



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Whitemoor

**For reporting year
1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

His Majesty's Prison (HMP) Whitemoor lies outside the Cambridgeshire town of March. Opened in 1992 as a maximum-security prison for men in categories A and B, it is one of eight high-security prisons in England within the long-term and high-security estate (LTHSE). On 31 May 2021, the prison held 316 prisoners, against an operational capacity of 333, reduced temporarily from 458 during a major electrical upgrading project. A total of 130 were category A, of whom six were high risk. All Whitemoor prisoners are accommodated in single cells, with integral sanitation, but use separate shared external showers.

The project which began in August 2021 to replace and upgrade electrical fittings and alarms required prisoners to be decanted from one wing at a time; the first wing to be completed was B wing, followed by F wing. Work on C wing was under way at the end of the reporting year. Prisoner numbers were reduced accordingly.

The prison comprises the following units:

- three main residential wings, but see above for the effects of decanting (A, B and C wings);
- the Fens unit, accommodating up to 70 prisoners diagnosed with a personality disorder and undergoing psychological treatment, delivered in partnership with the National Health Service (NHS) and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) professionals (D wing);
- a close supervision centre (CSC), holding up to 10 prisoners, managed under a nationally coordinated strategy to provide a secure location for the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners (F wing);
- a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) unit, designed to enable prisoners to maintain and build on developments they have previously achieved in prison, holding an average of 19 full PIPE prisoners (out of a capacity of 30) and 11 lodgers at the end of the reporting year;
- the Bridge unit, opened in April 2019, designed to support prisoners progressing out of segregated conditions, with a capacity of 12.

Healthcare services are provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and dentistry by Prison Centred Dental Care; education and the library are delivered by Milton Keynes College and maintenance by Gov Facility Services Ltd. Cambridgeshire County Council provides adult social care services. Psychological services in the Fens unit are provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The year was a trying one for the prison and the Board alike. The prison was subject to a stop/start approach to the removal of the measures taken to safeguard against Covid-19, with the national reinstatement of a Stage 3 regime during the winter because of the flare-up of a new Omicron variant. The detailed plans required by HMPPS gold command which had frequently to be adapted and amended, often at short notice, put some strain on prison management and their usually good relationship with prisoners.

Membership of the IMB was at an all-time low during this period and the age and vulnerability of members or of their close family made it impossible for us to carry out monitoring duties as we would have liked. Nonetheless, we have maintained a good relationship with the prison Governor and her team and would wish to express our appreciation of their efforts to keep us informed through access to staff briefings and ad hoc reports. The Governor, her deputy and other members of senior management have regularly attended Board meetings, either by Zoom or, later in the year, in person. We returned to more or less normal monitoring by the end of the reporting year.

Like other prisons, Whitemoor has suffered from a shortage of staff and rapid turnover, the geographical isolation of its location possibly adding to the challenges. Salary bands 3–5 cover most prison officers, as well as administrative staff, with the most senior uniformed grade, custodial managers (CMs), falling into band 5. Resignations of band 3–5 staff reached an annual rolling rate of 9% in March 2022, though to long-serving IMB members it appeared to be even higher as those leaving seemed often to be the more experienced officers on whose wisdom we had come to rely. At the end of the reporting year, nearly 17% of band 3–5 staff had less than two years' experience and over 40% less than five years. Of the band 3–5 staff leaving in 2022, 40% were in the 26 to 35 age group, an increase of about seven percentage points over 2021. We shall discuss the immediate implications of this for the prison's work later in this report. In the longer term, the data suggest that young people see the prison service as a short-term stopgap rather than as a life-long career, a perception borne out by our day-to-day conversations with staff, that bodes ill for the future of the service.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

