



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Belmarsh

**For reporting year
1 July 2021 – 30 June 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 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 Belmarsh opened in April 1991, at a cost of over £105m. It occupies some 60 acres on the old Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in southeast London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall. It is located alongside HMP Thameside, HMP/YOI Isis and Woolwich Crown Court.

It is a category A men's prison, and a core local prison within the high security estate. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and magistrates' courts in south-east London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial. Prisoners of all categories may be housed in Belmarsh.

At the end of June 2022, the operational capacity (the maximum population the prison can hold) was 773. This was a reduced operational capacity from the prison's original capacity of 910 as a result of the removal of three-man cells. During the reporting year the prison held approximately 650 prisoners at any one time, of which approximately 70% were on remand.

The accommodation is spread across four equal-sized houseblocks, a healthcare centre, a segregation unit and a high security unit (HSU).

During the reporting year, the acting Governor Jenny Louis was appointed substantive Governor. Most governors who stepped up within leadership during her acting period remain in post along with a few new, experienced appointees, creating a stable team.

The main providers of contract services to the prison are:

- Maintenance: Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL)
- Healthcare: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- Education: Milton Keynes College

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

After the challenges of lock down the Board has had a good opportunity this year to investigate and follow up issues that were beginning to cause concern. Not only were we able to visit the prison more regularly to carry out rota visits and attend to applications, we were also able to attend prison meetings where we could raise issues and ask questions. This, along with regular invitations to various staff members to speak at our Board meetings has given us a better picture of strengths and weaknesses, which have influenced our discussions and investigations.

Towards the end of the reporting period, staff numbers had reached the target level, and some staff were being cross deployed through 'detached duty' to other prisons. However, the number of 'non-effectives' was double the target level, leading to limited staff in various areas as detailed below.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board believes that the prison has safety as a high priority, as seen by the caution taken when coming out of lockdown and changes to the regime to avoid conflict when prisoners are off the houseblock spur. These changes have presented their own challenges and it remains to be seen if they have improved the level of safety for prisoners and for staff. At the time of writing this report, violent incidents appear to continue but it would be only fair to give the prison more time before the impact of their efforts are fully evidenced.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Prisoners complain that they are not fairly treated and, while the prison states that they are, the Board does not have enough statistical evidence to disprove this at the present time.

While the prison states that it has a full complement of staff, it is not clear why staff shortages are blamed for issues which prisoners feel are unfair. These include the loss of property, which has caused extreme frustration for many prisoners in the past year and is apparently down to lack of staff. The regime in the HSU is frequently curtailed due to staff being relocated to other parts of the prison. Prisoners miss out on activities such as library visits if there are not enough staff to accompany them. There have even been occasions when prisoners have not been able to shower due to lack of staff. It is a concern that the lack of key worker support continues when so many prisoners need this.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Over the year, provision to meet the health and wellbeing needs of prisoners has improved and limitations are not necessarily the fault of the prison or the Oxleas NHS Trust. Prisoners in the in-patient department are mostly suffering from poor mental health and mostly these are managed well with medication and psychiatric support. It is of concern that some of these prisoners would be better placed elsewhere, yet assessment and movement to a more appropriate setting is often prolonged. Those prisoners in the department with physical health problems are well cared for.

As in previous years, the outpatient department continues to have issues with prisoners not arriving for appointments, either because these clash with another activity or because there are not enough staff to escort them to the area.

Dental services have been a continuing source of complaint during the year, and several prisoners have complained about the waiting time to see a dentist, especially when they have been in pain. One prisoner waited five months before an appointment was given.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

While activities and support agencies are now opening up, the prison has more work to do to ensure prisoners make successful progress towards resettlement

Those prisoners in the HSU are of particular concern as they have little to do and do not have the opportunities for training and education that is provided in the main prison. Plans to change this situation have not come to fruition over some considerable time.

The tea bag workshops provided for vulnerable prisoners and as a general workshop, while they provide something to do, are demeaning for prisoners and do not resemble modern day employment. The Board questions why this activity is still in use.

Another frustration for prisoners and their families is the perceived inadequacy of the visitors booking system, which has resulted in confusion for many and despair for others. Prisoners, especially those in the HSU, complain that the system is unfair to some.

Complaints to the Board regarding resettlement over the year have concerned the lack of communication to prisoners about their release and how they should plan for this. Others feel they have been 'forgotten' as they have no sentence plan. This is one situation where a key worker's support would be useful.

Resettlement meetings have not been held regularly over the past year, which has meant that different agencies have not had the opportunity to share and hopefully resolve some of the issues that have arisen regarding prisoners' release, including finance, housing and employment.

HMIP Inspection

In August 2021, the prison experienced a full inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). This inspection noted the following main issues among others:

- Safety had deteriorated, the rate of violence was high, use of force had increased and there was insufficient attention to the growing level of self-harm.
- There was inadequate use of data to support the development of effective strategies for safety or equality.
- Not enough had been done to increase the level of purposeful activity for prisoners who remained locked up for very long periods each day.

While the IMB Board may be exploring from a slightly different viewpoint, generally the findings were similar to our own observations.

As the Governor and her colleagues work to improve those areas identified, the Board has kept these in focus as we have written our report and hopefully our evidence and observations will support further improvement.

3.3 Main areas for development

Questions

TO THE MINISTER

Will the Minister act upon the issues noted last year, which have not progressed as yet. These are:

- provision for appropriate service for prisoners suffering from severe mental ill-health (see section 6.3 Mental healthcare)
- speed up the courts process
- ensure accommodation support for prisoners on remand (see section 7.5 Resettlement planning)

Will the Minister require HMPPS to implement a system of managing and tracking prisoner property? This has been raised by various IMB reports for the past three years without any tangible action. (see section 5.8 Property)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will HMPPS stand by their commitment to introduce a nationwide approach to prisoners' property, and implement a digitalised process to reduce the amount of property lost on transfer (see section 5.8 Property)? (A new Property Framework has now been produced but still with no digitalisation).

Will HMPPS consider providing additional funds to improve the overall kitchen facilities at Belmarsh, considering the age and condition of some of the present equipment (see section 5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food)?

Will HMPPS continue to monitor and review the situation relating to in-cell telephony in the HSU (see section 5.2.1 HSU)?

Will HMPPS address the unavailability of online booking for prisoner visits and introduce a telephone booking process with a queuing system (see section 7.4 Family contact)?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will the prison work to create a consistent and efficient approach to prisoners' property, on arrival in Belmarsh, received from family or canteen, and when moved within the prison in order to avoid frustration and despair (see section 5.8 Property)?

Will the prison continue the good work already in place regarding collection and publication of data reflecting outcome and opportunity for relevant protected characteristics by ensuring that this data is scrutinised and used effectively to reduce inequality in all areas of the prison? This would include prisoner employment, use of force, segregation and decisions regarding incentive levels. (See section 5.4 Equality and diversity.)

Will the prison ensure that houseblock cleaning officers monitor the work carried out by houseblock orderlies so that it is of a decent standard (see section 5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food)?

Will the prison continue to review conditions in the HSU with special regard to

- Fair provision of visits, including social video calls, providing a laptop for the unit and suitable visiting accommodation.
- The provision of purposeful activity for the prisoners including suitable learning accommodation and the introduction of a horticulture workshop and polytunnel (see section 5.2.1 HSU)?

Will the prison ensure adequate time is ring-fenced for key worker duties to ensure the compliance rate for key worker sessions meets the required level (see section 5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers)?

3.4 Progress since the last report

The prison is definitely coming back to life after the pandemic and the ambition to raise standards is obvious. Leaders in the prison are committed to improvement and have a shared vision. This vision is not always clear to staff at the 'chalk face' who have to manage sudden changes in regime, staff relocation and subsequent prisoner frustration due to miscommunication and lost activities or association.

Safety

The previously new assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document is embedded across the prison and well used on a day-to-day basis. There is still work to be done when planning and reviewing progress of recovery but the prison is aware of this and making some steps to improvement albeit at a slow pace.

The regular use of force meetings that now take place and the subsequent encouragement for more use of body-worn video cameras is a positive element which has led to careful analysis of prison incidents and therefore better preventative planning.

Humane treatment

The use of data regarding those with protected characteristics has improved over the year in several areas of the prison and there is a better awareness of where improvement is needed. There is still work to be done in analysing and using the data found to the best advantage. The diversity and inclusion policy, introduced in April 2022, has been shared with all staff and this, along with informative publications about various protected characteristics has been useful in raising the focus of equality for all.

Issues that caused concern in the business hub last year have been ironed out and this is once more an efficient and well-run department, ensuring complaints are dealt with in a timely fashion and canteen is ordered and delivered promptly.

Health and wellbeing

Improvements have been seen in the fabric of the healthcare centre and most staff are patient and caring in sometimes challenging circumstances.

It has been good to note that the patient council and audit of prisoners' complaints have restarted.

