



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Lancaster Farms**

**For reporting year  
February 2021 – January 2022**

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## Introductory sections 1 – 3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Description of the establishment**

HMP Lancaster Farms is a category C resettlement prison, with accommodation for around 560 adult male prisoners at the end of the reporting year.

The prison benefits from having a large open central area with grass and flowerbeds, large communal spaces on each wing, and buildings that are generally in a fair state of repair. Most wing accommodation is in single cells; however, the number of double cells with bunk beds has increased in recent years. There are now four cells specially adapted for prisoners with reduced mobility.

The prison was opened in 1993 as a youth offender institution but later converted into an adult male prison. While it has an attractive layout, some buildings are beginning to show signs of wear and tear. The prison has four main residential blocks, each divided into two wings. Outside of the pandemic, there is a dedicated first night unit (FNU) for prisoners recently arrived at the prison. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic and for much of the reporting year one wing of the four main residential blocks continued to be designated as a reverse cohorting unit (RCU) to accommodate and quarantine new prisoners for their first two weeks at the prison. The FNU was also used as an additional RCU for some periods.

The care and separation unit (CSU) holds 12 prisoners. Accommodation is provided in single cells, two of which have closed-circuit television installed. In addition, there are two special cells.

A number of prison services are provided on a contracted-out basis. Healthcare services are provided by Spectrum Community Health CIC ('Spectrum'). Spectrum also provides the substance misuse service, with mental health services sub-contracted to Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust and pharmacy services being managed in-house. Rehabilitation services are provided by Sodexo Justice Services and Purple Futures, with both companies contracting Seetec to deliver resettlement. The prison maintenance contract is undertaken by Amey plc. Novus delivers education services under the offender learning and skills service (OLASS) contract.

Normally, the prison has a positive community engagement with local schools and with the University of Lancaster but these activities have been highly constrained due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Strong links exist with local football clubs and there have been many excellent charitable collections/donations by staff and prisoners.

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

- 3.1.1 The Covid-19 outbreak continued to have an impact on the Board's reporting activity.
- 3.1.2 While the Board recognises the enormous difficulties facing the Prison Service since the onset of the pandemic, we have raised concerns regarding the wearing of masks and social distancing within the prison. While managers have urged compliance, the implementation was sometimes limited during the reporting year. Given the particular risks affecting both prisoners and staff held or working within a confined area, it was imperative that as much could be done at the earliest opportunity to reduce virus transmission.
- 3.1.3 Unlike in 2020, the Board has maintained a full presence at the prison. In addition, for part of the year, additional information was shared with the Board by email on weekdays. Sadly, by autumn 2021 information was no longer provided by the prison to Board members via the secure CJSM system. And from December 2021 there has been no Board clerk.
- 3.1.4 Prisoners were able to contact the Board by paper-based applications or via a national freephone telephone service. The Board was able to respond to prisoners using the 'email-a-prisoner' system. Arrangements were in place in spring 2021 and in the RCU for prisoners to submit paper-based applications to the Board, using sealed envelopes passed to prison staff. Overall, the Board notes that the total number of applications received was slightly higher than that in the previous reporting year.
- 3.1.5 For part of the reporting year, most Board members responded to requests from the prison to avoid face-to-face meetings with prisoners on the RCU or in accommodation wings with known Covid-19 infections. Throughout this period, the Board received support from prison staff, including telephone calls to units with pandemic outbreaks, in its efforts to continue monitoring the fair and humane treatment of prisoners and their preparation for release.
- 3.1.6 Responses to the Covid-19 outbreak by the Prison Service and by the Governor have had many consequences for the experience of prisoners held within HMP Lancaster Farms. These responses are reflected in many of the comments in the evidence sections of this report.
- 3.1.7 The Board notes that the major impact of the pandemic on prisoners has been the policy to reduce significantly the amount of time out of cell for association or purposeful activities. While these measures were undoubtedly aimed at reducing infection risks, the Board notes that enforced confinement within cells for over 20 hours per day, for periods of many months, does not in itself appear to be consistent with humane treatment of prisoners. By the autumn, the Board was also alerted to problems in staffing the prison. Staff shortages led to further reductions in some out-of-cell activities. In summary, the Board would prefer to see more time for association and purposeful activities.

- 3.1.8 Notwithstanding the concern recorded in paragraph 3.1.7, the Board also notes that many prisoners arriving during the year have offered feedback that the regime at HMP Lancaster Farms has allowed more time out of cells than the regimes experienced at other establishments.

## **3.2 Main judgements**

### **How safe is the prison?**

- 3.2.1 The Board's monitoring of the prison continues to reveal that the Governor and prison staff work hard to offer and, to a large extent, succeed in providing a safe environment for the accommodation of prisoners at HMP Lancaster Farms. The Board has observed effective management of risks at safety intervention meetings and successful collaboration between key workers, safer custody, custodial managers, the mental health team and the chaplaincy.
- 3.2.2 From the start of the pandemic, significant steps were taken to increase the safety of prisoners by reducing infection risk, notably the introduction of the emergency regime to organise time out of cells in cohorts, the reduction of prisoner movement and activities, and the management of transfers into the prison via an RCU. During the year, measures such as temperature checking at the gate and lateral flow tests were employed also to control the pandemic. The Board acknowledges that these measures were successful at controlling the spread of the virus within the prison. However, as noted in paragraph 3.1.2, the Board believes that the wearing of face coverings by staff and limiting the numbers of staff in wing offices at any one time could have been more rigorously implemented.
- 3.2.3 The Board notes the continuation of high levels of self-harm among a small handful of prisoners, many of whom have challenging and complex mental health needs yet continue to be accommodated at the establishment rather than transferred to more specialist and secure mental health facilities.
- 3.2.4 Levels of violence, prisoner debt and substance misuse appear to have reduced during the pandemic, in parallel with the limited time out of cells, movement around the prison and number of prisoners within each cohort out of cells. The Board welcomes the improvements in safety, but it is regrettable that this has been by default because of the pandemic and reduced time out of cell. However, it is noted that the number of instances of use of force and the number of assaults on staff and between prisoners have all reduced substantially.

### **How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?**

- 3.2.5 The Board believes that, to a large extent, prisoners at HM Lancaster Farms are treated fairly and humanely, with considerable care taken by prison staff to treat prisoners with decency and respect. The Board noted the support given to prisoners during the pandemic, such as extra PIN telephone credit,

diversion materials and snack packs, and wellbeing checks where appropriate. Positive acknowledgement is given to the introduction of in-cell telephony in November 2021.