We have always regarded Whitemoor as a relatively safe prison: its high security status means that the population is on long sentences and relatively stable and there is ample opportunity for officers and governors to build good relationships with the prisoners. However, the current crisis in staffing is calling this into question. During the pandemic the staff complement on a wing was increased to supervising officer (SO) plus 13 officers to cover the extra work. The norm to which the prison has now returned is SO plus 11. We have been told that the collating officer in the central wing office is sometimes the only experienced officer on the wing and the definition of 'experienced' is very flexible, with young officers who have served only 18 months being regarded as meeting the criterion. Our own spot checks, when we ask wing staff about their experience, while not scientific, bear this out. Whitemoor is

frequently called on to provide staff to work on detached duty at other prisons and this exacerbates the difficulties. The tight staffing levels mean that officers are frequently called away from crucial duties like key work sessions to assist with urgent tasks like cell searches. Thus, the continuity of the relationship with prisoners is broken and the motivation of staff is put at risk because low-level custodianship takes the place of the therapeutic and supportive role that brought at least some of them into the service. It is not uncommon for prisoners in their consultation meetings or in conversation with Board members to comment on the difficulty some young and/or inexperienced officers have in communicating and building appropriate relationships with prisoners and there is a lack of experienced staff to show them the way. All prisons, like other human institutions, depend upon consent and goodwill to function effectively. That settlement is at risk in the present situation.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

There is no doubting the aspirations of the Governor and her management team to provide a humane and respectful environment within the prison. There is a positive culture of communication and openness between prisoners, governors and staff, with some excellent consultative meetings and real listening taking place. Despite the many challenges, the Prison Rehabilitation Culture Council has been reconvened with effective coordinators and members, who are more than capable of having a measured conversation about their needs and desires and the trade-offs that are necessary in a closed setting like a prison. In a recent meeting, topics ranged from the disappearance of frozen food from the canteen (owing to logistical problems and the failure of a supplier) to mice in the kitchen, to how to increase the number of charitable events prisoners could support. Council members comment positively on the Governor's willingness to listen.

However, the Board is disappointed with the prison's failure to live up to its aspirations in some key areas like the segregation unit. The unit habitually runs at well over its allocated capacity of 18 and this results in its failing to deliver the regime required by current policy and essential to a humane environment: prisoners are routinely asked to choose two of the three essential elements of the daily regime (shower, exercise and a phone call). Coupled with this is the fact that the segregation unit often houses prisoners in a very poor state of mental health, who shout and bang on their doors at all hours of the day and night and frequently mount long-lasting dirty protests. Officers generally treat these men with kindness and respect, but their presence, together with the lack of a full regime, causes significant stress and frustration in a part of the prison which is never less than challenging, affecting the morale of residents and staff alike.

The Board is increasingly concerned about the difficulty the prison has in meeting the basic need of food that is adequate in quantity and nutritional balance.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Mental health continues to be a major concern to the Board, and staffing in this area too, despite some temporary improvements last year, is a constant concern. Men held in gated cells, usually for their own safety, when they should be in hospital, too often engage in distressing levels of self-harm. The pressure of numbers makes accessing a place at a secure hospital a long drawn out and frustrating process for prison staff and prisoner alike.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

As a high-security dispersal prison, Whitemoor does not routinely release men into the community, but it is crucial to prisoners' sense of well-being and hope for the future that they can perceive opportunities to progress. It is taking time to re-establish a culture of purposeful activity across the prison. Some men have become too used to staying behind their doors and are less than energetic in pursuing opportunities for work. Sadly, the high value work opportunities provided by the Max Spielmann workshop have been lost because the market for its services in the community has declined; it is not easy to find a substitute for men capable of undertaking highly skilled work.

Education classes have resumed, but too often a significant part of the learning takes place through the use of in-cell packs, stretching the definition of blended learning as it is used in the wider community. Social interaction and discussion are key to effective learning and in the past Whitemoor has been very successful in providing opportunities for that kind of discourse in regular lessons and through the now abandoned Learning Together initiative. We are pleased that partnerships with community organisations such as Shakespeare's Globe theatre, the Britten Sinfonia and Greener Growth (which assists in developing gardens in the prison courtyards) have been restarted, but such activities touch the lives of too few men.

Given the clear need to increase the opportunities for prisoners to have their spiritual and emotional needs met, particularly after the challenges of protracted lockdowns, the Board regrets that there is a perception in some quarters that the work of the chaplaincy is not always valued as highly as it should be. Despite what we are told have been lengthy discussions at both national and local level, Gold Command's requirement for group sizes at corporate worship to be restricted is felt on the ground to be arbitrary and unsympathetic to the needs of the faith groups.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the minister give a clear lead to addressing the staffing crisis in the prison service by undertaking a fundamental review of the career opportunities and pay offered to its staff?

Will the minister please secure the cooperation of the Department of Health and other interested parties to conduct a wide-ranging review of the role and capacity of the secure hospitals and their relationship with the prison service?

