

# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP The Mount**

**For reporting year  
1 March 2020 – 28 February 2021**

**Published July 2021**



**Contents**

<b>Introductory sections 1 - 3</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	6
<b>Evidence sections 4 – 7</b>	
4. Safety	9
5. Humane treatment	15
6. Health and wellbeing	21
7. Progression and resettlement	26
<b>The work of the IMB</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Applications to the IMB</b>	<b>32</b>

## 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 The Mount is built on one side of a disused airfield adjacent to the village of Bovington in Hertfordshire. It is just over a mile from a mainline railway station and is well served by bus routes. This makes it a very open and accessible site for walkers, dog-walkers and of course those who wish to propel packages over the fence as well as drone activity.

HMP The Mount opened in 1987 as a Young Offenders' Institution. Initially there were five residential wings: Annexe, Brister, Ellis, Fowler, and Lakes. Most of these wings have their cells configured in a four-spur design on two landings which creates difficulty in observing prisoner behaviour. The exception at that time was the Annexe which has 44 rooms with separate wash and toilet facilities, a lounge and free access to the kitchen.

HMP The Mount was re-rolled as a category C adult male training prison in 1989. During the 1990s two more wings, Howard and Dixon, were built. These are of a two-landing galleried design that allows improved observation of prisoners. In 2007 a further wing, Narey, became operational, housing mainly older prisoners. The construction of Nash Wing was completed in 2015 with 94 double cells and 62 single cells. New kitchen, gymnasium and healthcare units were also constructed at that time. The prison's current roll is around 1020 prisoners.

In addition to its expansion, The Mount was re-rolled as a hybrid prison with the aim of providing training and rehabilitation for 75% of its population and a resettlement service for the remaining 25% during the final 3-4 months of their sentence. The resettlement service is intended for prisoners from Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Recently this proportion has changed with currently 70% of the population being offered training and rehabilitation and 30% resettlement. This will change again shortly with an anticipated increase in foreign nationals with different types of workplace and education requirements.

During the Covid pandemic in 2020-21 the configuration of the residential unit population changed to ensure groups remained in 'bubbles' of approximately 30 prisoners, each exercising, having association, showering, collecting food, etc. within their group. Unfortunately for all prisoners except for a few in work there was only one hour per day out of cell during the first lockdown, with two hours in the second lockdown. Nash, Howard and Dixon were reserved for those in work since they are closest to the workshops. Brister has remained the induction wing and part of Narey has been used for Covid shielding prisoners.

The IEP tier system was abandoned and all prisoners were placed on the standard level except for extreme cases and were issued with televisions. All prisoners had in-cell telephones to speak to their families and other agreed contacts and have been given a £5.00 credit weekly for the period. They also had enhanced food packs plus wellbeing items with the most vulnerable getting regular calls from the safer custody team.

**ACCOMMODATION AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 2021**

Operation capacity	Current roll	Spaces available	No. of cells out of action
1020	993	7	7

**PRISONERS BY LENGTH OF SENTENCE**

<b>Length of Sentence</b>	<b>Number of Prisoners</b>	
	<b>February 2020</b>	<b>February 2021</b>
Less than 12 months	3	4
12 months to 2 years	25	30
2 - 3 years	59	86
3 - 4 years	91	78
4 - 10 years	500	427
More than 10 years	186	224
Lifers	101	118
Indeterminately Sentenced	44	38
Sentence Expired Detainees	3	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>1012</b>

### **3. Executive summary**

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

This was the year of Covid. Our reporting year started at the beginning of March 2020 when the pandemic was just beginning to take off in the UK and concluded at the end of February 2021 when the roll-out of vaccines was giving us all hope.

At the start of the pandemic we feared that the virus would have a devastating impact on the prison with many deaths. We had seen how the virus had spread rapidly through cruise ships and worried that the prison would be an even better breeding ground for the virus, with prisoners held in a closed environment like a cruise ship but with worse living conditions and staff entering the prison every day potentially bringing the virus with them.

That this did not happen is very much to the credit of the Governor and staff of the prison who worked intelligently and diligently to keep the virus at bay. The quiet courage of the staff who went into work every day to do their best to keep the prisoners safe while putting themselves at risk of catching the virus is greatly to be commended.

Controlling the pandemic came at a price, a price paid by the prisoners held in the prison. The instructions for lockdown were given by the Prison Service's Gold Command which has been nationally directing the position for prisons during the pandemic. The Mount was always able to provide prisoners with the maximum time out of cell permitted by these national restrictions and prisoners were only on minimum lockdown of one hour per day for two months at the height of the pandemic but nonetheless for much of the year they have not had adequate time out of their cells for exercise and association with others, access to education or work, the opportunity to take part in offending behaviour programmes that are on many prisoners' sentence plans or in-person social visits.

There have been some compensating gains. Managing the prisoners in small groups with only one spur rather than the entire wing, indeed the entire prison, being unlocked at the same time led to reduced levels of violence and, perhaps lastingly, has given the staff, many of whom were relatively new to the prison service at the start of the year, greater confidence in managing and challenging the prisoners. Additionally, Purple Visits (video calls), email-a-prisoner and in-cell phones have helped families stay in touch.

Inevitably the pandemic has affected how the IMB has monitored the prison. Many of the IMB members were in high-risk groups and in any case we did not want to bring the virus into the prison and so we have visited the prison much less frequently than in previous years. We tried to compensate by dealing with prisoners' applications remotely, dialling into meetings and R45 reviews, studying the prison's reports and data and by calling functional heads and wing managers. We recognise though that there is no substitute for seeing conditions and talking to prisoners and staff in

person. We have now restarted a normal visit schedule and look forward to re-establishing the IMB with prisoners and staff.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to Doug Merriman who sadly died from Covid. Doug was the mainstay of the IMB for many years for which he was recognised with an MBE. When he was required to leave the IMB because he had reached the maximum permitted years of service, he became a volunteer in the chaplaincy at The Mount. He was a good man who has helped many others.

### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

Throughout the lockdown period the prison has been a safer place with prisoners very restricted in their movements around the prison and very limited time out of cells. There have been fewer prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff assaults.

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

The measures required during lockdown which were directed nationally were not humane but they were fair and necessary.

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

There was a new healthcare provider in place as of 1 October 2020 which, after a slow start, managed to deliver a good service. However, out of hours healthcare was not available.

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

There was little in the way of resettlement during the lockdown period. In particular prisoners were being released without having completed the offending behaviour programmes included in their sentence plans. This affords the MoJ the opportunity to check the effectiveness of these programmes by tracking how these prisoners' reoffending compares to earlier cohorts who completed the programmes as well as having work and education opportunities.

**All the above areas are dealt with in more detail in the body of this report.**

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

Offending behaviour programmes at The Mount have been severely curtailed by the epidemic. As a result, prisoners will be leaving The Mount and other prisons without having completed programmes on their sentence plans. The MoJ's statisticians should take this as an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of these programmes in stopping re-offending.