- 3.2.6 Responses to the pandemic, while undoubtedly aimed at increasing the safety of prisoners and staff, raise questions as to the humane treatment of prisoners (and, possibly, consequences for prisoners' mental health), most notably in the high levels of confinement to cells, with few in-cell activities, loss of in-cell packaging employment, restricted contact with families and restricted access to telephones, until the introduction of in-cell telephony.
- 3.2.7 As in previous years' reports, the Board notes that a minority of prisoners continue to be accommodated in double cells with limited screening of the toilet and/or no toilet seats. The Board is still disturbed that eating in cells has been normalised inside/outside Covid-19 restrictions.
- 3.2.8 Steps have been taken to undertake some refurbishment of cells and association areas within both regular accommodation and the CSU. However, through its monitoring, the Board has identified some outstanding issues such as poor ventilation in some cells and the absence of some door screens, broken equipment on some exercise yards and some overflows/poor drainage in wet weather.
- 3.2.9 The Board has encountered evidence relating to the handling of complaints from prisoners. While the number of overdue complaints is relatively few, some responses to complaints are delayed (especially those related to previous prisons). Of concern also is that prisoners are sometimes not kept updated on progress.
- 3.2.10 The treatment of prisoners' property remains an issue of concern for the Board.

### **How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?**

- 3.2.11 Monitoring by the Board during this reporting year suggests that, to a large extent, the prison has continued to offer reasonable levels of primary healthcare to prisoners, despite the enormous challenges arising from the pandemic. We note the positive implementation of the hepatitis C elimination programme.
- 3.2.12 The provision of mental healthcare within the prison appears to have faced even greater challenges, at a time when the impact of the pandemic on prisoners might suggest a need for enhanced provision of these services. The overall level of staffing for mental health services and staff shortages are matters of concern for the Board, as is the cessation of drug rehabilitation group work and the difficulties in finding suitable alternative, specialist accommodation at other prisons for those facing serious mental health difficulties.

- 3.2.13 The Board recognises the range of initiatives deployed to provide prisoners with access to exercise equipment during the pandemic and the steps taken to offer limited use of the gym.
- 3.2.14 Other significant detriments to prisoner wellbeing arose as a consequence of measures relating to the pandemic, most notably the significant reductions to time spent out of cell, access to purposeful activities and contact with families via visits and telephone calls (the latter remedied in autumn 2021, with the introduction of in-cell telephony).

### **How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?**

- 3.2.15 One of the many significant and problematic consequences of the pandemic was the reduced face-to-face teaching by the education provider, Novus, and the use of education via packs delivered to prisoners in cells. This resulted in a reduction in prisoners' progress through educational courses during the year.
- 3.2.16 Similarly, most workplaces functioned at reduced capacity during the regime, to manage infection risk. This resulted in limited progress towards the completion of vocational courses and less valuable work experience than is normally offered to prisoners, although the Board notes some positive progress during 2021/22.
- 3.2.17 The Board regrets that offending behaviour programmes were much reduced, alongside other educational and vocational courses, leading to significant obstacles for prisoners seeking progression to category D status during the year, and concerns among prisoners, shared by the Board, regarding the fairness of this.
- 3.2.18 Restrictions due to the Covid-19 infection risk also affected the availability of visits for much of the year, and hence the continuation of family contact considered to be an important component of preparation for release. While the alternative online video meetings between prisoners and families were welcomed in principle, delays, technical difficulties and the lack of privacy offered to prisoners have limited their impact and effectiveness.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- 3.3.1 To further improve the strategies available to the prison to manage and reduce the number of incidents of self-harm, particularly among the small number of prisoners who frequently self-harm and could be assessed as demonstrating severe mental health difficulties.
- 3.3.2 Given concerns expressed above to invite Department of Health colleagues to work with the Minister to review the capacity associated with the provision of



mental health services across the prison estate for those prisoners with severe and enduring mental illness.

- 3.3.3 To reduce the number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP).
- 3.3.4 To fund the Prison Service for the growth and maintenance of effective staffing levels.
- 3.3.5 To provide 'surge funding' for learning/skills provision and programme provision to remedy shortcomings in the preparation for resettlement and sentence planning caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

- 3.3.6 To conduct a wide-ranging review of prison staffing, to address the loss of experienced staff and of a large percentage of new staff that leave within 12 months of recruitment.
- 3.3.7 As Covid restrictions are removed, to ensure more focus on purposeful activities including programmes to support sentence planning, and full-time education and training and 'job readiness'.
- 3.3.8 To reduce losses of property as it transfers across the Prison Service.
- 3.3.9 To address shortcomings in the contracts for resettlement activity, canteen provision and education/training.

#### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- 3.3.10 To support growth in the amount of purposeful activity, including education, training, work and association.
- 3.3.11 As Covid restrictions are removed, to enable prisoners to eat outside their cells.
- 3.3.12 To ensure that any work in regard to toilets in double cells is addressed: broken screens, lack of toilet seats, etc.
- 3.3.13 To review and progress improvements and repairs to ventilation in residential areas and drainage outside residential areas, including exercise areas.
- 3.3.14 To improve the use of body-worn cameras by prison staff.
- 3.3.15 To improve communication with prisoners in key areas such as the progress towards resolving or responding to complaints, availability of programmes and the reasons for recategorisation.

3.3.16 To complete the Listener programme (started in November 2021 but halted by the pandemic) and ensure that there is a rolling programme of training for future Listeners (given the turnover of prisoners in a category C resettlement prison).

3.3.17 To ensure that processes previously agreed with the Board, such as that the Board will be notified immediately following the deployment of PAVA, deaths in custody and/or the use of the special cell, are implemented. In addition, to ensure that the appointment to the vacant position of Board clerk is prioritised, with a clear remit for that person to support better communication between the prison and the Board.

3.3.18 To ensure that contact between prisoners and their key workers becomes more effective.

3.3.19 To take further steps to ensure that food hygiene logs are completed for each wing at each meal, and that food temperatures are routinely logged.