Those prisoners from all over the prison who are most needy or vulnerable are discussed weekly at a safety intervention meeting (SIM), which is often attended by an IMB member. This meeting is usually well attended by medical and psychological staff, however it is unfortunate that residential staff do not always attend so they do not contribute or respond to discussions concerning prisoners on the houseblocks, for example regarding progress with ACCTs.

Prisoners who have problems with substance abuse and addiction make up approximately a third of the prison population. These prisoners are well supported by outside agencies as well as prison staff.

Progression and resettlement

The Board has spoken to several prisoners over the year who have stressed their desire to progress purposefully while carrying out their sentence. The opportunity to do this has improved since the prison has opened up activities, although there are still limitations on numbers and accessibility due to regime changes. The prison has made some progress towards linking workshop training to employability, for example with barista training and plans for dry lining training, but these are not for all prisoners.

The college has opened up and prisoners involved in education, although small in number have been engaged in their learning. Hopefully there will be some accredited learning introduced in the near future.

Progress on issues raised in last year's report

Issue raised to the Minister	Response given	Action taken
Provision for appropriate service for prisoners suffering from severe mental ill-health	There was to be monitoring or provision through portal, local meetings and coordinators. Possible use of private beds where necessary	Progress has not been seen in this area with several very unwell prisoners placed inappropriately in healthcare or segregation
Speed up the courts process	Reconfiguration of courtrooms, introduction of 'Nightingale courtrooms' and revision of cell sharing to increase prison capacity	No improvements have been seen in this area
Ensure accommodation for prisoners on remand is kept or provided on release	Probation pre-release teams to provide support for unconvicted prisoners with accommodation and debt	Accommodation support for prisoners on remand is likely in the future but at the time of writing is still not provided

Issue raised to the Prison Service	Response given	Action Taken
Confirm there are no plans to reintroduce the use of three-man cells	Would be an option in extreme circumstances so cannot be categorically ruled out	During the year no cell was used for three prisoners
Improve the length of time prisoners wait for mental health assessments and transfer to appropriate accommodation	No response given, although referred to in minister's response	No progress seen
Reform the system of handling prisoners' property when moving within the prison system	Prisoners' Property Policy Framework to be published. Explorations of digital property processes	The Prisoner's Property Framework has now been published but the situation has worsened and there is as yet no use of digital processes

Issue raised to the Governor	Response given	Action Taken
Appoint champions in each house block to be responsible for care leavers	Possibly for the future but meanwhile new head of safeguarding has organised weekly meetings where the most vulnerable can be discussed, including care leavers	Meetings arranged on a weekly basis attended often by IMB and borough social care. System of care support workers introduced
Ensure that the key worker scheme reverts to the initial planned level	The key worker scheme is running although dependent on regime	Key worker scheme has not reverted to initial planned level
Ensure that diversity and inclusion are given a higher focus and detailed measures are introduced to ensure equality of outcome and opportunity for all protected characteristics	New Equalities custodial manager in place. Monthly prisoners equality action group meetings. Equalities strategy to be reviewed	New custodial manager has helped to raise the profile of this area and some improvement has been seen, especially in collection and sharing of data
Ensure that updated induction packs are made and means are available to translate these	Induction packs available and literature in nine different languages	Induction packs have been made available
Review conditions in the HSU with regard to temperature, in cell telephony, staffing and regime, education and activities, interpreters for ESOL prisoners	Attempts to mitigate temperature concerns by hiring industrial fans. In-cell telephony will not happen due to live monitoring requirements. Staff are sometimes redeployed to other areas of the prison. Education and activities will progress, new agriculture coming soon, interpreters not always available so staff may be utilised	Little change has been seen in provision within HSU as regime is frequently disrupted, education and or activities are rare; the horticulture workshop is still not in place. IMB have investigated the use of in-cell telephony – and will continue to do so
Review the complaints process as previously suggested by IMB	Prison is working within Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework of 2019, which is based on recommendations by Lammy	Stable staffing in the business hub has resulted in improvement in this area; responses generally received in good time. There is disparity however between the quality of responses received

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Prisoners are thoroughly searched every time they enter or re-enter the prison.

From reception, prisoners are taken to the first night centre. The Board has recently observed an induction talk, given to new prisoners by one of the prisoners in the centre. This talk is supported by a PowerPoint presentation and gives useful information for those who are new to prison life. Induction packs are also handed out and those prisoners with English as a second language are identified and further supported by other prisoners who speak the same language. Listeners, prisoners trained by the Samaritans, are also available in the first night centre to answer queries and support where necessary.

Procedures in reception are robust, despite staff shortages at times, regarding entry to and departure from prison with regard to paperwork, correct identification and use of staff available. There are many complaints from prisoners concerning the prolonged wait for property to arrive at their cell and frequently the actual disappearance of property during transfer. This has caused enormous frustration for many prisoners during this year especially where sentimental items have been lost.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board believes that prison staff do their utmost to prevent prisoners from attempting suicide and self-harm. However, given the complex nature of Belmarsh, and the extremely difficult situations of some prisoners, incidents of self-harm are likely to arise. There were 360 reported incidents of self-harm over the reporting period compared to 324 in the previous year, and 444 in the year before that. As before, there are a small number of individual prisoners who repeatedly harm themselves. There was one death in custody, which occurred early in the reporting year. The inquest is yet to take place. Due to the pandemic, all coroners' court inquests were delayed significantly.

All prisoners who self-harmed were seen by nurses, who cleansed and dressed wounds, where necessary or if requested by prisoners. There were eight potentially lethal incidents due to significant self-harm that required hospital admission.

Almost every week a safety intervention meeting (SIM) takes place. These meetings are chaired by senior managers with responsibility for prisoner safety and are attended by senior officers and staff from different parts of the prison, although attendance can be patchy. At each meeting, prisoners of concern and new incidents of self-harm are reported and discussed, followed by a review and discussion of current assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) cases, challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) cases, and other safety, violence and care matters.

A new system of ACCT processes and forms, version 6, was introduced at the start of the reporting year with the purpose of bringing a sharper focus on positive

outcomes through timely care plans and reviews. From the outset, the prison has provided considerable amounts of information, training and other support to officers about version 6, and continues to do so. Throughout the reporting year, Board members reviewed ACCT processes and forms. While ACCT files contain much helpful information, the Board has also highlighted areas for improvement, which include better completion of the risks, protective factors and triggers form, better use of care plans, encouragement and support for prisoners to complete the prisoner's contribution form and better attendance at case reviews.

Board members have observed a small number of ACCT case reviews, with the prisoners' agreement. It is impressive that prisoners have been given the space and time to tell their stories and express their wishes for the future; and that officers make good attempts to stop further attempts at self-harm.

In the last six months of the reporting year, prison managers put in place an ACCT assurance process, backed by a weekly review of ACCT processes and paperwork. Good practice and areas for development are routinely reported to the SIM.

Occasionally, Board members have come across prisoners stating that they might harm themselves. Board members have quickly informed relevant officers and the safer custody team so that ACCTs can be opened if necessary.

Board members routinely visit prisoners under constant watch and those considered to be at a great risk of self-harm, in the healthcare centre or in other parts of the prison. The Board has been impressed by the diligence and knowledge of officers on constant watch duties. At times these prisoners have presented challenges such as non-compliance, aggression or 'dirty protests'. On two occasions in the year, prisoners told us that officers did not fulfil their constant watch duties as they either fell asleep or absented themselves for a part of their shift. These incidents were subsequently investigated by prison managers and refuted.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

A member of staff joined Belmarsh in the early 2022, charged to draw up a new safer custody and violence reduction strategy. His is a long task and we hope the strategy will be implemented soon.

Data collected on violent incidents – that is, prisoner on prisoner and prisoner on staff violence – has remained at very similar levels to the previous year, approximating 18 per month. This is despite strict regime changes and new conflict reduction initiatives. However, the comparison may be unfair as in the previous year prisoners were under Covid restrictions and a more restrictive regime. Therefore, more time will be needed for changes to become embedded before judgements are made on their efficacy.

The gang situation across London inevitably carries into the prison. There is an excellent programme of logging prisoners' postcodes and developing a complex list of conflicts in order to avoid clashes. As an important part of this, ex-gang member prisoners meet new arrivals to help them step away from conflict and the consequent violence.

At the time of writing, two prisoners were choosing to self-isolate which meant they remained in their cells for most of the day. The two claimed they were at risk of attack, but security could find no evidence to substantiate that.

In the past there has been an issue with prisoners and/or their families in debt to other prisoners or organised crime. Over the last two years Covid has masked this situation but the managers now anticipate that there are many more prisoners in debt. A new policy is being written and residential staff have been asked to identify those prisoners who may be at risk due to debt. This process is taking some considerable time to put in motion and the IMB would urge the prison to prioritise this matter.

4.4 Use of force

Since early in 2022, the segregation governor has held regular use of force (UOF) meetings, which was not the case for the earlier part of the reporting year.

