



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wymott

**For reporting year
[01 June 2019 – 31 May 2020]**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Wymott is an adult male category C training prison. The population comprises approximately 40% mainstream category C prisoners and 60% men convicted of a sexual offence (MCOSO). The majority of the prisoners have four or more years to serve. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak it had an operating capacity of 1174 prisoners but this was reduced to 1020 in May 2020 to enable all prisoners to be accommodated in single cells (see section 4.4).

In its usual form, the accommodation comprises a number of specialist wings including a care and reablement wing (supported by an older prisoners' activities centre ('come and meet each other' – CAMEO) delivered by the Salvation Army), a drug therapeutic community wing, a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) unit (to support a drug-free return to the community), an integrated drug treatment wing (managing prisoners on a controlled methadone programme), four wings for MCOSO and three other wings. Since March 2020 the prison has worked with Public Health England to reconfigure the population and function of the wings to provide a protective environment for all of the prisoners, particularly those who are exceptionally vulnerable.

For most of the reporting year, healthcare in the prison was provided by Bridgewater Community NHS Trust and Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMHT). However, since 1 April 2020 services are provided wholly by GMMHT. Delphi Medical now provides the drug and alcohol recovery service.

Education is provided by Novus and a full education programme is on offer from pre-entry level up to degree level, with particular focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. This service was suspended from March 2020 owing to the pandemic.

The prison workshops offer a range of employment places, many of which can lead to nationally accredited qualifications. Some of these workshops are operated on a commercial basis providing quality services to external clients and effectively constitute a 'working prison'. Most of the workshops have been closed to prisoners since March, but the staff have been employed making scrubs for the NHS, screens for visits and signs to promote social distancing.

A range of offending behaviour programmes to help prisoners address their offending behaviours are provided by the North-West regional psychology services and the local programmes team. These too are currently suspended.

Achieve North-West provides help and support with accommodation and finances prior to release, and the CAMEO group provides some support for older prisoners. The prison has also developed a pre-release support programme and more recently the community resettlement company (CRC) support from Sodexo has been increased.

An active chaplaincy supports a range of faiths and the full-time chaplains are assisted by sessional ministers and volunteers. Pastoral support and family liaison are provided through the chaplaincy. The chapel also accommodates the prison choir and a small music group.

The PE department consists of a large sports hall, a well-equipped gym, and a full-size outdoor sports field. The gym is currently closed and in-cell fitness activities are available for the prisoners.

General maintenance within the prison is provided by Amey, and the visitors centre is managed by Phoenix Futures.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant 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.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Overall the Board considers that prisoners are relatively safe at Wymott. Levels of self harm and violence have both gone up since last year, though (see paragraphs 4.2.1 and 4.3.1), and the prevalence of drugs remains a significant cause of bullying and debt. However, the prison still compares favourably with its comparator prisons.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board considers that the accommodation on some wings is not of an acceptable standard (see paragraphs 5.1.1 and 5.4.3)). During the reporting year there have been repeated failures in the heating, hot water and sanitation. Prisoners held in segregation are treated with respect and professionalism, and the prison has taken significant steps to address the needs of older prisoners. Management of prisoners' property remains a problem, particularly in relation to transfer from one establishment to another (see paragraph 5.8.2).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

There have been improvements in the provision of healthcare services, but significant underlying problems remain (see section 6.1). Mental healthcare continues to be of concern. Staff shortages and a lack of places in secure units mean that some prisoners are not receiving appropriate treatment in a timely manner (see section 6.3). The Board is concerned that the recent closure of the therapeutic community (TC) has seriously impacted the support available to prisoners trying to come off drugs.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The prison has further developed links with local employers to enhance prisoners' opportunities post release. The new offender management in custody (OMiC) model and increased staffing have begun to improve the progression of prisoners with their sentence plans. Despite not being a resettlement prison, Wymott now has a more

robust pre-release programme to assist with accommodation, financing and employment.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Wymott still holds a significant number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection. Are there any plans to give these men some cause for optimism?
- Too many prisoners with severe mental health problems get stuck in prisons, often in segregation units, because there are not enough place in secure psychiatric units (see paragraph 5.2.2). There is a desperate need for more of these places.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Board appreciates the investment that has gone into the boiler house and the services to A and B wings (see section 5.1). Will there be funding available in the next year for the major refurbishment still needed on these wings?
- There continue to be issues with prisoners' property going missing on transfer. Last year Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) assured the Board that the new Prisoners' Property Framework would improve the service, but we have yet to see evidence of that (see section 5.8).
- The capacity of the kitchen remains a problem (see paragraph 5.1.5). Last year Wymott's bid for a new kitchen was turned down. Can HMPPS give any indication of a timescale for funding adequate kitchen facilities?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board remains concerned about the regular cancellation of prisoner forums, particularly the healthcare forum (see also section 3.4).
- The lack of supervision of prisoners in the library, and cancellation of sessions due to shortage of escort staff have been a cause of concern to the Board (see paragraph 7.1.11). Can this be addressed via detailing?
- Management of the delivery of healthcare appointment slips remains problematic (see paragraph 6.2.4). Can a more reliable method be found?
- The Board is concerned that the drug-free therapeutic community has had to be closed during the pandemic (see paragraph 6.6.3), and would seek reassurance that it will be reinstated.