### 3.4 Progress since the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Action taken
Reductions in self-harm	Prison works hard to support this small percentage of prisoners	Seek beds in specialist facilities. However, the Government/Prison Service needs to extend availability of specialist facilities
Provision of mental health services	Some dedicated funding (e.g. psychology)	Psychology support available now, but mental health vacancies (e.g. in nursing) now exist at the prison
Response to the pandemic to improve the fair and humane treatment of prisoners	Learning from 2020 onwards	The Board remains concerned by the long periods of lockdown and lack of purposeful activity
Suitability and implications of making transfers between	Reduced in 2021/22.	Reduced in 2021/22 but when it does occur, problems regarding food, medication and so forth remain

prisons on Fridays		
Management of prisoner property at transfer	Internal process at the prison is good	Problems identified by the Board, largely those related to the transfer between prisons
Toilet screening	In place	Issue where screens are removed/toilet seats broken
Improvements to the estate	Ongoing	Overall good but some issues of ventilation and drainage
Communication with prisoners about complaints, decisions	Internal complaints: feedback within time	Feedback about some decisions could be more effective (e.g. sentence management)
Re-start equality action team and prisoner council meetings	Restarted	Ongoing monitoring
Arrange training for new Listeners	Started	Not completed
Processes to inform Board about the deployment of PAVA, special cell	Process in place	Many instances of this not working
Key worker contact	On paper, it appears largely to be in place	Evidence of it not working effectively
Wheelchair availability	In place (subject to orders/receipt)	Less need in 2021/22
Food hygiene logs	In place	Not implemented consistently

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

4.1.1 Transfers into the prison have fluctuated during the year as the different waves of the pandemic have had an impact on prison movements. At times, the number of prisoners has been below 500; by November 2021, numbers had increased back to the maximum of 550–560. However, the Board is mindful that the prison is overcrowded (that is, with over 100% of its certified normal accommodation).

4.1.2 While the Prison Service seeks to restrict the number of prisoners moving across its estate on a Friday afternoon, there have been a few instances of this during the year. This has an impact on both staff and prisoners, including the induction process, medication transfers and food availability. The prison seeks to minimise any difficulties but the Board has been alerted to some problems experienced by prisoners.

4.1.3 Overall, the Board is very positive about the reception service at the prison. However, as prison transfers have increased during the reporting year, the number of complaints to the Board related to property transfer have increased again (increased fourfold in 2021/22 compared with 2020/21).

4.1.4 Buttermere 2 (B2) was assigned in 2020/21 to be the prison's RCU and has retained a role as a dedicated unit for new arrivals to the prison. Induction takes place on that wing on the second day after arrival. Prisoners were isolated during their induction, in line with pandemic restrictions, and then relocated to other parts of the prison after their quarantine. The Board notes the good management of the RCU and its effectiveness of limiting the spread of Covid-19 within the prison. Grizedale, the previous first night unit, was reopened by November 2021 as a unit to receive new arrivals. Along with B2, prisoners remain there for 10 days, in line with quarantine/isolation requirements.

#### **4.2 Suicide, self-harm, deaths in custody**

4.2.1 Sadly, a death in custody occurred during the reporting year. This is subject to investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and HM Coroner.

4.2.2 There has been a 45% reduction in incidents of self-harm this year (220 in 2021 compared with 399 in 2020). Self-harm included swallowing batteries, using a ligature and cutting by glass, plastic, razor and broken porcelain. There have been a small number of prolific self-harmers responsible for multiple incidents who appear to self-harm as a coping mechanism. 'Near misses' (incidents requiring transportation to hospital for further assessment and treatment) have been recorded on 11 occasions, involving nine prisoners. The reasons given for self-harming include: feeling stressed, poor emotional control, being placed on report, adjudication losses,

mental health reasons, not wanting to be located in the CSU, wanting vapes/telephone credit and being distressed following a bad visit. The safer custody team monitors and proactively manages these prisoners through multidisciplinary interventions, including the assessment in care custody and teamwork (ACCT) process.

4.2.3 The Board has observed the use of the constant watch cell on occasions during the year. We have been impressed by the sympathetic work of prison staff and the good relationships shown by staff towards prisoners at risk of self-harm.

4.2.4 On occasions, the number of trained Listeners has been as few as three across all residential units. A further nine are undergoing training provided by the Samaritans but this was halted by the pandemic. It has been subject to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, to enable training to restart.

4.2.5 During the reporting year, 182 ACCT processes, caring for prisoners at risk, were initiated, evidencing a reduction on the previous year (206 in 2020).

4.2.6 The new version 6 ACCT training has been completed, with 90% of uniformed staff receiving awareness training. Further training for non-uniformed and partner agency staff is scheduled for the coming year. The pool of ACCT assessors is to be expanded by the training of an additional 18 staff.

4.2.7 The ACCT process sits alongside the challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) process to manage prisoners at increased risk of harming others or who are vulnerable, with cases coordinated by the safer custody team. Prisoners can self-refer for support. This is advertised on the Prison Service Wayout TV.

4.2.8 Safety intervention meetings take place weekly, to review ongoing cases and action plan interventions, and coordinate activities by a multidisciplinary team, including healthcare, mental health, chaplaincy, safer custody, residential and custodial managers. Board members have observed and monitored the meetings and identified good practice in supporting vulnerable prisoners. Senior members of the prison leadership team attend the meetings and actively oversee its work.

4.2.9 There has been a 'soft launch' of OUT Spoken (a voluntary sector organisation supporting male victims of sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation), which has begun activities within the establishment; it provides additional mental health support for those who have suffered trauma. Currently, it is supporting 15 prisoners, with a further 10 on the waiting list. There is an expectation of increased activity as the service becomes embedded.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

4.3.1 The Board is pleased to note that the level of violence within the prison has continued to decline. Assaults on staff have reduced year-on-year as follows: 55 in

2019/20; 39 in 2020/21; 32 in 2021/22. Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults have also declined: 218 in 2019/20; 65 in 2020/21; 49 in 2021/22.

4.3.2 The operation of safer custody during the pandemic was well organised and comprehensive, with all of the senior management team involved and being seen on the wings. The additional member of staff specialising in safer custody from the region was a valuable lead; at one point, for example, there were 26 prisoners being visited regularly by several staff members. The number of individual isolators continues to be very small; this has been linked to the denial of isolator status unless the prisoner discloses who he is isolating from. Any prisoner seeking isolation is supported via the CSIP process and a full investigation is conducted to ensure that information provided by the prisoner is credible. While potentially controversial, when properly managed on the wing, the threat is also managed. Evidence also indicates less use of the CSU. Most problems are solved on the wings through effective management by wing and safer custody staff.

4.3.3 As the regime changed in December 2021, the CSIP levels were higher than expected, with over 10 prisoners on these plans. The Board witnessed the referral to CSIP on a wing and found the wing manager responsive, treating the threatened prisoner with urgency.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

4.4.1 Use of force reduced by 43% during 2021 compared with 2020. It was monitored directly when an incident was in progress while a Board member was present. In addition, the Board attended governance meetings, where video evidence was played from body-worn cameras (BWCs) and use of force was reviewed, with comments recorded. The Board has been concerned by the reduction in the use of BWCs. During the year, there have been varying levels of encouragement to wear such cameras. We have been concerned by some incidents where there has been no camera evidence. On some days, for example, the number of BWCs taken out by staff have been as few as 13; in discussion, we have learned that 45 such cameras being taken out each day would be a 'good number'. More pressure from senior managers should be put on staff to wear BWCs.

