



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Stocken

**For reporting year
1 May 2021 – 30 April 2022**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Executive summary	5
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	18
7. Progression and resettlement	20
The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	24
Applications to the IMB	25

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Stocken is a category C male training prison with an operational capacity of 1,044. It is situated in a rural location close to the A1 in Rutland. Access to public transport is very limited; the nearest trains and buses are in Oakham (nine miles away).

Most prisoners serve medium- to long-term sentences (that is, of four years or longer) but the prison also holds a number of life-sentenced prisoners and those serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP).

There are seven wings, with four holding about 95–120 prisoners, and three holding nearly 200 each. There are 14 workshops and a substantial education section. There is a large and well-equipped gym, library, chapel and multi-faith room, which are generally very well attended with increasing attendance since the end of the pandemic period.

Education is provided by PeoplePlus, and healthcare and mental health services are provided by the Practice Plus Group. Inclusion (drug rehabilitation) is part of Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust. Library services are provided by Rutland County Council. Voluntary services include the Samaritans, Lincolnshire Action Trust, the Prison Fellowship, the Shannon Trust and the Sycamore Trust.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

During the previous reporting year the Covid-19 outbreak had a significant impact on the Board's ability to monitor the establishment and in-person monitoring was largely impractical and regarded as unsafe. However, the Board resumed full monitoring during this reporting year and we would like to thank prison staff for their warm welcome on our return.

The Board also resumed in-person Board meetings.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

We feel that HMP Stocken is a safe environment for prisoners and staff.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

In general, prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. Reports of unprofessional attitudes from staff are taken very seriously and thoroughly investigated. The Board is confident that the prison took all necessary steps to preserve the humane treatment of prisoners as far as was possible during the pandemic.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Physical health is well catered for. There are still too many prisoners with mental health issues in the prison system as a whole, and Stocken is no exception. The mental health team do their best but we often have concerns about the mental health of some prisoners.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Staff do their best to help prisoners work towards effective resettlement and are having to operate as a resettlement team even though Stocken is not a resettlement prison and not resourced for this work. However, the number of prisoners being released directly from Stocken is rising, with staff having to do things such as act as links with outside probation prior to men's release.

Ideally a prisoner moves to a resettlement prison within 24 months of the end of his sentence – in reality, if he is still in HMP Stocken three months before his release date, he won't be going to a resettlement establishment. This is compounded by the number of transfer holds – prisoners whose move has been approved, but who are delayed by the need for them to finish the course they are completing.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

There are a number of men held at Stocken with various psychiatric disorders. The Board feels that urgent consideration should be given to increasing the provision of

secure mental health facilities for those who should be in a such a facility and not in a prison.

Like other establishments, Stocken is frequently understaffed and the recruitment of new staff is held up by delays in the vetting process. The vetting process should be speeded up so that people appointed subject to vetting do not find another job while waiting to be vetted.

In last year's annual report, we reported that there was a pressing need for increased capacity in category D (open) prisons. This situation still remains. At the time of writing, there were 70–75 category D prisoners in Stocken, which, although a reduction on last year, is still too high. More places should be made available for speedier transfer of category D prisoners out of category C establishments.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Prisoners are being transferred to Stocken without a completed offender assessment system (OASys) assessment, which means that the assessment has to be completed at Stocken, adding pressure on the offender management unit (OMU), which is not staffed for this role. Does the Prison Service feel that it is acceptable that some establishments are allowing the transfer of prisoners without a completed OASys assessment and, if not, how does it propose to ask establishments to rectify this?

Volumetric control of prisoners' property when transferred is not being enforced and all too often men arrive at Stocken with excess property or their property is sent on (or not) after their transfer, leading to a backlog of property waiting to be security checked or not being received. Does the Prison Service feel that it is acceptable that some establishments are not following the rules on volumetric control and if not how does it propose to ask establishments to rectify this?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Staffing numbers need to increase to reduce the impact of a shortage of both officers and administrative staff.

Purposeful activity opportunities, such as structured on wing activity (SOWA), need to increase for men when out of their cells.

The Board has concerns about the performance of PeoplePlus, which is clearly not functioning well with low staff morale and some targets not being met.

The backlog of property in the stores needs to be addressed.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The prison regime has moved to more usual ways of working and the 50/50 regime seems to be working well.