These are weekly meetings to analyse all UOF events and CCTV footage, during the period, and to review the reports produced by all staff submitting their CCTV footage. The meetings are well attended by staff from all relevant disciplines. In February 2022, it was recommended that a control and restraint (C&R) instructor should attend these meetings and that has subsequently been the case. This has been found to be especially valuable as this person is able to give more educated feedback on the techniques employed in UOF incidents. In these meetings, the footage is reviewed to determine if correct procedures have been followed and to highlight where improvements can be made and identify any training needs. Additionally, the reports are reviewed to ensure they are completed in the correct level of detail and again comments are fed back to the individuals and their line managers. Footage of an incident was reviewed in a meeting where PAVA spray was used for the first time in the prison. After careful consideration, including a further review by the central physical safety team, it was confirmed that the use had been appropriate.

There is also a monthly meeting to review the data and analysis report. A common theme is that young adults are more likely to be subject to UOF. There is also analysis of the statistics relating to UOF on Black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners. Sometimes the figures are unreliable due to small numbers of individuals with numerous incidents.

As a result of these reviews, it is considered necessary to try to improve the usage of body-worn video cameras. As the HMIP independent review of progress found in April:

‘There had been little progress in increasing effective use of body-worn cameras. They were available but were still not routinely activated or turned on too late to capture the entire incident. Managers were aware of the problem but attempts to encourage improvement had so far been ineffective.’

Since the scrutiny meetings were introduced, there has been gradual improvement in the use of body-worn video cameras although this is something that continues to require scrutiny by the Board.

A member of the IMB periodically attends the UOF meetings. However, the prison considers that our attendance is mandatory at these, which the Board considers is in conflict with our monitoring role and as observers of the process carried out.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

On entry to reception there is a body scanner, not dissimilar to those used in airports, to ensure that prisoners are not harbouring illicit items, without the need for the removal of any clothing. This is an intrusive system but far more dignified than the previously used body orifice search system (BOSS) chair. It picks up small items such as packages of drugs hidden within the person or even within the body itself. Prisoners found to have items concealed within their body will be taken to the segregation unit.

This machine is housed in the reception area where prisoners enter the prison from prison transportation. There is another such machine elsewhere in the prison used by staff to routinely check prisoners.

As a snapshot of the three months from March-May 2022, see below for the numbers of illicit items found in the prison.

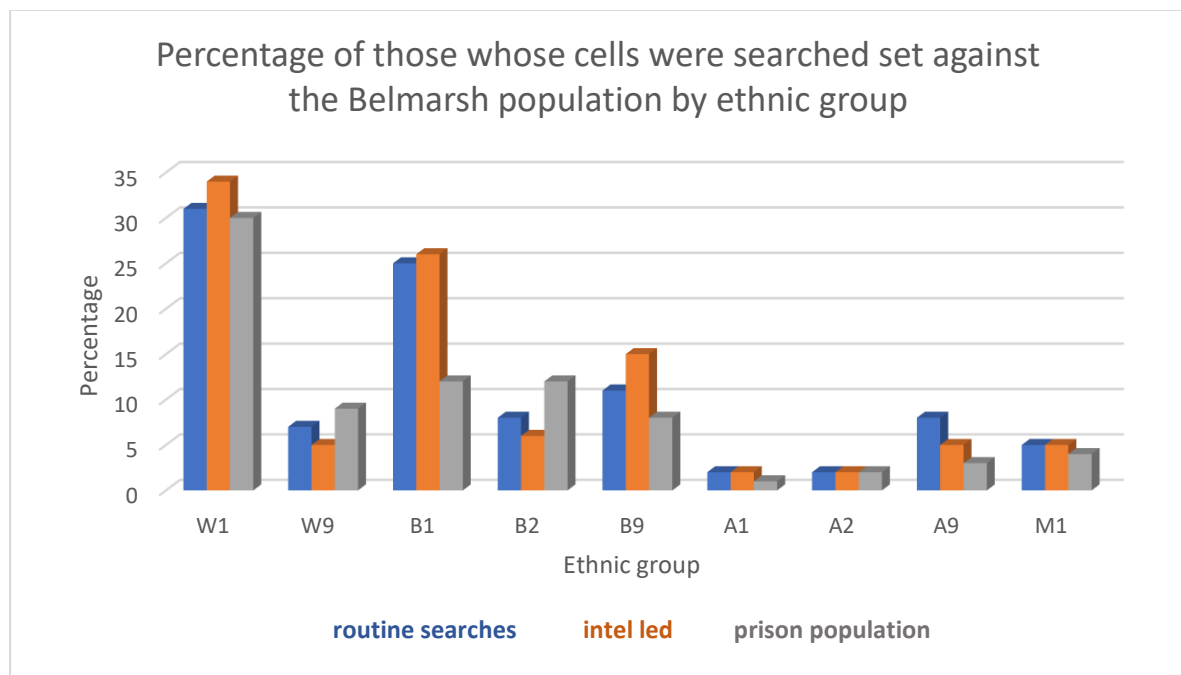
Item	Mar	Apr	May
Drugs	16	9	12
Weapons	7	4	13
Mobiles		4	3
Tobacco		2	
Sim cards			4
USBs		2	5
Hooch		2	1

These items may be discovered by routine or intelligence led cell searches, carried out by the dedicated search team (DST), mandatory periodic searches, regular category A searches and accommodation fabric checks, which are carried out on all prisoners, in their cells, every day. They can also be discovered by use of the body scanner, the itemiser (machine to detect drugs on paper), mobile phone detector, rub down searches, body searches in Reception and during the mandatory and voluntary drug testing procedures. Most items are found by searches in reception, use of the itemiser by sensors on incoming email, cell searches and the wands used by staff as people come into the prison.

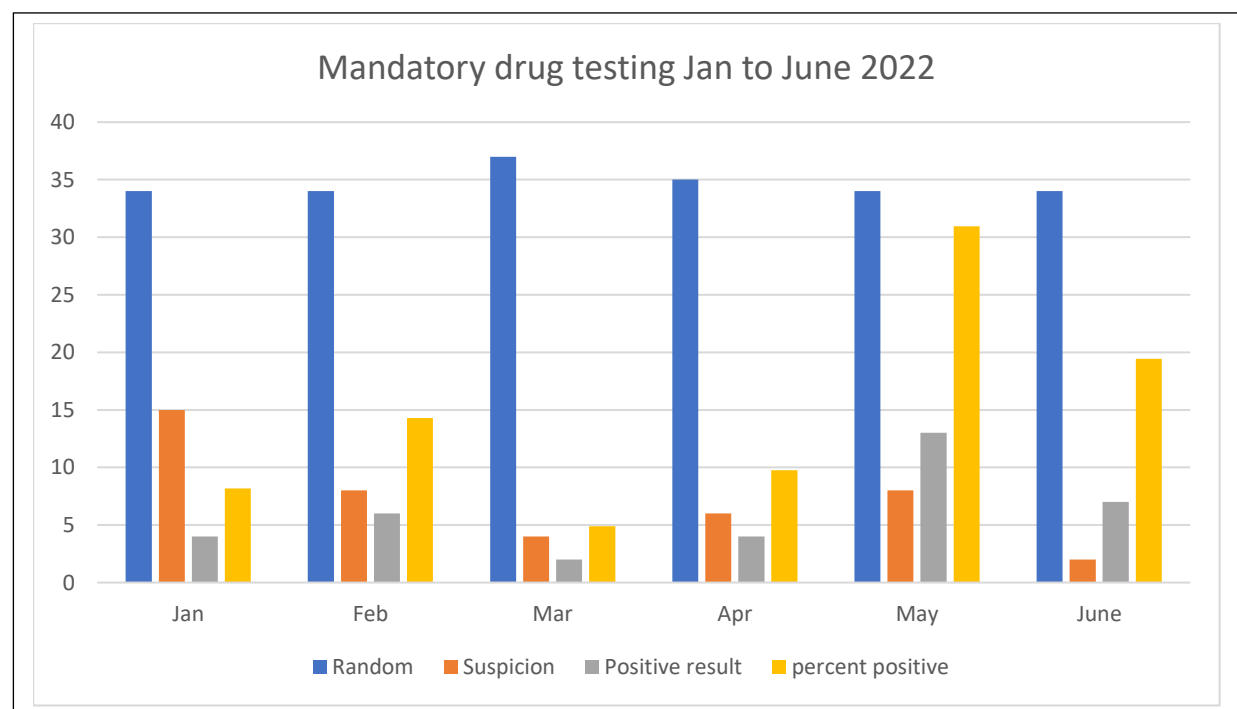
The table below shows searches carried out by DST over a period of time, broken down by ethnicity.

The table shows a remarkably similar pattern for routine searches and intelligence-led searches. Two of the three Black groups (B1 (Caribbean) and B9 (other Black background)) are overrepresented. There could be several explanations for this;

racial bias is one explanation. The Board will ask for and examine subsequent data over the coming year.



The prison is required to conduct a number of drug tests on prisoners. They select a random group and a group for which there is some intelligence that they may be using prohibited substances. There are also some prisoners who are regularly tested. The chart below shows, for the period Jan – Jun 2022, the number of random tests, tests done on suspicion, the number of positive results and the percentage of tests that show positive.