3.4 Progress since the last report

- The constant watch cell in I wing annex has been repurposed as part of the new pharmacy, and two cells on the wings are now used for constant watch.
- Attendance by prison staff at prison council meetings has improved greatly, and the prisoners appreciate this.
- With regard to the use of restraints for outside escorts, each case is now considered individually, based on the level of risk posed *at the time* (see paragraph 4.2.3).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The safer living team has continued to work hard to support and maintain prisoners' safety, and the Board wishes to commend them. A range of safety functions are co-ordinated by them, including the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process, the equalities board, violence and self-harm and the use of force committee.

4.1 Reception and induction

The prison has developed a 'Bus to Bed' peer led induction package that has helped to improve the prisoners' experience of the first few days at Wymott. Secondary healthcare assessments are now done as part of the initial screening process, following criticism from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The Board does not currently attend inductions, but provides leaflets for the induction packs.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There were 511 reports of self harm over the reporting period; this is an increase from 480 in 2018-19, which is of concern to the Board. It is acknowledged, however, that the figures are difficult to interpret, as they are influenced by a small number of prisoners. Monthly figures fluctuated through the year, peaking in the holiday period of July 2019, but there was also a noticeable spike in March 2020, possibly due to anxiety in the early stages of the pandemic. However, it is worth noting that in that month 75% of the prisoners had never self harmed, 29% had a history of self harm and just 2% were active self harmers.

4.2.2 The number of ACCT documents opened each month varied from a high of 67 in July 2019 down to 27 in April 2020. Many of these were closed during the same month. In July 2019 violence and self harm, and the number of open ACCTs were all high, largely due to staff shortages during the holiday period. The Board has noted that the number of ACCTs open at any one time has fallen significantly since the start of the lockdown, as the numbers of staff on the wings has increased.

4.2.3 There were six deaths in custody during the reporting year; all took place in outside hospitals and all were apparently from natural causes. In one case the PPO report recommended that risk assessments for the use of restraints take account of the health of the prisoner at the time, and that staff receive training on following the emergency call protocol. The prison has produced an action plan to address these points and the Board is satisfied that the appropriate actions are being taken.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The number of recorded acts of violence over the year rose from 122 in 2018-19 to 154 in 2019-20, despite the prisoners being locked down from mid-March. Of these, 116 were prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and 38 were prisoner-on-staff assaults. However, the Board notes that there has been a steady reduction in the number of acts of violence recorded monthly since September 2019, and commends the safer living staff for their effective use of challenge, support and intervention plans to manage prisoners with challenging behaviours.

4.3.2 Feedback from the 2019 annual prisoner safety survey indicated that drugs (mainly psychoactive substances - PS), debt, bullying and gang activity are the main drivers of violence. 59% of MCOSO participants said that they felt safe at Wymott, but only 29% of category C prisoners felt safe. Participants reported improvements in relationships with staff, fair treatment and the induction process. Areas that were judged to need improvement were drugs, bullying, debt and awareness of support networks. Overall these findings, and the Board's observations, tend to support the prison's own data.

4.3.3 In the early part of the reporting year, the Board raised concern about the number of prisoners choosing to self-isolate on the wings because they felt unsafe. This had reduced significantly before lockdown as the prison developed procedures to better support these men.

4.3.4 Members of the Board have attended five serious incidents over the year, and no concerns were raised over their management by the prison staff. Any restraint used was deemed to be necessary and appropriate.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

4.4.1 The Board is content that Wymott supports and protects the MCOSO well, through separate accommodation and work opportunities. The accommodation for older prisoners remains largely unsuitable (see paragraph 5.4.3), although the prison has made efforts to improve this.

4.4.2 Other vulnerable prisoners (VPs) are safeguarded through the complex case system, often involving multi-disciplinary teams, and a member of the Board monitors this.

4.4.3 At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the prison decanted over 90 prisoners to create space for prisoners to be safeguarded in cohorts, in order to reduce infection risk. The Board commends the prison for the work done to shield over 300 individuals.

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1 Use of force can involve anything from a guiding hold to control and restraint and use of handcuffs or batons. The prison's use of force data show that there were 280 incidents where force was used to restrain prisoners, up from 269 in 2018-19 and 246 in 2017-18. This gradual increase reflects a similar increase in prisoner violence. Over 2019-20 the highest monthly figure was in July 2019, and the most frequent location was the segregation unit. Handcuffs were used on six occasions; batons were not drawn at all. The Board attends use of force meetings and is satisfied with the overall governance, but remains concerned at the low rate of completion of use of force reports. In the comparator data for March 2020, Wymott remained fifth out of nine comparable prisons for numbers of incidents of use of force.

4.5.2 The prison is now equipped to use PAVA spray, although it has not been used. Only a very few control and restraint-trained officers have permission to carry it.

4.6 Substance misuse

4.6.1 The prevalence of illicit substances within the prison remains a concern, primarily PS, although there has been no significant increase from 2018-19. Prisoners identified drugs as a key driver of violence (see paragraph 4.3.2).

4.6.2 The prison has become better at dealing with the effects of PS; there are fewer ambulance call-outs and strategies have been implemented to help prisoners who want to recover, through the Robust Recovery programme. The prison now has a mail scanner for use on suspicious items of mail, which has had a positive effect. The Board is concerned though that the drug-free therapeutic community has had to be closed during the pandemic (see paragraph 6.6.3).

