This was carried out in accordance with guidelines with appropriate restraint used to move a prisoner from one house block to another. A Board member attends use of force scrutiny meetings at which use of force incidents, planned and spontaneous, were reviewed using CCTV and footage from body worn video cameras (BWVC) and relevant documentation. In all cases discussed the member was satisfied that force had been used appropriately. Analysis of use of force did not show any differential use on different ethnic minorities. During April, May and November a disproportionate number of prisoners aged 21-24 were subject to use of force (nine, eight and ten respectively).

Force was used in a planned manner 33 times during 2021 (31 times in 2020). External Tornado team assistance was not required during 2021.

Staff activated their BWVCs, which also record audio, 558 times during January to April and 368 times during May to December. Managers encourage staff to activate their BWVC if they anticipate an issue arising in which recording would be appropriate. During 2021 an average of 62% (maximum 71% and minimum 51%) of BWVC footage captured some or all of use of force incidents.

Batons were drawn twice in 2021, compared with eight times in 2020. PAVA (incapacitant spray) was not deployed during the year. Special accommodation was used three times, which is a significant improvement on previous years.

After a use of force incident, staff from the safer custody team (who had not been involved in the relevant incident) interview prisoners who have been subject to the use of force to ascertain if they understand why force was necessary.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Security faced the ongoing challenge of preventing illicit items entering the prison. Methods of moving such goods are constantly developed and procedures must be informed by intelligence. For example, search methods in reception developed to include checking waist bands and trainers.

The suspension of social visits and restrictions on attendance at funerals closed two potential routes for illicit items to enter the prison.

Security staff regularly detected and intercepted bogus rule 39 mail packages purporting to come from prisoners' solicitors and containing sheets of paper impregnated with drugs or containing drug tablets concealed in documents. During 2021 security seized an average of 10 such packages per month sent into the prison. The highest seizure months were January and February with 13 and 17 bogus mailings seized.

During July, staff seized 20 packages which had been thrown over the perimeter wall. These contained various tablets, crystals, powders and tobacco. Staff seized four thrown-over packages in August and one in April.

In a few cases, prisoners deliberately self-harmed, usually by cutting or actual or claimed overdosing, in order to be sent to an outside hospital where it was planned they could pick up illicit items left in the hospital. There are two hospitals in Teesside with accident and emergency provision. The prison can divert the prisoner to the alternative centre if they have intelligence indicating the planned for hospital destination.

Medication in a prisoner's possession is licit but not if passed to or taken by another prisoner. The selling, stealing and storing of prescribed medication by prisoners other than the prescribed recipient has increased and countering this was a major security objective.

Over 800 litres of fermented liquid ('hooch') were seized during 2021. A fermented liquids action plan included DHL restricting the quantities of fermentable food products which a prisoner can order. In many cases of prisoners caught in the possession of fermented liquid, it was found that the prisoner had been coerced or persuaded to hold it by the brewer/owner.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The overall ambience and atmosphere within the prison has improved significantly with the introduction of pictures, murals and coloured Perspex sheets on the walkways and in communal areas. The prison is generally clean and most paintwork is fresh. These improvements have resulted in a light and pleasant environment. Prisoners have been involved in this work and so ownership and pride in the environment are apparent.

The IMB continues to be concerned about unscreened toilets within cells, particularly in shared cells. Little improvement was made during the year.

Houseblock	% of unscreened toilet 2020	% of unscreened toilet 2021
1	52	46
2	46	5
3	67	55
4	18	55
5	27	35
6	0	0
7	37	19

The kitchen and food services endeavoured to deliver a good service to the prison despite some food shortages and staff shortages because of Covid-19 infections. One particular problem within the kitchen area has been a significant infestation of mice. Towards the end of the year, orders were placed to rodent proof the building with stronger physical barriers.

5.2 Segregation

The SIU has 26 cells and two special accommodation units. It is well cleaned and maintained with cell damage usually being repaired without delay. The heating (upgraded in 2020) suffered a minor malfunction in 2021. This was repaired quickly and during this short period of time blankets were given out when requested.

We again commend the outstanding professional caring approach shown by staff to vulnerable prisoners and their sometimes challenging behaviour.

Special accommodation was used three times during 2021. There were six dirty protests. There was no use of the body belt.

Governors conducted 1,186 adjudications in 2021. At the end of December, there were 44 outstanding adjudications with the majority due to Covid-19 isolation of witnesses and 15 were being referred to the independent adjudicator. At the end of the year, there were also 25 police referrals in process – 13 had been accepted and were ongoing, 10 had been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service and two were waiting for an update from the police.