4.4.2 During the year, the Board became aware of PAVA being used at the prison for the first time; its use was limited to those trained at another prison. Concern about the use of PAVA on the one occasion led to the incident being viewed on video by a member, facilitated by the prison. The prison has investigated the incident through an external expert, and a report was produced. The Board has been pleased to learn that there will be no further rollout of PAVA while more attention is given to appropriate training requirements.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 Enhanced gate security (with airport-style gates and clear-sided bags) and a new scanner in the prisoner reception area were introduced during the reporting

year. Perimeter security, cell searches and the use of specialist dog teams have also assisted the control of illicit items. During the year, there have been a number of drone incidents (and throwovers) when phones/drugs have been found within the prison.

4.5.2 As Covid-19 restrictions eased during the year, finds of some illicit substances increased, particularly hooch, which can be brewed with ingredients obtained within the prison. More hooch was found close to Christmas and events such as the European Championships. Cannabis and paper laced with psychoactive substances have also been found.

4.5.3 Enhanced spot checks are used by the prison staff to identify/support prisoners holding illicit substances as part of a debt.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

5.1.1 Service of the evening meal takes place between 4pm and 4.30pm each day. This does not mirror the timing of an evening meal in the community where it would interfere with the normal working day.

5.1.2 Unsolicited feedback from prisoners to members of the Board on our visits to the residential units indicates that, overall, the quality of the food provided in the establishment is good. Occasionally, the Board has received complaints and seen food served on the wings that is inedible (for example, blackened potatoes and mouldy bread). During the year, Board members have sampled food and described it as tasty and wholesome. The Board has noted incomplete server logs that detail the temperature of the food when it arrives at the residential units.

5.1.3 Efforts are made to provide meals in accordance with religious festivals and take account of fasting periods – for example, during the observance of Ramadan. Insulated food boxes are provided to enable these prisoners to break the fast at dusk, which could be between 9pm and 10pm. However, the insulated boxes do not retain heat for any extended period and there is no opportunity to reheat food at dusk.

5.1.4 During the year, all meals have been consumed in-cell alongside others, in shared cells with a toilet in the corner of the cell. It is hoped that opportunities to eat out of cell will be available as the establishment transitions from Covid-19 restrictions.

5.1.5 The introduction of in-cell telephony in November 2021 has been widely welcomed by the prisoners, staff and the Board. This followed some months of access to telephones being limited to 12–15 minutes per day per prisoner (including calls to legal representatives). In-cell telephony was a major project for the prison, overcoming infrastructure and cabling challenges at BT which delayed its implementation for four months. The Board received regular updates as the project progressed, and acknowledges the additional work this created for the staff managing this extensive contract.

5.1.6 Some residential units have periodic maintenance issues, including water pooling from overflowing waste pipes and leaking guttering. These are noted in rota reports completed by Board members following inspections of the units. Duck excrement on the paths and entrances to residential units had been a constant cause of complaint, being both unsightly and unhygienic. To remedy this, the establishment arranged for the relocation of a large resident duck population. However, a smaller flock has now been seen adjacent to two residential units.

5.1.7 Ventilation of some residential areas has been a problem, especially during hot weather. It has been a long-standing issue on Grizedale, which contains a number of



shared cells with limited passive ventilation available. A permanent solution needs to be found to address this issue.

5.1.8 The provision and replacement of damaged toilet screens, seats and lids is a particular issue in shared cells and has an impact on maintaining decency.

5.1.9 DHL manages the canteen contract. Applications to the Board increased by 128.57% (from seven to 16) concerning issues related to the canteen, facility list and catalogue. These included lack of choice, availability and refunds. Availability issues were compounded by the national shortage of HGV drivers and supply chain delays. At times, the lack of DHL staff on-site to manage and distribute canteen to residential units results in prison officers being diverted from other duties to complete this work, and thereby minimise disruption for the prisoners.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

5.2.1 The Ullswater wing was used as the segregation unit (CSU) for the period of this report. The previously bleak outdoor exercise area has been improved with the welcome addition of colourful murals, which were designed by an officer and painted by prisoners, including one with a disability. The covered area of the exercise area remains largely unused.

5.2.2 Due to the Covid-19 restrictions regarding physical space, the wing office was temporarily relocated to the adjudication room. The Board was pleased to note that care was taken to protect confidential information, which was covered over when adjudications were held there.

5.2.3 Members of the Board attended six reviews during the course of the year and noted in rota reports that prisoners were dealt with in a fair and just manner.

5.2.4 The Board is pleased to note that the downward trend (as noted in the 2020-21 report) in the number of prisoners located at any time in the CSU has continued. The length of time spent in the CSU also improved, with only two prisoners spending longer than 50 days there in 2021-22, compared with four in the previous year. The average number of days spent in the CSU reduced from 18 to 15 days during the reporting year.

5.2.5 Board members have reported on the positive attitudes and relationships shown by staff on the CSU during some of the most challenging behaviour shown by prisoners.

5.2.6 Use of the special accommodation rose slightly, from six in the previous year to eight occasions in this reporting period. The time spent in a special cell ranged from 15 minutes to two hours; unfortunately, the Board was rarely informed of its use.

5.2.7 The Board has raised the issue of the lack of in-cell occupation several times with staff, and has been told that it was logistically 'too difficult' to provide.

## **5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers**

5.3.1 The key worker scheme is designed to build positive one-to-one relationships between prisoners and staff, with the aim of promoting rehabilitation, reducing reoffending and acting as a central contact between other services within the prison. This work is pivotal to enable the prisoner to navigate through often complex prison processes and procedures, and act as a conduit with probation and offender managers and others. Relationships between staff and prisoners overall are seen as good and positive.

5.3.2 The establishment was the subject of an HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) operational and assurance audit during the various lockdown periods imposed by the pandemic. The audits revealed good practice in a number of areas, including adapting at short notice to local and national Covid-19 outbreaks, flexibility in its response to changing priorities and resilience in coping with staffing pressures.

5.3.3 The prison attempted to provide key worker contact sessions for every prisoner and the data evidence a significant amount of key worker entries on the prisoner records system during this period. The prison has identified quality and consistency of the key work entries as needing further development and training as this new initiative becomes embedded across the establishment. This is seen as a priority for the senior management team of the prison.