Many prisoners have mental health problems and the delay in finding them accommodation in suitable mental health units in the community takes much too long. This has an unacceptable impact on their mental health and puts considerable strain on the officers who care for them without any special training.

The Mount has 46 prisoners who are serving indeterminate sentences and is not set up to offer these prisoners the support they need to address the risk they pose to others and win release. In a sense they are just being warehoused at The Mount. The MoJ needs to consider how best to support these prisoners across the prison estate.

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

Some investment has been made to improve the showers but more is still needed to bring them to an acceptable standard.

The transfer of responsibility for healthcare at The Mount caused significant disruption and a temporary decline in the quality of service. We hope that this decline will indeed be temporary. The Prison Service needs to review what lessons can be learned when evaluating tenders and planning for changes in healthcare providers.

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

The challenge ahead is to progressively relax the regime so that The Mount once again becomes a fully working category C training prison with the men attending work and education every day while keeping everybody safe. We are sure that everybody working at The Mount is up for this challenge.

It will be important to provide sufficient number of workplaces for the prison's population, providing workshops for the planned large foreign national population, ensuring spaces for those with any sort of disability, those on basic regime and high-risk prisoners and, importantly, providing cover for instructor absence

The Board would like to express its appreciation to the Governor, prison officers and staff of The Mount who worked tirelessly and with courage to keep the prisoners in their charge safe during the Covid pandemic.

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

The Mount has operated a restricted Covid-safe regime throughout the last year making comparisons with earlier years unfair. The Covid-safe regime involved managing the prisoners in smaller groups and this seems to have helped the wing staff, many of whom were relatively new to the service, to grow in confidence when dealing with the prisoners.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

During the current lockdown, all prisoners on arrival to The Mount have a test for Covid. They are housed on Brister in isolation and then tested again on day five. Once they have been cleared of having the infection, they are then transferred to the different wings.

The process for receiving follow-on property has been tightened up as it has been found that some of the property was not coming from previous prisons but from other illegal sources - with illegal substances.

The ordering of goods from the Argos catalogue, previously handled by stores (Gov Facilities Service Ltd - GFSL), has now been passed to reception.

The long-anticipated body scanner has recently been introduced into reception.

Initially, all incoming prisoners are being scanned and data analysed to see if a picture is developing as to the frequency of drugs coming from any prisons in particular. Using that information, and for the next period, only those prisoners coming in from those identified prisons, where intelligence suggests there is a risk, will be scanned. This check will take place on a regular basis so that the scanning will be more targeted.

The rebuild of the reception area that was mentioned in last year's annual report has had to be postponed again due to lack of funding.

There have been no group induction meetings during lockdown and prisoners on arrival are given cell education packs which contain information about what is available and how to access it.

Sadly there can be no group work, no basic skills screening and no pathways for work established. There has also been very little work available during the lockdown.

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

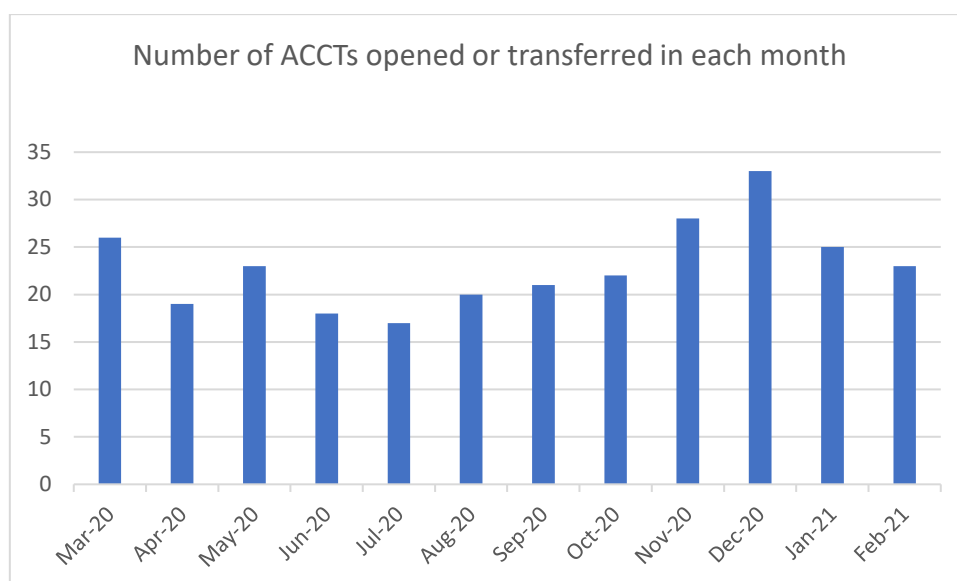
Sadly, there was one death in custody during this reporting year.

A prisoner was found dead in his cell in the care and segregation unit on 27 August 2020.

At the time of writing this report, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman had yet to complete the investigation into the death and an inquest had yet to be held so that it would be inappropriate for us to comment further on the circumstances.

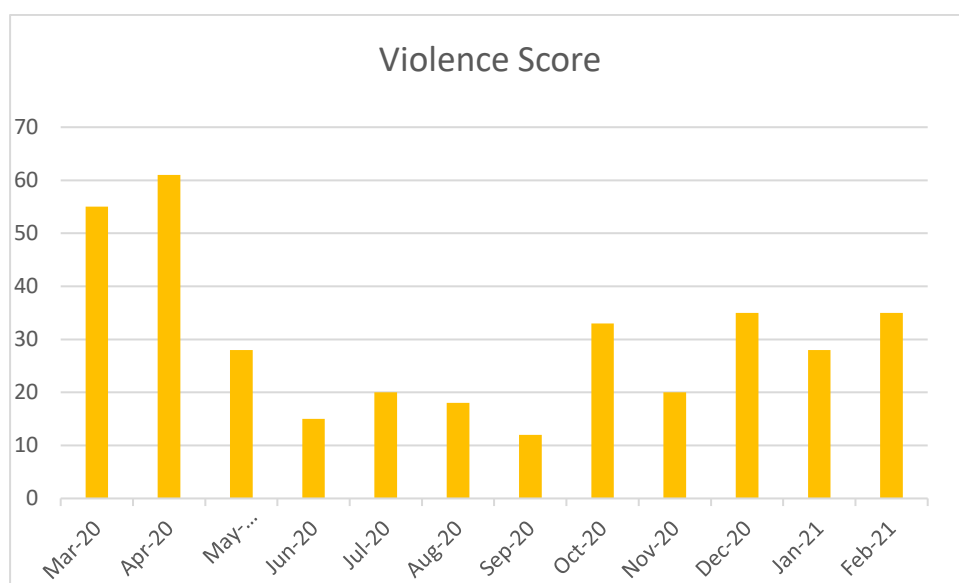
We would like to express our sympathy to his family and friends.

From time to time some men need additional support that is given through ACCTs and the table below shows the number of ACCTS opened (or transferred in with new prisoners). Our monitoring of ACCTS was inevitably limited compared to a normal year but we have no reasons to raise concerns.