Engagement with the local community during Covid has been proactive with examples such as fundraising activities both by the men and staff for local charities.

The IMB has been pleased with the way we have been welcomed back to our duties by prison staff.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

Safety and violence reduction are clearly prioritised by the prison and led by the Governor, with a well-resourced and enthusiastic safer custody team. There are good quality assurance processes for key working, assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) management and challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP), and good support for staff and prisoners, with additional counselling services.

Cell share risk assessments (CSRA) identify prisoners at risk of seriously assaulting or killing a cell mate in a locked cell or other unsupervised shared spaces. A CSRA report is run weekly. As of February 2022, and with a population of 1,019 prisoners, 346 (34%) were classed as high risk, and such men are monitored through weekly safety intervention meetings.

The safety and intervention meetings (SIM) have continued, with the IMB attending on an ad hoc basis as observers. These meetings consider a wide range of prisoners, not just those who are segregated, including those on ACCTs, and the establishment's 'nominals'. Matters are viewed primarily from a safer custody perspective.

The disruption meeting, held weekly, is an un-minuted discussion which takes the form of a violence reduction tasking meeting. It is attended by the supervising officers, custodial managers and safer custody governor.

The priority given to safety throughout the prison and the commitment of the safer custody team was recognised in the recent audit by the Operational and System Assurance Group.

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception is a department which continues to work well. Interviews and testing are thorough and carried out respectfully and decently. Incomers have access to a small shop, which helps to avoid a build-up of debt while they are waiting to order their first canteen. They have two private interviews, one in reception and one following transfer to the induction wing. New arrivals are asked whether they feel they belong to any protected characteristic group in keeping with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Property on transfer continues to be an issue. If volumetric control is not complied with, and men have more than two bags and an oversize box, it often means that there is insufficient staff in the Reception Unit to search all incoming property, which cannot then be taken onto the wing with the prisoner or the property may have to be sent to Stocken later, increasing the work of reception or leading to loss of property.

There is a comprehensive induction programme. The addition of a duty Listener to the monthly reception rota is a welcome step forward.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

It was pleasing to note that there were no deaths in custody in this reporting year.

There were 232 incidents of self-harm, involving 134 prisoners, with some frequent self-harmers who accounted for more than one and sometimes up to six incidents.

Triggers for self-harm have been identified as: frustration, debt, the restricted regime, low mood, bereavement, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health issues, threats, transfer issues, canteen and TV removal.

There is a need for an increase in the number of ACCT assessors and planning for selection and training is in place.

There is concern about the numbers of men entering the prison on open ACCTs without appropriate handover. This is particularly problematic when prisoners have complex needs.

A quality assurance check on ACCT documents in February 2022 showed improvement but identified some areas of concern.

There continues to be discussion about the complexity of the ACCT V6 document.

The prison has a Listener scheme in place. Applicants undergo a three-day training course. Listeners are now on a rota to attend reception for new arrivals.

Formal contact with Listeners is most evident between 1pm and 7pm and lasts 30–60 minutes. Informal contact also takes place on wings.

The main issues for discussion are linked with mental health/illness, problems with regime/staff, pre-/post-release concerns and sentence progression. The number of prisoners with complex challenges and needs, especially those with severe mental health concerns, is posing a resource demand on the prison.

The prison introduced the STARS (sense, take, awareness, reflect, see) course for prolific self-harmers to encourage coping skills. The first pilot course ran between 2 November and 21 December 2021, with eight prisoners taking part. Data shows the effectiveness of the course, with a 63% reduction in the number of open ACCT documents and 53% fall in self-harm. The second course ran between January and March 2022 and we will report further on evidence of its effectiveness in the next reporting year. During the courses mentoring sessions had been held and a reduction in self-harm noted, with a 53% reduction between October 2020 and November 2021. This is pleasing, particularly as the majority of men selected for the first STARS course had carried out multiple acts of self-harm.

A third course is now in the planning process. Feedback from the first two has been very positive, given the histories and challenges of participants. The safer custody team identifies men likely to benefit, and the inclusion team is now adding suggestions, extending the course to substance misusers.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The prison moved slowly and carefully out of the restricted regime caused by the pandemic. During lockdowns and times of restricted activities some men reported feeling safer, as time out of cell was more structured and there were fewer opportunities for mass gatherings. Following up on this, structured on wing activity (SOWA) was introduced towards the end of the reporting year.

