



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Parc YPU**

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

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## Introductory sections 1 - 3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Description of the establishment**

The young person's unit (YPU) at Parc has two units, Echo and Golf, which house 28 and 32 young prisoners, respectively. Education takes place in a separate secure area adjacent to the Golf unit, and a standalone server area where the children and young people can cook as part of an education and training programme as well as for occasional meal provision. Both units have an exercise area, with seats and artificial grass, and both have painted murals on the walls, to support the relaxed area.

The regimes operating in both wings are the same, and the full range of programmes and earned privileges are offered to all equally.

Members attended the monthly safeguarding meetings and the young persons' forum held on the units remotely, and these have been well attended by all the agencies involved in case management.

### **3. Executive summary**

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

The Covid-19 pandemic covers the total period of this report. The Board agreed to discontinue visits immediately the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced and throughout the period of this report there were no physical visits. Almost immediately, three members resigned, with a further one transferring to another prison and another member resigning during the period.

Both the Director and Deputy Director continued to make themselves available to the Chair and relevant contact information was provided to ensure that those remaining members could contact the appropriate staff.

Our observations are based on remote monitoring, discussions between the Board Chair and the head and deputy head of the YPU, and ad hoc discussions between some of the Board members and members of staff, to gather information and evidence to construct this report. The Board also had access to prison data and minutes from meetings and attended safeguarding meetings and young people's forums via video link and telephone.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

It was evident in the adult estate at Parc, and, indeed, the wider prison estate, that the pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing problems, primarily in relation to people's general health, mental health and their education.

The evidence of changes at Parc to normalise changes in the regime following lockdown in March 2020 not only reflects the work and commitment of all staff in carrying out these changes, but they also reflect the way they connected and communicated with the young people their intentions to improve their environment as quickly and safely as was practical.

#### **How safe is the establishment?**

The number of acts of violence was significantly reduced, comparing the seven highest months during the previous year, where there were 109 acts recorded. During the period of this report the comparable figures were 23.

Incidents reduced significantly throughout the year, with the highest monthly figure being 66% lower than the previous year.

There were significant reductions in the use of force during the period, showing an average monthly reduction of around 75%.

The number of adjudications was consistently lower than in the previous year, showing a reduction of around 70%, with evidence to support that staff are using the adjudication process only in more serious cases and where alternative approaches have been attempted prior to adjudication.

## How fairly and humanely are young people treated?

Thirty-eight per cent of incidents and 42% of incidents of violence were attributable to black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people, who represented 44.5% of the YPU population.

At the outset of the pandemic, restrictions were put in place and time out of room was limited to one hour. At the end of the first week – that is, April to May 2020 –this was increased to four hours per day, with continual increases up to the end of the reporting period, when prisoners were out of their cell for eight hours per day.

From April 2020, the young people operated in groups of three, and from August in groups of six, rising to 12 from September.

Initially, young people had their meals in their rooms, but from May shared their meals in their cohort groups, as recorded in the previous paragraph.

Initially, outside fitness was stopped, but it recommenced on 30 March and continued throughout the period of this report.

While visits were immediately curtailed, virtual visiting commenced at the end of March, with social and virtual visits taking place from the beginning of August.

Barnardo's staff withdrew from the establishment and were operating remotely, but returned to undertake administrative work from August, with a more normalised return from February 2021.

The following chart represents the regime in Parc as at June 2020, illustrating progress being made to changing status and improving young people's welfare and education.

Delivery area	To include (not exhaustive)	Parc YPU
Meals	Three varied meals a day	Every third day, lunch/dinner out of room – <i>now in groups of a maximum of six</i>
Medicine	Access to medicine	No access issues
Healthcare	Access to health services	No access issues
Safety	Good hand hygiene, 2m distancing	30 min shower per day, 10 min cleaning time per day  Boys feel safe – no one on enhanced supervision
Education and activities	Structured and routine	Half-day classroom-based and at weekend 45 min gym  <i>(Four hours 45 mins out of room Mon–Fri and three hours at weekend –</i>

		<i>football pitch available seven days a week)</i>
Wellbeing	Welfare checks	Regular welfare checks, 30 min exercise per day + extra 30 min exercise every other evening
Crisis planning	Integrated approach	Consultations with FACTS via Skype
Connection	Family and friends	Family groups of six ( <i>increased from three</i> ); eight young people visits available per day and extra phone credit + fortnightly stakeholder briefing (agreed to move to monthly from June 2020)

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

While the significant changes in the regime may be considered as a contributor to improved safety, it is the judgement of the Board that during the period of this report staff have worked effectively to make the prison a safe place for the young people.