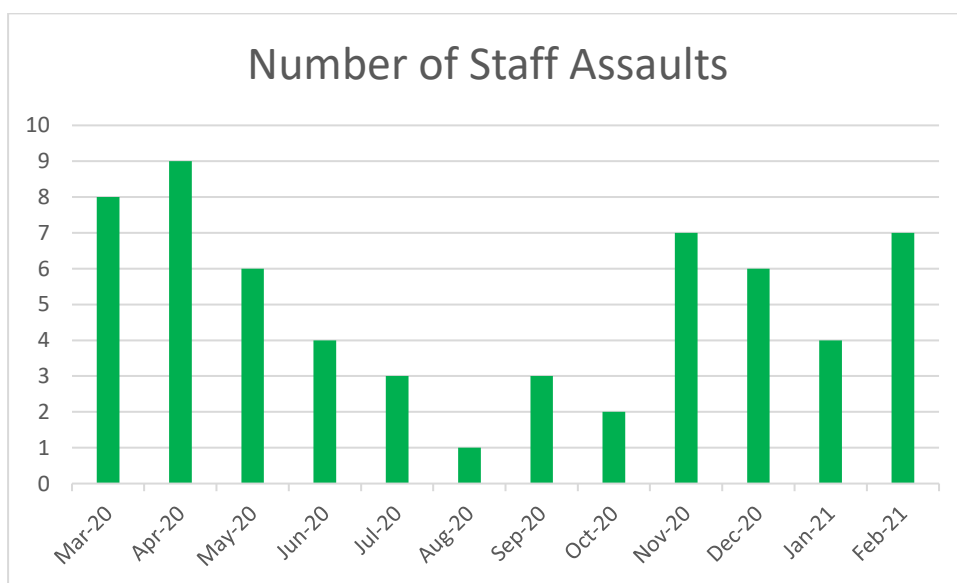
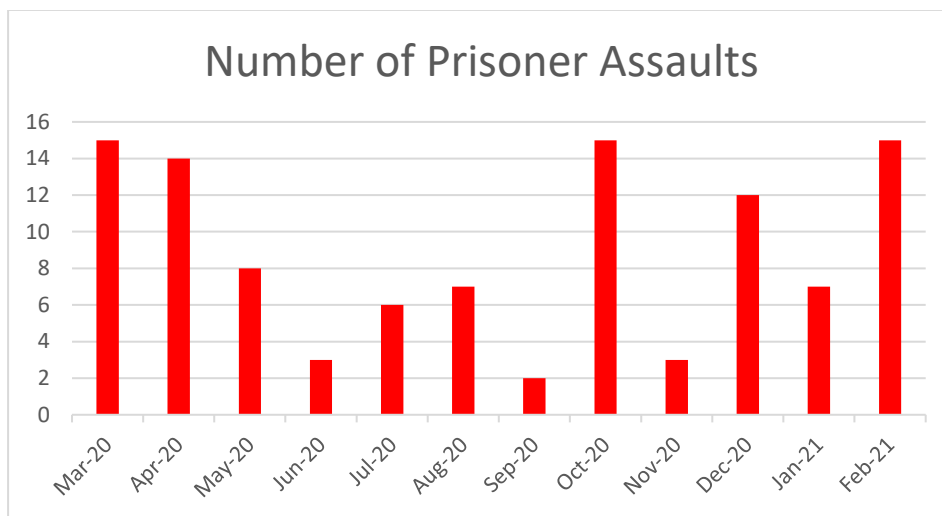
### 4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The table below shows the violence index score for each month of our reporting year. The violence index is created by weighting each violent incident by its seriousness. It is therefore a helpful measure of the overall level of violence within the prison. As can be seen, the index was at its highest in March and April at the beginning of the lockdown but then fell. We conjecture that this reduction reflects in part the staff growing in confidence and skill as they managed men in smaller groups. Violence levels were generally lower than we had observed in previous years when the prison was not locked down.

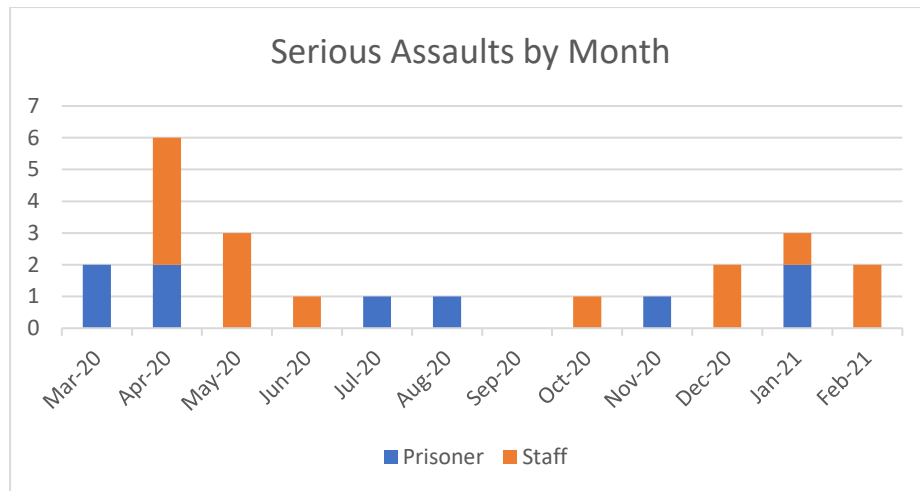


Within the overall violence index, the number of prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff assaults varied by month, falling to low levels during the summer months and then increasing again in the late autumn and winter. It may be that the increase

reflected growing frustration with the lockdown regime. This is illustrated by the two charts below.



A similar pattern is seen with those assaults classed as serious because they resulted in hospitalisation with the greatest number of incidents at the start of the lockdown, followed by a low level of incidents for much of the year and then an increase at the end of our reporting year.



#### 4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

The Mount does not have a vulnerable prisoners' unit but there is a Wellbeing residential unit which is designed to be more supportive than other residential units particularly for those on or coming off drug rehabilitation groups. There is also an active safeguarding unit when it is fully staffed. Unfortunately its operation is often affected by redeployment of its staff.

