



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Low Newton

**For reporting year
1 March 2021 – 28 February 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. A prisoner's medical records can only be accessed with their written permission.

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

Low Newton opened in 1965 as a remand centre with four wings holding young men up to 21 years of age and a discrete wing for women of all ages on remand and sentenced.

The prison was re-rolled as a women's prison in 1998 when it was refurbished. It now consists of eight residential wings together with general prisoner use areas e.g. healthcare. G wing has been emptied and will be demolished as one of the wings that failed health and safety and fire regulations following a review of prisons for safety issues.

Low Newton holds women of all ages from 18 years upwards on remand and sentenced. It includes those serving short sentences, those serving licence sentences and also restricted status (high security) women.

- Operational capacity is 344.
- CNA (certified normal accommodation – uncrowded capacity) is 314.
- Covid-19 operational capacity is 307.
- Current operational capacity is 274 (temporary reduction due to decommissioned accommodation)

Breakdown of prisoners by age (as at 21 April 2022)

Age range	Total prisoners
18-21	8
22-29	33
30-39	106
40-49	67
50-59	20
60-69	5
70 and over	3
Total	242

Most cells are single occupancy with a small number of double occupancy cells.

Adult prisoners and young adults are integrated. Risk assessments are carried out before it is decided on which wing a young adult should be located.

Work has been undertaken this year to repair the leaking roofs. The contract is expected to end in early summer 2022. The availability of contractors to work on site also means that other repairs are being undertaken such as replacement doors and windows.

Modular buildings have been installed on the site. These will be used as cells for women on release on temporary licence (ROTL) and other low risk prisoners.

During the pandemic the prison ran various regime stages as part of the national Covid restrictions and also in response to local outbreaks of Covid.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The Covid-19 outbreak has had an impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

The Board has been able to return to the prison for most of the reporting year but for a while the regime has been restricted either due to the national Covid-19 situation or the fact that at times HMP/YOI Low Newton has been classed as an outbreak site.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

It is the Board's opinion that the prison provides an environment that protects the safety of the prisoners. Levels of self-harm and violence are relatively low. The Board is impressed by the in-depth knowledge the staff have of the prisoners. This is demonstrated at the regular safety meetings which are monitored by the Board.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

It is the view of the Board that the prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. Interactions between staff and prisoners are normally good and friendly. The prison regime has been supportive of the prisoners despite the limitations due to Covid. The chaplains have in particular been innovative in supporting the prisoners. The establishment is kept very clean and tidy inside and out by both prisoners and staff.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The Board considers that prisoners' health needs are generally well met. The last year has been difficult and ways of providing healthcare have had to be changed. Appointments with outside healthcare providers have restarted following their postponement during the lockdown period, although there are still some delays outside the prison's control. There are still some women in the prison who have serious mental health issues and for whom prison is not the most appropriate place. Plans are being made for the development of a new healthcare centre and mental health unit.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

A wide range of interventions is provided to assist in resettlement, but areas of concern are finding appropriate accommodation and dealing with mental health issues. Low Newton's priority has always been to offer every prisoner opportunities and support to plan for their successful, crime-free release and future. A number of new initiatives are being developed which are welcomed by the Board.

The Board is concerned that the prison system is in general geared to male prisoners and does not always take account of the particular needs of women prisoners. This is particularly true of women serving short sentences.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

What progress is being made to increase the number of places available nationally in secure psychiatric units, since it remains the case that some women are being placed inappropriately in prison?

What assessment has been made of the effectiveness of current contracts for the resettlement of prisoners who have no permanent home to go to upon release, given the importance of this issue in reducing re-offending?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Could the CCTV system be replaced to assist in monitoring incidents around the prison?

TO THE GOVERNOR

How can the Governor ensure that targets are consistently met for delivery of the key worker scheme?

How can the Governor ensure that body worn cameras are used more consistently during use of force incidents?

3.4 Progress since the last report

Issue raised	Comment
Women with severe mental health issues being housed inappropriately	This is still happening and there is often a delay getting them into a secure hospital.
Additional funding for new educational and vocational initiatives	New initiatives are being developed.
Review of mental health services in the prison and possible creation of mental health unit	Plans are being developed for a new healthcare unit. Should this be successful the prison is considering a number of options for the current healthcare unit which will include the creation of a mental health unit.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The Board believes HMP/YOI Low Newton to be safety conscious and that through planning, implementation and follow up actions the prison is a safe environment.