5.3.4 Having the prison officer key worker based on the same residential unit as the prisoner they are supporting is seen as the ideal. However, in reality, the key worker may be detailed to a different residential unit or the prisoner moved to a different wing. The challenge for the establishment is to maintain consistency as the prisoner transitions through the progression plan as part of the overall resettlement planning journey.

5.3.5 During the reporting year, the establishment also initiated a system of welfare checks with vulnerable prisoners, together with purposeful interactions between staff and prisoners to build better relationships and address any concerns. This has been evidenced in key worker entries and during the ACCT process. Overall, the work and relationships are good and very positive.

5.3.6 A recent PPO report recommended a return to a minimum of 45 minutes of key worker contact time per prisoner per week as soon as the establishment progresses to a full regime. This has been accepted by the prison and noted in its action planning for the year as the establishment progresses through the Covid-19 recovery stages. The Board will conduct a sample survey during the forthcoming year to review progress.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 During the reporting year, the establishment benefited from the appointment of a diversity and inclusion manager, who supported the equality and diversity activities of the prison. The Board attended equality action team (EAT) meetings during the

year, subject to availability due to the emergency regime imposed by the pandemic. Campaigns and programmes linked to the diversity calendar have been provided on Wayout TV, supplemented with posters located on the residential units.

5.4.2 At the end of the reporting year, there were 12 equality representatives, spread across the residential units, following recruitment by the diversity and inclusion manager. They provide peer support, promote good relationships between different groups, report issues and attend equality meetings.

5.4.3 Statistics provided to the Board, and noted in the minutes of the EAT meeting, show that 42 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) were submitted during 2021, compared with 53 in 2020. The Board is advised that investigations were completed within the requisite time scales. Analysis of these DIRFs reveals that 42.85% (18) were multiple applications by six prisoners, with one responsible for 16.67% (seven) applications.

5.4.4 Actions following DIRF investigations and prisoner forums included establishing job descriptions and initiating recruitment activities for particular roles (for example, wing cleaners) in an effort to eliminate any perceived bias and make the process of appointment open and transparent. Further, changes were made to the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme requiring consultation with the mental health team prior to downgrading a prisoner's IEP status and the imposition of sanctions.

5.4.5 Data for prisoners' self-declared disabilities indicate 127 disability markers among 549 prisoners (reduced from 141 in 2020, although no data are available for 13 prisoners). Disabilities range from learning disability, including dyslexia and autism (21), to reduced mobility and physical capacity (25). A further group of prisoners have been identified with visual, speech or hearing impairment (13). Mental illness is recorded for 50 prisoners, an increase of 16 on the previous year (34 in 2020). The prison has four cells allocated as low-mobility cells. Personal emergency evacuation plans are in place for 15 prisoners, and these are highlighted in each wing office. These were monitored by the prison and remain stable over the year.

5.4.6 The age demographic across the establishment reveals that the majority (37%) are within the age range 30–39 years. The youngest is 21 years of age, and the oldest 75 years.

5.4.7 Foreign nationals (nine in total, and 11 in 2020) account for a small proportion of the prison population, with one Albanian, one Libyan, one Romanian, one Pole and five Irish citizens. While they are few in number, the Board is concerned that some prisoners who are accommodated at the prison have virtually no conversational skills in English. Liaison with HMP Risley (with its specialist staff) takes place to support the specific needs of this group of prisoners.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The reporting year has been difficult for the chaplaincy, with Covid-19 restrictions dominating what has and has not been possible. This was further compounded by the long-term absence of the established imam; visiting imams were employed to support Muslim prisoners. The chaplaincy sources materials in different languages (one example being the Bible in the Polish language).

5.5.2 Corporate worship has been offered whenever possible and the chaplaincy team provided corporate worship at times when many other establishments were not. This required separating cohorts, based on residential units, to avoid mixing. The Board notes the concern raised by the chaplaincy regarding the availability of corporate worship for prisoners located in the CSU. The Board will monitor this issue over the coming year, subject to the lifting of restrictions and availability of corporate worship.

5.5.3 Not all faith groups have a chaplain; gaps include those to meet the needs of Rastafarian, Pagan and Mormon prisoners. A freeze to recruitment during the pandemic has created some of these gaps and will require future cooperation between clusters of establishments to create substantive posts.

5.5.4 Religious festivals have been observed as far as possible, with a calendar of notable dates posted on each residential unit to show where the prisoners may be excused from work to observe their faith.

5.5.5 The chaplaincy continues to support prisoners following bereavements, supporting them in their applications to attend funerals, and facilitating online 'attendance' when it has not been possible (because of Covid-19-related restrictions) to send prisoners out under escort. Visits to dying relatives have been complex because of restrictions imposed by some hospitals. Additionally, the Free Church chaplain has worked with many of the prisoners to provide a bereavement support programme, which is individually delivered over three sessions to meet their specific needs.

5.5.6 The chaplaincy team has continued to offer pastoral support to those of all faiths or none, on request. It has also provided a significant commitment to the ACCT process; the majority of ACCT reviews are attended by one of the team. Additionally, the chaplaincy visits the CSU on a daily basis to speak to each prisoner held there.

5.5.7 While the prison has benefited from community engagement in previous years, these activities have been curtailed due to the pandemic.

## **5.6 Incentives scheme**

5.6.1. There are three levels of privilege in the prison: basic, standard and enhanced, with generally around 1% of prisoners on basic, 57% on standard and 42% on enhanced. However, for a large period of the year, there was no basic regime. The Board notes that there is relatively little difference in privileges between standard and enhanced levels.

5.6.2 Regrettably, the emergency regime (including the cessation of education and work) imposed throughout the pandemic had a severe impact on the

incentives scheme, with one prisoner informing the Board that: ‘...more than 60% of privileges do not exist due to current regime...’.

- 5.6.3 As part of the response to the pandemic in 2020, no prisoner was deprived of a television as a result of an incentives sanction. However, in autumn 2021, the Board was disappointed to learn that this sanction was being reintroduced, despite prisoners remaining in cells for over 20 hours each day.
- 5.6.4 Reviews of prisoners on the basic level usually take place every seven days; however, at times during the year, these reviews were undertaken at 72 hours.
- 5.6.5 Following delays in 2020/21, the Board notes that independent adjudications now take place remotely. These will be monitored in 2022/23.