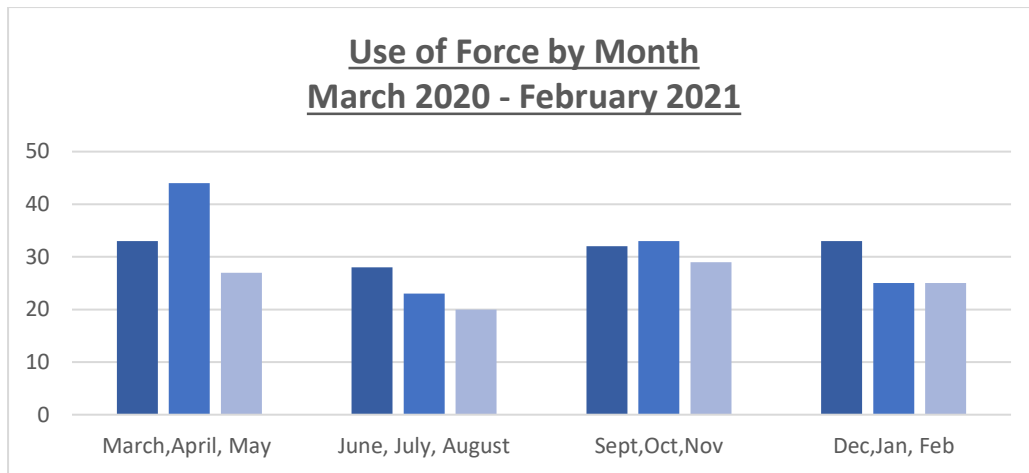
#### 4.5 Use of force

Use of force is very closely monitored at The Mount with weekly meetings chaired by the Deputy Governor and attended by other interested governors and the use of force team, with the IMB invited to attend. The monitoring team is ethnically diverse.

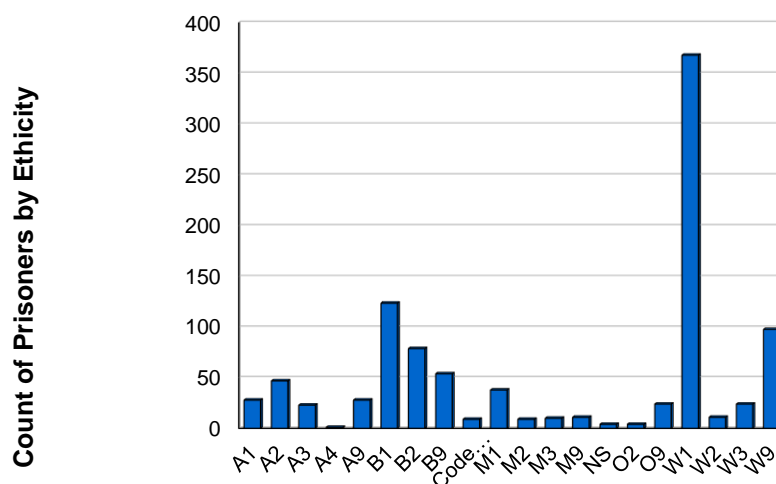
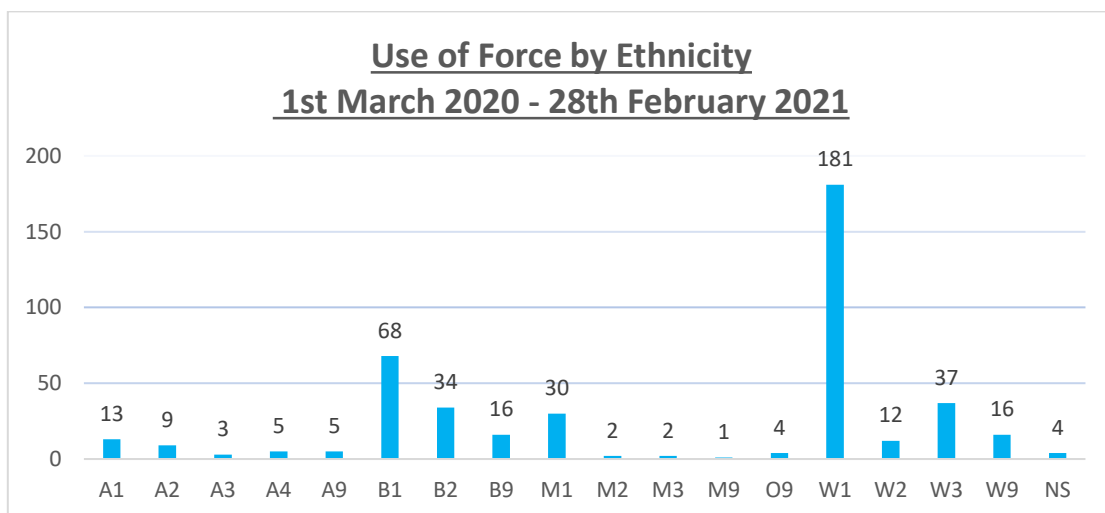
Body worn camera images and CCTV are reviewed for either feedback for specific incidents to officers or more generally used for training purposes.

There has been a considerable reduction in incidents where staff used force against prisoners since the pandemic lockdown was imposed in March 2020 with a reduction of 69% compared to the same reporting period in 2019–2020. This can be attributed to the large amount of time that prisoners have had to be locked behind their doors due to lockdown restrictions. .

See the chart below for the incidents for the current reporting period:



The ethnicity of those prisoners involved in use of force incidents reflects the ethnic mix of the establishment closely.



Coding of Ethnicity used:

A1	Asian/Asian British Indian	M2	Mixed White and Black African
A2	Asian/Asian British Pakistani	M3	Mixed White and Asian
A3	Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi	M9	Mixed any other background
A4	Asian/Asian British Chinese	O9	Other any other background
A9	Asian/Asian British any other background	W1	White Eng./Welsh/Scot/ N Irish/British
B1	Black/Black British Caribbean	W2	White Irish
B2	Black/Black British African	W3	White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
B9	Black/Black British any other background	W9	White any other background
M1	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	NS	Prefer not to say

#### 4.6 Substance misuse

Despite the reduction in the number of people entering the prison during lockdown there appears to have been little reduction in the quantity of drugs entering the prison. This is possibly due to an increase in the number, and frequency, of throw overs, drones and finds of 'hooch'. Spice and cannabis are still available and finds of 'hooch' have certainly increased. During the pandemic most prisoners except for the 100-150 essential workers have been locked up for 22-23 hours each day with no education/workshop/gym etc. which has created frustration and tension often leading to substance misuse.

Due to Covid-19, mandatory drug tests (MDTs) have been suspended, though healthcare and the Forward Trust have continued to support an average of 55 prisoners per month on opiate substitute prescriptions.

At the beginning of 2021 a scanner was installed in reception which should help in the detection of drugs coming into the prison with transferred prisoners. Having a full complement of dogs and the Rapiscan have made the postal route less successful. The installation of an airport-type scanner at the main gate is purported to be planned for 2021, which should contribute to a reduction of contraband entering the prison.

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

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

This report is based on conversations with the head of residency and observations from other IMB members due to our inability to visit the prison. The head of residency has been appointed for one year from 1 April 2020 on a clean and decency project.

During the pandemic the prisoners have spent more time locked up with only short periods of time out for domestics and exercise. They have been placed in cohorts with key workers and accommodated near their place of work. All cells except for those in CSU have had in-cell phones installed. There is no enhanced wing at present.

The main problem throughout the year has been the state and efficiency of the showers. A considerable amount of money has been spent on improving the showers starting with Well Being and Ellis wings. Showers over the whole estate have been grubby and inefficient. One reason is the poor ventilation. Disinfectant has been in short supply but better more suitable chemicals are improving the situation. During the year all showers have been deep cleaned.