All good order and discipline (GOOD) reviews were completed on time with healthcare in attendance and mental healthcare in attendance if they were working with the prisoner. The Board attended nine GOOD reviews in 2021.

The average time a prisoner spent in the SIU was 10.1 days. Nine prisoners were in the SIU for more than 42 days. Covid-19 restrictions caused difficulty and delays in finding other prisons to which these prisoners could be transferred. Transport arrangements also caused some delays.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The compliance target for key worker sessions is 52% and was met towards the end of the year, despite ongoing issues with staff sickness and redeployment.

The total performance during 2021 was:

Month 2021	Compliance rate
Jan	39.7,
Feb	45.3
Mar	50.0
Apr	54.9
May	69.6
Jun	45.7
Jul	31.6
Aug	41.3
Sep	41.6
Oct	35.3
Nov	40.1
Dec	52.4

5.4 Equality and diversity

In March, the prison established a monthly equality assurance meeting. Membership includes all departmental heads and prisoner representatives. Its area of responsibility includes monitoring the discharge of equalities and diversity responsibilities in all areas of the establishment and, where necessary, identifying and taking remedial action.

Initially, equality analysis by religion was compromised by the practice of recording religion in reception in which 'no response' was recorded as 'no religion'. This has now been addressed.

The equality assurance meeting aims to encourage prisoners and staff to report incidents of victimisation, harassment and discrimination within the prison by using the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) and to increase their confidence in the investigation processes and actions following the investigation findings.

Ninety-six DIRFs were submitted by prisoners and staff in 2021 (55 were submitted in 2020). Two of these were upheld.

Alongside the national update of the DIRF documentation and processes, the prison introduced quality assurance, independent scrutiny and linked the processes with the focus groups on protected characteristics, such as LGBT+, race, disability and age.

Stockton-on-Tees hate crime group quality assures two DIRFs selected at random each month. Feedback is shared with managers to improve the quality of the process.

In addition, regular meetings are held with groups of prisoners from protected characteristic groups, including those for LGBT+, race and disability, during which they consider and discuss relevant redacted DIRFs and what can be learned from them. The monthly diversity and inclusion strategic meeting also discusses the DIRFs.

Any issues highlighted during the various discussions are added to the equality action plan in which identified senior managers address them and put procedures in place to ensure they are managed appropriately. The Board has been told by staff that members of the Travellers community do not often submit DIRFs and that Travellers have said they prefer to 'deal with it themselves'.

The prison recognises and celebrates special days in the equality and diversity calendar including Durham Pride, National Coming Out Day and Transgender Victim Awareness Day (which remembered transgender people murdered because of their gender status).

The catering manager devised a 12-month calendar menu featuring food from different cultures on a day each month.

As Covid-19 restrictions eased from September, protected characteristic focus groups recommenced running monthly, including LGBT+, BAME, disability, age and Travellers.

The number of prisoners attending the LGBT+ focus group activities has increased this year. However, prisoners on the main houseblocks appear to be reluctant to apply to attend – while they may be willing to declare their sexuality to reception when entering the prison, they can be reluctant to attend the focus group which would indicate their sexuality to more people.

A Board member observed an LGBT+ focus group at which a guest speaker spoke about her experience as an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoner who had served 17 years of a three-year tariff. She described her experience as a transgender woman transitioning while in the male estate and ultimately leaving prison from the female estate. She now works alongside HMPPS in the development of policy surrounding transgender prisoners. This was a very honest and moving recounting of the experience which was very well received by the group, but particularly by the transgender prisoners in the group.

The equality assurance meeting discussed an equality discrepancy in which a prisoner who had racially abused an officer was more heavily penalised than another prisoner who had homophobically abused an officer. This could be interpreted as meaning that the prison regarded homophobic abuse as less serious than other abuse. The discrepancy was taken forward to review the relevant adjudication tariffs.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team has worked with below its establishment complement of 3.8 full time equivalents (FTE) and 0.2 FTE sessional staff, with 2.2 FTE and 0.2 FTE sessionals for most of the year. In October, the imam post became a full-time role. Two volunteers support the chaplaincy staff two mornings a week. Three further volunteers supported Roman Catholic masses when these took place.

There were considerable periods during the year when the chaplaincy was unable to run services because of Covid-19. To compensate for this, they delivered leaflets on a weekly basis to any prisoners who requested it. This was usually about 160 prisoners per week in addition to their statutory responsibilities in the SIU, healthcare and with new admissions.