## **5.7 Complaints**

- 5.7.1 Complaints (using form COMP1) and appeals (using COMP1A) are administered by the complaints clerk. It has been valuable to have a dedicated member of staff working on this activity throughout the year.
- 5.7.2 The paper-based complaints process continued to operate throughout the pandemic, but complaints from one wing were subjected for some weeks to a 72-hour quarantining process to reduce virus infection risk, thereby delaying response times.
- 5.7.3 Weekly performance statistics shared with the Board indicate that the total number of complaints in the current reporting year is broadly the same as that in the previous one. The percentage of overdue complaints has reduced to 13%; these have been predominantly related to property and other complaints at prisons from where prisoners have been transferred. The impact on prisoners, in terms of frustration and uncertainty, is clear from our monitoring work. In these cases, more regular updates and acknowledgments of the delay could be issued to prisoners.
- 5.7.4 We also note that some applications from prisoners to the Board make reference to complaints submitted, and to a level of dissatisfaction with the content of responses to those complaints.
- 5.7.5 The prison, including the Board, receives a small number of confidential complaints each year. While these complaints are predominantly related to sensitive personal information about a prisoner and/or member of staff, there is no clear process whereby the Board can monitor the handling of these complaints; this is a priority to be addressed in 2022/23.

## **5.8 Property**

- 5.8.1 Applications to the Board relating to property accounted for around 20% of all applications in 2021/22, which is similar to the proportion in 2020/21. A common theme is property not transferred into the establishment at the same time as the

prisoner. The delay or loss of property, including documents, family photographs and other personal possessions that are difficult or impossible to replace, have caused additional anxiety and stress at a time when family visits have not been able to take place or been curtailed.

5.8.2 The additional work for prison staff attempting to track down missing property during the transfer of prisoners between establishments absorbs scarce resources and involves manual recording processes. Regrettably, once a prisoner transfers out of the previous establishment, it is sometimes difficult to obtain satisfactory responses to enquiries about their property. These issues are not new and not unique to this establishment; this is a national issue, repeated in many other prisons, and requiring action from HMPPS. Further work is needed to address systemic and recurring issues in the management of prisoners' property.

5.8.3 Concerns have been raised about the time taken to issue property from reception after arriving at the establishment.

5.8.4 Confusion over what property can be sent to a prisoner by family members causes frustration. Sometimes parcels are not accepted by the establishment or are returned to family members without the prisoner being advised that the property has been sent back.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare: general**

6.1.1 Spectrum is the main provider of healthcare services at the prison. Mental healthcare services are run by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley, and dentistry by Smart Dental. Despite some reported difficulties in the recruitment of band 5 nurses, the total number of healthcare staff has remained at approximately 40. The prison is able to use the services of a radiographer and X-ray machine which come into the prison each month. Ultrasound facilities are offered on a four- to six-week basis.

6.1.2 The waiting times for GP services have varied throughout the year but typically have ranged from two to three weeks. For dentistry, the waiting time peaked at 20 weeks in the last reporting period but had reduced slightly to 18 weeks towards the end of this reporting period. Some instances of delays in treating acute dental pain have been reported to the Board.

6.1.3 The health checks at reception include checks for bloodborne diseases such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV and syphilis. In accordance with the prison elimination programme, the prison is able to treat positive cases of hepatitis C with an eight-week programme of treatment. Healthcare staff are also able to administer any missing childhood vaccinations when these are discovered on reception into the establishment.

6.1.4 The reverse cohorting procedures, along with other measures, such as the prison's own contact tracing practices, helped to avert outbreaks of Covid-19 for much of the reporting year. However, in late 2021 the prison was declared to be an outbreak site by the UK Health Security Agency. The high rate of vaccine take-up, particularly among the older prison population, is believed to have been one reason that serious complications of the virus have so far been avoided.

6.1.5 In rota visits, prisoners are generally positive about the standard of healthcare they receive. One prisoner had full praise for staff who had both supported his drug and alcohol rehabilitation and facilitated an optician's appointment, which resulted in a pair of prescription glasses, enabling him to undertake several courses and plan for his eventual release.

6.1.6 Healthcare complaints are dealt with by the healthcare manager and predominantly concern the types of analgesics available in the establishment. Applications received by the Board account for 13% of overall complaints (down from 15% in 2020/21).

6.1.7 As also happened during 2020/21, maintaining the usual level of primary healthcare services proved difficult over the course of the reporting year, and for a short period it was only possible to offer essential care. However, as this was the second year of the pandemic, staff were able to draw on their experiences of the first year, and the disruption to health services were not as adversely affected as they had been previously. Telephone consultations were used for a period, although as in-cell telephony was not available until November 2021, these were only possible with the support and cooperation of prison officers, using communal telephones.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 Comments from prisoners about waiting times for healthcare appointments varied, with one prisoner reporting that he had waited 10 months for an X-ray on his leg, which he had broken in a previous prison, and which he was told, following the X-ray, would need an operation.

6.2.2 Covid-19 vaccine take-up generally mirrored that of the general community, with older prisoners being more willing to be vaccinated. The Board is pleased to note that healthcare staff were proactive in trying to persuade reluctant prisoners to take up the offer of the vaccine. By January 2022, 65% of prisoners had had a first vaccine, and 58% a second. Of those eligible, 81% had received a booster.

6.2.3 The prison does not have 24-hour healthcare provision and is reliant on other establishments to accept prisoners requiring more intensive healthcare. This has been a particular issue this year, with one prisoner, with an ongoing serious condition, requiring repeated emergency admittances to the local hospital, only to be discharged and readmitted within a short period of time. Due to the situation with Covid-19, each time the prisoner was returned to the establishment he was required to undergo a period of isolation. However, the prisoner expressed his gratitude to prison staff for the care and general treatment they provided. Staff had given him a personal alarm for use during the night in case of a medical emergency, which had helped him feel safe. The Board recognises the efforts made by the head of healthcare to relocate this prisoner to a more appropriate establishment; although this was ultimately successful, it is the Board's opinion that it took an unacceptable length of time.

### **6.3 Mental healthcare**

6.3.1 The service has benefited from some extra funding in 2021/22, which has been used for extra services such as NHS psychology. However, the Board is disappointed to note that staffing in mental healthcare has reduced from last year; despite several recruitment campaigns, there are currently 2.6 (full-time-equivalent) vacancies.

6.3.2 Unsurprisingly, all therapies were severely disrupted due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Group therapies ceased for long periods, were restarted on the wings for a short time and then were back in the health centre from September, only to be stopped again in December, with the inevitable negative impact on prisoners. The single nurse trained in eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy endeavoured to continue the one-to-one sessions in healthcare, but these were also detrimentally affected when prisoners were resident on a wing that had to be locked down due to Covid-19. There is now a waiting list for this therapy. Self-help guides and distraction packs were provided for prisoners on the waiting list for therapies and for those whose groups were suspended.