The table shows a marked rise in the number of positive results in the most recent months. Whether this suggests that the testing regime is more effective or that prisoners are getting more access to drugs is a question that remains to be answered.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The kitchen manages to provide nutritious food for all the prisoners in Belmarsh for £2.19 per person, each day. Food costs have risen around 9% this year, which is higher than the budget increase. Within that amount it is necessary to provide food for a very broad range of diets and individual special requirements. The special diets include kosher meals that cost in the region of £10 per day, halal, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and lactose-free. Additionally, some prisoners have a requirement for individually sealed meals.

There are few complaints from prisoners about food, although it was interesting to observe, in a recent staff survey, the following staff comment: 'poor quality, boring, menus the same and rarely updated.'

The kitchen manager has been holding bi-monthly meetings, since the end of the pandemic, with residential area representatives, giving them the opportunity to contribute their ideas to improve the food and menus provided. All suggestions are given consideration and implemented where practicable.

Temperature testing is carried out before the trolleys leave the kitchen and then in the residential areas, by the staff taking the trolleys. Wing servery reports are completed by each residential area and sent to the kitchen manager each week for review. These reports include daily temperature logs, wing servery cleaning check forms, wing manager check sheet and weekly food comments. Every two years, an external audit is carried out on these reports. In the last audit in November 2021, all areas received a green rating, except for one red rating, which related to the fabric and maintenance of the kitchen facilities (not under the control of the kitchen manager):

'The general appearance of the kitchen was 'tired'; the fabric being dull and worn in parts. A maintenance and repair programme is in place. Repairs are reported using the internal FM logging system. Once reported it is an exasperating drawn out process leading to repairs being completed. On many occasions prime equipment is out of use for several weeks or more.'

The Board hopes the prison will be able to allocate funds to address the issues referred to in this audit.

The Board is pleased to note that triple-occupancy cells are no longer in use throughout the prison. In many areas the third bed has been removed, so completing the transfer back to double occupancy. This programme is still underway, but the third bed will be retained in the triple-occupancy cells on houseblocks 3 and 4. It is understood that these are being retained as a fallback should they be required again, although there is an assurance that there is no current intention to bring back triple occupancy.

The resultant reduction in headcount in the prison has had a knock-on impact on food and clothing budgets.

The programme to renovate showers is ongoing, the work is complete in houseblock 2, in progress on houseblock 1 and yet to start on houseblock 3. On houseblock 4 a different contractor completed the work and the work is not up to standard and further maintenance is still being carried out. Although where completed the new showers are of a high standard, the Board is disappointed that staff do not ensure that cleaning is done to an adequate standard. The Board urges the prison to ensure that staff monitor the work undertaken by houseblock cleaners to ensure it is carried out to a decent standard.

As a result of the reduced headcount, the clothing budget was reduced and additionally during the pandemic recycling of clothes was not permitted, further reducing the clothing stock. Prisoners frequently get rid of clothing by flushing it down the toilet, resulting in severe blockages. As recycling is now permitted, it is hoped this practice will diminish.

5.2 High security unit (HSU) and segregation unit

5.2.1 HSU

For much of the second half of the year (February 2022 onwards), there has been a split regime in the HSU, due to staff shortages. This has led to many complaints from prisoners on the impact this has had on their time out of cell and their ability to have sufficient time for domestics, phone calls, gym and exercise. Additionally, there have been many problems reported relating to access to visits and video calls. These are down to problems with the system for managing visits orders and staff not being available to escort prisoners, which has significantly reduced the time available for the visit.

Regrettably there are several issues to report, mainly to do with the fabric and maintenance in this area, as detailed below:

- It is understood that the refurbishment of the showers in the HSU will start when the programme has been completed to renovate showers in the other residential areas. The refurbishment is long overdue, and the showers are in poor condition, difficult to keep clean and there are frequent problems with drainage and the waste system.
- There are problems with the heating system which appears to be difficult to regulate, resulting in complaints about being 'too hot/too cold'.
- There are continuing health issues around large amounts of pigeon droppings, particularly around the visits area in the HSU.
- The windows appear to be difficult to open to enable adequate ventilation.
- There have been complaints about little contact from governors in this area.

It is understood a new polytunnel for the gardening area was ordered in March but has not yet been used. Also, two horticulture instructors were engaged but are not yet working in this area. It has not been possible to progress these plans for the garden due to the split regime.

One issue referred to the Board is that of in-cell telephony. All the other residential areas in Belmarsh are allowed in-cell phones, but this facility is not currently allowed

within the HSU. This matter has been referred to the Prison Service who have corroborated this and confirmed that they will continue to monitor and review the current situation.

5.2.2 Segregation, special accommodation

HMP Belmarsh segregation unit has 16 cells in total. Fourteen cells are available for the general prisoner population on rule 45, rule 51, rule 53 and rule 55. One of these cells can be used for constant watch purposes where prisoners are at significant risk of self-harm. Two cells are designated for rule 46 prisoners – that is close supervision centre (CSC) prisoners. In addition, there are two special accommodation cells, which are used as places to which the most violent and recalcitrant prisoners, who are a significant risk to others or themselves, can be placed at the earliest opportunity for brief spells of time.

The Board observed that at least three-quarters of the 16 cells are generally in use. The constant watch cell was used on two occasions in the year for two different prisoners. There were three CSC prisoners in total during the year, but no more than two at any one time. Special accommodation was briefly used twice in the year; and on both occasions the Board was informed.

The segregation unit is staffed by a team of supervising officers (SOs) and prison officers, who are specifically recruited to work there. For CSC prisoners, the segregation unit receives an uplift of two staff per day. Every day, there are fresh challenges, where a firm but fair approach is paramount. Instances were observed throughout the year of officers supporting prisoners, who mostly do not want to be there and who could be violent and extremely difficult. In the year, there were several instances of officers attacked with improvised weapons and bodily fluids.

Segregation is meant to be a time-limited intervention and, indeed, from prison records, it is clear that most prisoners only stay for five to seven days. For longer stays, the Board is satisfied that alternatives are routinely explored and pursued if feasible. However, some prisoners stay for very long periods of time, the two most notable being one prisoner who was in the unit for his own protection and a CSC prisoner. Both were in the segregation unit for well over 200 days during the year.

Good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews take place more or less on time, in line with prison rules, and are chaired by a governor and attended by SOs and other prison officers from the unit, a nurse and a psychologist. While a few prisoners do not want to engage, most do, and their welfare, aspirations, doubts and requests are routinely discussed. The need for prisoners to be compliant with prison rules is made clear at these reviews. At the same time, the prison's commitment to help prisoners get back on track, and plan for the future inside or beyond Belmarsh, is evident. Those prisoners who choose not to attend their GOOD reviews are occasionally visited afterwards in their cells so that some form of discussion can take place.

Sometimes removal from a houseblock to the segregation unit needs to happen very quickly, especially when prisoners are being violent or there are intelligence-led security concerns. If prisoners need full explanations for their removal to the segregation unit, managers give them at GOOD reviews or in other ways, as soon as

they can. Some prisoners have complained to the Board that important medication did not arrive in the segregation unit for some time afterwards, perhaps for up to a day. However, the Board was assured that prisoners can take essential possessions including medication with them; or the houseblock nurse can ensure that medication is not left behind. Failing that, prisoners can alert medical staff on their daily rounds in the segregation unit to the medications they need.

As described in 4.1, where an object shows up on a body scan prisoners are brought to segregation until such time as the object is emitted. There were several instances in the year of prisoners denying they had secreted objects in their bodies, and of being re-tested many times. During this time, they were kept on the basic level of the incentives policy for non-compliance with the prison regime.

From time to time, prisoners with mental health problems, personality disorders or cognitive impairments are housed in the segregation unit. Some officers have shown concern about the suitability of such prisoners for segregation, despite the daily nurse visits and input from on-site psychology and psychiatric services.

Many prisoners arrive in the unit for breaches of various rules, for which have they either already lost privileges or lose them on arrival in the Unit. On basic IP level, these prisoners have nothing to do for many hours of the day.

With some prisoners, challenges arose when English was not their first language. Often Language Line can be used during reviews and meetings. But for one prisoner who neither read English nor hardly spoke it at all, officers went to considerable lengths to get him material in his own language from the library, and the internet, so that he could understand routine prison processes and instructions.

Quarterly meetings of the segregation monitoring and adjudications review group (SMARG) were held in the year, which Board members attended. At these meetings, useful data on segregated prisoners was presented. For example, at the January 2022 meeting, we learnt that for the October to December period, 47% of segregated prisoners were Black compared with 31% in the general prisoner population; and 45% of segregated prisoners were Muslim compared with 27% in the general prisoner population. The disproportionately high numbers of Black and Muslim segregated prisoners were noted, and explanations, including gang membership, were mentioned. It was agreed that further insight is needed, and the Board will continue to follow this up over the coming year.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

During the pandemic the safer prisons team largely took over the role of managing staff/prisoner relationships, through the maintenance of their Covid support log. They set up the friends/family hotline and functional email system and the Board is pleased to note that this function is still available. Additionally, guidance is available for concerned individuals to contact the electronic control room (ECR) out of hours.