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 A and B wing are the original 1970s-style wings, which do not have in-cell sanitation; there are communal showers and single-glazed metal windows that are in poor repair. Three toilets on each spur are located in the shower area, along with urinals and there are two night toilets for each spur. The Board has repeatedly reported on the shocking state of these wings, but the funding agreed at the end of the last reporting period has, yet again, been put on hold. Since the refurbishment went on hold Amey has carried out some repairs to the shower blocks, but toilets continue to leak and tiles are falling off the walls. In some cases tiles are replaced but come loose again because the walls are so damp. Amey was asked to replace the old wooden half seats with plastic seats and lids, but the porcelain toilets cannot be adapted to take plastic seats and so a complete new toilet is needed. This is classed as 'new works' and cannot be done under the maintenance contract. This type of wooden seat allows all types of dirt, including faeces, to accumulate underneath, and is almost impossible to clean under. The shower blocks, whilst kept as clean as possible, are neither dignified nor humane.

5.1.2 There have been times throughout the year where there has been no heating on some of the wings and no hot, or only tepid, water. However, the prison was able to obtain investment to secure the service areas on A and B wings, and to replace the boiler house and piping going into the prison.

5.1.3 Washing machines across all of the wings are repeatedly breaking down. The machine on A wing is over 15 years old and has a capacity of 7kg to wash personal clothing for all the prisoners. It regularly breaks down, often for long periods. In January a Board member was told by wing staff that the machine had been condemned three months previously and they were awaiting a new one. The prisoners have the option of sending their washing to the main laundry but have to sign a disclaimer. Many were reluctant to do that, as things can go missing. They cleaned clothes in a bucket on the landings and dried them on the pipes. In mid-March the wing still had not had the broken washing machine replaced.

5.1.4 I wing (Care and Re-ablement Unit) now has six social care cells that can accommodate wheelchair-using prisoners, and have hospital style beds. In October a 'buddy system' was introduced and is working well. The stair lift is still breaking down on a regular basis, resulting in some prisoners on the ground floor not being able to access the medication hatch.

5.1.5 The prison kitchen was built to cater for around 800 prisoners but this has increased to over 1,100. There is continuous equipment failure. Repairs can take months, adding more pressure on the staff and the equipment that is working. In December broken food trollies were being condemned, rather than being mended, as there was no repair contract in place. A bid to purchase 18 new trollies and a maintenance contract has been submitted.

5.1.6 The shortage of prisoners working in the kitchen is another area of concern. It has not been consistent throughout the year, and between May and August 2019,

the number of prisoners working in the kitchen was very low. Several visits by the Board recorded levels to be in single figures. Very low prisoner numbers were again recorded at the end of January and into February 2020. There is a constant turnover of kitchen workers largely due to prisoners being removed on security grounds.

5.1.7 The Board considers the food provided by the kitchens is adequate in quality and quantity, considering the amount of money allocated for each prisoner (just over £2 per day). There is an overspend in the kitchen's budget, mainly due to the increase in the cost of supplies.

5.1.8 Food service on the VP side of the prison is very efficient. There is good portion control and all servers are correctly attired. On the mainstream side, server workers very rarely wear the required clothing. There is no consistency in portion control as servers do not always use the correct utensils for serving, and give some prisoners larger portions. They have been seen to eat from the food trays while serving. Board observations of food service on these wings showed that staff supervising rarely challenge these breaches of rules.

5.1.9 The catering manager holds bi-monthly meetings with representatives from the wings, where concerns and ideas are raised, and a Board member often attends.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) can hold 18 prisoners at any one time. Quarterly prison data show that the average number held each week was 18.5, and the average length of stay was 17 days. These figures both show a slight increase from 2018-19 (16.6 and 15.6). They remained fairly consistent through the four quarters to March 2020 but, as expected, the numbers held fell significantly after the start of lockdown.

5.2.2 The average length of stay was inflated by a small number of prisoners who remained on the unit for more than 42 days. In the main, these prisoners were waiting for places in secure psychiatric units and the Board has expressed its great concern at the length of time taken to find appropriate accommodation for them.

5.2.3 The number of prisoners coming to CSU on open ACCTs is of concern. The unit has increasingly had to manage prisoners with complex needs, and the Board commends the care and professionalism of the managers and staff who work there.

5.2.4 The Board remains concerned about the location of a constant watch cell in the CSU, although two cells have now been set aside for constant watch on the wings.

5.2.5 A Board member has viewed the prison's data on the percentage of black, Asian and minority ethnic, and disabled prisoners on the unit in comparison to the prison population as a whole, and found no issues of concern.

5.2.6 The Board attended most of the good order and/or discipline (GOOD) reviews prior to lockdown, and was satisfied that the process and outcomes were fair. Since lockdown it has had to rely on email feedback from the CSU governor.

5.2.7 The Board sampled internal and external adjudications, and again found the process and outcomes to be fair. Quarterly prison data show that, of 428 going to the

independent adjudicator, 52% were proven; 63.6% of appeals were upheld, although the Board did receive a small number of applications from prisoners who seemed to be unaware of the appeals process.

5.2.8 The special accommodation cell was used 11 times over the year (nine times in 2018-19). The Board is routinely informed when a prisoner goes into special accommodation and when he comes out, and no prisoner remained in there for more than 2 hours. A Board member visited each prisoner and was satisfied that the use of the accommodation was appropriately managed.

5.2.9 There were 15 'dirty protests', up from seven last year. Board members declined to speak to prisoners while they were on dirty protest, but spoke with them later.

5.2.10 The Board remains concerned about the limited amount of purposeful activity for prisoners in the CSU. A few undertake in-cell work, and books are available, but many spend their days asleep and this has led to noise problems at night-time.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staffing levels have improved over the year, and the Board is pleased to see more female and more black, Asian and minority ethnic officers on the wings. Of some concern is the number of applications to the Board involving staff / prisoner relations (see section 8).