Other essential work has included flooring repairs and installing grilles on cell windows to prevent prisoners throwing rubbish into the grounds. Rubbish has been a big problem in the past and resulted in a rat infestation which is now more or less under control.

Washing machines and dryers are constantly breaking down and require regular repairs. Sixteen new microwaves were purchased to replace those broken through ill use.

A custody manager is in charge of kit change and the senior management team make regular hygiene and decency checks. This system works well and there have not been any major problems with the availability of kit.

The pandemic has meant that the prisoners have been kept in regime cohorts in accommodation close to their work so there is no enhanced wing at the moment. The number of double cells has caused a problem throughout COVID with prisoners having to isolate if their cell mate has tested positive. Out of a total of 772 cells, 288 are double.

On the whole there has been a marked improvement over the estate. GFSL appears to be carrying out repairs more quickly and now has a log recording work needing doing. GFSL is required to sign off once the work is done. The new cleaning procedures introduced by the head of residency have been well received and staff now armed with more information have engaged well.

The kitchen runs well and copes efficiently with the various religious festivals and individual dietary needs.

There are complaints about portion sizes and lack of variety but the kitchen works to the guidelines. Meals are often served too early with lunch at 11.30am and the

evening meal sometimes about 4pm. Management are aware of these issues and are looking to bolster the budget by increasing the amount of home-grown produce.

Most kitchen workers have Level 1 training. Further training has been delayed owing to the pandemic. Comfort packs have been distributed during Covid and include crisps, chocolate and bottles of water.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

Despite the lockdown regime being in operation for nine out of the twelve months of this report, the prisoners who are in the CSU hardly ever have any complaints about their treatment whilst in the unit. The officers have systems in place to ensure that they get regular exercise, showers, telephone calls and meals. The IMB is informed when prisoners are located in the CSU and if transferred to special accommodation i.e. unfurnished accommodation. The team of officers working in the CSU are very patient and caring and do their best for some very difficult and abusive prisoners in their care.

All the prisoners who are entitled to reviews (those on good order and discipline (GOOD) and own protection) get regular reviews in the presence of a governor, an IMB member and a healthcare representative. During the lockdown the IMB member has attended the reviews by telephone conferencing when they have been unable to attend in person. There has been an improvement in the paperwork with a better record of previous reviews and what has been decided by governors at that time.

There are often extremely difficult prisoners who require a considerable amount of supervision and care. Prisoners with mental health difficulties are often located in the CSU as there are no facilities on the residential units. Officers have no special training in the management of prisoners with mental health issues but they are managed with care and concern. The CSU is no place for them. The isolation and lack of treatment programmes is not acceptable. The delay in finding them accommodation in suitable mental health units in the community takes much too long and has an unacceptable impact on their mental health and strain on the officers who care for them.

During the lockdown a number of prisoners being held in the CSU have refused to return to normal location and are waiting for transfers out. The delay in transfer approvals has put additional strain on officers. A system of planned relocation on to wings is used to move prisoners back on to normal location.

The CSU is in need of window replacements as cells become cold and draughty in the winter and very hot in the summer. This is not a suitable environment for prisoners who are isolated for over 23 hours a day.

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

The key worker scheme is an important part of HMPPS's response to self-inflicted deaths, self-harm and violence in the entire male closed estate rolled out in 2018/19. It is intended to improve safety by engaging with prisoners, building better relationships between prison officers and prisoners and helping prisoners settle into life in prison. Prison officers are allocated up to eight prisoners on a one-on-one

basis, for the officers to spend an average of 90 minutes per prisoner every other week for delivery of the key worker role, which includes individual time with each prisoner.

With the prison fully staffed, the scheme was working reasonably well just prior to the onset of the Covid pandemic but since then the provision of this important service has been challenging as the statistics below sadly confirm. With prisoners locked in their cells for 22 hours a day, the need for social distancing, staff sickness, staff and prisoner self-isolation, the formal recorded application of the scheme as set out above has been intermittent during the reporting year. That said, whenever possible, for example during prisoner exercising periods, key worker conversations have been taking place as have safer custody calls to vulnerable prisoners. It is expected once the normal prison regime restarts that this scheme will return in its prescribed form.

In general staff-prisoner relationships seem to have improved as with smaller groups of prisoners unlocked at any one time, staff have more time to interact on an informal basis with prisoners.

Statistics of current key working:

- 122 active key workers with an average of 8.3 prisoners each.
- 98% of prisoners have a key worker allocated.
- Total projected sessions for 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2021: 26,332
- Total recorded sessions for above period: 9,332

## 5.4 Equality and diversity

In the first few months pre-lockdown few resources were available for equalities work in the prison. There were no wing representatives and the equalities officer had little opportunity, because of cross deployment due to staffing issues in the prison, to concentrate on their role. Even when wing reps were in place they were not able to attend the monthly prison meeting. Subsequently, with lockdown, activities have been restricted. A new post of diversity and inclusion should improve the situation in this area.

### Age

More than two thirds of the prisoners in The Mount fall into the 22-39 age band (68%). However, there are 103 prisoners aged 50 and over and also more than 100 with a disability. Narey, the wing for elderly prisoners, is the most accessible wing in the estate for those with mobility issues.

Age Range	Number of Prisoners	Percentage of Prisoners
18-21	21	2%

22-29	330	33%
30-39	348	35%
40-49	187	19%
50-59	75	8%
60-69	25	2%
70+	3	1%
Total	989	100%

### Ethnicity

In December 2020 37% of the prisoners reported themselves as White British, 29% Black, 10% White Other, 13% Asian and 6% Mixed.

Ethnic Description	Number of Prisoners	Percentage of Population
White British	362	37%
Black	292	29%
White, Any Other Background	97	10%
Asian	125	13%
Mixed	60	6%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	24	2%
Chinese or other	29	3%
Total	989	100%

Foreign nationals (FN) in the prison numbered 176, with 52 different nationalities, and were in a difficult position during lockdown with little or no contact with family or immigration officers and only having prison staff to answer pressing questions. The monies provided by the prison for all prisoners during lockdown was particularly hard for these prisoners, as the costs to call home were significantly higher than for UK prisoners, though they were able to apply for a five-minute call per month to an international number at the Prison Service's expense. The introduction of the Purple

video visits has helped FN prisoners as they are now able to have digital face-to-face calls from home countries.

## **Adjudications**

Adjudications charged reflect, almost exactly, the make-up of the prisoners in terms of ethnicity or religion being 41% for white prisoners and 30% for black prisoners in a prison population with 37% white prisoners and 29% black prisoners. No ethnic group was disproportionately represented.

As with those charged, the adjudications proven also reflected the ethnic mix of the prison population.

## **Complaints**

Complaints from the white cohort of prisoners (34%) were slightly lower than their proportion of the population and those from the black group (26%) were very slightly less. The total number of complaints in the current reporting period is 3,339 and is almost identical to the previous year (3,363). However, as most of the reporting period has had prisoners locked in their cells for 22-23 hours per day, this is to be commended.

