



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Usk and Prescoed**

**For reporting year  
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**

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## Introductory sections 1 – 3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Description of the establishment

2.1 HMP Usk and Prescoed comprises two prisons located around the town of Usk (south-east Wales). They are managed by one Governor supported by a senior management team (SMT).

- HMP Usk is a category C prison.
- HMP Prescoed is a category D open prison.
- Cilwrgi Farm Training Centre enables prisoners from Prescoed to work and receive training in agriculture, operating farm machinery and warehousing.
- In common with the rest of the prison estate, HMP Usk and Prescoed operated at regime stage 4 lockdown during most of this reporting period (RP) due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prisoners are supported by:

- The offender management in custody (OMiC) rehabilitative team. Keywork is operational in HMP Usk but as HMP Prescoed is an open prison, it is not operational there.
- A resettlement team and associated caseworkers.
- The health provider – the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.
- The psychology department.
- A substance misuse team provided by Dyfodol. This is a prison substance misuse service, funded by the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).
- The chaplaincy.
- A healthcare department which provides a day care facility at Usk and Prescoed.
- Libraries and gyms at both HMPs Usk and Prescoed.

2.2 HMP Usk first opened in 1844. Located in the town, its three main wings fan out from a central control point. These now house vulnerable prisoners, the majority being men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSO), approximately 48% of whom are over 50. During most of the 2021-22 reporting period the operational capacity (OpCap) was reduced to an average of 220 compared to the standard 278.

In normal circumstances men who qualify for enhanced status under the incentives scheme can apply to live in the Comber wing, which is a separate dormitory-style unit. During the Covid-19 pandemic this area has been used as an isolation wing.

The regime is designed to prepare prisoners for safe release and reduce the risk of reoffending:

- The sex offender treatment programme was available to all prisoners until it was terminated nationally in March 2017. This has been replaced with the Horizon and Kaizen programmes.
- There is an education department and carpentry, bricklaying and plastering workshops.

- Objectives are to hold prisoners securely and safely, and provide a well-ordered establishment, where prisoners are treated humanely and with decency and respect.

2.3 HMP Prescoed is three miles outside Usk town, on the site of a young offender institution which opened in 1939. Since 1993 it has functioned as an open resettlement establishment for male adult category D residents.

For the majority of the 2021-22 reporting period the OpCap has been at reduced levels. This enabled an increase in single occupancy as part of the response to the pandemic. Previously the OpCap was 260; during the 2021-22 reporting period the average has been 210.

Prescoed has 11 detached accommodation blocks housing approximately 20 residents each. During the reporting period 40 single occupancy pods have been added and are plumbed in and working well.

The regime is designed to rehabilitate and educate through sentence and resettlement plans, and to reduce the risk of prisoners reoffending as they return to their communities. Normally opportunities are available for education, training, and work placements, with resources allocated for the resettlement of prisoners. The regime at Prescoed includes a range of industries and activities. The Board notes that despite Covid-19 restrictions the prison has been successful in maintaining the number and variety of paid work placements. (See section 7.2.)

### **3. Executive summary**

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

3.1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic continued to restrict the Board's ability to research the contents of this report, which presents our findings for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The Board lost members due to retirement and its physical visits were curtailed by lockdown but it managed to cover the key elements although there is less supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints but despite this:

- The Board managed to conduct some visits during the differing stages of lockdown.
- Contact with prisoners was supplemented by:
  - telephone contact with staff
  - remote attendance at prison management meetings
  - increased levels of data and feedback from the senior management team (SMT)
- The Board would like to record the cooperation it has received from the prisoners, staff, and the SMT in collecting information for this report.

From this the Board:

- Has blended previous experience in both prisons with the physical monitoring it accomplished during the year.
- Derived meaning from the data it and others have collected.
- Considers its conclusions to be valid in that it has extracted a realistic picture. (See section 8.1 for a description of monitoring during lockdown.)

3.1.3 In addition to this regular information is being collected on HMPPS's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

3.1.4 In this report, the Board has used phrases such as 'in general' and 'in the main'. This is intended to indicate a realistic view of the prison where things can go wrong – it would be unhelpful to suggest that any prison could get everything right all the time. The Board appreciates that this corrective is true for all organisations, departments, bodies and individuals.

3.1.5 The Board considers HMP Usk and Prescoed to be effective, well-run prisons, following the concept of transparent review and continuous improvement. Our view is supported by the reports of other bodies monitoring or inspecting these prisons. These include Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the Welsh Prison Group Director's reviews. (See section 8.1.)

3.1.6 In 2020 the prison was awarded the College Centre for Quality Improvement's (CCQI) Enabling Environments award, and this standard has continued. It is awarded by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. See the glossary in section 8 for an explanation of what this means.

## **3.2 Main judgements**

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

3.2.1 The Board considers that both Usk and Prescoed are safe prisons that see low levels of violence, bullying and self-harm. Most men report feeling safe. (See also section 4.5)

3.2.2 The prison continues to have a robust strategy to respond to Covid-19. Clinically vulnerable prisoners have been shielded and its men were amongst the earliest (in the prison estate) to be double vaccinated.