6.3.3 Access to the OUT Spoken trauma therapy service, with its two visiting counsellors, has developed this year. There are several members of staff trained in dialectical behaviour therapy.

6.3.4 The services of a psychiatrist, for one day a week, was maintained throughout the year, and at year-end there was no waiting list for this service. It is positive that an initial assessment is undertaken within four working days.

### **6.4 Social care**



6.4.1 The prison liaises with Lancashire County Council in respect of social care, with prison staff undertaking the initial assessment. Outside agencies are not generally called on to provide social care to prisoners. During rota visits, members of the Board both observed and spoke to prisoners providing practical support – for example, pushing those who are wheelchair dependent to the health centre and providing some in-cell tasks, such as making hot drinks. This arrangement appeared to work well, with prisoners both giving and receiving support expressing their satisfaction. However, there is currently no training available to prisoners providing care. Healthcare staff acknowledge the need for training, and the Board will monitor this in the coming year. At the end of the reporting year, there were no prisoners waiting for an assessment for personal care. Alterations to the showers in two wings had begun and this will provide two wet rooms areas in each for prisoners with limited mobility.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

6.5.1 While the regime throughout the period of this report varied, the Board acknowledges that a period of outdoor exercise was maintained throughout the year for all prisoners. All wings benefit from an outside exercise area which, apart from the CSU and first night unit, contains outdoor gym equipment. This was well used throughout the various regime changes, and noted by the Board during their visits to the establishment. Key staff report that the gym is underused, particularly at weekends, and would like to see the education programmes restarted in line with other education in the prison. It has been regrettable that staff shortages towards the end of the reporting year have led to some gym sessions being withdrawn.

6.5.2 There is a very well-resourced gym, and prisoners for most of the year were offered two sessions per week: an hour in the morning and 45 minutes in the afternoon, although this time included getting to and from the gym, which reduced it by at least 15 minutes. One session is in the fitness room and the other in the sports hall. Numbers allowed to use the gym at any one time fluctuated, in accordance with changes to the regime due to the pandemic but ranged between 24 and 32 prisoners every day.

6.5.3 Sessions in the gym for those referred by healthcare staff take place in the evenings. Healthcare referrals can be for both physical and mental health reasons. Both the fitness suite and the sports hall have wheelchair access.

6.5.4 A running club was established over the summer months and took place until the early autumn.

6.5.5 Overall, the Board has observed excellent relationships between gym instructors and prisoners.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 Spectrum continues to provide the substance misuse service at the prison. It works with over 200 prisoners and sees about 100 per week on a one-to-one basis. This service was maintained during the pandemic. However, group sessions were significantly reduced. Support for prisoners from outside organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous has also been curtailed. the prison was optimistic that group meetings and outside links would restart in 2022. In addition, the team was very

optimistic about the establishment of a new 180 Project (see below). Meanwhile, methadone support increased from 65 to 83 during the reporting year.

6.6.2 The Board is supportive of the substance misuse team, which feels that uniformed staff could learn more about their work; this could further help achieve the drug rehabilitation goals of Coniston wings (see below).

6.6.3 The Coniston wings are the dedicated drug rehabilitation units, with Coniston 1 (C1) being the incentivised substance living unit and Coniston 2 (C2) holding prisoners being treated for their addiction with methadone. Prisoners on C2 work to reduce their dosage of methadone and make informed choices about their treatment. From the end of January 2022, Buvidal is expected to be presented as an alternative treatment option at the prison.

6.6.4 The Board is pleased to identify Coniston as a supportive environment where prisoners are empowered and given ownership of their recovery. The drug recovery team works to build prisoners' self-confidence; in addition, prisoners find support from others on their wing who have had similar experiences.

6.6.5 Plans have been put in place during the year to implement an ambitious 180 Project in early 2022. Beginning on C1, the Project provides prisoners with a new positive focus – fitness. For 14 prisoners (and six staff training with the prisoners), they will learn about diet and their general health and wellbeing. The Board is impressed by the programme and looks forward to monitoring the impact that it will have on participants.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

6.7.1 The Board recognises the impact on 'soft-skill' opportunities for prisoners during 2021/22, due to Covid restrictions, and praises the efforts made to provide opportunities to connect prisoners with their families at this very challenging time.

6.7.2 For the second year, the impact of the pandemic has had a negative impact on submissions to external exhibitions. For example, there have been no submissions for the Koestler Award.

6.7.3 Large numbers of prisoners still need help with reading. Prisoners in need of support are identified through their key worker, and also the educational assessment process during induction.

6.7.4 In previous years, the prison has benefited from work with a number of external organisations (for example, Lancaster University and the Irene Taylor Trust), but such activities have been restricted due to the pandemic and social distancing.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 In line with other prisons, in 2020 the education provider (Novus) moved staff offsite. In 2021/22, much education provision took place through education packs which were delivered to and completed in cells. There were fewer comments about the late return of work in 2021/22 than in 2020/21. Work on education packs has been supplemented by tutorial support on a one-to-one basis on the wings.

However, for many prisoners on the RCU units (B2 and Grizedale), such provision and support have been limited. The Board received comments that the outcomes of initial assessments were sometimes taking longer than expected; this delayed allocation to appropriate programmes and training opportunities.

7.1.2 Meanwhile, the nature of face-to-face class teaching varied during the year. However, limits on prisoner movement/mixing led to education provision being restricted to specific groups of prisoners from 'bubbles' on particular wings at any time. The education centre has sought to maximise the numbers of prisoners able to access its provision. Novus risk assessed each classroom, which led to numbers able to attend classes being reduced. The impact of this for prisoners has been to restrict provision to part time, rather than full time. As 2021 progressed, there was increased activity within the education centre; however, the Omicron variant and the return of restrictions on prisoner movement led to much of this activity being ceased in December 2021.

7.1.3 The disruption to the education provision has had a significant impact on prisoners. The Board has been advised that the impact on prisoners of completing work in isolation has meant that the pace of completing packs has been slower than anticipated. In addition, some examinations (for example, functional skills and units of the Diploma in Electrical Installation) have been affected.

7.1.4 The Board has been concerned throughout 2021/22 about the negative impact of isolation, and its negative impact on the mental health of prisoners. The Board was pleased to see the restart of evening class opportunities in October 2021. These included classes in music, cookery, arts and crafts, books and debating. Again, numbers were restricted due to Covid-19 restrictions, and in December 2021 they were withdrawn due to the Omicron outbreak.