During the reporting year (with last year's figures in parentheses) there were 42 assaults on staff (64) and 51 assaults on prisoners (45).

Although direct comparisons are sometimes difficult, Stocken emerges quite well for assaults on staff and prisoners compared to other comparable establishments. According to most recent figures during the reporting year (February 2022 figures), Stocken is placed fourth in the region and mid-table for all category C prisons for assaults on staff. It is first in the group and 15th out of 44 for all category C establishments for prisoner-on-prisoner assaults.

The Board receives the daily briefing sheet (DBS) by secure email. The DBS is always very comprehensive and monitored closely by staff. Any incident raising risk generates automatic ad hoc CSRA review.

The prison's debt strategy has been finalised, ratified and published.

A NOMIS entry and welfare check is completed on prisoners after a video link visit.

Challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) referrals are opened for assaults, gang-related issues, bullying or whenever a prisoner reports feeling unsafe. Pre-emptive CSIPs can be opened prior to a prisoner's arrival at the prison, based on their history.

The daily safety brief charts the progress of current CSIPs.

CSIPs should have relevant and meaningful plans with structured goals. To maintain quality assurance, all senior managers distributed a comprehensive guide to senior officers in March 2022. Most CSIPs are appropriately completed to set timeframes and have very detailed interview notes. However, some are briefer in detail and some are not signed off within the 72-hour timeframe.

The prison is generally responsive to the fears of prisoners and is willing, if necessary, to hold them in the segregation unit for their own protection until a transfer to a safer environment is possible. There is some gang-related activity, but any potentially serious problems are usually prevented through the prison acting swiftly when intelligence is received.

4.4 Use of force

All use of force incidents are investigated and documented in line with HMPPS guidance. The introduction of PAVA has not created any issues. The use of force records are now maintained by the clerk in the segregation unit. When we last

reported (due to pressure and inheriting a backlog) there were 103 use of force reports (Annex As) still outstanding from July and August; however it is pleasing to note that this figure had dropped to 63 at the end of the reporting year.

It has now been impressed on staff that these forms should be completed within 72 hours of the incident.

4.5 Substance misuse

Substance misuse reduced dramatically during the pandemic period and remains reasonably low with intermittent spikes of mainly Spice circulation. Stemming the supply and circulation of drugs in the prison remains a challenge. At the same time the prison is continually trying to disrupt supply routes putting pressure on suppliers, runners and dealers. Hooch dogs are also deployed alongside cell searches and the prison uses a state-of-the-art X-ray machine, with equipment available to examine every item of property that comes into the prison and an X-ray body scanner, which means that it is almost impossible to conceal drugs, weapons or mobile phones, both on the person and internally.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

There are seven wings. F wing holds 90–100 prisoners; K wing holds 120–130 prisoners; H wing holds 100–120 prisoners, and some cells are reserved for emergency occupation should cells in the segregation unit become unavailable.

I wing is reserved for those on drug or alcohol recovery pathways. There are about 75 prisoners there, all of whom have in-cell showers and who find its facilities, common purpose and calm atmosphere very helpful.

The three large wings – L, M and N – hold nearly 200 prisoners each, on two spurs. N wing is populated largely with enhanced status prisoners. One spur on L wing now houses new receptions, where they are held in reverse cohort for 10 days to ensure that they are not positive for Covid-19.

The in-cell telephony, installed during the reporting year in all cells except for the moment in the segregation unit, has been, in our view, a major step forward.

The refurbishment project on F-Wing, where all cells and communal areas were redecorated by prisoners, was commendable and has now moved to another wing.

During our rota visits we have identified variable levels of cleanliness of wings, including shower areas, with some being very clean and tidy and others being less so, and some places (such as under stairwells) being very grimy.

Food

There are frequent staff shortages in the kitchens, along with supply problems. As is the case across other areas of the prison, staff are leaving to work nearer to home for personal reasons and due to travel costs (mainly fuel costs). Kitchen staff are finding it difficult to work to budget due to the spiralling cost of supplies and the usual weekly dry goods order has increased by almost £2,000. For the allocated £2.24, each prisoner gets a breakfast pack (including the wherewithal for two hot drinks), a hot lunch and a cold supper – although from May (the beginning of the next reporting year) the hot meal will be served at suppertime, in line with new prison service guidance. Supply companies seem to be running out of goods and trying to make substitutions: this does not go down well with either the kitchens or the prisoners.