A survey of new safety initiatives was issued to all prisoners, which was used to try and identify the drivers for violence and self-harm and give an understanding of what makes prisoners feel safe as the prison comes out of Covid-19 restrictions. The initiatives are in the early stages of development and the Board will monitor progress.

A weekly up-skilling meeting is held to share both good and bad practice in regard to ACCT and CSIP challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) reviews and associated processes. These are trends which are picked up through quality assurance.

Safety and intervention meetings (SIMs) meetings are held weekly, with one monthly CSIP meeting. They continue to be well attended by a cross section of stakeholders, the Governor and all management levels of the prison's staff. who discuss every prisoner on an open ACCT or open CSIP, top 10 VIPER (violence in prisons estimator) score prisoners, young adults, care leavers, foreign nationals, prisoners due for release, prisoners in the care and separation unit (CSU) and safety and support unit (SSU) and pregnant prisoners. The meeting reviews all the key factors of safety including statistics, ACCT management, violence, CSIPs plus and other elements that form part of safety. Where appropriate action plans are formulated, the involvement and participation from those present, ensures that individual prisoners who require closer management are highlighted.

There are two mother and baby dedicated prison officers supporting pregnant prisoners, of whom there is usually a handful at any one time.

A new safety strategy is in place and the action plan is reviewed in the monthly safer prisons meeting.

The Board member with the relevant 'area of special interest' (ASI) attends the vast majority of meetings throughout the year and believes that the Governor, safety governor and staff are to be commended on their commitment and work to ensure the prison is as safe as possible.

4.1 Reception and induction

Staff are able to follow the progress of prisoners from court to the prison on the electronic prisoner escort record. Women sometimes arrive late from court. Sometimes this is because male prisoners carried on the van have been dropped off first, and sometimes the van is late departing. This can mean there is a shortage of staff to process the women, whether reception staff or healthcare workers. Together with the need to check a prisoner's property this may delay a prisoner getting to her cell.

Women often arrive with immediate family problems that need dealing with, such as children being picked up from school, relatives being informed and other issues. These problems mean they find it difficult to concentrate if overwhelmed by

introductions to prison staff and details of the regime. At Low Newton a decision has been made to get the Listeners to talk to the prisoners and to have limited staff involvement in the first few days until a new prisoner is able to understand the other information. Chaplaincy prepared an induction DVD which is played over the TV system in E wing, which is the induction wing. It gives information about the regime and services and is repeated daily.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Self-harm

Month	Number
March	43
April	50
May	50
June	59
July	39
August	31
September	27
October	30
November	27
December	28
January	14
February	29
Total	427

This year's total of self-harm incidents at 427 is a decrease from 470 recorded during the previous year. Those who self-harm continue to be closely managed.

From July 2021 to February 2022 there has been a downward trend. The monitoring of prisoners placed on an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT V.6) document due to concerns about their safety has played a part in the reduction of self-harm as it has assisted the prison staff in preventing incidents.

ACCTs

The table shows the number of ACCTs opened each month and total for the annual reporting year.

Month	Number
March	35
April	27
May	20
June	20
July	19
August	17
September	18
October	20
November	19
December	18
January	13
February	13
Total	239

There were 33 fewer ACCTs opened this year in comparison to last year's total of 272. March and April 2021 combined shows 62 ACCTs were opened, an average of 31 per month. From May 2021 to February 2022 there has been a distinct downward trend with a monthly average of 18 ACCTs opened. From the start of the year, January and February 2022 have seen the lowest level of 13 per month.

At the weekly SIM meeting each case is reviewed with the input from those concerned in managing the ACCTs. The Board observes and monitors ACCTs on a weekly basis, which includes in particular those on constant watch, complex cases and those who are deemed vulnerable. It is satisfied that ACCTs are opened when justified by a prisoner's situation.

Deaths in custody

There were no deaths in custody during the reporting period.

Listeners

During lockdown the prison was below complement on the number of Listeners trained by the Samaritans charity, which meant that some wings were without this service. However the prison was able to run a limited service and keep the scheme running through the pandemic and various regime changes. The prison now has a

full complement of 11 Listeners, of whom the two most experienced are based on E wing where new prisoners are first placed.