All staff in the YPU at Parc worked effectively, continually working to create both positive and effective working procedures with the young people.

Across the units, there were reductions in the number of assaults, serious assaults, proven assaults, use of force, adjudications, reportable incidents and fights.

The period of this report mirrored the Covid-19 pandemic and it is considered that the initial and continued actions of senior management and staff in implementing appropriate protocols were recognised by young people as being both necessary and appropriate.

A survey undertaken in October 2020 showed that 89.3% of young people felt safe on the YPU which reflects the commitment and hard work of all staff on the unit.

The number of incidents in the reporting period totalled 98, down from 251 in the previous period; there were a total of 46 violent incidents, down from 165; there were seven incidents of self-harm, down from 38; and there were 123 occasions involving the use of force, down from 495 in the previous period. Some of this may have been due to having a smaller population, but the efforts made by the senior management team (SMT) and all staff, should be recognised in the way they engaged with young people to operate an orderly environment.

The YPU at Parc has adopted a process of conflict resolution, where the skill is to manage conflict in a way that people can actually get together, agree and bring things to a middle ground.



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

### **5.1 Accommodation**

While there has been an occasional issue with the hot water supply, a prompt resolution has always taken place.

The wings were always kept clean and in an orderly manner, with young people encouraged to respect their environment in keeping their cells neat and tidy.

### **5.2 Segregation**

T6 is a facility like segregation in the adult estate and is used for young people who have to be looked after away from the residential units.

### **5.3 Staff/young people relationships**

To understand culture within the YPU and to ensure that all staff play a part in the drive to understand what the culture is within the establishment, a wellbeing officer has been identified within the unit. This will allow the management team to set the tone – a voice for staff to contribute to the establishment being safe, decent, hopeful and supportive of change, progression and stopping offending.

Working within the YPU, support and guidance to all staff will be provided; staff will take part in focus groups to consider the current culture within the YPU; key themes will be identified and reported to the management team.

The six areas that will be discussed in the focus groups are:

- 1. Stories at Parc** – These are stories that immortalise the history of the prison
- 2. Symbols** – This is how the workplace defines itself (logo, dress code, branding)
- 3. Power structures** – Who has the greatest influence over the decisions?
- 4. Organisational structures** – Power structures within the department
- 5. Control systems** – How is the workplace controlled?
- 6. Rituals and routines** – Daily behaviour of people, how they relate and address each other.

### **5.4 Diversity and inclusion**

Regular calendar events are held not only to improve young people's understanding of other cultures, but also to recognise people with physical and/or mental disabilities and gender.

Seventy-five per cent of young people who responded to the equality, diversity and inclusion survey in October 2020 felt that they were well supported with regard to all of the nine protected characteristics, and also that discrimination was challenged by staff.

- High response - 26 out of 32 boys at Parc completed the survey (81% of all young people at Parc in the week commencing 8 May 2020)

- High level of feeling positive with current position – 17 boys noted that they felt positive, compared to six boys who gave a negative response (65% of young people noted a positive response)
- Compared to the position pre-Covid-19, the number of young people indicating a positive response went down slightly; at the same time, the overall number scoring a negative response increased from one pre-Covid-19 to five
- Almost all young people felt healthy (96%)
- Four out of every five boys felt positive in speaking to others about how they felt
- Lack of contact with family and others, and time in cell were the most difficult parts of the current situation
- Young people felt positive about Parc's response to Covid-19, especially the use of PlayStations
- Young people wanted to develop the regime further, in terms of more time out of cell, more association, more education, more gym and more food.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

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

Remembering that the report coincides with the first 12 months of the pandemic, the SMT at Parc was able to focus early on how they might return to a more normal regime. From as early as May 2020, young people were out of their cells for up to four hours per day, with two hours of education in groups of three and getting exercise both outside and in the gym. This was a process and not an event and by January 2021 time out of cell was 10 hours per day, with 4.5 hours of education as part of it, meeting and dining in groups of up to 15, with weekend enrichment activities reinstated from November 2020.