The only answer is to cut back on extras, which prisoners see as cheating, or as extra punishment. However, complaints remain few and far between and the kitchens staff do an impressive job in producing over 2,000 meals a day.

The 50/50 regime continues to work well amongst staff and prisoners: 18 prisoners in the morning swap with 18 for the afternoon and the result is less noise and crowding, and more effective work time. Staffing the Stockpot (the staff canteen) is problematic, but VT Catering is taking up the slack on a temporary basis, both there and in the café area in the visits hall.

The new online ordering system for prisoners is proving problematic but staff are looking forward to the laptop based ordering that is apparently in place in many other prisons: paperless ordering will presumably save paper, ink, copying etc.

The kitchen equipment was bought outright and is serviced first by the in-house maintenance team and then – last resort – by Serviceline, who are notoriously slow.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

The on-call Board member visits the segregation unit weekly and speaks to each prisoner, as well as attending rule 45 reviews. There have been improvements in the quality of the rule 45 reviews over the last 12 months with most governors being adept at using the computer system, and prisoners being given time to put their questions forward so that they fully understand why they are being held in segregation. However, there have been instances where the security department has been a little slow in visiting the prisoners to explain the situation fully.

The unit contains 19 cells; a de-escalation cell, two dirty protest cells and a constant watch cell. Generally the premises are clean and tidy, although at the time of this report there was one cell out of order which has been unavailable for a number of months. For the majority of the reporting year the number held in the segregation unit has averaged around 15 prisoners – which is close to its maximum capacity, although efforts have been, and are, constantly being made to try and reduce the number. This is reflected in the fact that the average number of prisoners in the unit has dropped to nearer 10 since the start of 2022. This reflects that the prison is still receiving unsuitable category C prisoners and prisoners carrying illicit items due to many prisons not searching transferees on their way out. This issue was reported last year and needs to be addressed nationally.

There is always a mix of men in segregation, including those who are there for their own protection (in debt and/or under threat) and those who allegedly have been carrying out bullying, threats and violence. Due mainly to the effects of the Covid restrictions there have been fewer instances of climbing on the netting and bullying.

There are a few instances where men are in the unit for substantial periods of weeks with some still there after 42 days following approval by the Prison Group Director.

Instances are still being seen where men with mental health problems have had to be held in segregation, which is far from ideal, and where they would most certainly be better served in an appropriate secure mental facility. However places are hard to come by and this is something that the prison authorities need to be looking at – this has been raised a number of times before and still needs to be addressed.

In addition the segregation staff themselves have said that they need both more training for themselves in mental health issues, and more support from mental health staff.

The supply of clean clothing can sometimes be a problem, with prisoners leaving to return to the wings or being transferred to another prison taking prison-issue clothing

with them, which leaves segregation short of kit; this is an issue that needs to be addressed internally.

There is good supply of library books for the prisoners, together with distraction packs and newspapers if requested.

A fully-minuted segregation meeting is held weekly, where all those held in segregation are fully reviewed so that all adjudication and reviewing governors are fully aware of each prisoner's circumstances, progress and future prospects.

It has become the norm for the segregation staff to be firm but attentive and responsive to the prisoners in their care, notwithstanding some of the difficult characters that they have to deal with.

The segregation unit is generally tidy and the cells are well maintained.

The record keeping for the prisoners located in segregation has also been improved.

Adjudications

The number of adjudications continues to remain high.

However, improvements have been made with outstanding cases having dropped from 132 in September 2021 to 49 in February 2022. The unit clerical officer suggested that some of the prisoners who had been placed on report might better have been dealt with under the incentives scheme and we await its full launch.

There have been a number of changes of personnel in segregation over the last year, and particularly in the last four months or so, with three changes of custodial manager.

An adjudication standardisation meeting was held in January and whilst the terms of reference have been drafted, it is fair to say that further work and preparation are required, and this should be completed shortly. The external judge has offered guidance and support to ensure that fewer cases are rejected by him, and further improvement has been made in that prisoners who refuse to attend their adjudication now have to sign a form to that effect.