Both are playing a valuable role in assisting new arrivals. The Board is satisfied that they add value to the work done by prison management and staff rather than filling gaps.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

The breakdown deals with the three main elements of acts of violence committed: prisoner-on-prisoner, fights and assaults on staff. Prisoner-on-prisoner violence is where one prisoner attacks another. A fight is when two or more prisoners are actively involved in the incident.

Prisoner-on-prisoner

Month	Number
March	2
April	1
May	2
June	3
July	3
August	0
September	1
October	4
November	2
December	2
January	0
February	1
Total	21

There was no significant increase throughout the year. In comparison to the previous year (18) there was a marginal increased total of three.

There is a trend from October 2021 to February 2022 that shows monthly reductions relating to prisoner-on-prisoner violence.

Fights

Month	Number
March	0
April	3
May	1
June	2
July	1
August	2
September	3
October	3
November	3
December	2
January	0
February	1
Total	21

In comparison to the previous year, the number of fights has risen by nine, mainly in the three-month period September to November 2021 which accounted for almost half of the total incidents. The Board was pleased to see that in January and February only one fight was recorded.

Prisoner-on-staff

Month	Number
March	1
April	6
May	7
June	3
July	8
August	9
September	6
October	3
November	0
December	4
January	2
February	3
Total	52

This year's total is marginally below last year's level (54) by two. Those months that show the highest levels, July and August, were due to prisoners who have mental health issues. In August five out of the nine assaults were committed by two prisoners.

There has been a distinct downward trend since September 2021.

4.4 Use of force

The table below shows the four key elements in the use of force:

Month	Guided holds	Control & restraint (C&R)	Personal protection	Other
March	3	5	1	0
April	6	1	2	3
May	9	13	0	1
June	5	6	2	0
July	8	11	7	0
August	7	18	1	1
September	5	16	1	0
October	1	3	3	0
November	6	3	1	0
December	3	3	3	0
January	3	5	0	1
February	2	1	1	0
Totals	58	85	22	6
Grand Total	171			

The combined total of incidents from March 2021 to February 2022 was 171 with the previous year's level being 169.

Compared to last year, the level of guided holds and C&R incidents remained virtually static.

Personal protection incidents showed a moderate increase, and 'other' forms of use of force a marginal decrease.

In the two peak periods of May 2021 and August 2021, four prisoners in May 2021 accounted for nine incidents and in August five prisoners accounted for 22 incidents. The main reasons for the use of force include: failure to comply with moving cell, staff assaults, escorting to vehicles, removal of ligatures and preventing self-harm.

The Board believes that use of force by staff at Low Newton is a last resort. During the year there was some inconsistency in the number of incidents recorded by body worn video cameras. Furthermore, the CCTV system throughout the prison is not always adequate to record incidents in sufficient detail.

The Board was pleased to see that the number of use of force incidents showed a significant reduction from 110 in the first six months of the reporting year to 61 in the second six months. The Board will continue monitoring to ensure this was a true reduction and not due to lockdowns.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Illicit items are found through targeted searches and intelligence-led searches. Prisoners and staff also hand in found items. The SSU continues to have an important function to help in the reduction of illicit items coming into the prison. The number of incidents each month is shown in the table below.

Month	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Total
Number incidents	27	17	14	11	11	10	15	17	16	19	30	21	208

A prisoner can be the cause of more than one incident per month, and each incident may have more than one item found, or a number of the same items. By far the majority of finds are drugs whether as tablets, powder or in some other form. The drugs may be prescribed or illegal drugs. In some cases, the prescribed drugs are not found with the correct prisoner.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Low Newton has at present seven wings – A, B, C, D, E, F and I wings plus a healthcare unit and the CSU which has three cells. Prisoners and staff take great pride in cleaning these areas and keeping the prison tidy. G wing no longer houses prisoners and is being demolished.

A single cell policy is operating in the prison and the operational capacity is 274 at present.

There is ongoing work on the roofing of residential areas, healthcare, education and workshops. With co-ordination, this has not led to any disruption to exercise periods while scaffolding has been erected and secured.

Bids have been submitted for outside lighting on the exercise yards to enable prisoners to have time outside in the fresh air when it is dark.