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

3.2.3 Due to Covid-19, the elements of safety, fairness, and health have intertwined more than usual. It is the Board's view that the prison has been successful in the way it has continued to manage the pandemic. Despite lockdown the previous Governor managed to prioritise risk management over mere avoidance and the new Governor has continued this practice. Undoubtably men have paid a high price for their safety, but most have not seen the implementation of lockdown as compromising fairness. The prison was one of the first to be allowed to move to stage 2, thereby increasing time out of cell, and this important principle has continued following further lockdowns.

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

3.2.4 The Board considers that the prison has coped well with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and that it has provided healthcare comparable to that available in the community. Prisoners regularly express the view that their health needs are well met.

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

3.2.5 Despite Covid-19 restrictions during the reporting period, the prison continued to facilitate resettlement (see section 7.5) and men from HMP Prescoed were able to continue their off-site placements throughout the period. During the pandemic the prison has continued to work with the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact: see section 8.2) to ensure that support was available to both men and their families during Covid-19 restrictions.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE UK PRISONS MINISTER***

3.3.1. Education is a key element in improving prisoner rehabilitation. After accounting for staff salary pay awards (mandated over the last few years) the Board is concerned that there has been an effective decrease in the funding the education department receives and that this could have a negative impact on prisoner outcomes.

The Board is pleased to note the significant reduction in the number of men serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP sentences) in HMP Usk and Prescoed. However, those remaining (many significantly over their tariff term) are aware that they are serving an abolished sentence, described by a previous Supreme Court Judge as a 'stain on our criminal justice system'. Several describe the mental health issues occasioned by what they see as the hopelessness of their position. We join other Boards in asking the minister to expedite the reviews of prisoners serving IPP sentences.

### **TO THE WALES MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

Sadly, during May 2022 a valued member of staff and one of the mental health nurses, died. In addition to being greatly missed for the skill and difference he made to the men, the team has been left understaffed and a replacement appointment is urgently needed.

### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

The Board is concerned that the number of probation officers may be inadequate. We understand that the complement of senior probation officers currently stands at one when four would be needed to cover the work involved. (See section 7.3.1.)

### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

3.3.4 Referring to our comments in the executive summary 3.1.5, 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, we have not much to add here other than to ask that the team continues their efforts to improve telephone access for the men in Usk. The Governor has produced and distributed his establishment plan; it included the following statement:

*'Think to the finish. In whatever you do, think about the ultimate outcome. Think about how we treat each other and those we keep in custody. Think about legitimate authority and doing the right thing. Never underestimate the impact, for good or bad, which you can have on another human being.'*

The Board has nothing to add to that.

## **3.4 Progress since the last report**

3.4.1 HMP Usk and Prescoed have operated under atypical Covid-safe regimes throughout the reporting period, making comparisons with earlier years unhelpful; but the Board has noted the impressive and productive level of cooperation between staff and men. Other progress includes:

- HMP Usk gained the Enabling Environments qualification. (See 5.4.)
- Residential managers at Prescoed held regular update and Q&A sessions to keep men informed on what was happening during the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- Investment has been secured by the SMT to improve the fabric of both prisons. This has allowed the refurbishment of some of the toilets and showers in Usk. The programme of cell updates has progressed with those in A wing being completed during the RP.



- The decommissioning and replacement of the unsatisfactory Lester unit in HMP Prescoed has begun with the addition of 40 Bunkabin accommodation units in HMP Prescoed. These have worked well and allowed the prison to offer more single-occupancy accommodation during the pandemic. Twenty of these were used for stage 2 outworkers and the other 20 became a protective isolation unit (PIU). It would be good if the prison was allowed to keep these units permanently. (See section 5.1.)
- HMP Usk was innovative in maximising possible exercise time for the men. For example, the sports field was split into areas to allow walking groups, group circuits and weight sessions and, depending on the weather, five sessions a day were run.
- To promote equality and diversity at Prescoed 'Let's Talk' events were delivered on race and disability. Events celebrating Black History Month and Women's History Month were conducted for both staff and prisoners.
- The level of cooperation and trust between men and officers required to maintain a protracted lockdown is considerable. The fact that this has been achieved in a positive spirit is noteworthy.

3.4.2 HMP Prescoed has had its operational capacity increased for MCOSO from 20 to 25 which has enabled more local prisoners to reside there.