Adjudication tariff books are presently being reviewed although as yet the IMB has not had the chance to review them. The adjudication standards meeting – held in February 2020 – has reviewed and updated the tariffs. The IMB is seeking to get an updated copy.

The planned segregation compact for prisoners is now in use which is a good step forward.

The rules on the provision of televisions for those in the segregation unit have been revised with a notice to go out to the community saying that if prisoners are located in the unit because of bad discipline, they will not be eligible for a television. All prisoners located in the segregation unit have a review, as per the incentives policy. If a prisoner is located in the segregation unit for a single serious incident, then they are downgraded to basic.

The length of time potential transferees wait in segregation is a concern for the Board. Prisoners can be located in segregation for up to 42 days initially. It is then the decision of the prison group director (PGD) to make a decision as to what steps are to be followed. However, this should be the exception.

Transfer of prisoners who have been recategorised to B takes too long and is certainly not within 72 hours.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

Our frequent observations of staff/prisoner interaction suggest a high level of professionalism. Difficult prisoners are dealt with consistently and with the minimum of confrontation possible in the circumstances.

The consensus seems to be that key working works if both parties want it to. An intelligent progression plan, sensitively drawn and conscientiously worked at, is a useful tool and a worthwhile document. Inevitably, Covid had a bad effect on the programme: constructive engagement with a prisoner is much harder to achieve through a cell door, but there has been renewed engagement with the scheme from both prisoners and staff with the easing of restrictions. In this reporting year 71% (641 of 900) of planned sessions were delivered.

Each wing is meant to have a room set aside for key working, and there are hubs on H, I and M wings.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Action plans are monitored at the bi-monthly diversity and equality team action (DEAT) meetings attended by all senior management team (SMT) members and equality prisoner representatives. (There are three prisoner representatives.) The SMT discuss outcomes at the DEAT meeting and some discussions will take place during the SMT meetings.

The current objectives are to recover post-Covid and to reinstate previous activities. At present there is a recruitment drive to appoint more mentors to assist. Whilst Equality Mentors have a generic job description, some may have specialisms which can be called upon, for example specialisms which reflect their ethnic background.

Actions following the previous HMIP report have been addressed; they now need to be embedded amongst Stocken's prisoner population with the men engaging more fully in the area of equality and diversity.

Stocken has developed a new way of working within equalities. All SMT members will now take a lead on a protected characteristic, supported in their respective strands by staff in Bands 5 and 6, both operational and non-operational.

They will have responsibilities to hold staff luncheons on a bi-monthly basis and prisoner forums on a quarterly basis. There is an expectation that they will feed back at the relevant meetings and actions and plans will be developed thereafter.

All other staffing groups will support the equality agenda through single points of contact, along with the newly recruited prisoner representatives.

The discrimination incident reporting form process is managed by the equalities advisor in the prison and all investigations are subsequently quality-assured by the Governor.

Data on incidents and allegations are thoroughly analysed monthly and discussed in depth at the bi-monthly DEAT meeting. It is publicised to the prisoners via the equality mentors. Presently the equality adviser is not able to access information on the diversity of staff, but a first staff DEAT meeting is scheduled where staff data will be discussed and improvements made.

Despite some Covid restrictions celebratory events have included recognition of equality and diversity on as many days as possible, for example at a physical event such as Black History Month or through information and displays via emails and on the wings. Special menus and meals are provided for religious and cultural celebrations.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Aside from intermittent staffing problems, the Board considers that good faith and pastoral support is offered to prisoners by a dedicated team of three full-time chaplains and eight sessional staff.

The department has a wide and varied role. Prisoners in the segregation unit are visited, new arrivals are seen, and those who are leaving the next day are spoken to. The team tries very hard to see everyone on an ACCT and to reply within 24 hours to a written application.

The department holds services in the chapel and the multi-faith room. As the number of Muslim prisoners has increased, there is concern that the multi-faith room is not large enough and even with the planned increase in size will still not be large enough.

An important role of the chaplaincy team is to provide pastoral support to those who have suffered bereavement or loss.

The chaplaincy sends representatives to trauma risk management and safety intervention meetings. The chaplaincy and multi-faith team ensures that all faiths are respected at the prison. The team is led by an Anglican priest. It is sometimes difficult to recruit suitable faith leaders. Plans are now in place to expand the chaplaincy with the opening of a further house block in 2023.