Comment: The Board has reported regularly on the difficulty Whitemoor experiences in securing places for desperately sick men who are held in the segregation unit for want of anywhere else to put them and through self-harm and dirty protests descend almost to the condition of animals. It is inhumane to leave them to suffer in this way and unfair and unreasonable to expect staff who are not medically trained to cope with such profound distress.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will HMPPS give priority to improving the training and support given to prison officers in their early years in post in order to halt the haemorrhaging of staff in the first five years after their appointment?

Will HMPPS review the way in which prisoners in high security prisons are fed, taking into account the facilities and equipment supplied for the main kitchen; the qualifications of staff; the budget allowed for the purchase of food; the canteen and its approach to pricing?

Comment: The daily food budget of £2.08 is entirely inadequate, particularly given the escalation in food prices, and the canteen arrangements are at best precarious.

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will the Governor give personal attention to sorting out the intractable issues faced by the kitchen in order to ensure that the best possible local arrangements can be made amid the pressing national concerns about escalating living costs?

Will the Governor consider what further steps can be taken to enable the permanent separation of the segregation and the Bridge units so that they can fulfil their individual roles more effectively?

Comment: *The Bridge unit will continue to be a wasted resource until there is a block on segregated prisoners being housed in Bridge cells and Bridge staff are enabled to fulfil their therapeutic role. Segregation unit staff need greater support to provide the more humane regime they aspire to deliver and to which prisoners should be entitled.*

3.4 Progress since the last report

We welcome the progress made in some areas since our last report:

- successful return to Stage 1 regime following careful management by prison governors and staff;
- increase in the number of prisoners downgraded from category A and given progressive moves to a lower category prison (assisted by the decanting requirements) (section 7.3);
- introduction of the new assessment, care in custody and teamwork arrangements (ACCT Version 6), which we trust will lead to better monitoring of prisoners who are at risk of suicide;
- well-managed delivery of the project to improve electrical wiring and alarms;
- planned (but not yet delivered) installation of in-cell telephones;
- continued support for the Prison Rehabilitation Culture Council with the appointment of effective coordinators and regular attendance by governors
- restoration of partnerships to promote cultural and educational activities such as Shakespeare's Globe theatre;
- support for the development of gardens in prison courtyards, most recently in healthcare,

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Continuity of leadership has again proved its benefits, with the same custodial manager (CM) in charge as last year. Unlike so many other parts of the prison, the team has remained stable: they are hard-working and knowledgeable about the work of reception and are thus able to deliver a high quality of service.

Movement continued to be restricted for much of the year because of the pandemic: prisoner movements amounted to between two and six per week by the end of the reporting year. Reception now holds a small store of kit ready for issue to new arrivals and this, together with the limited amount of movement, ensured that newly arrived prisoners generally received their property within the expected three-day deadline.

Towards the end of the year, the reception team carried out a prison-wide series of volumetric checks, triggered partly by the wing moves and partly by the accumulation of property during lockdown. The prisoners generally cooperated well with this process. We are made aware regularly of the inconsistencies in the observation of prison rules on property in other prisons: the Whitemoor team have had to delay the delivery of X-boxes from which hard drives have not been removed and electronic devices with USB ports that have not been disabled.

The reception team is hampered, as previously reported, by the lack of a Rapiscan itemiser for checking incoming property. But these are costly items and difficult to fund when budgets are so stretched.

Reception staff continue to operate the scheme whereby items of clothing no longer needed by prisoners are reclaimed and stored so that they have something to give to men in need who have no families to help them out. A pair of size 13 trainers was a star find in recent months.

The Board is pleased to note that the culture of consideration and helpfulness has been maintained in reception despite the challenges of the pandemic and the additional large-scale movements resulting from the decanting operation.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

In the year under report, 119 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened. Some of these were for prisoners low in mood; some were to deal with cases of actual crisis and self-harm; and some were for ligatures made or threatened to be used. This represents a decrease from last year's 202, the result of the gradual lessening of Covid restrictions as the prison moved towards a more open regime. The Fens unit for prisoners with a personality disorder accounted for 31% of the total. This reflects the mental state of these prisoners and the challenging nature of the therapy that they are undertaking. On 42 occasions segregation and Bridge unit prisoners were the subject of open ACCTs, a small decrease from the previous year. Prisoners on ACCTs should only exceptionally be segregated. The new ACCT Version 6 was introduced during the year and, after time to embed, is proving to be an improved way to monitor, although it takes more time to complete entries accurately. Once again, the attendance level by mental health or healthcare

personnel at the ACCT reviews was disappointing, owing to the small size of the team and long-term sickness absence, meaning that at some periods only one mental health nurse was available to cover the whole prison.