As the prison has gradually moved out of the pandemic, there has been an attempt to reintroduce the key worker scheme. However, the main obstacle to this is the impact of varying staffing levels. As the scheme comes under the management of

the residence area, whenever staff numbers drop, the first function to be reduced is the key worker role. Even though, towards the end of the reporting year, Belmarsh has a full complement of staff, staff numbers are frequently reduced by assignments of staff to augment the houseblocks, to do detached duties or to do escort duties for example, thereby removing the time that was allocated for key worker duties.

Under the key worker scheme, all houseblock officers are assigned four prisoners as key workers and should be detailed to spend 45 minutes per prisoner every two weeks. An attempt is being made to retain one of the key concepts of the scheme, namely that of ensuring that a key worker remains with the same prisoner during his time in Belmarsh, wherever he may be accommodated. This is a desirable concept although it makes it more difficult to achieve the outcome and it is easier for officers to meet their assigned prisoners regularly when they are on the same houseblocks. Names of key workers are recorded on the digital prison service (DPS) system on the home page for each prisoner and key worker engagements are recorded in the case notes.

The DPS system provides statistics for key worker duties, which can be displayed for specific periods. The senior management team reviews these daily. The Board is pleased to note that the recording of key worker assignments and contact sessions is well recorded. Assignments are done in a timely manner but the compliance rate for key workers sessions is well below the required level and the Board urges the prison to allow sufficient time for key worker duties to be undertaken.

5.4 Equality and diversity

In recent years, the Board has commented on a lack of focus on equality, diversity and inclusion at Belmarsh. Last year, we commented that no meaningful reports or active analyses were available in any area.

In the current reporting year, there have been some significant developments. For example, a custodial manager was appointed to lead work on equality, diversity and inclusion. There is now the regular circulation of 'equality diversity inclusion' newsletters, alongside one-off announcements and leaflets to raise awareness of a variety of equality related matters. Prisoners access this information on their TV channel, while staff usually receive it via email. Often the public address system at Belmarsh issues key equality-related news and information.

In the year, prisoner equality representatives were consolidated and supported, and now cover all houseblocks. Staff equality representatives have been identified from most locations in the prison and these meet regularly. In addition, different senior figures have taken up a lead interest in one of the protected characteristics, and meetings are held on these strands.

Management-focused diversity and inclusion meetings were instigated in the reporting year, replacing the former prisoner equality action group meetings. Board members have attended these meetings where issues arising from representative or strand-based meetings is fed in. Importantly, at these and other meetings, such as the use of force review meetings and segregation monitoring and adjudications

review group (SMARG) (see sections 4.5 and 5.2.2 respectively), data broken down by several protected characteristics is routinely presented on key parts of prison life.

In April 2022, the prison's diversity and inclusion policy was circulated, and was accompanied by a launch meeting for all prison staff. The policy sets out the prison's responsibilities under the public sector equality duty, and presents equality statements that emphasise equality of opportunity, mutual respect, inclusivity, fairness and tolerance for staff and prisoners alike. Prison service instructions (PSIs), relevant to equality, are also cited. The policy announced an equality action plan for the prison; the use of equality analyses; and the regular review of equality-related data through His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)'s equality monitoring tool. The equality action plan, among other things, promises that trends from discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs), and discrimination-related complaints from Mercury reports will be monitored. In addition, reports and surveys from HMIP, the independent monitoring board for Belmarsh, and other sources will be routinely discussed.

The Board hopes that the plans and actions proposed in the diversity and inclusion policy will reinforce and promote the cultural and practical changes that the prison is trying to bring about. But more curiosity about age, ethnicity and religion breakdowns in relation to different aspects of prison life, and more action to understand and change apparent unfairness, is paramount.

One prisoner equality representative demonstrated that some of the prison data showed that prisoners placed on the basic level of the incentive scheme are more likely to be Black, while prisoners on the enhanced level are more likely to be White. This prisoner would have liked to see open and clear explanations for this disparity. Several prisoners claimed that they were being unfairly treated because of their ethnicity or religion. Prisoners told the Board they were subjected to adjudications, or denied work opportunities, visits or phone calls, because of their race or faith. The prison often had a different take on these incidents, and provided information to support their view, claiming that all prisoners are treated fairly. But against a backdrop of data, such as the incentives example cited above, and ethnicity and religion imbalances among segregated prisoners, it is easy to see why Black and Muslim prisoners have misgivings about their situation.

While the pandemic posed challenges to large group attendance at prayers and other observances, and for the timing of prayers, prison staff, chaplains and prisoners managed as best they could. For example, Friday prayers for some prisoners were held in the chapel, at flexible times, while others prayed elsewhere. The Board welcomed a gradual return to normality towards the end of the year.

Belmarsh houses about 20 prisoners with physical disabilities that seriously impair daily living and issues of cell sharing and the use of equipment in cells has arisen for some of them. Working with the prison, Greenwich Council has trained a team of care and support orderlies to help disabled and other vulnerable prisoners with activities of daily living. Several prisoners have reported this scheme to be helpful.

There are several transgender prisoners at Belmarsh and the prison has shown support to, and understanding of, these prisoners.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplains cover the main religions to be found at Belmarsh, most notably Christianity and Islam. Prisoners with or without faith are able to access support from the chaplains, who provide both pastoral and temporal care on a routine basis to many prisoners. Some prisoners have been supported by the chaplaincy as they attempt to retrieve missing property. Other prisoners have sought the chaplaincy's help in securing visits from family members. Others talked to the chaplaincy as they faced deportation; or coped with category A status and/or their sentence. Other prisoners spoke to the chaplaincy as they faced the challenges of being segregated, under constant watch, or subject to poor health.

The chaplaincy also helps to support newcomers to Belmarsh, who arrive from court or transfer from other prisons. Prisoners are spoken to privately as part of their induction to the prison, in the first night centre, to find out their religious and spiritual background, and any support they might need.

The chaplaincy also has a role in considering requests for prisoners to attend the funerals of family members and loved ones.

During the pandemic, much attention was given to the running of both Christian and Muslim services and prayers in the chapel, where flexibility in the use of the chapel, and the deployment of other locations, were key considerations. Occasionally, some prisoners complained about the emphasis given to Muslim festivals at the expense of non-Muslim observance. The Board believes that the prison was even-handed in its approach to faith.

The Church of England chaplain at Belmarsh is the lead chaplain, with responsibility for protection of religion and belief. Both he and an imam attend the prison's major equality meetings.

5.6 Incentives schemes

This is now known as the incentive policy Framework, previously IEP. The levels are set nationally although there is some flexibility to allow local changes. There are different allocations for convicted and unconvicted prisoners at the three levels of basic, standard and enhanced. A prisoner can apply for enhanced status and is expected to have demonstrated a high level of compliance and attendance at activities over the previous three-month period (soon to be reduced to two months). If a prisoner drops down a level, this is reviewed after 28 days and every seven days thereafter.

5.7 Complaints

The prison has a prisoner complaints policy framework governing the way in which a prisoner can make a complaint, and the expected response times. The complaints system is managed from the business hub, which directs the flow of complaints, monitors follow up and produces monthly management reports.

During the IMB reporting year to the end of June 2022, there were 2,392 Comp 1 complaints made, with a further 147 Comp 1As made to appeal the prison's decisions. A further 720 Comp 2 confidential access complaints were made to the Governor. Of the normal complaints, the major areas are as follows:

- reception – 12.8%
- residential issues – 12.7%
- property – 11.4%
- canteen orders – 6.2%
- catalogue orders – 5.8%
- activity allocations – 5.7%
- telephone requests – 4.6%

The response times of the prison in meeting the five-day turnaround target has steadily improved during the year to around 93% in June.

During rota visits, it has sometimes been noted that no complaint forms have been readily available in the designated areas for prisoners to access.

Applications to the IMB have more than doubled over the year (see chart on page 36).

In addition to the usual applications regarding for example property and visits, many more are of a complicated nature taking extended time to resolve.

5.8 Property

This area is problematic. Staff are frequently redeployed elsewhere in the prison and this has an impact on them attending to property and queries. Tasks have to be prioritised and property appears to be bottom of the list, often put back to the weekend when there are less staff to take it on. As noted in 5.7, complaints about property are high and prisoners are frustrated when their valuables appear lost.

The Board is seriously concerned about the amount of property that is lost during transit and after arrival at the prison. Complaints about property and reception taken together amount to almost one quarter of all complaints, and frequently relate to valuable (both sentimental and financial) items that have been lost by the Prison Service or in the courts system. These figures mirror the applications made by prisoners to the IMB where almost 30% relate to property issues.

Items lost during transfer between prisons continue to be disturbingly high, despite the commitments made by HMPPS over several years to reform the property system. The system continues to rely on the manual recording of tags on prisoner property bags on transfer, and a hand-written property card itemising every item in the prisoner's possession.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare in Belmarsh continues to be run by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, and by Change Grow Live, who provide social care services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The Oxleas team had vacancies for both the head and deputy head of healthcare during the year. The deputy head post was filled in June, but the head of healthcare remains vacant. Additional management input has been made from the regional team. Both inpatient and outpatient services are provided by Oxleas.