In general, the area of faith is one which gives rise to very few applications to the Board.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme is reviewed regularly and monitored for any disproportionality among the protected characteristic groups.

Action is taken where necessary. For example, it had been identified that there was not enough differentiation between the levels of the scheme. This has recently been reviewed and a new policy document has been produced. It will allow for more incentives.

Where assessments have been made of changes to a prisoner's incentives status and these have been felt to be unjust, for example through lack of information on NOMIS, it has been referred back to the wing management for consideration of a better way of recording to avoid any misunderstanding.

Prior to the pandemic, the prison identified that the incentives scheme tended to have negative outcomes for younger prisoners (particularly those under 25 years of age). Therefore, a custodial manager has been appointed to manage delivery of support to this group of prisoners. Outcomes from this support will become clear during the next two to three months.

5.7 Complaints

Complaints are generally dealt with efficiently but there remains the perennial problem of other establishments ignoring complaints forwarded to them by the complaints clerk at Stocken. This matter is not unique to Stocken, and we suggest that it needs attention from HMPPS and/or the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

5.8 Property

Prisoners' lost property is still an issue at Stocken – primarily property that has not been received at Stocken when a prisoner is transferred from another establishment. In many of these cases, there is a lack of cooperation from establishments when complaint forms are sent to them from Stocken. It appears that prisoners are 'out of sight and out of mind'. In some establishments, there is little concern about volumetric control of the amount of property that a prisoner has, which can lead to his property not being able to be transferred on the van with him, which can then lead to loss.

We reported this in last year's annual report and the issue has still not been addressed.

It also causes problems for storage at Stocken when prisoners arrive with excess property, with the reception unit and stores having to store it.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

Healthcare services, provided by the Practice Plus Group, seem to have been running well during the reporting year.

Non-attendance at appointments can be an issue. During March 2022 the proportion of DNAs for GP appointments was 25%, although this was unusually high. Strategies to improve attendance at appointments have been tried without success. Prisoners would rather attend appointments in work time rather than during gym or association time.

The staffing has improved throughout the year. Although some staff are still provided through an agency these are generally long-term members of the team and it does not impact on the men or their perception. As with the other prisons and hospitals sourcing agency staff has become more of a challenge recently.

Healthcare staff have continued to provide a service at least in line with the outside community. However attendance figures have not been as good during the periods of restricted regimes. Many initiatives to improve attendance have had limited success. The head and deputy head of healthcare have visited another prison where the use of prisoner health champions has been a success particularly around improving appointment attendance. The best practices seen are currently being investigated to see how they can benefit Stocken healthcare.

Healthcare staff have made use of remote consultations. It is planned that 'attend anywhere' follow-up video consultations with local hospitals will soon be available for prisoners, in line with the service available in the outside community. 'Telemed' – a video consultation – is already used and although not linked to local acute trusts is very useful for specialities with lengthy waits locally. It has been valuable, for example in dermatology where wait times are long.

Covid vaccinations

The prison undertook an effective Covid vaccination programme:

- first vaccination: 67% (national prison figure 62%)
- second vaccination 62% (national prison figure 55%)
- boosters: 44% (national prison figure 40%)

The team has continued to keep revisiting Covid vaccinations as the population of the prison has changed. There appears to have been some reluctance for men to take up the booster jabs and this also appears to be happening in the community. Healthcare has had limited routine vaccination clinics e.g. hepatitis B, shingles and pneumococcal vaccinations, but is planning to reintroduce routine clinics imminently.

6.2 Mental healthcare

As within the community there is a shortage of mental health staff. It is also considered that the staffing needs to be increased to reflect the increasing workload

as the prison expands. Early last year a new head of mental health was appointed. This was not a success, and they left before the end of the probation period. In July 2021, a very experienced head of mental health was appointed and the morale of the team is much improved, with a month-on-month improvement to waiting times.

The head of healthcare felt that some of the negative personal comments in Prison and Probation Ombudsman reports regarding death in custody about mental health staff were unwarranted, although the action points were fully accepted.

A nurse and health worker started in October 2021. A permanent psychologist was appointed early in this calendar year. More recently a full-time assistant psychologist has been recruited and the start date is imminent.