The chaplaincy supported prisoners who had lost loved ones and attended online live-streamed funeral services when family members were not permitted to attend in person.

Religious acts of worship in the chapel restarted in the week commencing 27 September. Due to continuing Covid-19 restrictions, numbers were limited to a maximum of 17 attendees in the chapel at any one time. This was on a fortnightly rota basis to ensure equity for all faith groups, with a three-week rota for Muslim worship.

The festival of Eid al-Adha was celebrated on Tuesday 20 July.

On Friday 17 December, all communal services and prayers were stopped as part of the plans to address the national surge of the Omicron Covid-19 variant. Until then, the chaplaincy had plans for the festive season including the Roman Catholic bishop officiating at a Christmas service.

The chaplaincy reverted to visiting prisoners in their cells. As part of this work, they provided study material to around 140 prisoners who had registered an interest (over 100 Christian, 35 Muslim and three Sikh).

On Christmas morning, the Church of England chaplain and a visiting Roman Catholic priest visited 350 prisoners and gave them packs, including gifts provided by Junction 42 (a Newcastle upon Tyne based charity working with offenders), a Christmas message and a craft activity; staff on the houseblocks gave the packs to all the other prisoners.

Members of the chaplaincy team participated in a monthly online Zoom event organised by Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma which helped them understand many of the issues affecting those communities.

5.6 Incentives schemes (IP)

The incentives scheme promotes conforming behaviour. At the start of the year the gold, silver and bronze level numbers were quite unbalanced with the large majority, around 800, on the gold level. Throughout the year the numbers on the gold and silver levels have become more balanced, with an approximately 50/50 split between gold and silver at the end of the year and around 20 on bronze level.

5.7 Complaints

Prisoners submitted a total of 2,447 complaints to the prison during 2021 (2,500 in 2020). Almost all were responded to within the timescale for response. The prison complaints system has improved significantly over the year with daily scrutiny.

Prisoners submitted an average of 187 per month COMP1s, with an average of 13 COMP1As per month (appealing against the initial decision/response to the complaint). The timeliness of responses to prisoner complaints is reported at each morning Governor's staff briefing. No complaints due for a response by Holme House departments were overdue in 2021.

Complaints about residential services (which include regime, cell conditions and cell allocation/sharing, TV channels, dress code and kiosks) were the highest complaint topic in four different months.

Complaints about TV channels were mainly attributable to the failure of the Bilsdale TV transmitter and technical problems with Channel 5 reception over four weeks. The prison arranged alternative programmes and DVD showings while there were no TV services available, but prisoners complained about the unavailability of temporary TV channels which were receivable in some areas by retuning.

Property (principally missing property) was the highest complaint category for four months. Complaints about the DHL canteen service, staff behaviour and catalogue purchases were prominent in individual months.

Fourteen confidential access complaints (COMP2 forms) were recorded. In autumn 2021 there was an increase in the number of confidential access complaints being submitted to the Governor. A high proportion of these did not meet the criteria for confidential access complaints and the prison complaints procedure had not been followed in the first instance; similarly some prisoners submitted COMP2 complaints to the Board chair when it would have been more appropriate to submit an application to the Board.

Healthcare complaints have a different response time (28 days) than the seven days response time for general prison complaints. There were several months when responses were well out of time.

Month	Number of complaints	% of complaints not answered within the timescale
January 2021	71	15 %
February 2021	38	65 %
March 2021	49	98 %

April 2021	62	92 %
May 2021	38	47 %
June 2021	37	86 %
July 2021	57	45 %
August 2021	50	20 %
September 2021	46	10 %
October 2021	48	8 %
November 2021	58	3 %
December 2021	33	6 %

Previous years' healthcare complaints were not provided and so a comparison cannot be made. The Board believes that the response targets for both types of complaints should be the same with a scrutiny comparable to prison complaints. Prisoners receive services from the prison and the fact that a contractor provides the service does not remove the Governor's responsibility for the quality of that service.

5.8 Property

There is an ongoing problem with prisoners' property. The Board was informed that the courier service engaged on a national basis is not able to transport the prisoner's property as necessary to follow the prisoner. This is being investigated nationally and a new contractor will be appointed. Holme House reception staff arranged for operational support grade staff to transport/deliver prisoner property to destinations in the north of England. However, property belonging to prisoners relocated to prisons in other parts of England currently cannot be delivered to them and remains on site after their departure. At the end of the year, there was a backlog of property waiting to be delivered to prisoners who had left Holme House. This is not satisfactory.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Spectrum is contracted to provide healthcare, including nursing, inpatient care, administrative support, clinical drug and alcohol treatment, GP and pharmacy services and overseeing the dental services.