A number of prisoners at Whitemoor experience high levels of distress and disturbance, and practise self-harm, which they often tell us is a way to cope and relieve their distress. This ranged from serious cutting and ligaturing to incidents of swallowing, inserting items and head-banging. All such instances are a cause for concern, and the safer custody team works with diligence and empathy to keep these prisoners safe. There were 151 incidents of self-harm, compared to 188 last year, with 14 of the incidents leading to hospital attendance. Thirty-five percent of these incidents were related to three men with complex presentations who are regular self-harmers.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Listener hours were not formally recorded or collated this year, as engagement mainly took the form of casual discussions on the wings, and Listeners were not used at night due to Covid-19 requirements to maintain social distancing. It is planned that out-of-hours access to the Listeners' suite will be restored when the electrical upgrade of C wing has been completed. The training and supervision offered by the Samaritans resumed in April, but before that the safer prisons team maintained contact with the Listeners, and the Samaritans provided a confidential mobile phone number for Listeners to use to debrief. There is a full complement of eight Listeners.

There were two deaths in custody in the course of the year, for which the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) report and inquests are pending.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of prisoner-on-staff assaults has decreased by 22 to 27 and the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults has decreased by six to 22. The recording of assaults on the violence diagnostic tool has improved, with clearer explanations of why they have happened. Prompt recourse to the most appropriate action and sanction appears to have maintained good order for the majority of the time. Within the challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) process, 69 CSIPs have been considered, with seven formally opened; all violent actions have been followed by a completed CSIP referral.

4.4 Use of force

The number of incidents that have required the use of force has varied over the last year, with only 10 in August 2021, rising to 41 in December 2021. The total number has risen by 63 (from 240 last year to 303 this year). The majority appear to be in response to the need to reduce risk and prevent harm to prisoners or staff. The number of attacks on staff remains low, with none in the last three months of the reporting year: it is a matter of concern though that some left staff needing hospital treatment.

There were 32 incidents at height, mostly in the form of prisoners climbing onto the netting as a passive protest and quickly resolved. Handcuffs have been used 259

times this year, a huge increase from 114 last year. The rigid bar handcuffs allow the officers to gain control over a situation very quickly.

PAVA (a synthetic pepper spray) is used by those who have received training. It has been drawn on 10 occasions and used on seven. A full review takes place every time it is drawn. Batons were drawn on only one occasion, a significant drop from 11 in the previous year.

No clear patterns of time, ethnicity or religion can be detected regarding the occasions when force was used. However, it is clear that younger prisoners, in the age band 26-35 years, were responsible for the majority of occasions when force was used, and the segregation unit was the location where it was most often required.

There were 16 serious incidents that resulted in the command suite being opened. Calls to the IMB to report an incident were somewhat haphazard, but this is not surprising given the Board's inability to visit the prison for long periods during lockdowns.

The recording of incidents on body-worn cameras (BWCs) and CCTV has improved over the year; an action plan is looking into CCTV for healthcare and the use of BWCs on bed-watches. A digital system linked to the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) has made it easier to monitor the number of officer statements not completed within the required 72 hours after the report is generated. These are followed up and most are done by the end of the month. The new NOMIS use of force application is working well, but would be improved if it could become a diagnostic tool and analyse the data automatically.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