Segregation reviews are done on a regular schedule every Monday afternoon, with healthcare in attendance. The application of the ACCT process for managing at-risk prisoners has been variable across the prison and is regularly monitored by the IMB with feedback provided to the prison. Several initiatives have been implemented during the year to improve the quality of the ACCT process. (see 4.2)

A monthly patient council meeting was re-instituted in April 2022, involving formal healthcare representatives from each of the four house blocks. Oxleas is represented by several clinical and support staff who can take issues away to be resolved.

At the beginning of December 2021, prison staff changes resulted in several improvements in the ambience and provision of the healthcare centre. The area had become shabby and uninviting having seen little new initiative for some time.

The area has now been painted with new pictures and motivational posters on display. What was previously a little used association room has been transformed into a sensory room. While only a small area, when completed this could provide relief for prisoners, especially those suffering from mental health issues. In addition, the equipment in the exercise yard has been replaced and prisoners are starting to use it more.

Efforts have been put in place to improve staff training in healthcare. Nurses have provided mental health training; and staff have visited Rampton hospital and have a contact at Broadmoor hospital.

‘Ward rounds’, which were questioned by the IMB, as the amount of staff present could be intimidating for a prisoner, are being reviewed and slimmed down.

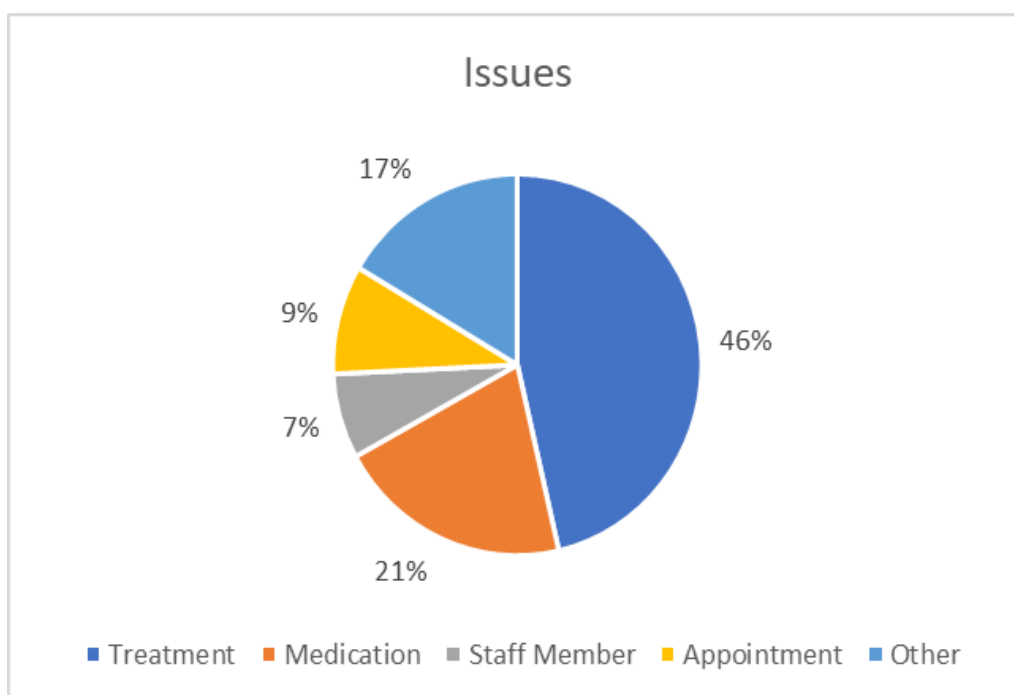
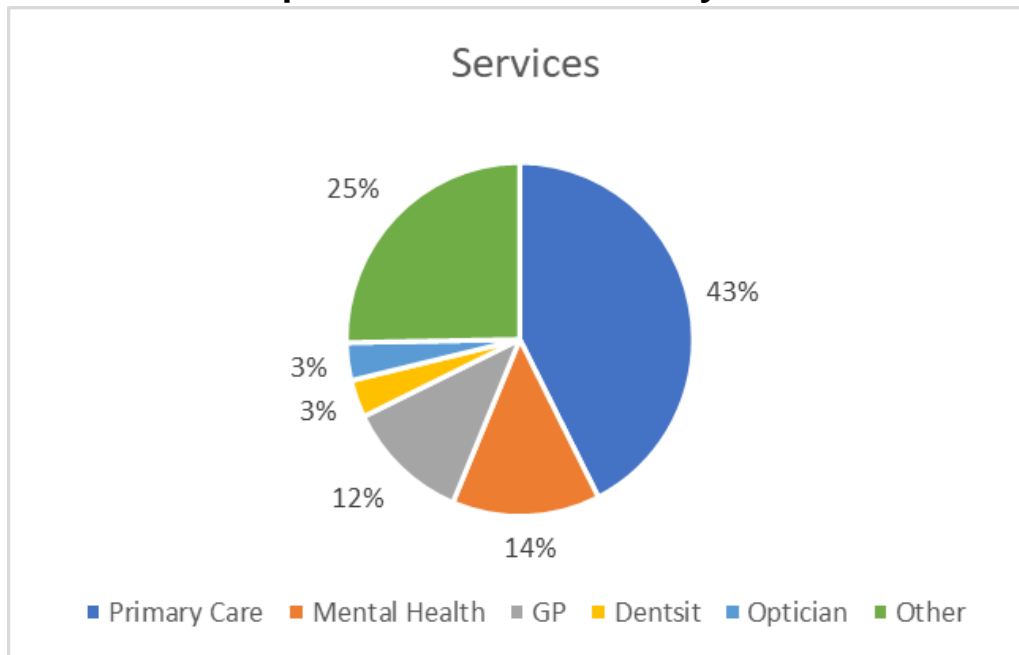
The in-patient unit is usually completely full and prisoners who are unwell, physically or mentally may have to wait for a place. Sometimes this issue is exacerbated by the fact that prisoners in the unit are waiting for a place in a secure mental health hospital and these are limited, requiring sometimes months of assessment before a place can be allocated. This matter was included in last year’s annual report with a question to the minister but as yet there has been no improvement.

Oxleas manages a healthcare complaints system. There were a total of 52 complaints and 45 requests submitted over a six-month period, with an average response time of eight days. In the same period, the prison’s own complaints system

(referenced in Section 5.7) received 30 healthcare complaints (which are referred immediately to healthcare), while the IMB received only four applications concerning healthcare matters.

The following graphic from Oxleas shows a summary since the start of 2022 as Covid restrictions began to be lifted:

Healthcare complaint statistics: January 2022 – June 2022



6.2 Physical healthcare

Regular outpatient clinics are run in a similar manner to healthcare in the community. The prison also has an inpatient facility, mainly treating prisoners with serious and continuing mental health problems.

From the outpatient services, there are two recurring issues:

- Medication and dispensing. Healthcare is continuing to address the balance between having medication available when it needs to be taken against excessive 'in possession' medication which could be dangerous. The pharmacy team have been proactive in addressing these concerns.
- Dentistry. The provision of dentistry services has been variable during the year, and Oxleas has just contracted to a different dental service, which hopefully will show improvements.
-

Issues over prisoners attending their appointments in outpatients continue to arise when there are conflicts with gym, education, and activities or when there are not enough staff to escort them to and from healthcare.

A related issue expressed by several prisoners in patient council and to the IMB is around access to private dental care. The Governor has confirmed that this is not available to sentenced prisoners, based on HMPPS directives. The new dental service provider, subject to logistical issues around escorts, can arrange specialist treatment.

6.3 Mental health

The healthcare inpatient unit within Belmarsh has the capacity for approximately 30 patients, in small wards, individual cells and constant watch cells, primarily for prisoners with serious mental health conditions. Regular reviews take place, which may result in prisoners being discharged to the house blocks or segregation, or in severe cases to secure mental health facilities in the community. There is continuing pressure on the number of beds in healthcare. The Board regularly sees the residents of the inpatient unit and identifies issues they may have to the management team in weekly rota reports.

6.4 Social care

The prison, supported by Greenwich Council, manages social care needs on an individual basis. These needs are reviewed at the weekly SIM meeting, which is attended by a council representative who is very knowledgeable about the prisoners and their needs and will clarify what is required to ensure safety and wellbeing. The majority of these prisoners have the support of a care and support orderly. Some use a wheelchair or crutches. There are a few larger cells to accommodate a wheelchair, but there have been occasions when these have not been sufficient. However, most prisoners requiring social care who were spoken to have been satisfied with the support they have received, particularly from the care and support orderly prisoners.

6.5 Exercise, regime

As the prison came out of Covid lockdown, time out of cell was limited to approximately two hours per day, unless the prisoner had an orderly role or was participating in the limited activities available during Covid restrictions.