## **Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)**

The number of DIRF complaints for 2020 was 141, a 57% increase over the previous year and mainly at the beginning of the period. Given that the ethnic mix of prisoners had not changed significantly from the previous year it is difficult to determine the reason for this large increase particularly when general complaints did not increase.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

In terms of religion, 39% of prisoners registered as Christian, 34% as Muslim with a small number of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh adherents and 20% declaring themselves of no religion. During the pandemic and lockdown no services have been held in the chapel. However, there has been no illness amongst the chaplaincy staff and the team continued to be out and about in the prison supporting both prisoners and staff. The chapel space has been used, when required, for whatever purpose people needed.

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges**

The incentives and earned privileges (IEP) regime has been not operating normally.

The “basic” regime was suspended throughout the year, quite rightly, as depriving prisoners of access to a TV as is normal when they are on basic would have been very harsh while they were locked in their cells for extended periods.

46% of men were classed as “enhanced” at the end of our reporting year. This is a higher than normal percentage and perhaps reflects that the lockdown regime has

given some prisoners fewer opportunities to misbehave. In normal times such a high percentage of enhanced prisoners might mean that the IEP was not discriminating enough between prisoners and their behaviours.

## **5.7 Property**

There have been fewer complaints and reports of lost property during this reporting period probably due to the fact that there have been fewer movements between prisons and when they have occurred the transport has not been so crowded so there has been space for property to be transferred with the prisoner.

However, it has been found that some of the follow-on property was not coming from the previous prison, but from other illegal sources – with illegal substances – so the process for receiving this property has been tightened up.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 General healthcare**

From 1 October 2020 healthcare services are being provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG) which changed its name from Care UK Healthcare in that month. PPG have for some time past provided healthcare services to a number of UK prisons as well as GP practices, walk-in centres, diagnostic facilities and ophthalmology. The other side of the company, Care UK, operates 120 care homes in the UK.

#### **Covid-19 vaccinations**

All medical staff have been offered their first vaccination. For other prison staff and prisoners the vaccination roll out for them follows the JCVI (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation) age priority groups.

#### **Services**

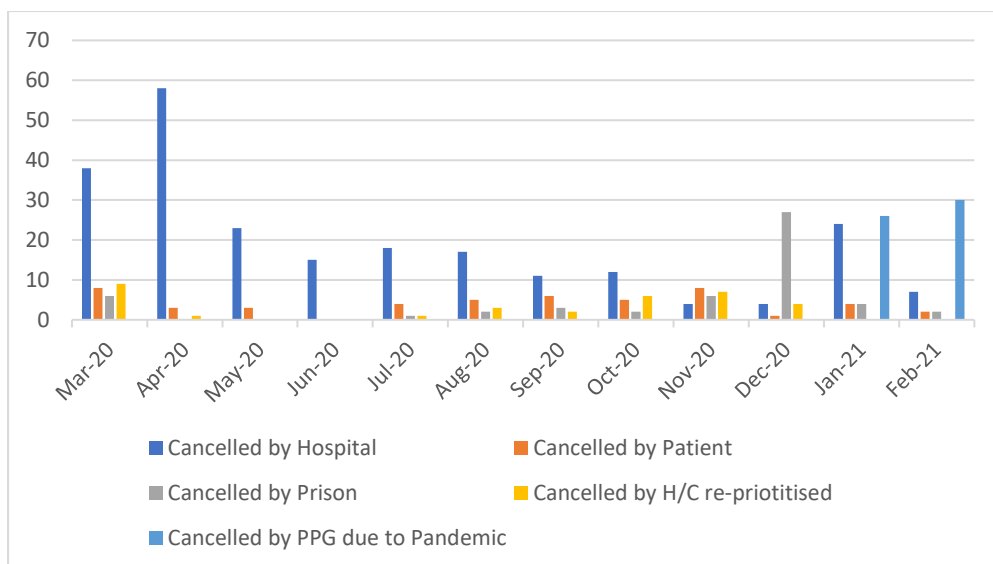
PPG provides a range of healthcare services, including physical and mental care, sexual health support, smoking cessation support (stopped for most of the past year but now restarting), physiotherapy, chiropody, GP and psychiatrist visits.

Due to the change in provider from Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCNHST) and, more notably, the pandemic, it has been an extremely difficult year with a number of staff leaving (not wishing to work for a private health provider). Currently a number of experienced agency staff are filling the gaps while recruitment continues. Notwithstanding this fact, and despite the pandemic, generally services have been maintained at a satisfactory level but it is true to say that the transfer of services from HCNHST to PPG is a work in progress where as a result there is expected to be improvement over the next 12 months. An experienced custodial manager at The Mount joined PPG on 1 January 2021 providing non-clinical but considerable operational knowledge of the prison for the benefit of both the medical staff and prisoners.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

#### **Statistics**

The below chart shows hospital appointments cancelled by different entities including the prison and PPG. The bulk of prison and PPG cancellations occurred in the last three months of the year when there was a significant Covid-19 outbreak.



The next chart depicts the number of 'code reds' (where there is blood) and blues (no blood) at different times, showing the number which were drug related. The prison has worked hard in trying to reduce illegal substances reaching the prison, including the use of up-to-date technology with further airport style apparatus being installed in March 2021. Throw overs, particularly during the current lockdown, are however presenting a challenge and additional measures have been taken to try and interrupt the flow.

Month	No of emergency codes called	No of Code Blues	No of Code Reds	No that required A&E	No called within working hours	No called outside working hours	Number of Codes Drug Related	Drug Related Code Blues	Drug Related Code Reds
Mar-20	13	11	2	0	0	0	4	4	0
Apr-20	6	2	4	0	0	0	1	1	0
May-20	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jun-20	11	6	5	4	4	0	2	1	1
Jul-20	8	7	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Aug-20	13	11	2	2	2	0	1	1	0
Sep-20	11	9	2	0	0	0	2	2	0
Oct-20	17	15	2	1	1	0	4	4	0
Nov-20	14	14	0	1	1	0	0	6	0
Dec-20	20	11	9	2	2	0	5	5	0
Jan-21	6	4	2	1	1	0	1	1	0
Feb-21	8	6	2	2	2	0	1	1	0

## **Dentistry**

As noted in last year's report, this service is being provided by Community Dental Services CIC from 1 April 2020. Similar to healthcare, it has been a challenging year due to the restrictions imposed on dental services at different times caused by the pandemic. All face-to-face appointments ceased during the first lockdown with remote triaging being implemented but a pathway was available for emergency hospital care. From mid-June prisoners requiring urgent treatment were booked as a priority.

## **Forward Trust (FT) and Wellbeing**

Forward Trust (FT) entered into a new contract with NHS England on 1 April 2020. From that date the contract incorporated 'improving access to psychological therapies' (IAPT) which had been a stand-alone facility until then.

Both FT and IAPT usually have a group of 10 health and wellbeing champions (HAWCs) as peer prisoners supporting their teams and their clients but this activity has been on and off due to the pandemic restrictions.