Low staffing levels continued throughout the year with contingency plans in place and with agency and bank nurses covering the shortfall.

External appointments were moved forward with commissioners covering the costs of escorts when necessary.

Daily senior staff meetings discuss current issues. Other multi-disciplinary and mandatory drug testing meetings took place where the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines and pain management were debated.

The 16-bed inpatient unit is a regional resource. It functions well and has a mix of prisoners with physical, mental, disability and social needs. All patients have a care plan.

The Board has repeatedly asked for anonymous data on the numbers and subjects/outcomes of complaints submitted to the health provider. This has not been previously provided to the Board. This year we have obtained some data and will look to get a more comprehensive analysis in future years.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Nurses in reception screen prisoners who arrive at Holme House and complete the national screening template. They generate a referral to the mental health team if required.

Early in 2021, because of Covid-19 precautions, the GP held most appointments by telephone. When Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed, nurses continued to triage prisoners on houseblocks or via the kiosk and the GP further triaged the remainder of the list. As a result, there was a waiting list of 121, which is much reduced from 2020, and prisoners received a more responsive service. The outpatients' waiting room was restricted to six patients to accommodate social distancing.

Access to dental care continued to be problematic with only emergency appointments being offered. In December 2021, the waiting list for regular appointments was one year and 40 weeks. This issue has been escalated to the regional commissioners. The service provided is not comparable with services in the local community where most residents have access to a dentist.

A complex needs nurse monitored all long-term conditions and vulnerable prisoners.

The palliative care suite housed two end of life prisoners who were treated with care, compassion and support by the head of healthcare and her team.

Holme House is the top performing prison in the region for administering Covid-19 and booster vaccinations to the prisoner population.

6.3 Mental health

Primary care assessment waiting times increased to 13 weeks and treatment to 20 weeks due to Covid-19 measures. Those prisoners referred to the secondary care team were seen within four days of triage procedures. Waiting times were exacerbated by difficulties with accessing prisoners because of Covid-19 infection outbreaks closing down house blocks.

The department had no vacancies at the end of 2021, but security checks meant that several appointed staff had to wait some time before they could commence their employment.

The mental health team has continued to provide interventions despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic. These include dialectical behaviour therapy, eye movement psychological intervention, cognitive behaviour therapy, speech therapy, counselling and psychiatric consultations.

Care navigators support individuals prior to release into the community and a part time health and wellbeing coach is also supportive of prisoners

Where possible, mental health staff attend all ACCT reviews for patients on the mental health list.

Support is given to prisoners admitted to the inpatient unit.

The mental health team was nominated as an example of best practice as part of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' peer review of prison mental health services. Two members of the team were nominated for Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust 'living the values' award by a prisoner for work they had done with him.

6.4 Social care

Stockton Borough Council (SBC) continues to work alongside Holme House to provide assessment and training within the safer custody department. They also provided any aids prisoners needed. A storage container was provided by the prison in which these aids are stored ready for issue.

SBC planned to be involved in the training of 10 prisoner carers who work with prisoners in need of care and support, but this was postponed because of Covid-19. An action plan was provided by SBC.

6.5 Exercise, regime

Throughout 2021, prisoners on each houseblock were entitled to a one-hour session in the gym per week, in addition to one hour association time per day, which prisoners could use for exercise or showers or general association.

Throughout the year, the gym has continued to function, albeit on a restricted basis. Initially, it was outside only in exercise yards with reduced time periods. Indoor training recommenced in June but with reduced equipment availability and prisoner numbers. More outside exercise took place when staff were available. All prisoners had the opportunity for weekly gym sessions; unfortunately not all available individual houseblock slots were utilised, and spares could not be offered to other houseblocks due to Covid-19 restrictions. Because of reduced space, equipment and prisoner numbers at each session could be as low as 10 or 12.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Human Kind (a charity) delivers a programme in the therapeutic wing. The programme in 2021 was delivered by eight members of staff and six prisoners.

During the year, 54 prisoners graduated, with 18 prisoners choosing to deselect themselves from the process. Eight prisoners became alcohol free.