Some flooring is to be replaced in healthcare and all flooring has now been replaced on C and D wing landings. There are also plans to replace the carpeted area on the entrance to C and D wings and the flooring on the main corridor.

The local incentives policy framework, graffiti policy and volumetric control policy have recently been reviewed. The last of these aims to make the best use of the space available, control the amount of property a prisoner may have in her possession, aid effective searching, and comply with a prisoner's entitlement under the local incentives scheme. There is also to be a review of the decency strategy and living conditions action plan. Decency walks are undertaken regularly with IMB members, looking at the environment as a whole in living areas throughout the prison.

Prisoners with concerns can address them through the prisoner consultative committee which meets regularly on a monthly basis.

In the near future 24 ensuite residential pods in modular buildings will be placed in the exercise yard outside the visits hall.

The CRED (Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling, Decent) programme has continued to run with the work on C, D, E and F wings being completed and the work in A, B and I wings ongoing.

Women who need clothing and have sufficient money can buy items from the prison shop, Rags to Riches. The shop also sells a variety of other items and is popular with the women. There is also a limited supply of second-hand clothing obtained from other prisoners and kept in reception. Women who need to buy clothing from the prison catalogue have limited choice and items are sometimes more expensive than elsewhere. The prison budget for clothing for women who have nothing is very limited. The Board has been told that the price paid for some items of clothing is higher than that available in the community. Gym clothing and work boots are also disproportionately expensive for women particularly in the case of work boots which have to be made specially in the smaller sizes.

Prisoners can make their meal choices from weekly menus issued to them. Although the catering budget is low, prisoners are offered meals which are nutritious, well

cooked and presented and of good variety. Meals are planned and prepared in accordance with food and hygiene regulations, with options available to meet cultural, religious and medical dietary requirements. Healthy eating options are also available. IMB members scrutinise the menus during routine visits.

IMB members are also invited to taste the meals on their visits, and these have always been found to be excellent. There is also a comments book available for prisoners to record their opinions about the meals they are receiving. The comments regarding the Christmas food this year were especially welcomed by staff. The management is hoping to restore the greater choice of food for evening meals and weekends that existed prior to Covid-19 restrictions.

Regular surveys take place to obtain the prisoners' opinions. The suggestions are adopted where possible. Regular theme nights are also a feature, and these have always proved popular.

Although the dining hall is of adequate size, prisoners have shown a reluctance to use it following the easing of Covid restrictions in the latter part of the reporting year, apparently due to fears of bullying. How the dining room is used is constantly reviewed, for example use by wing on rotation.

'R' Café on the main corridor has recently been refurbished and is staffed by kitchen workers. It provides snacks for staff and prisoners throughout the day and is proving popular.

5.2 Segregation

There are three cells, an adjudication room and an interview room in the CSU. Staff working in the unit are excellent at building up a rapport with prisoners and encouraging them to improve and control their behaviour. Comparatively few are placed on GOoD reviews, rarely for more than 14 days and more often up to seven days.

A Board member is informed of all moves to the CSU and the SSU and, if possible, visits that person before observing the 72-hour GOoD review. Review panels are conducted by a governor, attended by appropriate members of staff, with all necessary information available. The prisoner attends and is invited and encouraged to make representations.

Reviews subsequent to the 72-hour review are normally scheduled to take place on Wednesday afternoons at 2pm, allowing a Board member the opportunity to observe. The Board considers that the reviews are conducted fairly and in detail.

Prisoners awarded cellular confinement at adjudication are listed on a board in the CSU but are usually located on landing cells. This is not a regular occurrence and is risk-assessed on a case-by-case basis. Visiting Board members check the CSU board in order to visit anyone on cellular confinement.

Board members observe adjudications when making rota visits.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

Staff prisoner relationships are generally good. The Board is impressed by how well the staff know the prisoners and the issues that they may have. This is particularly

evident in the weekly safety meetings where staff have an in-depth knowledge of particular prisoners.