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

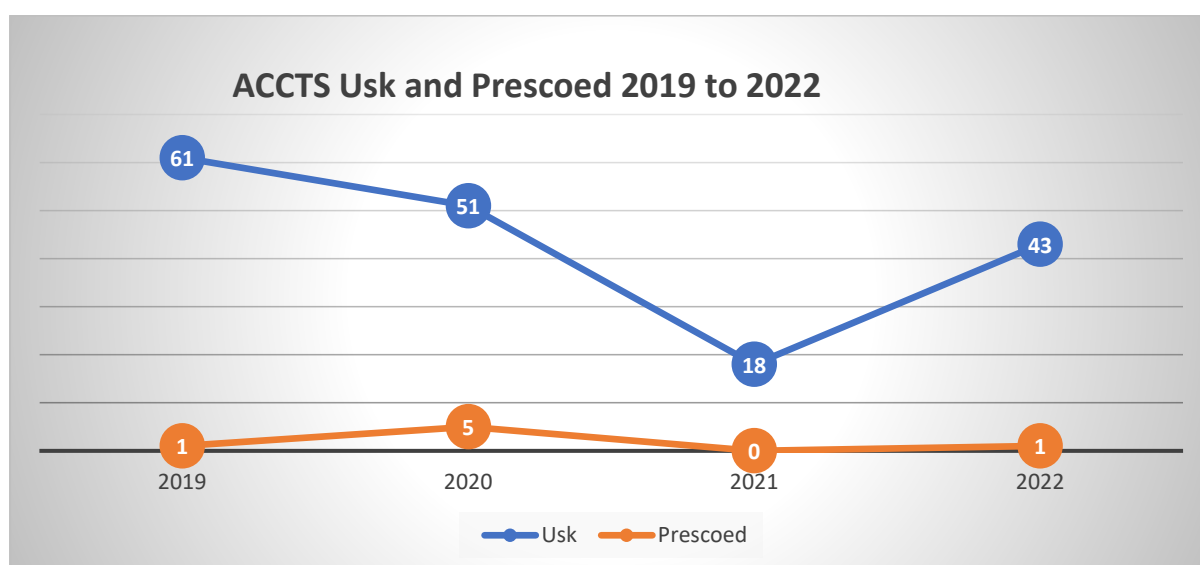
#### 4.1. Reception and induction

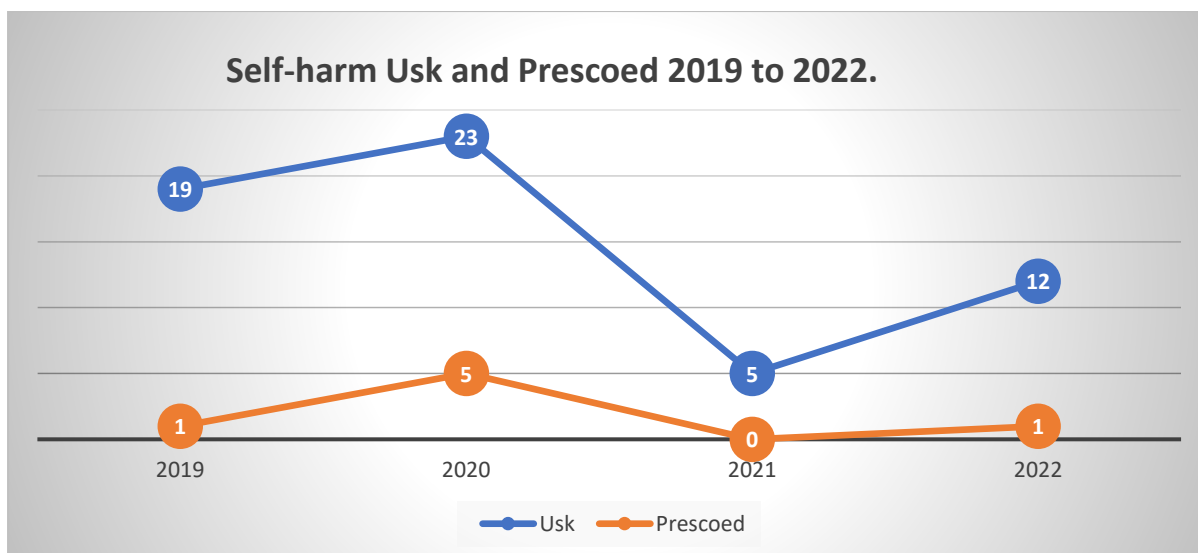
The responsibility for reception and induction has now been taken over by the residence function at HMP Usk. This has aided continuity. Two prisoners work with reception to provide support and during the pandemic reverse cohorting was mandated for two weeks. The safer custody team have introduced a pack to support and inform the men. Printed ID cards and lanyards are issued to all prisoners on arrival and an induction booklet has been completed in collaboration with prisoners. In January a renewed facility list was made available to all, produced in conjunction with the prisoners council. Prescoed prisoners are required to have reverse cohorted for two weeks at the sending establishment. Prior to disembarkation from transport at Prescoed, documents are checked to confirm category D status, and thereafter prisoners move to reception for welfare checks, undertake a lateral flow test and property checks and then visit healthcare. Checks are made regarding vulnerabilities including mental health issues. A half-hour talk is given informing prisoners of expectations and when they are likely to see their prison offender manager (POM). A prisoner induction orderly addresses the prisoners to help them settle in and in general this appears to work.

#### 4.2. Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board had expected an increase in the number of assessments, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents and self-harm during the Covid-19 lockdowns; in fact – see the graphs below – numbers reduced. During the last 12 months 43 ACCTs were opened at Usk. One ACCT was opened at Prescoed.

During this reporting period a total of 13 incidents of self-harm have been reported.





	Usk 2021-22			Prescoed 2021-22		
	ACCTs	Acts of self-harm	Complaints	ACCTs	Acts of self-harm	Complaints
Apr-21	4	2	33	0	0	2
May-21	6	0	43	0	0	4
Jun-21	3	1	37	0	0	13
Jul-21	4	1	43	0	0	7
Aug-21	3	0	47	0	0	6
Sep-21	4	1	27	0	0	7
Oct-21	4	2	32	0	0	4
Nov-21	2	2	32	0	0	5
Dec-21	4	0	21	0	0	6
Jan-22	4	2	41	0	0	4
Feb-22	1	0	34	0	0	7
Mar-22	4	1	19	1	1	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>74</b>

4.2.1 Listeners are supported by the Samaritans and safer custody case managers. There are eight Listeners at Usk and seven at Prescoed. Our conversations with the men suggest that these services are helpful and valued. During Covid-19 Listeners in HMP Usk have been recording 'stop and chats' to assist prisoners with various problems. IMB members continued to have informal meetings with them to gauge their views regarding ongoing issues within the establishments. Their views corresponded to those we have given above.