It should be noted that both FT and IAPT work closely and well with general healthcare, mental healthcare and safer custody.

The healthcare, wellbeing and dental services provided at The Mount are comparable to those available in the community.

### **6.3 Mental healthcare**

Due to the pandemic, with most prisoners locked up for 22 hours a day for most of the year, there has been particular strain on mental healthcare, where most of the current staff are agency staff. During different iterations of the pandemic restrictions, face-to-face consultations have been difficult but for part of the year 80% of referrals were being addressed face-to-face. For the remaining consultations, in-cell telephony has been the alternative. Statistics prior to 1 November are not readily available, due to the change in provider, so there is no comparison to the previous year, but there were 342 referrals from 1 November to 28 February.

Therapy dogs were introduced just prior to lockdown and had to be suspended. They were reinstated during the summer and worked with some of the most vulnerable prisoners getting positive feedback.

One prisoner was recently sectioned and relocated to an appropriate hospital facility.

Sadly there was a death in custody during the year whilst the prisoner was located in the CSU.

## **6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym**

As for the whole prison, this has been a very frustrating year for the PE department due to Covid, regime changes (including residents being locked up for much longer periods) and staff shortages.

Sadly Saracens Professional Rugby Club had just started their rugby programme on February 17th 2020 with great promise, only to be stopped four weeks later. This would have been a very impressive setup with the Saracens coming to the prison for eight weeks to run a rugby programme with enhanced prisoners who had been selected, who had rugby sessions with the prison staff on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, while working with members of the Saracens staff on Mondays and Wednesdays, with theory sessions in the mornings and training in the afternoons.

This would be an amazing opportunity to gain qualifications and even get a job on release. However, the prison PE staff have been in constant contact with the Saracens and they will restart the programme as soon as allowed.

This year the sports programme has broadly mimicked what has been happening in the country outside.

There have been quite a lot of outdoor circuits outside the residential units which will continue when the regime changes.

The gyms were open with a maximum of 15 residents allowed in at one time but this was only for a very short duration.

The good news is that the gym has been renovated and all the equipment is functioning and ready to be used, hopefully in the near future.

In last year's report it stated that "sport finally seems to be moving forward at The Mount". This has sadly not happened over the last twelve months, but there are great hopes that this will be the case in a few months from now.

## **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

All new arrivals to The Mount are inducted by Forward Trust (FT) and delivered harm minimisation related to drug misuse in custody. The aim is to triage assess every referral within three working days, and to fully assess those suitable within 15 working days. Throughout the pandemic, structured one-to-one work has continued, albeit at a reduced rate and has been prioritised by risk. Despite structured one-to-one face-to-face work being limited over the past year, clients have been engaged in structured work which starts at the assessment phase, from structured one-to-one sessions through to extensive release planning.

FT is contracted to run the Bridge Programme (six weeks' duration), Stepping Stones Drug / Alcohol programme (two weeks' duration), Living Safely workshops and health and wellbeing champion (HAWC) workshops (one-off workshops). However, due to the Covid pandemic, these have been severely restricted due to being unable to run various forms of 'group work'.

For those prisoners on opioid substitute therapy (OST), FT supports healthcare in attending all clinical 13-week reviews and also participates in substance misuse related ACCTs.

Normally, throughout the year, around 22% of the prison population are working with the Forward Trust on structured courses to help with addiction and 38% on structured and non-structured courses. However, since the start of Covid, where face-to-face meetings are limited in-cell packs have been distributed to support prisoners.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

The education department consists of a main education block where (under normal circumstances) the bulk of core courses are run, including music and art. The library is linked to the main education department offering easy access to learners.

Following steady progress during the latter part of the year ending March 2020 in the provision of education to prisoners, all face-to-face educational and workshop activities ceased on 24 March 2020. Following that, the education team worked remotely and to meet the needs of prisoners and developed initial in-cell learning packs which have been put forward as good practice to other establishments. The pack selection also included in some cases Way2Learn courses where learners could watch a pre-recorded class on a TV in their cell.

Since May there has been increased use of in-cell education packs supported by Way2Learn TV but a return to the holding of classes, despite significant efforts by the education team, was not possible due to the prevailing regime until December 2020. On 14 December cautious steps were taken involving some limited face-to-face education. The delay in such introduction has reflected the gradual return of educational staff to the prison, the need for caution before resuming face-to-face contact (and compliance with instructions from the Ministry of Justice in relation to all prisons) and the need to carry out a deep clean of the education areas.

Despite a very significant effort to overcome these obstacles all face-to-face education had to stop in January 2021 and will not commence before the expiry of the reporting period.

During this uniquely challenging period the education team has made increasing use of technology to communicate with each other (for example while working from home) and in particular to communicate with prisoners (notably via Way2Learn) and assess the needs of prisoners and to tailor cell packs and learning programmes to the needs of each prisoner. The further use of technology, even when face-to-face learning is resumed is envisaged and welcomed. Contact with learners has been maintained via the in-cell telephony system while forward planning for face-to-face delivery.

Work is also ongoing with security advisers to enable Open University laptops to be used in cells. Shannon Trust mentors are in the process of receiving material to complete virtual in-cell learning so that they can mentor individuals within their cohort.

In February the prison participated in an Ofsted virtual visit that was positive in outcome.

The library is delivering a mobile book delivery service to prisoners.

Currently 225 prisoners are engaged on accredited courses, representing 22% of the prison's population.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Our annual report for 2019-2020 reported considerable improvements in this area both in respect of the environment and the work opportunities. However as with most areas both nationally and internationally this improvement was brought to an abrupt halt by the Covid-19 pandemic. The national lockdown affected the prison and everything was closed down in March 2020 including all the workshops. These have remained closed throughout the year with a short opening of three weeks in September before another lockdown forced closure.

### **Workshops**

Some essential workshops have continued to work throughout the pandemic.

DHL (prisoner canteen packaging facility) has continued throughout with a short break in the autumn when it had to be closed due to a Covid outbreak. It employs 35 prisoners, whereas the normal roll would be 55. With these numbers they can work with social distancing and this works well.

Waste management has employed 16 prisoners and continued to deal efficiently with the rubbish and waste from the wings and within the establishment.

Shop 9 has been used to prepare Covid packs for daily distribution to all prisoners, which contain a drink and snacks and vary from day to day.

A mask workshop has been set up employing eight prisoners making masks for distribution to all prisoners.

Redemption Roasters (a commercial coffee roasting organisation) has continued with its operation but has not employed any prisoners.

The double-glazing workshop has also opened periodically to produce Covid-related products, for example screens for the visits area.

Bikes have continued to be delivered by the Sue Ryder organisation for the bike refurbishment workshop so will provide plenty of work when the workshops open.

The instructors have worked hard to clean and clear out the workshops which are looking ready for action.

The structural repairs have been completed so the roofs no longer leak and the rat problem seems to be in abeyance. Also, and importantly, the heating system is due to be renewed.

### **Future Developments**

All the instructors bar one who has retired have remained in place during the closures and one instructor is being trained to work in double glazing so all current workshops will be able to open once lockdown is eased.