There has been a continued lack of evidence and, as a result, low reporting of drug use within the prison, aside from some trading of medication. The itemiser continues to be consistently used with all incoming mail, with occasional positive indications. There was a concern that the reintroduction of social visits might see an increase in illicit substances, but to date this has not been the case, largely due to the work of the dog handlers and search dogs, which are highly skilled at indication/interception and, therefore, are a good deterrent. Unfortunately, the prison has been a victim of its own success. The lack of access to illicit drugs has seen a significant rise in the brewing of fermenting liquid. Previously, this was predominantly a seasonal risk (particularly during the Christmas period), but the reporting and finds have remained consistently high over the past year. Unfortunately, the fermenting liquid is produced relatively quickly, and therefore constant vigilance is necessary with regard to searching and intelligence reporting. The prison regards this as a high risk due to the threat of violence/disorder associated with prisoners under the influence. Appropriate behaviour management tools (adjudications and incentives scheme processes) have been consistently used for prisoners found to be in possession of the liquid and following consultation with the Rehabilitation Culture Council an educational programme has been introduced for those involved. Wing staff are regularly briefed and reminded of the importance of tackling this issue, ensuring that accommodation

fabric checks are thorough and that any evidence of fermenting liquid and paraphernalia associated with the brewing of fermenting liquid are immediately removed and prisoners challenged accordingly.

During the Covid pandemic, the priority for drugs testing was suspicion-led. As the prison progressed through the Covid levels, random testing was re-established, with key performance targets now having been introduced.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The electrical upgrading project to replace alarms and update wiring is current and being well managed by a dedicated project team. Prisoners were decanted from B wing in early October 2021 and five months later C wing residents were moved into B wing. Smaller movements took place to allow for similar work to be done on F wing and in the workshops. Work on the remaining areas will continue through most of the new reporting year. The moves enabled a thorough audit of cell furniture and equipment, right down to lavatory seats. Residents were disappointed that the electrical work on B wing was not complemented with redecoration of the cells, but they rapidly rediscovered do-it-yourself skills and made good the omission. The project also enabled a major volumetric check of property (see section 4.1 above), so the wings look ship-shape and tidy. It is a pity that installation of in-cell telephones was not incorporated into the project. This is planned to take place within the financial year 2022-3 and will result in further disruption, but bring great benefits.

The kitchen has had a number of challenges, which started before the present reporting year. A poorly executed cladding replacement project was completed, but with materials well below the standard that would be expected for a similar commercial kitchen. An infestation of mice has proved hard to deal with and has spread to most of the buildings on site. Only three ovens out of four were operational, while two new ones had been waiting for some time to be wired in. The regular breakdown of machines, which the contracted maintenance company puts right only after a lengthy, bureaucratic, and frustrating process, makes life inordinately challenging for the kitchen manager and her staff.

General staff shortages were compounded by a lack of staff with a catering qualification or experience. This affects both the quality of food and the kitchen's ability to offer training to prisoners as they aspire to do. The arrangements for meals during Ramadan proved problematic this year, with complaints about quality, portion size and some administrative confusion. The situation was handled constructively by management: a consultative meeting was arranged to give prisoners the opportunity to raise their concerns, resulting in an agreed series of actions to make sure that lessons were learned.

The Athena kitchen management and food ordering software, which was one of the main recommendations of the Food Review of 2020, has still not been operationalised. It is a system that is used effectively in some other prisons and should enable the kitchen to operate in a more streamlined and efficient way, saving administrative time. But time and resource need to be deployed to get it set up, and this has not happened.

At the end of the year escalating food prices were a national concern, but there was no indication of an increase in the prison's catering budget, which was meagre to start with at £2.08 per head per day. The price of goods in the canteen (the arrangement whereby prisoners can purchase ingredients to cook for themselves) increased markedly while prisoners' wages did not. Logistical problems related to Covid stopped the delivery of frozen food in April and this continued to the end of the reporting year, a serious inconvenience for men who were unable to use the wing

kitchens during lockdown and were looking forward to the pleasure of cooking their own food.

5.2 Segregation

Throughout most of the reporting year, the segregation unit was full, causing continuous regime restrictions, though there were some fluctuations at the start of the year owing to the pandemic, with numbers occasionally as low as 18 (the unit's allocated capacity). At times the overflow population occupied cells in the adjacent connected Bridge unit. The proximity of the Bridge and segregation units, and the historical use of the Bridge area as part of segregation, create a constant tension between them and impede the ability of each to operate as a discrete unit. If the Bridge is not full, the prison can and does use the space for men requiring segregation, but this prevents the Bridge from delivering the regime it was set up to offer. When the segregation unit has more than its nominal 18, it is deemed unable to offer a full regime, and other opportunities, such as in-cell education, are restricted. Throughout the year, the regime was regularly compromised, a major concern to the Board: prisoners had to choose two each day from a shower, a telephone call, or exercise, when policy is that all three should be available.