After graduating, some prisoners applied for category D status or moved to the 'B' wing to continue their maintenance by assisting other prisoners with drug issues. Some came under the umbrella of the DART team.

Buvidal was prescribed for 18 volunteer prisoners. This is a fixed dose of methadone.

6.7 Soft skills

In the drug and alcohol team the programme leader was progressive and creative, expanding the animal assistive input. This improved the wellbeing of prisoners and provided meaningful activity by providing care for both the animals and surrounding area outside the wing, which contains a pond, ducks, chickens, hedgehogs, and a barn owl. Inside the wing, a pet dog comforted prisoners and 22 birds were cared for in individual cells.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

From January until mid-February, when the prison was at stage 4 lockdown, education ran purely on an 'in-cell' learning basis whereby packs were sent out to participating prisoners and then returned for marking. In-cell learning was not just confined to academic subjects but also included, for example, theory of cooking and working in the bistro. Uptake of in-cell learning was poor, averaging less than 30 participants each day. The low numbers were thought to be because no financial incentive was offered but could also have been it being more difficult to motivate prisoners in their cells rather than face to face. During this period no face to face 1 to 1 sessions were held.

From February until October, in-cell learning continued with 1 to 1 sessions. The number of participants increased with the consequent increase of daily 1 to 1 sessions, packs sent out and packs returned for marking.

In October, very limited classroom teaching was restarted for maths and English only. Each class was limited to six or seven pupils and take up was poor, e.g., three out of six allocated would attend. The reason given was that prisoners were happier and felt safer staying in their cells as in-cell learning and 1-to-1 sessions continued in parallel. Non-academic subjects also restarted, with the bistro having learners return (but not reopened to staff customers). Unfortunately, cooking could not be restarted due to inadequate ventilation in the kitchen, so teaching was by demonstration only.

Efforts have been made to increase classroom attendance by finding the reason for non-attendance. Attendance has improved and the practice continued for the rest of the year.

Throughout the year, the library has operated on a paper-based system whereby prisoners can ask for a book from lists and this being delivered by a red band prisoner. Take-up has been reasonable with 20+ weekly deliveries to each houseblock.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The year has been severely disrupted by Covid-19. The number of men able to work was restricted by measures introduced to prevent the spread of the virus. The extent to which this has occurred has been very much dependent on the level of precautions at regime stages 1, 2 or 3. The situation was at the point of returning to some degree of normality at the beginning of December when the Omicron variant emerged. However, on a positive note, unlike earlier in the year, all workplaces have remained open but with fewer numbers. Under these circumstances it is impossible to discern any long-term trends.

The prison normally has more than 750 workplaces and of these just over 400 are full time, although this latter number is being reduced so that more men are able to find employment. This is a gradual process as the change is only made when a place becomes vacant. This will allow a greater range of workplaces and ensure men can access work, education, and programme facilities as part of their core day.

As in previous years vulnerable prisoners did not have access to the same range of courses as other men. Attendance at work, as for all purposeful activity, is generally good, over 85%, but this has been variable, due again to the restrictions imposed due to Covid-19.

It remains an aim of the prison to extend the curriculum to fully meet the needs of all the prison population. As a result of effective careers guidance, the men's choice of prison-based activity fits well with their vocational aspirations. Some accredited qualifications were available in workshops and work roles but not in all. The plan to integrate English and maths more closely in workshops has been further delayed. The industry manager is in communication with both the Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board and City & Guilds with the intention of bringing more vocational qualifications back.

In the commercial workshops, prisoners gained valuable skills and knowledge that support release plans although their development in work and workshops needs to be recorded so that men are aware of the personal progress that they have made. Individual coaching often occurs which enables the men involved to develop useful vocational and employment skills. As a result of the pandemic, some of the outside connections have been suspended, but they continue with good links to Spindles, Stockton Borough Council, Balfour Beatty and Atkins Global. For the majority of 2021 there were 105 workshop spaces.

Industrial workshops allow men to develop skills in laundry, wood finishing, joinery, gardening, waste management, warehouse distribution and garment manufacture. The Code 4000 computer coding programme continues to be very successful to the point that prisoners were motivated to explore the possibility of self-employment on release.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic the offender management unit (OMU) operated well, with the use of technology, including in-cell phones. The strong team is made up of over 17 full-time posts, with a mix of prison and probation officers

There were 548 assessments on the offender assessment system (OASys) with a high level of offender manager engagement. The prison population includes a broad range of prisoner types across age, sentence length (including lifers), types of offence (such as those convicted of sexual

offences), which requires a variety of skills in the OMU team. The team appears to have been developed to meet this diverse population.