Currently it is unclear whether the commercial contracts will be renewed.

There are plans for new courses, most of which will be accredited through People Plus, including roofing, forklift truck driving, plumbing and horticulture, for which three new greenhouses are being erected. There also plans to keep bees which will provide employment opportunities on release. The project of Food Behind Bars is also planned to improve catering skills of the prisoners, improve the food served in the establishment and encourage healthy eating.

Despite ambitious plans for the re-opening of the workshops, the same challenges will remain as were detailed in last year's annual report, for example ensuring a sufficient number of workplaces for the prison's population, providing workshops for the planned large foreign national population, ensuring spaces for those with any sort of disability, those on basic regime and high-risk prisoners and, importantly, providing cover for instructor absence.

There is however a proactive team in charge of the workshops now and hopefully the above challenges will be addressed.

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

The offender management unit (OMU) at The Mount is a strong team that functions well. Inevitably we have had less contact with the OMU and the prisoners than in a normal year but when we have had contact we have observed that:

- a) prisoners have sentence plans that they understand;
- b) decisions that affect prisoners' lives such as changes to categorisation and recommendations to parole hearings are timely and soundly based.

However, there are three matters to which we would like to draw attention:

Offending behaviour programmes: the pandemic meant that The Mount was unable to run offending behaviour programmes for much of the year. Moreover, even when the programmes were being run the numbers able to attend were reduced because of the need for social distancing and because staff hired to run the programmes had yet to be able to complete their own in-person training. The result is that prisoners will be leaving prison who have not been able to complete programmes that were on their sentence plans. Given that this will also be the case in other prisons, the pandemic has set up a large scale trial of the effectiveness of these programmes and the MoJ should track whether there are significant differences in the propensity to re-offend of prisoners released without doing these programmes compared to those in other years who have completed them.

Transfers to open conditions: transfers to open conditions were suspended for several months to minimise the spread of the virus. This was the right thing to do. Then, when transfers were resumed, for several weeks the only option for prisoners at The Mount was a transfer to Hollesley Bay. This was administratively convenient because The Mount and Hollesley Bay are both in the Eastern prison region but Hollesley Bay is far from where the majority of prisoners at The Mount and their

families live. Transfers to other category D prisons have restarted but as at the end of February 2021 there were roughly 80 prisoners at The Mount who had been re-categorised to D but who were still waiting for a place in an open prison to become available. Prisoners work hard over the course of their sentences to achieve their category D status and the delays in transferring them not only disappoint the prisoners waiting but send out a message to others that perhaps striving to achieve category D is not worthwhile.

IPPs: The Mount has 46 prisoners who are serving indeterminate sentences. All have served many years more than their tariffs: the length of time set as the punishment for their crimes. They are being held for public protection or, in other words, because of the crimes they might commit rather than because of the crimes they have committed. Through no fault of the Governor and staff, The Mount is not set up to offer these prisoners the support they need to address the risk they pose to others and win release. In a sense they are just being warehoused at The Mount. The MoJ needs to consider how best to support these prisoners across the prison estate.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

It has been difficult to maintain the normal requirements and expectation of family contact this year. All cells had telephone contact installed so prisoners could keep in contact with families and other personal contacts. They have also all had £5 credit per week for their calls.

Visits were cancelled at the beginning of the pandemic, opened briefly during the temporary lifting of lockdown under Covid-secure conditions and then had to be closed down again. Many prisoners did not want their families to risk travelling for the purpose of a visit so there were few complaints, but the prison has been quick to open visits whenever they have been permitted.

Purple Visits were installed at the beginning of the lockdown (secure video calling) which have been well used.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

As with most areas, due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been considerable disruption to work being carried out in this area.

Sodexo run a provision called Enhanced Through The Gate (ETTG) and there was a specific person allocated to The Mount. Unfortunately they had to take considerable time off for medical reasons and were not replaced with a permanent member of staff. Two staff (one based at Peterborough and one at Reading) have been coming to The Mount. They have been attending weekly but only for one day. However, they have not been entering the prison and have been based in the visitors' centre but have had phone contacts set up to speak directly with prisoners. It has impacted on

the amount of work able to be carried out. This should improve as the member of staff based locally returned at the start of the year.

St Mungo's have continued with their service, providing assistance with accommodation and banking, working from the Reducing Reoffending Unit office (RRU) two days a week during lockdown. Their representative has attended the wings but as prisoners are locked up for most of the day it is difficult to hold private conversations so most work has been carried out using the in-cell telephones. There is a database kept by St Mungo's, providing useful information of where those being released are housed and numbers involved.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service run by Forward Trust, which was introduced in January 2020, has continued to work during the year. The two staff have been in attendance most days, once again, mainly for privacy reasons, making use of the in-cell phones to contact prisoners following induction and 12 weeks before the end of their sentences. Sadly because of the lockdown it has not been possible to ensure prisoners are on the right courses or receiving the right education as this has been on hold. Work is also being carried out, in conjunction with New Futures Network (NFN), to secure employment on release. This is a new initiative and is looking at employment opportunities within the civil service (mainly DWP) for suitable candidates. IAG will assist with CVs and it is expected that the staff will have their own database of men who have been released, which will enable follow-up work as employment places become available.

## 8. The work of the IMB

There are currently 13 members of the Board two of whom nearly completed their probationary period just before the lockdown occurred. One is now on rota and the other is awaiting completion of probationary requirements. It has been a difficult year for them as they have been unable to progress their learning and gain confidence to carry out their role. However, to their credit they have maintained their interest and once they are both on rota and able to visit the prison regularly will become valuable members.

The Board has continued to adhere to a rota with members telephoning the establishment to complete their commitments and visiting when possible.

Segregation reviews have been carried out mostly by telephone which, whilst not ideal, works reasonably well. Unfortunately it has not been possible to accurately record the number of reviews carried out but members have maintained their commitment to attend the reviews regularly as part of their rota weeks.

Board meetings have also been carried out by teleconference and more recently via Google Meet. The Governor has attended each month and there has been training for Board members either by teleconference, Zoom or Google Meet.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the establishment	51
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not recorded (see above)

## Applications to the IMB

It has been challenging this year responding to applications from the prisoners as for much of the year the IMB members were not allowed into the establishment.

However, with the invaluable help of our administrative assistant at the prison, applications have been scanned and sent to members, answers established through phone calls and e-mails and responses to the prisoner sent either through our administrative assistant or via the 'email a prisoner' system.

More recently the Board has subscribed to the 0800 method of receiving applications which is proving to be working well.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Previous reporting year</b>	<b>Current reporting year</b>
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	12
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	2	1
C	Equality	3	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	10	23
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	4	7
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food and kitchens	4	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	14	30
H1	Property within this establishment	43	20
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	8	8
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	27	49
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10	25
K	Transfers	6	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	111	49
	Total number of applications	<b>247</b>	<b>205</b>



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [imb@justice.gov.uk](mailto:imb@justice.gov.uk).