5.3.2 A vital part of supporting prisoners to achieve their personal targets is the key worker system. Last year the Board reported that the prison was 'well behind target' for completed sessions, with too many prisoners complaining that they did not know who their key worker was. In January 2020 the prison diverted resources into a huge effort to consistently maintain a revised HMPPS target of 52% completed key worker sessions weekly, and the Board commends them on achieving this. However, concern was expressed that it was at the expense of some elements of the regime, and that this could not be sustained in the long term.

5.3.3 Regular key worker sessions stopped with the onset of COVID-19, but the prison implemented welfare checks on any prisoner who was causing concern, and increased staffing on the wings meant that prisoners were able to have regular interactions with officers.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The Wymott equality board has continued to meet bi-monthly but prisoner representation has remained poor, particularly from the mainstream side of the prison, despite efforts to encourage participation. A Board member attends these meetings. The prison has also appointed a custodial manager as equalities officer.

5.4.2 Prisoners may raise issues of concern relating to the protected characteristics through a discrimination incident reporting form. Fifty nine reports were submitted over the reporting year compared to 67 last year. The most common categories were: race (30), religion or belief (16) and sexual orientation (10). The Board was not able to carry out its usual sampling due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

5.4.3 The prison holds a high percentage of older prisoners, many of whom have complex needs. Some resource has been put into adapting a small number of cells to accommodate wheelchairs and other daily living aids (see paragraph 5.1.4), but much of the accommodation remains unsuitable for older disabled prisoners.

5.4.4 At the start of 2020, the prison worked with a charity, Recoop, to train 10 prisoners to act as 'buddies', supporting some of the more infirm older prisoners with their social care needs, but this work has had to be suspended. It is hoped that it will resume when the lockdown is eased, as feedback from prisoners has been positive.

5.4.5 At the time of writing Wymott holds 16 foreign national prisoners, and they are supported through monthly visits from Home Office Immigration Enforcement staff. It is difficult to ascertain the numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller prisoners, as they are often reluctant to identify themselves, but the prison does have a GRT champion and she has been trying to access some specific reading materials for them.

5.4.6 The Board received very few applications relating to equalities – four compared to three last year - which may suggest that the prison is managing any issues successfully.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy caters for a wide range of faiths, and groups meet to worship on several days a week in a calm and peaceful environment. The chapel rooms host a variety of group and one-to-one meetings, including reading group, a choir and music group, and prisoners tell the Board that they value this highly.

5.5.2 Unfortunately all group meetings have been suspended during the pandemic, but the chaplaincy team have been visiting the wings daily to provide prayer and support on an individual basis.

5.5.3 The chaplaincy also offers bereavement and pastoral support to prisoners and acts as family liaison following a death in custody. This has been known to involve very sensitive tracing of next-of-kin.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges IEP)

5.6.1 HMPPS produced a new policy framework for IEP in 2019, and Wymott updated its own local policy within that. A new 'top' category of communityl was introduced, and a small number of prisoners have achieved that level. These men are expected to act as role models and are being given certain responsibilities. This seems to be bedding in satisfactorily.

5.6.2 The prison keeps data on the fairness and consistency of the IEP scheme, and the Board has no concerns, although supporting evidence is not available at present.

5.6.3 During lockdown prisons were told that there should be no prisoners on the basic regime (with a very few exceptions), and all should have a television in their cell. Wymott has had around 5 prisoners on basic for a short period during lockdown, after they had repeatedly failed to comply with rules or damaged their cell contents repeatedly, but none have been without a television for more than half a day.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 During the year there have been periods when prisoners complained to the Board that the prison's complaints system was not working well. Complaints were not being answered within the prescribed time frame; this was partly due to staff shortages in the Business Hub and partly to the uniformed staff not collecting and responding to them. A new system has been introduced whereby complaints are scanned and e-mailed directly to the relevant personnel.

5.7.2 The Board has been informed that a large proportion of the complaints come from the older and disabled prisoners. Although there is a disability focus group to address some of these issues, the staff position of disability champion is vacant.

5.7.3 A significant number of complaints pertain to the access to visits for disabled visitors, namely the distance from the visitors' centre to the prison, and the unreliability of the stair lift. This lift is really only suitable for domestic use, and the Board would like to see it replaced by a more robust model.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 For the 2019-20 reporting year, IMB applications regarding property lost within Wymott were comparable with the previous year, taking account of the effects of lockdown (see section 8).

5.8.2 Applications regarding property lost on transfer from another prison have increased from 23 to 31 since last year, and between July and October 2019 there was a significant rise. Many related to property not reaching Wymott and prisoners' complaints to other prisons going unanswered. The Board is concerned that across the country a vast amount of prisoners' property is left behind on transfer, and the transferring prison does not send it on. The Prison Service then has to pay out compensation. In its response to the Board's 2018-19 Annual Report, HMPPS informed us that the new Prison Escort and Custody Services contract should produce a significant improvement in the service from August 2020. It is hoped that this will result in a significant reduction in prisoner complaints.

6. Health and wellbeing

For most of the reporting year primary healthcare services were provided by Bridgewater Community NHS Trust and mental healthcare by GMMHT. Since 1 April 2020 both physical and mental health services have been provided by GMMHT. There is an active prisoner healthcare forum, although the Board is concerned that meetings have been cancelled too frequently and at short notice.

6.1 Healthcare: general

6.1.1 There have again been improvements in the provision of primary healthcare, most notably the introduction of an in-house pharmacy which has led to better and more regular distribution of medication. However, a number of long-standing problems, which have been raised in previous reports, persist.