4.2.2 During this current period there have been no deaths in custody. However, on 5 January 2022 the coroner issued a Regulation 28 report regarding a death in September 2019. The request was that the prison confirm the steps that it is taking to address the risks posed by prisoners at HMP Usk trading prescribed medication. A response was sent on 28 February 2022 by the Director General of Probation, Wales

and Youth, HMPPS.

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

4.3.1 At HMP Usk assaults remain low, but there were three on staff and ten on prisoners recorded during the reporting period. There were no assaults on staff or men at Prescoed. Levels of bullying remain low and most prisoners report that they feel safe. This supports the impression gained by members during our regular rota visits.

4.3.2 The introduction of a specific safety governor has enabled increased resources for safer custody.

During the reporting period there were 58 referrals for challenge, support, and intervention plans (CSIPs) made at Usk, with 16 proceeding. At Prescoed nine CSIP referrals were made, with four proceeding.

### **4.5 Use of force**

Use of force is rare and PAVA, the incapacitant spray, has not been used at either establishment. The impression of the Board is that staff would regard its use as a representing a failure on their part.

During the reporting period there have been 15 incidents of use of force at Prescoed involving escorting prisoners from their units to reception on ratchet handcuffs – with one cuff on a wrist of the prisoner and one on the wrist of the prison officer. At Usk there have been seven incidents of use of force.

### **4.6 Preventing illicit items**

The main element of substance misuse at Usk has been the trading of prescribed medication. Prescoed has occasional drug finds as well as trading in prescribed medication. A dog searching team occasionally visits the Prescoed site. Its zero tolerance on substance misuse has meant that several men were returned to closed conditions based on intelligence gathered and suspicion testing. As reported last year, the prison cites a causal link between this policy and the low level of violence and bullying found in both establishments.

A healthcare medication compact has been drawn up to be signed by each prisoner. This is in addition to increased vigilance – for example the security department manage 10% of prisoner cell checks and if a discrepancy is found an intelligence report is completed leading to an adjudication. Should prisoners not agree to the medication compact they are challenged.

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

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

5.1.1 Usk prison was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has the inevitable accommodation challenges associated with that. Continuing efforts have been made to mitigate these, but its Grade II listing requires approval for major works. It provides a monitoring paradox – although most prisoners live in cramped conditions, sharing cells designed for one, the outcomes continue to be good, and most (but not all) men routinely provide positive feedback to Board members.

5.1.2 The prison is well maintained and clean, there is little litter and staff undertake regular decency checks. Unfortunately, there has been no progress with in-cell telephony and the opportunity was not taken to prepare for its introduction during the upgrades

5.1.3 Prescoed prison is of more modern construction and originally opened immediately prior to World War Two. The demolition of the Lester unit is welcomed by the Board – we have highlighted its poor condition and unsuitability in previous reports. The complete replacement arrangements are currently unclear but 40 individual self-contained accommodation ‘pods’ have been set up and function well and have assisted in relieving the circumstances of Covid-19. It is hoped that these will be kept in the longer term. Further the Board understand that Lester will be replaced with 60 – 80 ‘Bunkabin’ pods, which is planned by December 2022. In addition, two houseblocks at Prescoed have been refurbished and all windows have been replaced

5.1.6 Operational capacity has been adjusted downwards in both prisons. This has resulted in a reduction in cell sharing and helped to facilitate shielding, reverse cohorting, isolation and other Covid-19 compliance arrangements.

5.1.7 The Board has noted that cleanliness has been maintained at a high standard at both sites, not least through the efforts of industrious orderlies, who have continued this vital work throughout the pandemic.

5.1.8 The Board is unaware of any protracted difficulties with the heating and hot water systems that have affected prisoners. A programme of cellular upgrade is due to be undertaken throughout the next reporting period.

5.1.9 Key performance indicators (KPIs) within the maintenance contract have been suspended, though the Board has been assured that standards have been maintained and from what we have seen this is correct. A full accommodation review at both prisons is planned but has been delayed owing to the pandemic.

5.1.10 The Board has not been made aware of any ongoing concerns over clothing and laundry. The Prescoed laundry has been upgraded and normally runs well.

5.1.11 The fire alarm systems in both prisons have recently been upgraded and this is important in an old prison.

5.1.12 The main kitchen at Prescoed generally seems to function well though staffing shortages (staff and prison workers) present continuing difficulties. The Board has

not received any applications about food during the reporting period. The catering comments book in both prisons has a few observations – some positive and some negative - but there are no recurring themes supported by evidence. Supplementary food packs continued to be supplied through the pandemic. Special diets seem to have been satisfactorily catered for. Towards the end of the reporting period the staff have reported difficulties in obtaining some of the foodstuffs ordered – this does not seem to be unique to the prison but is mirrored in the local community.

5.1.13 At HMP Prescoed 80 prisoners have opted to engage in the ‘Thursday food shopping day’ – this is available to fully-paid outworkers on release on temporary licence (ROTL). A step towards normality, it allows them to store a selection of sandwiches and microwavable meals for the evenings should they miss the hot meal service in the evening.