## **7. Education and training**

### **7.1 Education**

Since the lockdown in March 2020, there were a few limitations to education provision. It was locked down for the first week and then there was reduced face-to-face education, providing one wing with education in the morning and the other wing in the afternoons. The class numbers were reduced by half (for social distancing) but staff managed to offer every subject to every learner, even in the first part of lockdown.

This continued until the end of August, when procedures changed to having all learners out (face-to-face education) for roughly four hours per day (usually five in normal circumstances). The pathway numbers were also increased from three to four.

There was no television education, as face-to-face education was reinstated after only one week of full lockdown.

All young people attended education, with very few refusing to attend all the time.

All learners were given additional work from their teachers – that is, if they had mathematics in the morning, they were given extra work they could complete in-cell.

There was minimal impact on learners with additional learning needs, as staff were able to offer face-to-face education and continued to give additional support to those identified.

The only change was that the timetable was balanced for all (same access to all subjects in the curriculum). When social distancing finishes, there will be the opportunity to offer more dedicated pathway selection for learners – for example, the cookery pathway, where they will have more access to cookery than others as they have chosen this pathway.

### **7.2 Library**

The library provision was (and still is) on an individual basis. A librarian visits every Wednesday and sees 100% of the young people. She brings books requested by individuals and takes orders for those who are keen to read specific books/authors. The library is always available to those timetabled to services 2 (main education area), and teachers and young people can browse at any time. New borrowers were attracted to the library and the total number of books issued by the library to young people was 424.

### **7.3 Vocational training**

Throughout the period, vocational training suffered due to Covid-19 and the cessation of release on temporary licence.

There was, however, a kitchen on Golf unit, where young people, depending on the regime at the time, had the opportunity to develop food preparation and cooking skills, and preparing their own meals at weekends.

## **8. Progression towards transfer or release**

### **8.1 Case management and progression**

The YPU currently has seven needs, engagement and wellbeing team officers (NEWTs), who provide end-to-end case management, from reception to release in the community, for all young people.

This allows the young people to have consistency in their sentence planning, while encouraging them to work collaboratively with their NEWT worker within custody and, following release, that builds upon their strengths and goals to help them shift their identity from pro-offending to pro-social.

The NEWT worker provides individualised personal support, which includes identifying the pro-offending narrative, strengths and goals, a pro-social identity and the route to achieving this. This is followed by individualised structural support, encouraging the young people to contribute by identifying appropriate goals that will help develop areas of strength and address offending behaviour. Areas of focus include accommodation; education, training and employment; drugs and alcohol; children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour; health; and finance and debt.

### **8.2 Family contact**

Feedback from the young people was considerate, in as much as generally they did not want their families visiting and risking contracting Covid-19. Towards the end of April 2020, a programme of Skype calls was initiated, with Purple Visits (video calls) added when they became available. There were, of course, periods when guidance permitted face-to-face visits.

### **8.3 Resettlement planning**

A holistic approach was used to support the young people regarding transfer or successful resettlement, which began at their initial sentence planning or remand meeting.

The NEWT worker worked closely with children's services and youth offending services to ensure a smooth transition into the community upon release or transfer to another establishment so that all practical measures were in place prior to release or transfer, and the young people had a clear plan to ensure continued and consistent support.

## 9. The work of the IMB

In order to undertake its responsibility to monitor the treatment of young people at Parc, the Board would normally engage with young people in a number of ways.

During rota visits, Board members respond to applications, and monitor across all areas of the YPU; however, as stated, all monitoring throughout this period was remote.

Members individually and collectively would normally respond to young people applications, by visiting young people to gain a better understanding of their problems and investigate their complaints by discussing the issue(s) with the relevant staff responsible. This process was, however, suspended as members were not attending the YPU.

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we immediately received three resignations and an application for a transfer for geographical reasons, leaving the Board with just five members, who were unable, for individual reasons, to undertake prison visits.

Mostly, we continued to work to discharge our duties remotely, with identified points of contact for individuals and individual subject areas. A consequence of this was a serious disruption to direct prisoner contact and a restriction on our ability to deal with applications, due both to high levels of staff absence as a consequence of the pandemic and our inability to visit.

The Board did not receive any applications during the reporting period.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	-



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