6.1.2 The healthcare centre remains too small, with insufficient treatment rooms and waiting rooms which are frequently overcrowded.

6.1.3 Staffing remains an issue with undue reliance on agency staff in all areas, although a number of these staff are long term. This has led on occasion to staffing shortfalls which in turn can lead to the cancellation of clinics and late distribution of medication.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Prisoners still complain of long delays in getting to see the dentist, and the prison does not currently have a podiatrist.

6.2.2 During the course of the reporting year, clinics have been cancelled on a number of occasions with little or no notice, leaving prisoners to remain in overcrowded waiting areas for long periods of time. In addition, prisoners have often not been escorted back to their wings or workplaces in a timely manner.

6.2.3 The Board remains concerned that GP “consultations” in CSU often take place through the observation panels and that prisoners are not always aware of who they have spoken to. This has been raised regularly through rota reports.

6.2.4 The longstanding problem of the distribution of appointment slips persists. Prisoners state that they do not receive them or that they arrive after the time of the appointment. Prisoners have also been taken to the healthcare department for appointments that no one seems to be aware of.

6.2.5 Concern previously expressed by the Board about the cancellation of meetings of the healthcare forum with little or no notice to the participants has persisted, with some confusion over where the responsibility lies.

6.2.6 Despite the many problems with the management of healthcare, prisoners generally speak well of the nurses that they encounter on the wings.

6.3 Mental healthcare

6.3.1 Staffing shortages in the mental health team persist, with its functions being dependent largely on agency staff, although again a number of these have been long term. The team is currently two members of staff down owing to long term sickness.

6.3.2 In the previous report concern was expressed that staff shortages compromised the provision of therapies for identified needs. It remains of significant concern that needs identified on initial screening are not being met.

6.3.3 The Board is greatly concerned by the length of time some prisoners have waited (in CSU on occasion) for places in appropriate mental health treatment centres (see paragraph 5.2.2).

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 Lancashire County Council provides the services of a social worker to assess prisoners' social care needs, although there are often long delays in providing equipment following assessments.

6.4.2 There is currently a full complement of four social carers; however, as they work in teams of two, if one is absent the work of the other is severely compromised. Absent carers are not replaced and this has meant that assistance to some prisoners has relied unduly on the good will of prison officers performing tasks beyond their remit and skills.

6.4.3 Given the very complex and demanding needs of the prisoners housed on I wing the officers in this area are to be commended for the way in which they have met these difficult challenges.

6.4.4 Since lockdown, I wing has been a shielding unit, and this has made it more difficult for prisoners to get repairs to their day-to-day living aids.

6.5 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

6.5.1 There is a timetable of gym sessions for the prisoners to ensure fairness of access, with a well-equipped gym, sports hall and sports field. Special events have also been organized to promote healthy living. However, since the beginning of lockdown the gym has been shut and access to sports facilities stopped.

6.5.2 The Board monitors the wing exercise logs to ensure that prisoners get regular fresh air. There have been a few occasions where staff shortages have meant that there was no exercise period.

6.5.3 Since the beginning of lockdown, exercise and time out of cell have been severely curtailed. Whilst the Board accepts that this has been necessary given the situation, it was pleasing to note that time out of cell has recently been doubled from one 45-minute period to two 45-minute periods each day.

6.6 Drug rehabilitation

6.6.1 The Board remains concerned by the prevalence of PS use by the prisoners, not least because of the demands that this puts on healthcare services both inside and outside the prison.

6.6.2 Drug programmes and support are provided through a drugs and alcohol recovery service (DARS). Delphi Medical took over this provision on 1 April, and lockdown has restricted much of its work.

6.6.3 The closure of the therapeutic community as part of the COVID-19 arrangements was also a matter of concern to the Board, particularly as there seemed to be little provision for the prisoners who had been on the programme. It is to be hoped that it will be reinstated (see also paragraph 4.6.2).

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 During the reporting period prisoners have had some opportunities to engage in sessions of yoga, horticulture, foreign languages, art and music, which have been well received.

6.7.2 There have been no face to face sessions since the beginning of lockdown, however a variety of distraction packs have been issued. The take-up of these has been limited, possibly due to the prisoners being provided with extra television channels.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Overall, education classes are rated positively by prisoners. The annual Learner Voice survey, conducted and analysed by the Student Council, receives consistently positive feedback from learners, and members of the Board regularly receive complimentary comments about education staff, many of them unsolicited.

7.1.2 Changes to the education contracts during the reporting year presented a number of challenges to the education department. Five members of staff were lost and the allocated hours for the delivery of functional skills was reduced. As a result, some courses could no longer be offered and prisoners who progressed at a slower rate were potentially disadvantaged by the tighter timescales for course completion that were introduced. The Board will continue to monitor any negative impact on the prisoners, particularly as information technology (IT) is introduced as an additional mandatory functional skill in a prison where over 14% of the population is 60+ years of age and 42.3% are serving sentences of at least 10 years.

7.1.3 Attendance at education classes remains a challenge for Wymott. The efficiency rating of 68% is an increase on the previous year's figure of 66.04% and the Board is pleased to note that strategies are being put into place to address this, including incorporating good attendance as part of the criteria for a number of programmes, notably the recently introduced Construction Skills Certification Scheme card.

7.1.4 The establishment recently introduced a peer-to-peer mathematics scheme that was written by members of the Student Council and is supported by peer mentors on the wings alongside the Turning Pages literacy programme. This excellent series of booklets has proved to be very popular and successful with prisoners whose level of numeracy is very low.