## **5.2 Segregation**

There are no segregation facilities at either Usk or Prescoed.

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

5.3.1 The Board notes that staff/prisoner relationships appear to be sound. Communication between staff and the men generally appears to be good and there are opportunities for representatives to meet with managers to raise problems or suggestions. As would be expected, some men disagree with this assessment, but they are in the minority.

5.3.2 The key worker system continues to operate in Usk, though clearly the pandemic and related staff absences have somewhat disrupted this, although basic contact and welfare checks have continued and are now increasing.

HMP Usk has gained the Enabling Environments qualification. This includes having prisoner representatives on various boards being encouraged to take an active role. In addition, prison community councils have been introduced, where there are representatives from minority groups. This will include encouraging support and development for prisoners by prisoners, involvement in decision making about the prison environment and maximising key worker engagement with prisoners. The Board continues to monitor this development.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The prison staff have continued to support prisoners who have protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act during this last year. The prison is to conduct an equalities survey to compare Covid-19 and pre-Covid-19 conditions to identify if any specific groups feel they have been treated differently during the pandemic. Prisoners consistently state that they feel safe in both prisons. The results of the HMP Usk protected characteristics questionnaire were positive overall but slightly less so in Prescoed, this disparity was noted in our last report.

The HMP Usk, Prescoed and Cilwrgi Farm Training Centre excellence strategy was agreed in January 2021. This highlights the specific needs of older people.

The equalities officers have benefited from the increased resources resulting from the introduction of the specific safety governor, including increased training and literature on educational themes. The following have been provided: "Equalities Quarterly" magazine; LGBT Pride month; a prison newsletter for those with complex needs as well as forums for the protected characteristics of age, race and sexual identity, and a specific forum for under-25s. In addition, there are bi-monthly meetings for foreign national prisoners. There are a range of events during the year that reflect the diversity of the prisoners. Whilst these have been different during the restricted regime, the prisons continued to recognise and celebrate a range of areas. This includes Black Lives Matter, LGBT awareness, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, World Suicide Prevention Day, mental health and disability awareness. Display boards were in place to promote these events, films and prisoners had a choice of celebration meals to reflect the respective cultures.

There is an aging population in HMP Usk: 46% of the prisoners are over the age of 50 and 41% of prisoners have one or more disabilities. In HMP Prescoed, 20% of the prisoners are over the age of 50 with 32% having one or more disabilities. Usk appears to provide a safe and supportive environment for senior prisoners but access for prisoners with physical disabilities can be challenging on both sites. Whilst there have been adaptations to the shower rooms, there is only one stair lift for the three wings in HMP Usk. Most older men report that they do feel safe and do feel supported.

The cameo suite, developed to provide an activity centre for older prisoners in HMP Usk, has been closed due to the lockdown, with some specific exceptions such as faith-based activities. The prisoners are keen that this reopens when the prison regime allows.

The LGBT forum has continued during the year. The prison housed two transgender prisoners, one of whom has now left. Transgender case boards have been held, but the IMB was unable to attend these.

There have been 21 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted with 12 being upheld and six not upheld, with three (submitted in March) under investigation during the reporting period, which have now been resolved.

The recommendations from the Lammy Report continue to be monitored by the equalities and diversity board. During the reporting period these meetings were held by teleconference, with Board members present. Whilst not ideal, as prisoners are not involved, they have kept this agenda progressing.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

This has been challenging to monitor during the pandemic and lockdown. Most of the information has been either reported by the chaplaincy or through the equalities board.

During visits, the prisoners reported being able to continue to observe their faith. The religious festivals have been celebrated as much as possible, whilst ensuring Covid-19 security.

The prisoners have a range of faiths and beliefs. These include Buddhism, Paganism, Judaism, Hinduism, Muslim, Sikhism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, and various forms of Christianity. The prison chaplains have continued to visit during the pandemic. Whilst they could no longer offer group worship, such as Friday prayers, unless prisoners are from the same cohort, they have managed to offer individual prayer and worship, where requested.

A survey in HMP Prescoed highlighted the work of the imam, who continued to offer spiritual and emotional support to people of all faiths and none.

The monthly Prescoed newsletter now includes a section called 'Faith in You', where resources, faith support groups, faith book clubs and the Prison Fellowship's prayer line are all listed. Prisoners are being encouraged to submit articles, explaining why their faith matters to them.

Unfortunately, the multifaith room in HMP Usk was closed during the reporting period because of damage. Previously it was accessible to all prisoners. Non-Christian or faith groups who prefer not to use the chapel are able to use the cameo suite.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

Following the outbreak of Covid, approximately three years ago, the decision was taken to move all men in the establishment to an "enhanced" regime. This was to mitigate the damaging effect of the greatly increased time in cell and other regime changes that took place to ensure both staff and men were safe. As of July, since the establishments are no longer under the constraints of the Covid rules implemented by Public Health Wales, they will be reintroducing the incentives scheme in full.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 HMP Prescoed: there were few complaints during the reporting period (89). Peaks (the mode) were centred around property (16) and residential issues (17). It is of note that there were no complaints around violence or visit limitations.