The Board understands that the key worker targets set by the prison service relate to male prisoners and do not take into account the difference in assessment of women prisoners. The Board is told that this is an example of the way a number of national policies are written mainly from the male perspective and do not always fit successfully into women's prisons.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Low Newton has a positive outlook in reducing discrimination between people of different racial groups, age groups, abilities and sexual persuasion. This is done by reviewing the prison's policies, investigating complaints by means of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) raised by prisoners and taking action against any member of staff, prisoner or visitor who uses insulting language or behaviour. Support is given by:

- a) Signposting prisoners to equalities, mental health, Listeners and the drug and alcohol recovery team (DART);
- b) Using appropriate channels e.g. CSIP referral, DIRF;
- c) Staff accessing support from the care team;
- d) Adjudication process;
- e) Staff reporting and challenging behaviour or outbursts, and documenting these in case notes and incident reports.

Year on year there has been a decrease in the number of DIRFs: 2019 – 69, 2020 – 67, 2021 – 43. This might be because of Covid restrictions, or for other reasons. Some individual prisoners have submitted numerous DIRFs over this period.

Proven DIRFs received so far in 2022 were all linked to race (7).

Complaints relating to discrimination and bullying have increased each year: 2019 – 5, 2020 – 13, 2021 – 27. These have related to various subjects i.e. wing move/transfer requests, gender reassignment, staff, disability, religious intolerance, racism, food handling, abuse from prisoners, not receiving mail/phone calls, shower times, self-harm, refusal of property, not feeling supported (mental health).

The percentage of those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities Minority and Ethnic groups in the north east of England is relatively low compared to other parts of the country. At the end of 2021 there were four Asian, three Black, 11 Mixed Race, one White Gypsy/Irish Traveller and seven White Other prisoners out of a total of 252 prisoners. The combined percentage is about 10%. Data on adjudications, complaints, releases, prisoner status, segregation and use of force is collected and reviewed regularly. Any statistically significant deviation from the proportion of BAME prisoners compared to the whole population is highlighted, raised with prison management and explained where necessary. Any deviation found is usually down to the small number of prisoners in a particular category causing an apparent spike in the incidents.

At the end of February 2022, there were 64 prisoners recorded with a disability. There was a wide range of disabilities, the most common of which was mental illness (33).

Foreign nationals

A foreign national is defined as a person who is not a British citizen and includes people from other countries including the European Union, migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees and those detained under immigration powers. Such prisoners form a very low proportion of the population of Low Newton. In the most recent breakdown of numbers in February 2022, there were eight foreign nationals – one each of Brazilian, German, Spanish and Vietnamese, two Irish and two Polish.

There are specific but varied needs for these prisoners including: language barriers – needing more opportunities to develop English skills – cultural barriers, food, maintaining family links and legal advice on immigration issues.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Faith support has continued through the various lockdowns and Covid outbreaks that happened throughout the reporting period. Group work stopped but the in-cell phones enabled one-to-one work to continue. Services have been produced on DVD. DVD players were purchased to increase the number of prisoners participating in worship. They have also been used to run Alpha courses for prisoners. Junction 42, a local Christian charity, has been running one-to-one art courses during the lockdown period. They will be introducing group artwork on one or two days per week as the regime level relaxes. They also produce faith packs four times a year and distraction packs also four times a year.

Some things introduced as a result of Covid have worked well and will be continued as the prison moves out of restrictions. For example, the use of iPads to enable prisoners to attend funerals online has been well received.

Religion	Number of prisoners
Agnostic	1
Atheist	2
Buddhist	2
Christian	29
Church of England (Anglican)	40
Methodist	1
Muslim	10
No Religion	103
Other	1
Pagan	9
Rastafarian	1
Roman Catholic	41
Spiritualist	2

Data as at 21/04/2022

5.6 Complaints

Complaints are regularly monitored by the Board. Staff members keep a lookout for any trends that may be developing. Numbers of complaints are usually low and any

increase in a particular month can often be identified as due to certain prisoners who tend to come in and out of the prison system.

5.7 Property

The IMB sees very few applications about property. A number of complaints are made but the prison has an efficient system for dealing with them. operational support grades and officers deal with complaints. A number of queries relate to things such as volumetric control of items and how often a prisoner is allowed to receive a parcel from the outside.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Members of the Board visit healthcare regularly and talk to the patients. The area is kept clean by the prisoner healthcare orderly. Some prisoners in healthcare are there because of mental health issues.

Following the lockdown, face-to-face appointments for the doctor, dentist and opticians have restarted.