7.1.5 Wymott was one of three prisons where staff were invited to attend a Holocaust commemoration event in Westminster Hall in January, along with an excellent artwork that was produced by prisoners for an exhibition by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. The prison was justifiably proud of this achievement, and various artworks and installations are regularly displayed in the education centre.

7.1.6 Several members of the Board have attended family days that represent the culmination of the Family Pathways course, an innovative programme designed to help prisoners to focus on what it means to be a parent (see also paragraph 7.4.1). These are well attended by families and represent an informal and relaxed opportunity for prisoners to spend time with their children.

7.1.7 The Board is pleased to note that education support has been put in place for prisoners who are self-isolating and for those in the CSU, although no information is available on how this has progressed.

7.1.8 Tutors prepared some education packs prior to withdrawing from the prison at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Board was disappointed to hear that take-up had been poor and no marking of work was possible.

7.1.9 The library is well stocked and both library staff and orderlies alike are reported as being extremely helpful, going out of their way to respond to requests from

prisoners. Book groups continued to operate until lockdown and, despite severe staff shortages at times, library staff have produced resources for prisoners such as Mother's Day packs.

7.1.10 The Board was concerned to note that there were a number of cancelled library sessions during the year, primarily due to staff shortages when some library staff left, including the full-time librarian. In addition, staff absences across the prison and an increased focus on key work had a negative impact on other prisoner activities, including library time. Staff absence across the prison and an increased focus on key work impacted negatively on other activities, including library time.

7.1.11 The level of supervision of prisoners in the library has been an ongoing cause of concern for the Board. On some occasions prisoners were brought to library sessions early and the numbers of individuals in the library at any one time exceeded manageable levels. On other occasions, library staff and orderlies expressed concern about the lack of adequate supervision by officers.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 There are more than sufficient education and training places for all prisoners at Wymott. At the start of the reporting year, 68 prisoners were unemployed (either awaiting allocation or refusing to work) while 107 were classed as long-term unfit or retired. All others were at least partially allocated to an education or training place.

7.2.2 Data for the number of hours worked in industry during the reporting period shows an overall average of 84.04%. The prison exceeded its target of 80% in six of the nine months for which figures are available prior to the lock-down. The lowest figure was 73.77% in December when the number of cancelled sessions was particularly high.

7.2.3 Historically, there has been no cover for workshop supervisors who are absent through sickness or leave. This has resulted in sessions being cancelled or supervisors doubling up. The Board is pleased to note that attempts are being made to remedy this - for example by offering additional qualifications in the gym.

7.2.4 During 2018-19 the construction trades area was reassigned to become a facility for mainstream prisoners. After a slow start, this vocational area has increased in popularity and the prisoners who attend these courses value both the skills they learn and the support they receive from staff.

7.2.5 The employer engagement programme continues to progress well, with representatives from local employers attending the prison to see and hear what prisoners can offer and talk about potential employment opportunities on release.

7.2.6 Wymott offers a wide range of vocational qualifications at various levels. The recent introduction of level 3 qualifications in both engineers and the gym provides skills that prisoners can use to gain employment on release including, in the case of the personal trainer qualification, self-employment.

7.2.7 Additional courses designed to meet a more local need were purchased through the dynamic purchasing system. These included warehousing, forklift truck operation and biohazard cleaning through an external training company. These

additional programmes have offered training opportunities to 121 prisoners since their introduction. The Board welcomes these developments and is encouraged by the strong links that are being forged with local employers.

7.2.8 The physical environment has continued to be an area of concern for the Board. DHL moved into a new workshop area during the reporting year, which has proved a success. However, some industry areas still had leaking roofs and inadequate heating during the winter months and on one occasion the laundry was closed as it was deemed to be hazardous. Some roof repairs were carried out during the year and the boiler was upgraded to improve the facilities.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Last year the Board reported concerns about backlogs in the offender management unit, and that some prisoners did not know who their offender supervisor was. The Board is pleased to report that there have been significant improvements in this area under the new OMiC model. By the end of 2019, staffing of the unit had increased: all prisoners had a prison offender manager and probation officers are now based in the prison. The head of offender management felt that the unit was just becoming stable before lockdown halted much of the face-to-face work. There are currently 15 outstanding offender assessment system (OASys) assessments.

7.3.2 Parole hearings have been affected by COVID-19, causing frustration to some prisoners. Some have been completed via telephone or video link, but over 50 have had to be postponed due to outstanding assessments from staff not currently able to meet with the prisoners. Re-categorisation reviews are up to date.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 When the board has spoken with family and friends, the vast majority have expressed very positive views on the whole process of visits. Family days continue to be popular, with prisoners becoming more involved with the planning and preparation for these days (see also paragraph 7.1.6).

7.4.2 Those prisoners who do not receive family visits may be put in touch with volunteers from a charity, who visit the prisoner and stay in touch via the telephone and letters. The therapy dog visits also continue to be very popular.

7.4.3 The Saturday Homework Club, where prisoners are able to meet up with their children and help with homework, continued until March. These are held in the library, and on one occasion some prisoners gave a presentation about the impact this had had on their relationship with their families. Sadly, these have occasionally been cancelled at short notice due to staff shortages.

7.4.4 Applications about family contact received by the Board showed a slight increase from the previous year (41 up from 36). These most frequently complained of delays in adding numbers to prisoners' PIN telephones, or contact restrictions related to public protection.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Movement prior to release has been difficult as many of the resettlement prisons are full. Moving on MCOSO continued to be particularly difficult as there are few places for them, although the reconfiguration of HMP Haverigg as a resettlement prison for MCOSO has eased the situation. A few of Wymott's complex category C prisoners have been refused by category C resettlement prisons.