There was an issue with some record keeping not being as good as it should be and this has now been rectified. More regular auditing of the records is now being carried out.

Early in the year the mental health triage response time was not being met. This has improved throughout the year. In April 2021, the average routine triage wait time was 30 days (against a target of five days). Improvements have been seen each month, and in March 2022 the average wait time for a routine triage was four days. The increase in referrals seems partly due to the uplift to receptions into the prison. There were 56 referrals in April 2021 which rose sharply to 134 in March 2022.

Even when the psychiatrist has determined that a prisoner needs to be in hospital rather in the prison it has taken a long time to get them moved due to the national shortage of secure mental health provision.

6.3 Exercise, regime

The post-Covid regime has seen improvements in time out of cell for all prisoners on the 50/50 regime. All prisoners are offered at least the minimum directed time out of cell.

All prisoners are offered the opportunity to use the gym. There are many structured gym activity programmes aimed at prisoners with specific health and physical needs.

6.4 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Prisoners arriving at Stocken who are already addicted to drugs or alcohol are identified during the reception process. They are then strongly urged to cooperate with their detoxification programmes. Prisoners who show good progress are transferred, where possible, to I wing (the recovery wing). 'Inclusion' is the name given to the prison's programme to identify and help prisoners trying to overcome their addictions. Inclusion is now part of Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The education department is operated by PeoplePlus (PP), which is also responsible for most of the workshops.

The IMB has received different accounts, views and reports of the current situation with education provision at Stocken but it is the Board's view that PeoplePlus is not functioning well.

Low staffing levels sometimes lead to closure or amalgamation of classes. At the end of the reporting year there were 18 staff vacancies, although nine of the 18 had been appointed and were awaiting vetting clearance. Staff vacancies mean that staff are covering extra lessons which has had an impact on their rest periods. There is difficulty recruiting tutors and the promise of higher wages for new staff was not well received by existing staff. However, PP tell us that Stocken is still one of the highest performing prisons in terms of education, based on key performance indicators and service agreement levels. We have noticed a high turnover in managers leading to some staff suffering stress and disengagement between managers and prisoners.

There is a programme to deliver good core skills with, according to PP, appropriate tutors for maths, English, English for foreign nationals and personal and social development. At the time of writing it was expected that art would be added to the curriculum. However, some staff have informed us that they are being asked to teach at a higher level than they are qualified for, or outside of their areas of expertise or specialism. We have also received reports that the workbooks that PP supplied contained a lot of mistakes. Some staff also reported being overburdened by paperwork (which we have been informed is now being addressed by reductions in required paperwork), slow-running computer facilities, resources (such as student workbooks) arriving late and so needing to be printed by staff, and lack of printing facilities. Staff also reported insufficient time to provide meaningful feedback to learners unless they work late.

The reporting year was the final year of the current PP contract (which runs from 1 April to 31 March) and we expect that to be extended for one more year because of the impact of Covid. We have been informed that there is a plan in place to improve operation and performance of educational delivery.

We recognise that support from the Governor has been good, as acknowledged by the PP management team. However, PP has raised concerns about the implementation of the 50/50 regime, which resulted in classes of 12 doubling to 24 per day with mixed groups of prisoners at different levels of study who therefore need varying levels of support which tutors do not feel able to provide. This is compounded by the lack of mentors. There is also an issue of men not wanting to leave workshops to go to college, as it pays less, hence the need for a pay review to incentivise men to leave work for education.

The library is a well-resourced facility and is well integrated into the education department's courses. It is hoped that all the activities associated with the library will

resume once it is fully open again. A large volume of newspapers and magazines is processed every morning and distributed to the wings.