The prison has taken a cautious approach to reintroduction of the regime, very gradually allowing more prisoners to move about the prison to their various activities. While this issue has been carefully controlled to reduce conflicts, it has meant that prisoners have had reduced time for exercise and association. Shortages of staff at particular times have also limited a full regime.

Gym sessions have opened up during the reporting period, and by June 2022, the gym staff were delivering around 50% of the planned delivery hours. It has been difficult to recruit qualified staff to this area of the prison and it is hoped that by Christmas 2022 there will be a full quota. Meanwhile prisoners have said they enjoy the gym, several saying it supports their mental health and they are satisfied with the equipment. Many prisoners have missed their gym sessions however due to a continuing strict regime or lack of staff to accompany them to and from the area, while others complain that allocations are not fairly distributed.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Prisoners are assessed on arrival at Belmarsh and referred to relevant agencies as needed. Agencies, such as Change, Grow, Live (CGL) and Pathways to Recovery, support those who have problems with substance abuse. Almost a third of the prison population is on substance rehabilitation.

Prisoners who have problems with addiction or substance abuse are supported on the houseblocks by other prisoners and staff. Some staff are very skilled in recognising the effects of certain substances and can act accordingly. Additionally many are sympathetic and supportive to the needs of those with addictions and supportive. Other staff however may need more training in this area.

Pathways to Recovery is the psychosocial substance misuse service whose aim is to support those with drug or alcohol use that is having a detrimental effect on their wellbeing, health, families or wider community. Anyone using heroin, methadone or subutex, or withdrawing from alcohol, will be seen by a Pathways to Recovery worker in the first night centre. Self-referral is common on arrival, but staff members, peer mentors or other agency worker may refer service users.

In-cell support packs continue to be offered, and positively, attendance to group sessions is on the rise. However, the current split regime can mean that education and work requirements sometimes interfere with prisoners making it to groups. CGL management advise that regular meetings take place with governors and activities to address this.

Tobacco: Belmarsh has been a no smoking prison for some time. Vaping is allowed and there are several schemes run by Oxleas, which include ways and means to stop smoking altogether. Prisoners may purchase and use tobacco patches.

Alcohol: This is another issue for many prisoners. Alcohol is not allowed in Belmarsh but there is help for those struggling with this addiction, including an Alcoholics Anonymous group that meets regularly.

Drugs: Several prisoners are in drug related debt, and this can lead to violence and self-isolation. The prison aims to keep a record of those known to be in debt and support where necessary, however this record is not regularly updated.

6.7 Soft skills

This area has not been seen as a priority over the past year, although various departments are taking the initiative for example the aforementioned sensory room in the healthcare centre. Peer mentors have been organising an event, 'Body Mind Soul' which will hopefully involve several prisoners.

During the year, given Covid restrictions, little progress was made towards providing opportunities for music and art. The Board is hopeful that time will be found over the coming year to prioritise those areas which promote wellbeing, personal development and mutual support.

7. Progression and resettlement

It is clear that the majority of prisoners are aware of the opportunities available to them in order to make their stay purposeful and, for some, to assist their preparation for release. Some have been happy to share their aims and how they plan to achieve them through work or education. They continue to complain however about inequalities, confusions, miscommunications and tedium. Several prisoners have stated to the IMB that they feel their stay in prison is without purpose.

The manager of the activities hub has the role of ensuring that risk assessments are fair and regularly reviewed but has been limited by safety concerns regarding category A prisoners or those with conflicts with other prisoners. Those prisoners who have a low educational level or require ESOL would be expected to attend education to complete level 1. Prisoners who are on remand are not compelled to attend any activity although some choose to.

The undertaking that category A prisoners will have the opportunity to apply for (previously) prohibited or new roles, has been progressed through the initiative of the activities hub manager working in conjunction and liaising with the head of security and is welcome progress. It is the intention of the manager to further increase opportunities wherever feasible.

7.1 Education, library

In recent months, prisoners have begun to attend their education once more in the Milton Keynes College (MKC) area of the prison. The college area is tidy, and displays are attractive. As in workshops, numbers in attendance at any class are very limited and while classes look interesting and prisoners appear engaged, the area is not the lively hub it was before the pandemic. Attendance at education has grown, bearing in mind the small numbers, to between 80 and 90 per cent of those allocated.

Lessons focus on the basics: English and maths at different levels, ESOL and some information technology (IT). Other classes are promised soon. Very few prisoners are as yet attempting to gain qualifications in any area of education. Rewards and incentives in education, which made a good start with a display showing a prizewinner's name and their achievement, petered out and while the display remains it is now merely historic.

Staff shortages or complications with the regime has meant that it is not always possible to get prisoners to education on time and this is frustrating for prisoners and waiting staff alike.

New education staff have been appointed to MKC and the prison and the Board is hopeful that educational provision and opportunities for achievement will progress at a faster pace once they are in post: in particular accredited learning and support for ESOL prisoners which saw some improvement over the past year

The library at Belmarsh is a rich and sadly understated resource. For an array of reasons, it did not open until June 2022 and then initially for a very small number of prisoners. At the time of this report the capacity is 24 prisoners, although this has not

been observed. Throughout the pandemic and beyond the librarians worked tirelessly to keep up interest, providing a variety of paper activities for prisoners in addition to fulfilling book requests. These activities are still available and include provision for ESOL prisoners in more than nine languages.

The library is attractive and extremely well stocked with a variety of books to suit all interests, updated regularly. It is also a quiet retreat where prisoners can browse, play chess, research or study. One prisoner explained how prisoners on his houseblock share books and recommend them to each other. At present prisoners can only attend during association time, which is limiting for some who wish to shower, or attend to other necessities. Previously prisoners in education classes would spend 20 minutes in the library as a break from their lessons. It is disappointing to find that this is no longer the case.

A timely arrival at the library depends on all movement going well. One group of prisoners were kept in the holding room for almost an hour before being escorted there. Apparently, this can happen quite regularly, meaning prisoners arrive feeling stressed having wasted their time.

7.2 Vocational training, work

A labour board is held weekly and gives good opportunities for prisoners to find work while keeping necessary vacancies filled. Recently there have been 379 jobs available and 341 filled. At that time, 122 prisoners were seen to be unemployed. Some prisoners have complained that certain ethnicities have been overlooked when employment decisions are made. The IMB has discussed this with activities hub managers and continues to investigate this matter.

Over the year the workshops in the prison have gradually opened. In May 2022 there was 100 percent attendance of those allocated to workshops although numbers are still limited.

It is disappointing to note that the horticulture workshop that looked so promising a year ago has still not opened for logistical reasons. All the more disappointing is the fact that this provision was to be for the HSU, which is severely lacking in any form of activity. Similarly, a dry lining workshop initiated last year is yet to materialise. This workshop would provide training for prisoners from an external company and a guaranteed local job interview on release.

In January 2022, progress in workshops sheets were introduced to show a prisoner's progress in terms of behaviour and work achievements. These booklets should follow the prisoner if they transfer and could support a CV in preparation for work on release. They are not as yet used in all workshops, however.

While the textiles workshop continues to provide a useful occupation, most prisoners are attending so that they can build up enough attendance to be eligible for the envied post of houseblock orderly.

Barista training – a week-long intensive course ending with a City and Guilds certificate – was well received, as it was lively and practical. It would be useful to see if any prisoners make use of this training once released but this information does not

appear to be available. Apart from this training, no qualification or certification has been awarded to any prisoner for work achievement so there is nothing of note to support job realisation on release.

There are two teabags workshops, one for vulnerable prisoners on their spur, and one in the main workshop area. While both appear noisy and industrious, the work is demeaning. A prisoner stated, 'I'm just wasting my time'. This work is demoralising and without purpose.

Despite freezing conditions due to a broken heat pump, prisoners working in the recycling centre have again saved the prison over three thousand pounds. For several months these prisoners have continued to request permission to have showers when they return after working, but this problem has still not been fully resolved.

The reopening of the industrial cleaning skills workshop is due; this previously offered accreditation on completion.

Prisoners who are employed in the kitchen have spoken proudly of their work and the fact that they are trusted. This is a coveted role although the hours are long. One prisoner said, 'Things have really improved for me since I moved houseblock and got this job'.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Integral to offender management, the key worker scheme should provide the prisoner with a consistent single point of contact, to coordinate and sequence an individual's journey through custody and post release (see 5.3). However, key work can only take place when a full complement of staff is operational and this is not generally the case across the prison. An exercise is underway to re-profile key worker allocations, allowing for more opportunity for key work to take place. Currently, whilst prison offender managers (POMs) still see their prisoners, there will be no key worker reports available.

Offender assessment system (OASys) risk assessments are a requirement for all sentenced prisoners. These are time bound and due dates are calculated based on the type of sentence. The process is tracked by the offender management unit (OMU) and at the time of reporting, Belmarsh has 319 allocated cases. Court appearances have impacted OASys when transfer holds are over-ridden for court cases elsewhere.

Last year it was reported that remote working of the Parole Board and Home Office Immigration Enforcement affected the work of the OMU. The Parole Board continues to convene meetings over video link as and when necessary, and it is now reported to be working well and no longer seen to be detrimental.