5.7.2 HMP Usk: there were 300 complaints during the reporting period, and it is of note that over 30% came from one individual. The peak (mode) was around residential issues. Again, there were no complaints around violence and only four regarding visits.

## **5.8 Property**

Many complaints, in both Usk and Prescoed, came from issues surrounding the transfer of property from other prisons.



## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

The Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) provides all health services for both HMP Usk and HMP Prescoed. GP, dental and optical services are outsourced.

During the pandemic members of the IMB have been in frequent contact with healthcare and in the opinion of the Board good collaboration exists between officers and healthcare staff. This has facilitated effective management on both sites. Attempts have been made to move forward to pre-Covid status but, during the reporting period, challenges remained due to several resurgences of the pandemic.

Healthcare at HMP Usk and Prescoed is a five days per week service but is not 24 hours. Difficulties arise when prisoners arrive at either establishment at the end of the working day requiring staff to extend their hours to accommodate the necessary procedures. Prisoners can arrive from the sending establishment where they have been prescribed prohibited medication not appropriate to a non-24-hour medical facility. They may be transferred without the knowledge of the sending healthcare establishment thus detailed information of prescribed medication (particularly psychiatric medication) is unavailable. Occasionally prisoners arrive who have not previously been assessed by the sending healthcare establishment.

Communication between healthcare and prison management is positive. However, with limited NHS resources (appointment availability) it is vital that prisoner appointments are maintained in a timely fashion. Practical problems include the fact that taxis occasionally turn up extremely early and are turned away or arrive late with the patient appointment being lost. This situation requires increased communication between the security department (who book taxis) and healthcare. The rebooking of appointments causes distress for the prisoner and inconvenience for the NHS and could result in claims of negligence should critical appointments be missed.

The proposed increase in the population at HMP Prescoed will necessitate additional nursing staff and additional consultancy space within the healthcare facility.

Student nurses are again being accommodated and receive positive feedback.

### **Covid**

They were the first establishment in Wales and among the first UK wide to progress to stage 1 within this reporting period. Partnership between the establishment and external agencies remained strong during the Covid pandemic. While recovery appeared to have started with new ways of working this was hindered by an increase of confirmed cases within both establishments amongst prisoners and staff during the early part of 2022. Problems due to the changing landscape of the virus and its effects were compounded by the difference in guidance between England and Wales and the requirement to impart information to many sources.

While the development of services has been on hold during the pandemic, progress has been made with some plans to enhance services aided by monies from Welsh Government.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

General medical services are provided by Malpas Brook Health Centre. There are three surgeries a week in Usk and two in Prescoed. The services provided to prisoners appear to be comparable to those available in the community.

A Band 6 registered nurse was supported through her minor illness module, and this will ensure continuity of care across both sites. During the reporting period Band 4 and Band 3 healthcare support workers undertook level 4 certificates. A further Band 3 healthcare support worker has completed the Buttercup course enabling her to assist with medication ordering and issuing for the men. A Band 7 is working to complete her MSc dissertation which will broaden and enhance the nurse-led service.

Due to the pandemic, commencement of training in sexual health in order to provide sexual health clinics across both sites has been delayed. Plans are in place for two members of the team to attend a course at Swansea University to enable this to go ahead.

### **End of life/palliative care**

The end-of-life pathway was agreed last year. So far this has not needed to be used and the accommodation is currently occupied by prisoners with disabilities.

### **Ophthalmology**

Pen Optical provide two sessions a month on each site. Men usually receive their prescription glasses within a week.

### **Dental services**

A fixed-term contract runs until 31 May 2023 with Time for Teeth. Two dentist sessions a week are provided at both Usk and Prescoed with a dental hygienist providing one morning session per week in Usk. The men at Prescoed are encouraged to attend their own dentist when on home leave, however this has not occurred frequently during the last 12 months. Both sites can access emergency services as required. The team has managed to reduce the waiting time and services appear to be as good as those available in the community.

Extra money has been provided by Welsh Government for additional sessions for both optometry and dental treatment following the pandemic to tackle the waiting lists.

### **Pharmacy**

Following HMPS and Welsh Government audit 0.6 full-time-equivalent pharmacy technicians and 0.4 full-time-equivalent pharmacists will be in house.

## **6.3 Mental health**

As part of the integrated autism service pathway a senior occupational therapist in mental health has been part-funded to assess and review patients with this diagnosis and to identify those who might qualify for a diagnosis.

The older adult mental health in-reach programme has halted due to the individual clinician changing her substantive working hours. Some support remains through a referral process. The Board is not aware of any plans for a replacement.

#### **6.4 Social care**

Work continues with the Monmouthshire integrated team. During the reporting period the problem became apparent of an ageing prison population with inadequate facilities to accommodate them. The rooms/cells are restrictive in size and are unsuitable for those with mobility problems. Buddies offer support for such prisoners; however, they cannot assist with 'hands on' hygiene issues, and showers are not readily accessible to such prisoners. Prison staff occasionally inappropriately medicalise both mattress and footwear issues which are not the responsibility of healthcare.

#### **6.5 Exercise, regime**

During the reporting period the exercise regime has varied, with recent improvement to time out of cell and the beginning of a normal regime. The prison was one of the first to be allowed to move to stage 2 and increase the amount of time out of cell. Varied outbreaks of Covid-19 have made the regime restrictive; despite this, every opportunity has been taken to provide a chance for the men to exercise, in most circumstances for a minimum of one hour per day.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

This is the area where prison life has continued to be most challenging during the reporting period.