7.5.2 Although Wymott is not a resettlement prison, the table below shows that 296 prisoners were released directly during the reporting year, to a variety of settings:

	MCOSO	Cat C	Total
Releases	153	143	296
Approved premises	98	66	164
Permanent accommodation	46	49	95
Supported housing	3	3	6
Short-term accommodation	5	14	19
Rehabilitation Centre		3	3
Retirement home		1	1
Home detention curfew		6	6
No fixed abode	1	1	2*

*Of these two, one refused to engage with the 'through the gate' services and one refused to disclose his release address.

7.5.3 Last year the Board reported that the prison had begun a preparation for release programme, and we are pleased to record that this service has made good progress, and is now supported by two full-time members of the CRC (Sodexo). Approx. 98% of eligible prisoners are making use of the service. Unfortunately, it has become more difficult to find suitable accommodation since the start of the pandemic, as Sodexo staff are working remotely and many of the housing organisations are not working. Some of the approved premises are also reluctant to take men with continued drug usage.

8. The work of the IMB

8.1.1 The Board membership has undergone some change since the last report. Two probationers recruited in May 2019 both left the Board for personal reasons, and three new members were recruited at the beginning of 2020. Unfortunately their probation has been impeded by the pandemic, but the Board development officer has ensured that support and training are offered remotely.

8.1.2 For most of the year, the Board has been able to meet its commitment to monitoring duties on a rota basis, and issues of concern and good practice have been shared with other members through weekly reports. Since the start of the pandemic, the Board has suspended direct monitoring, but continues to monitor remotely through emails and phone calls.

8.1.3 Prior to each monthly Board meeting, the Chair meets with the Governor to discuss any reported issues and receive updates on operational and strategic matters. The Governor continues to be supportive and the Board is appreciative of this.

8.1.4 Board members have continued to receive applications from individual prisoners on a variety of issues (see data below). These are investigated and responses, which may be verbal and written, have been provided promptly.

8.1.5 Experienced Board members take a particular interest in at least one specialist monitoring area. This improves the Board's breadth and depth of monitoring and facilitates the compilation of this annual report. Board development is supported by regular pre-Board meetings at which either aspects of the Board's monitoring work are discussed or updates are provided by members of prison staff on their area of work.

8.1.6 The Board makes every effort to attend reviews of prisoners held in segregation under prison Rule 45 (see table below) as part of a normal weekly rota. The Board maintains its own record of individual reviews and is thus able to have a continuous overview of each prisoner held under rule 45. The Board also attends a sample of internal and independent adjudications and has attended several incidents as observers. It has not been possible to attend reviews or adjudications since March.

8.1.7 During the year Board members have also attended, as observers, a range of prison meetings to extend their depth of monitoring and to inform themselves of events and changes. A Board representative has also been present at a number of other staff and prisoner events over the reporting year, such as Christmas carol services and charity events involving prisoners.

Board statistics

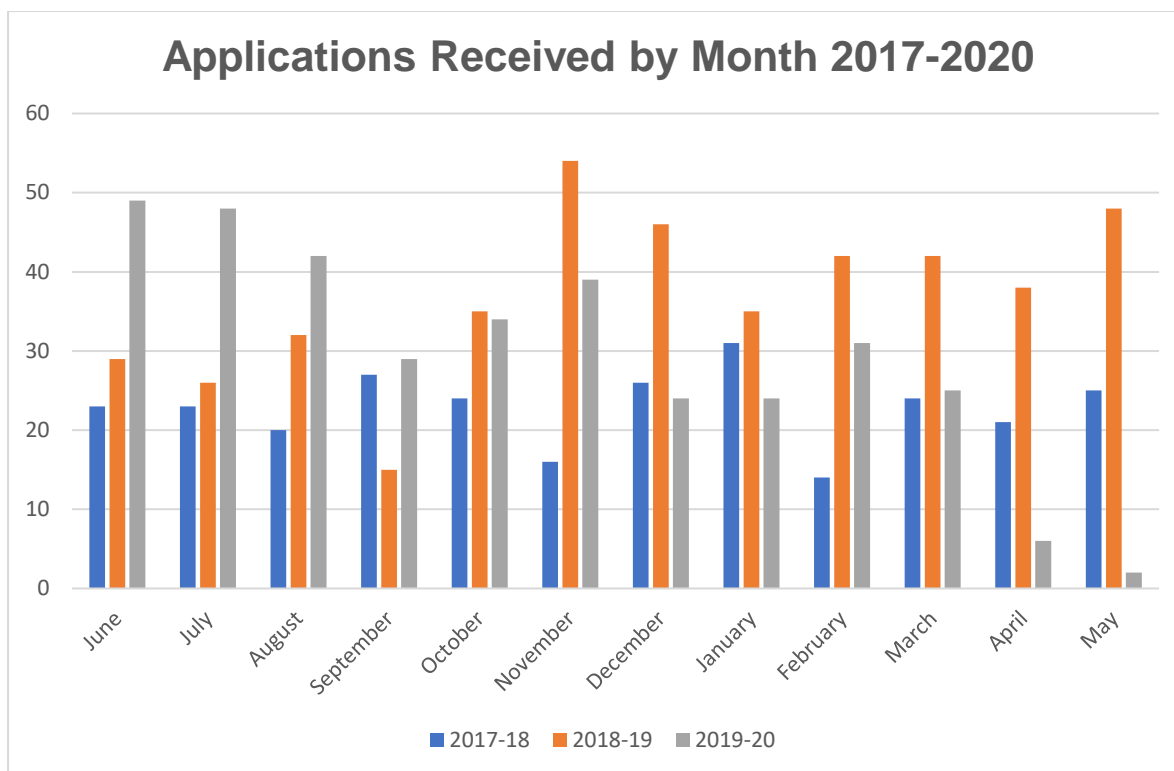
Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	371*
Total number of segregation reviews attended	307*