There were 26 prisoners being held on IS91s (immigration warrants) at the end of June 2022. Several of these were frustrated at the length of time taken to process their case.

During the reporting period, 735 prisoners have been released and of these 56 were released on home detention curfew (HDC). There is a target to release those entitled to be on HDC within 14 days of their eligibility date. However, this is at the mercy of external agencies collecting information and supplying the OMU with this to assist release and there are backlogs within the police and social care, which cause delays.

The prison has seen an increase in imprisonment for public protection (IPP) and life sentenced prisoners, and at present there are 88 such prisoners held.

Offending behaviour programmes (OBP)

Accredited and validated programmes are running. Accredited programmes include Resolve and TSP (thinking skills programme) and validated programmes include Foundation and M&E (motivation and engagement).

Resolve focuses on general violent offending, but nationally this is being discontinued and will no longer be available at HMP Belmarsh as from September 2022. To replace Resolve, a new programme called Identity Matters will be introduced next year, which will hopefully help address gang violence.

The OBP team is looking to increase its work with the young adult population through providing a TSP group for young adults.

The OBP team is working within priority guidance, meaning those being released within the next twelve months must be prioritised. Demand is reported as being down in the last six months due to the Covid shut down and programmes not having been run for a long time. Since restarting programmes, only small groups of three or four participants take place and attendance can still be challenging due to the regime. Group attendance is mixed from all houseblocks and attending a programme will mean that some prisoners will always miss a certain amount of association time and gym, which can make attendance problematic. Conflict management also plays a part; as delivery takes place in a single houseblock, eligibility is not only based upon conflict within the room but prisoners are also assessed for any conflict within the houseblock itself.

Currently prisoners receive 70p/80p for attending a single session. Realistically, if there is an activity that pays more, then prisoners are likely to choose that over attending a programme. Whilst completing OBPs does not automatically reduce risk, there is the opportunity for prisoners to have a post-programme review with their prison offender manager (POM) or community offender manager (COM) and the programmes team to discuss further progression; this shows their willingness to engage, progress and complete their sentence plans.

7.4 Family contact

Unlike last year, face-to-face visits were able to take place throughout the year, although restrictions remained in place on the number of visits and visitors. The pandemic also disrupted the provision of the crèche and the tea bar in the visits hall and caused changes to the rules on handing in property, all of which diminished the visiting experience. Localised Covid outbreaks during the year resulted in changes to

the restrictions that, while unavoidable, led to inconsistency and frustration for prisoners and their families.

While prisoners generally accepted the restrictions in place, the Board received many complaints about the difficulty in booking visits. The on-line system was unavailable for almost the whole of the year, a situation that the Board finds unacceptable. This was a central IT problem, which HMPPS were responsible for resolving. The failure to do so for such a long period was disturbing.

The unavailability of online booking obviously caused pressure on the telephone system and was the subject of many complaints to the Board. It was not until the autumn of 2021 that a second telephone line was installed. To ease the problems, in October 2021, the prison reinstated the facility to book in person in the visitors' centre. This helped but complaints continued. One problem is that the telephone queuing system that was introduced does not tell callers where they are in the queue; they merely hear the ring tone. Anecdotal evidence is of callers ringing an average of 30 times before being connected.

Prisoners had been complaining to the Board about delays in arrival in the visits hall thus reducing the time spent with their families. One cause of delay for visitors was the added time needed for the Covid-secure process to be completed. The Board was pleased therefore that in July 2021 the prison adjusted the opening times of the visitors' centre to allow more time for this to take place. As to the delay for prisoners themselves, this is part of a wider problem with freeflow that is not as efficient as it might be. The Board understands that this is being examined to identify where the failings lie and hopes that it will soon be resolved.

On a positive note, during the year, the prison started weekly family days that have proved a big success. For example, on one occasion a Board member witnessed 24 families enjoying the experience after much effort was put in by staff and the Pact team. Families join in games, quizzes, and competitions with prizes awarded at the end of the day. A professional photographer is on hand and photographs can be bought on the day. Lunch is provided. The Board congratulates the prison for this support for family contact.

There are particular problems with family contact for HSU prisoners. The discrete visits hall, although refurbished, is presently not in use because of contamination by pigeons. Various solutions have been considered but none so far have been successful. The Board will monitor this in the coming year. There is an added problem with social video calls that are often subject to delay and even cancellation. The cause is an organisational one that means that, if face-to-face visits in the main prison overrun, it affects the provision of staff to run social video calls in the HSU. There is a plan that, once the prison moves to Stage 1, the HSU will be provided with its own laptop which would resolve the problem.

Secure social video calls (provided by Purple Visits) more generally have had problems this year. This is a pity given their successful innovation and their popularity with prisoners with distant families or with families who have difficulties that restrict transport. The issue is an IT one in that problems are not being resolved

as quickly as once was the case. This has led to the cancellation or failure of calls causing distress to those involved.

The demographic of HMP Belmarsh is now 70% remand prisoners. Their entitlement to visits is three times that of sentenced prisoners and there are indications that this is increasing the pressure on the availability of visits. The Board will continue to monitor this in the coming year.

7.5 Resettlement planning

It was a key concern in the recommendations of the HMIP report, August 2021, that the decision to stop resettlement workers providing advice and support to remand prisoners was a significant loss to these prisoners, who made up 70% of the population and the recommendation was that all prisoners, including those on remand, should be able to access resettlement advice and support to prepare them for their release into the community. The subsequent HMIP independent review of progress, conducted in April 2022, reported that whilst the Probation Service had plans to address this in the future, there was still no formal resettlement support for this group of prisoners. This situation remains unresolved.

The probation service now commissions services under the 'transforming rehabilitation' initiative. They provide advice and guidance on all housing matters including tenancy rescue, and support to find and access accommodation for people who would otherwise be homeless on release from prison and help to access benefits available to them.

Currently, St. Mungo's housing team are working with a caseload of ten. They have resumed seeing referrals face to face. However, this service is only for prisoners with housing needs within the Greater London boroughs. Referrals requiring accommodation outside of these boroughs, which cannot be dealt with by St. Mungo's, can face complication and backlogs. These prisoners are referred via their COM, to Seetec housing brokerage who do not have a presence within the prison.

Late referrals are flagged to the St Mungo's community team. These can unfortunately happen quite often, as referrals can be extremely last minute especially for prisoners on 14-day recall.

It is of concern that a very good scheme provided by 'AEFEO', working alongside St Mungo's, is closing in at least four London boroughs later in the year. This is an ex-offender accommodation scheme enabling housing for younger and medium risk prisoners. It is felt this will leave a hole in resources for prisoners leaving Belmarsh that will not be easily replaced.

Finance benefit and debt support is still provided to those on remand by the resettlement team, but priority is given to those within their final twelve weeks. The resettlement team no longer works with prisoners with a high risk of serious harm as these needs are primarily met by the community offender manager. This includes housing referrals to St. Mungo's. However, the resettlement team still supports high-risk prisoners who require help with debt and bank accounts.

It was noted in last year's report that prisoners had raised the issue that identity cards issued in prison (called citizen cards) are not accepted for finance, housing and employment and that the discharge letters issued by HMP Belmarsh are not recognised by outside bodies. A new pilot will hopefully be started at Belmarsh, which would allow those from the UK in their final twelve weeks of sentence, to obtain a birth certificate at no cost.

The work of the IMB

After the turbulence of the previous year, this year has been a calm, if rather busy one. Our temporary chair left after the 18-month period allowed and a new chair was appointed in January 2022.

The success of our recruitment campaign from November 2020 was short lived as we remain with just two of the original appointees from that time. Reasons for the others not continuing with the process were various but the wait for counter terrorism clearance (CTC) did not help. Luckily our two new members have shown great commitment and supported the Board in many ways. However, the shortage of members has resulted in a heavy workload for all those on the Board. There has recently been a new recruitment campaign across three prisons in the area resulting in three new board members for Belmarsh.

While all IMB visits to the prison are now physical apart from the occasional remote attendance at prison meetings the Board still update each other regularly by e-mail to share and compare information and ideas.

A new clerk was appointed earlier this year and she has carried out her duties in a calm and supportive manner. We are extremely grateful to her for her organisation of our monthly Board meetings, IT support and availability.

We are also grateful to the Governor's secretary who ensures we receive all useful mail, which helps us to follow the day-to-day functioning of the prison. In addition to this she ensures that our weekly rota reports are responded to in a timely fashion.

Relationships with staff have improved considerably. We all have a lot of respect for the work that they do in challenging circumstances and are grateful that they give their time to answer our questions and queries and to share information about prisoners.

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	323
Total number of segregation reviews attended	46

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	13
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives, sanctions	4	16
C	Equality	6	9
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	18
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	65
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	20
F	Food and kitchens	8	13
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	26	70
H1	Property within this establishment	27	28
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	24	36
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	5	9
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	13	19
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	66	87
K	Transfers	10	24
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	67
	Total number of applications	224	494



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