### **7.1 Education, library**

Lockdown (i.e. men locked in their cell for up to 23 hours a day on occasions) has had a huge negative effect on delivery of education during the period, but staff strove to make some opportunities available.

For example:

- Open University students were provided with laptop loans allowing them to continue their studies.
- In-cell education TV was set up supported by workbooks.
- Several distance learning courses were funded and set up by the Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Library services on both sites were maintained by the prisoners themselves. For almost a year they successfully managed, administered, and maintained cataloguing and lending until the arrival of a new librarian on 1 of March 2022.

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

Despite Covid lockdowns HMP Prescoed continued to be successful in providing work placements for prisoners. Previously Prescoed facilitated approximately 120 men working off-site on ROTL every day. It is important to note that in the main, these jobs are well paid and include occupations such as:

- HGV driving
- construction
- rail and track maintenance
- manufacturing
- warehousing
- waste management
- agriculture

These enable men to gain profitable employment on release. The Board continues to be impressed with the results that the team have achieved in protecting and developing opportunities. For example, during the pandemic men were found employment helping to build the new hospital in Cwmbran, benefiting both themselves and the local area. At the end of March 2022 there were 100 prisoners working in the community whilst on temporary licence; 82% of these were in paid employment attending work daily. To achieve this the community placement team continued to develop new relationships with employers – for example men are working for Transport for Wales to help build the South Wales Metro and a potential long-term career for themselves.

National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) exams continued throughout lockdown (24-hour open book in-cell exams completed on loaned laptops).

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

7.3.1 Contact between prisoners and Community Offender Managers has been severely affected by Covid-19 restrictions and low staffing levels.

However, compared to the last reporting period (i.e., the beginning of the pandemic) the offender management unit (OMU) has seen an increase in the level of face-to-face contact between prisoners and OMU staff and key workers – this is valuable. Contact is now regular rather than sporadic which has meant that work relating to enhanced behaviour monitoring has been resumed.

At Prescoed, under OMiC all prisoners have the opportunity of regular contact with a prison offender manager (POM). Board feedback suggests that this is valued by most of the men. The OMiC model appears to be embedding across both sites and the Board has noted an increase in the level of contact with community offender managers. This has been achieved via on-site face-to-face contacts and a video system available across both sites.

7.3.2 During the pandemic multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meetings have taken place via Microsoft Teams and this appears to be satisfactory. HMP Prescoed has been able to retain more face-to-face contact due to it being an open prison. Both establishments acknowledge that documentation received from sending establishments has improved although concerns have been raised at Prescoed about risk assessments received from other open prisons and such concerns have been escalated through management groups. The OMiC model is seeing more probation officers coming into the Prescoed establishment as Covid restrictions reduce and this seems to be valued by the men. All aspects of ROTL for resettlement and employment purposes have returned to a business-as-usual approach. Prisoners can apply for ROTL following their transfer to Prescoed following the required risk assessment and safeguarding checks.

7.3.3 Up to 50% of OASys documents received in HMP Usk vary in quality with the 'Start Custody' section either remaining blank or the quality of recording falling short of expectation. It is accepted that this is contributed to by lack of resources.

### **Offending behaviour programmes**

Small group work has now resumed but due to the pandemic no target was set for 2021-22.

### **7.4 Family contact**

During the reporting period the prison continued to work with Pact to ensure that support is available for men and their families during Covid-19 restrictions.

In Prescoed during the reporting period nearly 1,400 social video calls (delivered by Purple Visits) have taken place with an average of over 125 per month. As restrictions have eased, in-person family visits have returned.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

There have been 24,221 periods of ROTL to the end of March 2022 with only 30 failures; this is impressive. Both resettlement day release (RDR) and resettlement overnight release (ROR) have resumed. Whilst Prescoed was under stage 1 Covid restrictions the prison encouraged external partners to return to work within the prison, but facilities were made available for phone contact when face-to-face contact was not allowed.

7.5.1 All agencies have now returned to face-to-face meetings and the multi-agency hub has been redesigned to offer a waiting area and a small meeting room for the use of prisoners. The hub is open throughout the working week with a prisoner based in the waiting area to take bookings.

Since the last reporting period, probation practitioners have replaced the St Giles Trust. Their current function is to meet with prisoners and facilitate applications for bank accounts and provide identification documents (e.g. driving licence and/or birth certificate) to assist in housing applications. During the reporting period resettlement workers have aided:

- ID applications – 150
- Bank accounts opened – 63
- Housing applications – 24

The Board normally monitors the number of prisoners going into housing on their first night after release; during the reporting period we have been informed that Prescoed achieved a 94% success rate. Most men from Usk go to approved premises or Open Prisons.