All parole hearings were held remotely, which meant that none were delayed.

7.4 Family contact

Between January and June there were no social visits. Prisoners could apply for up to three Purple (video) Visits each month. These virtual visits slots were underused at first, but usage increased considerably from March onwards. Some families reported that they did not use Purple Visits because if their children did not stay relatively still, the security features of the system would end the call.

	Purple Visits booked
January	363
February	350
March	786
April	711
May	802
June	619

Face to face visits restarted on 7 June 2021, with strict rules about the use of masks and no contact permitted. Visits had not taken place for over 14 months. The prison recognised and addressed the need to train recently appointed staff who had not previously worked with visitors to the prison in the visits portal or the visits hall and also to upskill all staff on the new visits processes. Visitors and prisoners wore face masks, officers wore face masks, gloves and aprons. Visitors and visited prisoners were allocated seats on alternate group sitting units to impose social distancing. Contact between prisoners and children under 11 years was permitted (subject to usual rules about contact between adults and children). Visitors could not use toilets in the visits hall. The Nepacs creche and children's play area remained closed.

The prison informed prisoners and visitors prior to the visit that breaching Covid-19 restrictions in visits would incur consequences. The first offence of a prisoner would be an IEP warning, a second offence could lead to a period of closed visits. For visitors a first offence would lead to a warning letter and a second offence to being temporarily banned from visits. In October, 10 prisoners were subject to temporary closed visits for a month.

Visitors could not take refreshments into the prison (except food or milk for a baby) but from September, as part of the test to contact programme, visitors could test or provide proof of a negative test and be able to access refreshments during a visit. The visitor could place an order for a limited selection of refreshments when booking into the visitors' centre. After providing proof of a negative lateral flow test, the refreshments would be delivered to the table in the visits hall.

Uptake of available visits slots has been low:

Month	Visit slots	Visits	Uptake of
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	available	booked	slots (%)
June	680	368	54
July	727	205	28
August	700	233	33
September	680	280	41
October	740	275	37
November	660	313	47

Attendance was impacted by several factors:

- Until November, social visits were limited to immediate family and significant others from the same household.
- For about 3 months from June the visits booking line was not working. This resulted in callers not being able to book a visit. The prison implemented a temporary measure using a direct dial number given on Twitter and the Nepacs website. Visitors who spoke to the Board about this difficulty pointed out that many people do not have access to social media or the internet. One visitor had telephoned HMP Durham to obtain the contact number. The matter was eventually resolved.
- In September the prison introduced permitted contact between visitor and prisoner during social visits after a negative test result. This led to very positive feedback. Visitors had to show evidence of a negative lateral flow test to enter the visitor centre and book in for the visit.
- On 17 December the prison implemented plans to address the national upsurge in the Omicron Covid-19 variant. Prior to that date, 180 visits had already been booked up to Christmas. It was decided that these visits should go ahead, subject to visitors demonstrating negative test results and separate movement of prisoners from different houseblocks.
- Nepacs could not hold its usual family days during 2021. Recognising the importance of maintaining contact with family and friends, the Nepacs family support team offered prisoners the opportunity to have a craft pack sent to their family (subject to contact limitations). They offered craft packs for Easter, Halloween and Christmas. Nepacs ran an Easter Facebook live event for the children of prisoners on 7 April. They hosted activities for children and young family members on the Nepacs YouTube channel.

7.5 Resettlement planning

During the year, 959 men were released, with 235 released on home detention curfew. Ninety to ninety five per cent of prison leavers had an address to go to during 2021.

Over a third (35%) of the prisoners released were high risk and needed a high level of community supervision.

Sadly, many men left the prison without achieving their desired level of attainment.

The work of the IMB

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to cause issues regarding access to the prison. Two Board members continued to visit the prison on a weekly basis and the remainder only visited once they had received two Covid-19 vaccinations.

As in 2020, members continued to have allocated areas of special interests and individual house blocks for monitoring. and sometimes monitored from home.

Members rang into the morning briefings each day and reported to the rest of the Board.

The number of applications received reduced again from the previous year.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	219
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	0
Total number of segregation reviews attended	9

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	5	0
C	Equality	5	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	9	12
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	24	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	11	4
F	Food and kitchens	4	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	46	46
H1	Property within this establishment	18	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	26	13
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	7
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	20	20
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	6	31
K	Transfers	28	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	1
	Total number of applications	216	189



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