7.2 Vocational training, work

All workshops are now fully operational. The workshops teach bicycle refurbishment; motor vehicle repair; plumbing and tiling; waste reclamation and management; bricklaying; painting and decorating; catering; motor vehicle repair; gardens and grounds; and laundry work. In addition, the private sector company, DHL, operates two workshops which assemble and pack the weekly canteen orders for Stocken and a large number of other establishments. There is also a workshop where prisoners make up breakfast packs. A small number of those in catering work in the Stockpot, the prison 'mess', giving them an opportunity to interact with all grades of staff in the prison. Almost all workshops offer qualifications of some kind – usually national vocational qualification levels 1 and 2 – and several workshops (bricklaying, painting and motor vehicle repair as examples) offer level 3 qualifications, requiring much study and substantial exams. Bicycle repair is one of a number of workshops that engages with society outside the prison, with finished bicycles distributed to charities and other worthy causes.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Staffing remains very stretched in the offender management unit (OMU). Low staffing levels mean that staff are under severe workload pressure. The average caseload of each staff member is 90 prisoners, but some have around 145. Some prisoners are still arriving at Stocken without a completed OASys assessment meaning these need to be done by already-busy OMU staff at Stocken. However, the backlog of assessments reported in last year's annual report has reduced during this reporting year.

The Board also regularly comes across prisoners complaining about the length of time it takes to for transfer to category D establishments. At the end of April there were 112 category D prisoners waiting for transfer to open establishments. As reported last year, the shortage of places on offending behaviour programmes also means that it is likely that prisoners who might otherwise have been recategorised and moved to category D conditions cannot progress.

The OMU is stretched, with 30 staff managing a workload of 90–100 prisoners each, and two more members of staff leaving whose cases will need to be absorbed. Budget provision has been made for new staff and several have been identified, but as long as the vetting process continues to be so lengthy, filling vacancies will remain a problem: potential new starters lose interest or cannot afford to wait and go elsewhere.

New offices in a new building are promised for the department but are not due to be ready until next year at the very earliest, and OMU staff are expressing concern as to whether they will provide sufficient space.

A number of prisoners are required to undertake courses as part of their sentence plan. The three most commonly run at Stocken are the thinking skills programme

(TSP), Kaizen (targeted at prisoners who are sentenced for violent or sexual offences, and who present a high risk to the public) and Resolve (aimed at prisoners convicted of violent offences).

The programmes unit is often fully staffed, with programmes running to capacity. Group sizes have increased slowly since the end of the lockdown period, with groups of up to six. It is hoped that group sizes will be back to 10 by the end of the reporting year.

The Resolve programme is due to wind down by the end of the year with most men on the waiting list being mapped over to the waiting list for TSP, if they meet the criteria for that course. For those who do not, there will be enough places on the Resolve courses before they end.

There is to be a review of the programmes/courses that are run and we will, hopefully, be in a position to provide an update on this in next year's annual report.

7.4 Family contact

Full in-person visits have resumed.

The recent refurbishment of the visits hall, with new, lighter furniture, has made for a much more relaxed environment for both prisoners and visitors – especially the children.

There have been multiple problems with the national and local prison booking system, which has made it very difficult, if not impossible, for some people to book visits. The Governor considered action that may alleviate the problem locally.

In-cell telephony in all cells has improved contact between prisoners and their families.

7.5 Resettlement planning

OMU staffing has been incredibly tight throughout the reporting year. Apart from the challenges of the day-to-day management of prisoners, staff are having to operate as a resettlement team even though Stocken is not a resettlement prison and is not resourced for this work. The number of prisoners being released directly from Stocken is rising, with staff having to do things such as act as links with outside probation prior to men's release.

Ideally a prisoner moves to a resettlement prison within 24 months of the end of his sentence. In reality, if he is still in HMP Stocken three months before his release date, he will not go to a resettlement establishment. This is compounded by the number of transfer holds – prisoners whose move has been approved, but who are delayed by the need for them to finish the course they are undertaking.

There has been no resettlement movement from HMP Stocken for the past two years. During the pandemic, courts were 'warehousing' prisoners and allocating them to beds with little control over whether or not their sentence plans were being met. The prisoner movements unit and the OMU are working together again in an attempt to determine when and to where people can be moved.

On release from HMP Stocken, a prisoner is given a taxi to the train station in Oakham, a travel warrant from there to wherever he needs to go, and a £76 subsistence payment (formerly known as the discharge grant until August 2021). He can apply to reception for a grant of spare clothing.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the establishment	428
Total number of segregation reviews attended	91

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	7
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	10	20
C	Equality	3	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	16	34
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	13
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	10	16
F	Food and kitchens	3	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	25	15
H1	Property within this establishment	23	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	6	33
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	7
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	14	31
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	38	49
K	Transfers	16	23
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	46
	Total number of applications	186	309



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