## 8. The work of the IMB

8.1 During the Covid-19 lockdown period the Board's evidence has been derived from:

- contact with prisoners and staff made during physical monitoring
- regular weekly remote monitoring of units and wings
- limited conference calls with the Listener and other prisoner representative groups as lockdown prevented many of these
- continued remote meetings and updates from the Governor and SMT
- analysis of prison management information against Board records and rota reports
- review of prisoner applications to the Board (see relevant table and our supplementary comment)
- review of the prison's complaints system, together with the quarterly DIRF reviews
- remote attendance at key meetings – for example:
  - equalities meetings (which include staff and prisoners)
  - quarterly use of force meetings

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	97
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not applicable

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	0	1
C	Equality	0	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	0	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	1	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	2
F	Food and kitchens	3	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	1
H1	Property within this establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	4	2
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	2	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	2	2
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	1
K	Transfers	0	3
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	1
	Total number of applications	12	21

### 8.1 Supplementary comment about applications:

In 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Board commented on the small number of applications lodged by prisoners. It has now reinvestigated whether this should be a cause for concern. The spectrum of possible reasons could include one of the following:

- That the numbers are an indicator implying that prisoners are well managed and relationships between prisoners and staff are generally satisfactory. The suggested conclusion in that case is that prisoners do not feel the need to submit formal applications.
- That the numbers are a negative indicator implying that prisoners are disengaged with the regime, fearful of possible consequences (for example, being moved to another prison) or so disillusioned with the effectiveness of the Board that they do not bother to submit applications.



### **8.1.2 Our conclusions re applications**

The Board has reviewed what it sees as the relevant elements, which include:

- the nature of the relationships that Board members have observed between prisoners and staff
- feedback from prisoner representatives e.g., Listeners and buddies
- the unusual circumstances around the Covid-19 pandemic
- a review of management information on men return to closed conditions, linked to observation on-site

Prisoners at Usk and Prescoed have access to the IMB 0800 (freephone) hotline number which enables men to voice their concerns and make applications directly to the IMB. The prison has supported this initiative and it has been advertised in the newsletter (produced and edited by the men) and via the prison's news screen.

To make sure that men can access the application system without hindrance the Board will accept applications verbally when we visit, and men do not need to use the IMB form to write to us as we noted that the appropriate forms were not always available. To be GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) compliant this means that Board members are required to carry spare copies of the approved forms so men can sign them. This means that they can read the privacy notice and are aware that members may need to speak to staff to process their application.

The Board does receive comments (both positive and negative) from the men and when necessary, these are passed on to the SMT via our rota reports and discussed with the Governor at Board meetings. This may reduce the need for formal applications by resolving problems early.

Previously some prisoners suggested that those who submit applications may be 'shipped out' as a punishment for complaining to the Board. In the reporting periods 2017/18, 2020/21 and again in 2021-22 the Board conducted reviews and found no correlation between those submitting applications and removals to other prisons or (in the case of Prescoed) a return to closed conditions. These findings have been regularly communicated within the prison.

To conclude: the Board has found no evidence supporting the idea that the small number of applications we receive is a negative sign. The Board's view is that in the main, prisoners are comfortable in submitting applications and would do so should they feel the need. Prisoners do use the prison Comp1 system and in addition discuss matters of concern with the Board. The Board continues to keep this situation under review.

## 8.2 Glossary

<b>ACCT</b>	Assessment, care in custody and teamwork
<b>CCQI</b>	College Centre for Quality Improvement. The Royal College of Psychiatrists works with mental health services to assess and improve the quality of care provided. To achieve and maintain accreditation a service needs to demonstrate consistently high standards over time. These are reviewed at regular periods. See <a href="http://rcpsych.ac.uk/improving-care">rcpsych.ac.uk/improving-care</a>
<b>CSIP</b>	Challenge, support, and intervention plan
<b>Dyfodl</b>	Dyfodol is part of the criminal justice harm prevention provision in Wales and offers assessment, treatment and support for those involved with the criminal justice system
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
<b>HMP</b>	Her Majesty's Prison
<b>HMPPS</b>	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
<b>IMB</b>	Independent Monitoring Board
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi-agency public protection arrangements
<b>MCOSO</b>	Men convicted of sexual offences
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>OASys</b>	Offender assessment system
<b>OMU</b>	Offender management unit
<b>OpCap</b>	Operational capacity. This relates to the total number of prisoners an establishment can hold without serious risk to the good order, security, and proper running of the prison.
<b>OMiC</b>	The offender management in custody (OMiC) model implemented from April 2018 as a framework to coordinate a prisoner's journey through custody and back into the community. OMiC intends to put rehabilitation at the centre of custodial and post-release work to reduce reoffending and promote community reintegration. OMiC provides every prisoner in the adult male closed estate and all eligible women in the women's estate with a key worker, who is a prison officer, who is there to guide, support, and coach an individual through their custodial sentence. Key workers and prison offender managers, who are employed by the Probation Service, work together.
<b>OPCAT</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It is an international agreement of which the UK is a founding signatory, and the IMBs form an important part of the UK's obligation in prisons. IMBs are part of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism, set up under the OPCAT.

<b>ROTL</b>	Release on temporary licence. ROTL is part of the process for the resettlement and rehabilitation of prisoners. The opportunity to access ROTL is a key element for the preparation of their safe release. This gives them the chance to organise work, housing and re-establish relationships with families and their communities. The decision to allow ROTL is made following rigorous risk assessment and there is no presumption that it will be allowed. This assessment will include investigation of previous release on temporary licence, criminal history, child safeguarding, probation assessment, the position of the victim, the prisoner's behaviour during custody and police information.	
<b>Pact</b>	The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) is an independent national charity working with prisoners and with prisoners' families. Its mission is to support prisoners and their families to make a fresh start and to minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment to prisoners, families, and communities.	



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