The Governor is seeking funding for a wellbeing unit outside the visits building. This would be a purpose-built outpatients department with a reception/waiting area, dental facility, clinics, interview rooms and consulting rooms, leaving the current healthcare unit as living accommodation. It would also allow the current healthcare unit to provide an increased level of service for prisoners with mental health issues. The Board supports this proposal, seeing it as a way forward to deal with issues that have been of concern for some time.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Prisoners can use their in-cell phones to make appointments, speaking to a member of staff or leaving a message. The in-cell phones have also enabled triage to take place over the phone. This can be done by a nurse and then referred to a GP, or a GP can ring through. If the phones are not available, then notes can be left for the prisoner. There are not many of the handsets available that allow connection to the in-cell phones and it would be a help to healthcare staff if there were more.

During the period of the report the midwife dealt with 10 pregnant women, and two pregnancy terminations, and attended two births. Continuity of care is a community initiative and has been implemented in the prison to make sure all pregnant women in prison receive equivalent care. The Board understands that feedback from the women has been very positive. When women are separated from their babies it can be extremely traumatic. To alleviate some of the stress the prison has introduced memory boxes which involve the women receiving a box full of baby items. For example, two blankets are given so the mother can swap one when the baby comes into the prison. This helps ensure the women still feel close to their baby and helps with bonding.

The midwife is trying to get Visionable (a digital platform) implemented in the local hospital. This would prevent women from having to attend consultant appointments in person and ensure that the woman's privacy and dignity are respected as she would not be handcuffed to officers. Work is also underway to make sure all pregnant women have access to their digital maternity notes.

6.3 Mental health

Offender personality disorder (OPD) services are provided in Primrose and PIPE. Women's OPD Pathway outcomes are intended to be:

- a reduction in repeat offending
- improved psychological health, wellbeing, stability and pro-social behaviour
- improving the competence, confidence and attitudes of staff working with complex prisoners who are likely to have personality disorders

- Increasing the efficiency, cost effectiveness and quality of OPD Pathway services.

The pathway starts in the community and ends in the community. HMPPS and NHS England jointly commission services.

The Primrose Service is a national service which forms a key component of the OPD strategy for women. Women can be referred through a range of avenues i.e. court, offender managers, offender supervisors, prison staff and self-referral. The goal is to help women reduce the risk they pose to themselves and others. This is done by encouraging participation in treatment to help identify and address areas of risk. Twelve prisoners are dealt with at any one time. The women do therapies half of the time and work the other half. Outcomes are measured every three months.

The main challenge across the year which has impacted the most is the continued changes to regime in response to Covid, which have been difficult for prisoners and staff, leading to the cancellation of planned sessions.

This has resulted in the drama project group not being able to access the prison, so these sessions could not take place.

The Primrose staff have responded every time there has been a change to establishment regimes, to be supportive to the resident group who access the service. At times this has involved phone contact or letter writing. If the staff have not been able to see people face to face due to the rates of Covid at the time, mostly they have managed to make arrangements for individual sessions to take place; however, group sessions have been more difficult.

The Primrose staff believe the current situation feels positive, with most of the services provided as they were before Covid.

The PIPE unit is a psychologically informed planned environment. There is a focus on positive relationships on PIPE. PIPE officers have more time to spend with residents, who are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. The aim is to provide a positive and an enabling environment. Many activities are planned and offered by staff in the prison and by outside agencies. Often the nature of the activity is less relevant than the social interaction learning which women gain. Residents on PIPE are involved in the running and development of the service. PIPE's main aims are:

- facilitating a 'good enough' experience through a structured and planned environment
- maximising 'ordinariness', promoting pro-social living
- supporting progression
- supporting colleagues to work with complex needs

6.4 Social care

There are two social care cells, one on E wing and one on I wing, and a palliative care suite on healthcare, which are now in use.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Over the last year the DART team have adapted their working practices to ensure safe, appropriate and continued support during Covid. They have developed in-cell work and motivational materials to address reducing harm from substances, self-

esteem, boredom and wellbeing as these issues can trigger lapse/relapse and be difficult to cope with whilst in custody. The team also used the in-cell phone to contact prisoners in their rooms and deliver one-to-one interventions as well as boost morale and continue contact.