7.1.5 While, overall, opening of the library was affected by the pandemic (limited opening only from August to December 2021), the Board was pleased to note that it continued to provide resources on all units throughout the year.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 Throughout the year, vocational training and work have been affected by the pandemic. Areas such as waste management, kitchen work and wing cleaning generally continued throughout 2021/22; however, the restricted regime did mean that separate wings/cohorts needed to be separated from one another. Later in the reporting year, the prison was able to offer an increased number of workplaces

within waste management, gardens and dry lining, and the electrics and industrial cleaning workshops were reopened.

7.2.2 Prisoners are allocated according to assessments and application. Given the shortcomings of the Covid-19 regime, credit should be given to those responsible for sorting out the logistics of placing different prisoners/cohorts across the estate at different times. However, this meant that many activities for prisoners (for example, Recycling Lives and the garden) were reduced from full- to half-days.

7.2.3 Some vocational courses were delivered in-cell via paperwork and DVDs covering theoretical aspects of the course. Workbooks were delivered/collected weekly but sometimes there were delays in the return of material. The Board praises the creativity and hard work of the instructors to progress prisoners on courses but raises concerns regarding the catch-up that will be required to cover the practical elements of courses. For example, Recycling Lives continues to be much valued by prisoners. Examples exist of how prisoners were promised secure jobs and accommodation on release from prison. In the words of one prisoner: 'they give you hope and that's hard to find in jail'.

7.2.4 The contract for in-cell packaging ended during the reporting year. It is regrettable that nothing has taken its place (especially given the long periods that prisoners spend in their cells).

7.2.5 The Board recognises the difficulties created by the pandemic in providing the full range of employment opportunities within the prison, and looks forward to monitoring the broadening of those work and training places in 2022/23 and ensuring that prisoners are 'job ready' on release.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

7.3.1 Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Board noted the continuing lack of probation staff in face-to-face meetings with prisoners for much of the year. This led to further anxiety among some prisoners about resettlement.

7.3.2 The Board has identified a long-running problem between sentence planning and the provision of accredited offender management/specified behavioural programmes at the prison. On occasions without resolution, prisoners find themselves frustrated to find that progression has been blocked through the lack of available programmes. This leads to a mismatch between sentence plans and prison-provided programmes. The pandemic has caused existing problems to become severe. During the reporting period, the Board was told that 167 prisoners were waiting for programme places and/or assessment. A recent request for waiting lists (on 21 October 2021) cited: 'there is a backlog waiting for actual TSP [Thinking Skills Programme] assessments and 36 waiting for Resolve'. The throughput of prisoners on these courses does not match the sentence planning needs. In mitigation, the prison has experienced the pandemic, but 2022/23 provides an opportunity for speedy resolution of a number of 'Catch 22' situations.

7.3.3 Some prisoners at the establishment have been recategorised from category D to category C. On occasion, concerns are raised by prisoners that there is

insufficient information from the category D prison about the reasons for that transfer and opportunities to appeal about that decision.

7.3.4 There are 14 IPP prisoners in this resettlement prison. One such prisoner, in the CSU, explained the history of adjudications which limited his parole potential. His initial sentence was two years but he had already served 14 years. Should the Prison Service not seek to remove these anomalous situations? In addition, due to the pandemic, some prisoners have been displaced from their home area. Over time, it is anticipated that they will be moved to prisons in their home regions.

7.3.5 During the year, offender management unit (OMU) staff have developed wing-based advice sessions. This is a welcome move as there are occasions where the Board receives applications about situations where one-to-one contact between the prisoner and OMU would have been fruitful.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Early in the reporting year, social visits were unavailable and prisoners were limited to secure social video calls via laptop computers (delivered during the reporting period by the provider Purple Visits). This methodology was difficult for prisoners, and particularly families, to operate. The laptop computers were also prone to teething troubles, although were welcomed in the difficult context of lockdown. Video calls continue and, provided that the technology works well, are a valuable means of maintaining family contact, as they reduce travel burdens on families. In-cell telephony has had a major positive impact on contact between prisoners and families.

7.4.2 During the year, social visits were permitted, with social distancing between families and prisoners – the distance of two tables, and usually no physical contact. Prisoners accepted these restrictions, partly because of effective staff communication, and also news of community restrictions.

7.4.3 Partners of Prisoners has the contract to organise visits. It has been proactive in the prison and caring/supportive outside the prison. It works collaboratively with prison staff in the visits process, including the crèche, the operation of family forums (to give families the chance to speak directly to senior governors and have their worries responded to) and family days (where up to 10 prisoners have a more relaxed time in the visits hall, dressed in civilian clothes, and family photographs are available, in agreement with security staff).

7.4.4 The chaplaincy continues to support prisoners with family difficulties and bereavements; they work across all departments in the prison (see section 5.5).

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 During 2021/22, there was a change in resettlement contracts. Shelter was replaced by Seetec, with little/no continuity of service. Given the changes that took place during the pandemic, this has led to major problems in the availability of appropriate support at times for those being released. Instead of assistance to establish bank accounts, accommodation and other protective measures, many prisoners were given a pack of advice information (whether or not they were literate

and able to cope) and lists of telephone numbers, such as that of their local housing department, in order to make their own arrangements. On occasions, this information was received by prisoners immediately prior to their release. For those less able to cope, this was very distressing. The lack of face-to-face contact for much of the year also increased the frustration of those shortly to be resettled. Agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions did not visit the prison.

7.5.2 The opening of the employment hub at the end of summer 2021, with experienced staff, acted as a job centre to help match prisoners with external job opportunities. The manager deals with the final 12 weeks of the prisoner's term, and there is a close working relationship with prisoners, and is to be applauded. While the prison is proud of its position among comparator establishments, the figure of 19% of prisoners achieving employment status is little to be proud of. The Board would like to see more focus on this important work. Sustainable resettlement should include employment for as many prisoners as possible.

7.5.3 A positive example of resettlement remains that of Recycling Lives, which supports prisoners in their transition from prison to life outside. With its commitment to providing accommodation, employment and personal support on release, there is much demand from prisoners and a strong record of alternatives to reoffending.

## The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	65
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	32
Total number of segregation reviews attended	6

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	8
C	Equality	9	10
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	6
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	9	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	2
F	Food and kitchens	6	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	30
H1	Property within this establishment	39	26
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	5	22
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	7	16
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	35	28
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	12	13
K	Transfers	13	34
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	23	26
	Total number of applications	210	236





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