*No visits were carried out or reviews attended from 19 March 2020 due to COVID-19.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	12
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	28	23
C	Equality	4	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	45	37
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	51	45
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	23	13
F	Food and kitchens	7	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	81	42
H1	Property within this establishment	37	29
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	23	31
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	9	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	37	48
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	35	27
K	Transfers	29	18
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	22	15
	Total number of applications	442	353

The number of applications received in the 2019-20 reporting year is notably less than the previous year; however, the final three months of the period coincided with the COVID-19 lockdown, and within that period only 33 applications were received compared to 128 for the same period the previous reporting year. The Board considers it likely that the restricted regime, together with the increase in officer presence on the wings, may have contributed to this. Members of the Board stopped attending the prison from 19 March 2020, and this reduced profile may also have impacted on application numbers.

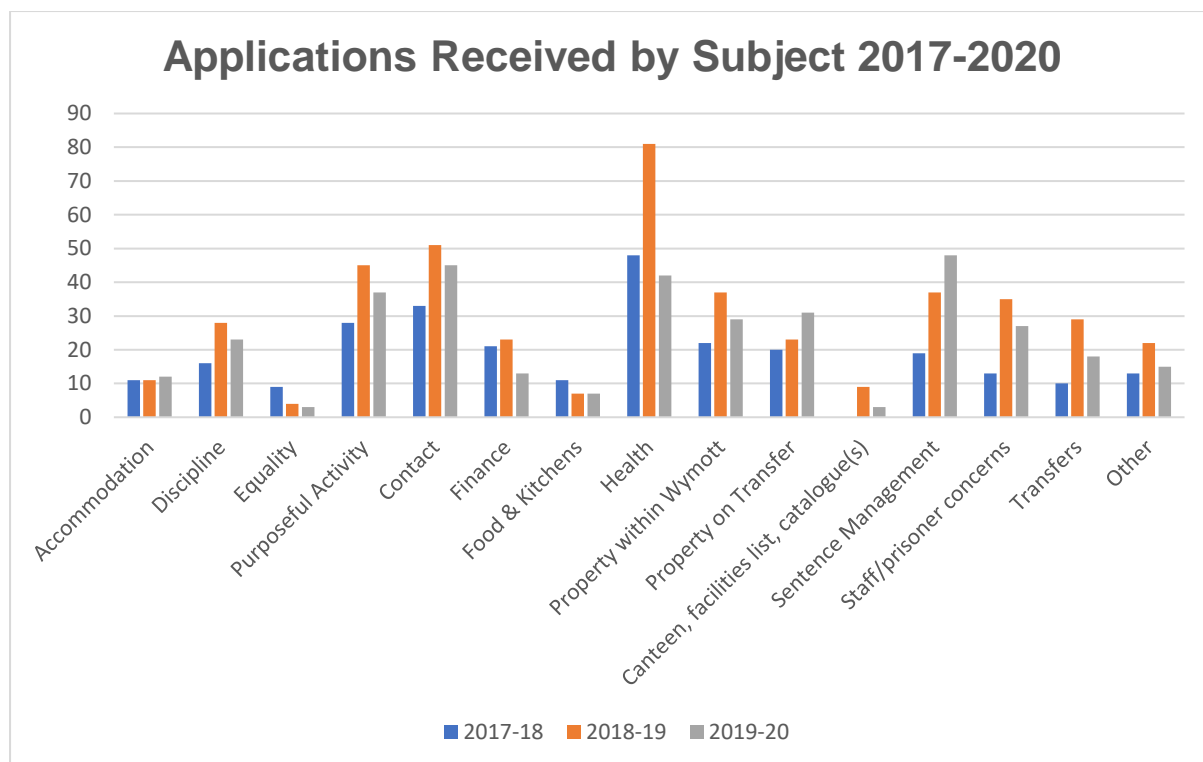


A more meaningful comparison might be made with the first nine months of the period, when 320 applications had been received compared to 314 the previous year. A notable dip in numbers in January and February (55 in 2020 and 77 in 2019) coincided with an increase in key work at Wymott. While not necessarily the single reason, the Board considers that more proactive interventions at an earlier stage within the prison may have resulted in fewer issues escalating. The Board hopes that key worker sessions are maintained at an effective level in the future. The Board also notes that a management restructure that created a number of additional wing managers may be starting to impact positively on both staff and prisoners.

The number of applications received from prisoners on VP wings was nearly twice that from prisoners on the mainstream wings (in 2018-19 they were almost equal), while 21 applications were received from prisoners in the CSU, compared to 42 last year. The ratio of VP: mainstream category C prisoners is approximately 60:40.

The Board is pleased to note that the number of applications concerning healthcare fell from 57 for the first nine months of 2018-19 to 37 for the same period in 2019-20, correlating with improvements in health service delivery that took place during that time.

The highest number of applications concerned sentence management. Over the summer period the Board had expressed major concerns about the capacity of the offender management unit, with sickness absence and unfilled vacancies leading to a severe staff shortage. The new offender supervisor structure was introduced in autumn 2019 and the Board hopes that this will result in fewer concerns being raised by prisoners over the medium to long term.





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