The team celebrated Recovery Month in September 2021 with staff and prisoners, and International Women's Day in March 2021, by producing a video of prisoners/staff talking about 'beat the bias' of being a woman, and started running group work as soon as it was Covid-safe. They have supported prisoners following release with the new DART reconnect navigator roles to help resettle prisoners into their recovery outside prison and are working closely with community teams in the north east who have female-specific criminal justice workers who offer a bespoke service with pathways for referral for continuity of care.

6.6 Soft skills

The prison has organised animal visits and has brought goats and sheep into the establishment alongside having a residential rabbit and two birds. Prisoners have had access to these animals, often with the most challenging of prisoners giving good results in feedback surveys, which have shown that this initiative has had a calming effect

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education and library

The new education induction process is delivered by the Novus Advise team and provides individuals with a needs-led, one session, assessment and engagement programme which outlines the next steps of their learning journey. The Novus aims are stated to be that self-assessment and reflective practices be used to identify key areas for personal improvement which then inform individual goals set for the future. Learners are introduced to, and take ownership of, their personal learning plan (PLP) which is linked to employability skills, empowerment and developing social and communication skills. A social model of inclusive learning enables individuals to access, participate, progress and achieve; this is built into the whole learning journey from induction, where needs, abilities and support requirements are discussed and documented with individuals.

The education team at Low Newton have achieved a success rate of 100% of learners who remain on programme and complete the course, and where relevant achieve their qualification.

A non-accredited First Steps course provides an essential route for learners to enable individual growth in confidence, assessing their own strengths and self-belief to progress to further study or employment.

Also, the education team provide support for learners to enrol and complete a range of Open University and distance learning courses.

Classroom provision has capacity for 108 learning places (27 full-time and 81 part-time places – 45 part-time places over the morning sessions and 36 over the afternoon).

A process is in place to ensure that quality and all other objectives are met. This process is monitored by a range of stakeholders.

Throughout the reporting period the department experienced leaks from the roof, which was disruptive. However, the new roof on the education department is in place, and a programme of internal work is planned to rectify the water damage to floors and fittings. Funds have also been made available to purchase new furniture and equipment to make the environment more conducive to learning and provide an improved environment for staff.

During the last 12 months, the department has been through various stages of restrictions caused by Covid-19. Throughout all of these stages, staff have remained committed to the learners on their programmes and have made every effort possible to ensure learners are able to stay on course so they can complete and achieve and progress onto their next steps. During periods when learners have been unable to attend education, staff have sent detailed work through the internal mail and have contacted learners via in-cell phone. When restrictions have eased but learners still could not attend class, staff have gone onto residential wings to have individual discussions with learners.

The Board, through its weekly visits, has evidenced that learners have been very complimentary about the support provided to them by Novus staff and have

appreciated the work that has gone into the in-cell learning packs sent to them and the developmental feedback provided.

Latest learner feedback conducted through an independent monitoring survey confirmed that learners' rate of satisfaction ranges from 89% to 100%.

7.2 Vocational training and work

Vocational qualifications include hairdressing, beauty, food production and cooking and hospitality. The business start up (SFEDI) qualification prepares learners for the world of self-employment. The course covers a range of units including business planning, personal skills and abilities needed for self-employment, finance recording and regulations, as well as considering the challenges and risks of owning a business.

In terms of vocational provision, when the learners have been able to attend the department, they have undertaken all the usual practical elements of their course to allow them to progress with their qualifications. For example:

Hairdressing and beauty learners have had access to 'clients' and have gained practical experience from providing a full range of treatments for both hair and beauty. This involved ensuring that everything was Covid-safe – masks worn, and additional cleaning of tools, equipment and work areas .

Catering and hospitality learners were able to cook and service their usual selection of meals, snacks and drinks The catering learners were to provide a hot Christmas lunch, albeit takeaway, for every member of staff in the prison who wanted one. Unfortunately, additional Covid restrictions had kicked in so on the day of the Christmas lunch there were no learners in the department, so all of the education staff pulled together and serviced 160 takeaway meals over a two-hour period.

During the periods when learners were unable to attend classes in the department, they have been working on the theory elements of their vocational programmes. This has meant that their progress has been slower than it usually would be, and some have completed all of the theory elements of their course, but are unable to complete their whole course until they can get back in the classroom and undertake some practical assessments. Vocational trainers have worked very hard to keep their learners engaged and have made regular contact with them by phone, post or one-to-one visits to the wing (when this has been allowed) in order to keep them focussed and motivated.

The provider has introduced some additional theory-based qualifications which have enabled the vocational learners to gain some additional qualifications whilst they are studying in their cells. These include:

- Award in infection prevention (COVID-19) for beauty therapy and nail services
- Award in infection prevention (COVID-19) for hairdressing and barbering services
- Award in contact dermatitis prevention

The Board has observed and monitored vocational activity and learning through weekly visits and seen first-hand the enthusiasm and commitment from education staff.

There is a national issue which the Board recognises about women being sent to prison on short sentences. They are not in prison long enough to access education or for the offender managers to do meaningful work to reduce their offending. The women involved often include those who are often in and out of prison.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Every prisoner gets a POM (prison or probation offender manager). The women are assessed and if classified as high risk of harm they get a probation officer. If classified as a lower risk, they get a prison officer.

7.4 Family contact

The family engagement workers help with family contact inside or outside of the prison including:

- assisting contact with children
- maintaining family ties
- visits
- rebuilding relationships

They help with child contact applications and are a point of contact for any Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) queries.

There is a low take-up of both face to face visits and social video calls.

The perinatal pathway is in place to help residents who fall into the following criteria:

—

- currently pregnant
- child under 24 months
- recent loss of pregnancy
 - termination
 - miscarriage

A team of people consisting of OMU and mental health staff, DART workers, Nepacs (a prisoner support charity), midwife and GP are available to assist with any woman who falls into one of these categories.

7.5 Resettlement planning

This is a core function of the Prison Service. It is directly related to the Prison Service's objective 'to reduce crime by providing constructive regimes which address offending behaviour, improved educational and work skills and promoting law-abiding behaviour in custody and after release'.

Low Newton is engaged with civil, corporate and faith alliances to provide support when prisoners are released. The prison has just appointed a staff member as an employment lead. An employment advisory board has also been created, and an employment hub will be set up in the library for all prisoners to use. A target of 15% of women gaining and maintaining employment on release for six weeks has been set.

Accommodation workers based in the OMU see everyone on admission to identify immediate needs. Within 12 weeks of release, they complete a resettlement plan and make the relevant referrals to the community to make sure each prisoner has

somewhere safe to live. A wide range of interventions is provided, but areas of concern are finding appropriate accommodation and dealing with mental health issues. On release or having been given bail women are given a pack of toiletries from the chaplains via the charity Junction 42. Often the women have difficulty finding their way to the train station or the benefit office. A service which provided support at the prison gate lost the contract in 2021.

There are still occasions on which prisoners are released with no allocated accommodation and have to report to the relevant local authority. Analysis of data indicates 78% women are released to permanent secure accommodation. Those women in short term accommodation or duty to refer accommodation aren't counted as long-term provision. Also not counted are women who do not report to probation on release or who are recalled within a short time frame. So although there are very few women released with no accommodation at all (less than 10%), because the system only counts certain information and parameters, the official figure would be 22%. The OMU has reported on the scarcity of accommodation for women on discharge. Women prisoners have been observed returning to custody as their licence condition is failed due to not having a prescribed address. Vulnerability and lack of safety gives a reason to reoffend and be returned to prison.

Short-term prisoners with sentences of fewer than 12 weeks are usually unable to take advantage of support from chaplaincy, education and healthcare. Addiction services are difficult to engage with due to the imminent release date. Women with family responsibilities often need support equivalent to bereavement counselling due to the loss of family.

The impact of Covid-19 continues. The Board still finds it difficult to conduct the annual resettlement planning survey. It is expected to continue in the next annual report period, circumstances permitting. Education and training have been restricted, maintaining family connections has been difficult, and many links with community services have not been effective. Despite these difficulties, the establishment has worked hard to produce a service to help prisoners return successfully to the community.

The work of the IMB

The Board consists of six people – five men and one woman. Two of the Board members are dual boarding with other prisons in the area. The Board needs new members and is currently part of a national recruitment campaign. The Board would like to get more women to join.

In the early months of lockdown Board meetings took place by telephone and Zoom, but meetings are now in person and attended by the Governor or deputy.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	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	0	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	1	1
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	0	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	7	4
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	3
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	10
H1	Property within this establishment	1	5
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	0	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	2	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	0	2
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	3	9
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	2
	Total number of applications	21	45



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