The Board has a growing concern about the lack of stimulation for men held in segregation, often for lengthy periods. There have been small improvements from previous years: televisions and radios are now available for all who are entitled to them; prisoners who apply and are approved can take part in corporate worship; distraction materials are available and regularly offered to prisoners. However, other needs, such as that for more profound mental engagement and stimulation, are not always met. Prisoners are locked up for in excess of 22 hours a day, with limited human contact; and there are extremely limited opportunities for work or education. Plans to enable men to access the servery to collect their own meals, as they used to do regularly, were still on hold at the end of the reporting year.

Last year, we were able to report signs of some positive changes that had been initiated in the unit and efforts have been made to maintain them. The CM and his staff team, with the embedded psychologist, work to provide a more supportive and humane regime than in previous years. The officers are seen to work with care and sensitivity with the prisoners with complex presentations who should not be held in prison, let alone segregation. There have been three extremely unwell men held in the unit, long after referrals to secure psychiatric hospitals have been made and approved, waiting for an available space. Such men present volatile behaviour, with noise, self-harm, and frequent dirty protests which affect the environment for neighbouring prisoners and visitors.

Adjudications were successfully moved to the wings instead of being carried out in the segregation boardroom and this has been maintained, reducing the likelihood of men refusing to return to the wing and thus having to be segregated. The weekly mental health wellbeing round, introduced last year, involved a conversation between a nurse and each prisoner and was an effective way to identify early signs of mental health problems. However, this was ended in the last months due to the lack of staff in the mental health team. Plans to have an embedded mental health worker have not been implemented.

During the reporting year, there was a 44% increase in the number of men segregated. A total of 108 men were segregated, with 48 experiencing segregation periods of over 42 days (the point at which authorisation is required by the deputy director of custody (DDC)), compared with 25 in the previous year, and 19 of over 126 days. Of these, four lasted for over 300 days, and one for more than a year. In the last reporting year fewer men were segregated in total, but for longer periods, reflecting the lack of movement during the lockdown period. This year more men were segregated but for shorter periods, albeit longer than desired. The average time spent segregated was 88 days, hence the Board's continuing concern about the long periods that some prisoners spend in segregation, and the continual difficulty in arranging transfers to other establishments or, in particular, to specialist units.

There has been a notable number of men who, once segregated, refuse to locate back to the wing at Whitemoor, insisting that as category B prisoners they should be in the category B estate, and yet who do not have the necessary RC1 form to authorise such a move. These men can remain segregated for months in this stalemate, until they eventually achieve their aim, are moved to another establishment, or are successfully encouraged to return to normal location.

Representation by psychology and mental health staff at segregation review boards (SRBs) has remained consistent, and is now routine and makes a significant contribution to each review. SRBs have been held by teleconference throughout the year, attended in person by the chairing governor, the segregation unit SO, the psychologist, a mental health team representative, and the prisoner and his escorts. The offender management unit (OMU), the IMB, the safer prisons team and the segregation unit administrator attend by phone, sometimes joined by the chaplaincy, and more recently at times by security: this is very helpful. IMB members began attending in person at the end of the reporting year. Any 72-hour reviews not conducted as part of the Tuesday SRB are done in an additional Friday meeting, attended by phone.

However, the Board remains frustrated by the limitations on what is achieved. Progress for prisoners has frequently been limited during this period, with little change from one fortnightly SRB to the next. At times agreed actions were not carried out, or recorded and reviewed; transfers to other prisons or secure hospitals were very difficult to arrange, with long waits even when agreed; and segregated prisoners who had to be housed in the healthcare unit owing to capacity constraints were not always reviewed. The chairing governor is not always familiar with the cases being reviewed or supplied with all the paperwork, such as the DDC's authorisation for segregation to continue beyond 42 days. There has been an improvement in the timely arrival of these authorisations, but the benefit is lost if the chair is unaware of the DDC's comments. The Board is frustrated that no segregation, monitoring and review Group (SMARG) meetings have been held all year, nor was the data prepared for them available for this report.

Close supervision centre

The close supervision centre (CSC) system holds around 50 of the most dangerous men in the prison system. Whitemoor's unit (F wing) has typically housed five or six CSC men able to follow an open regime within the unit and progress towards a return to a normal custodial environment. There has been no structured intervention programme since the violence reduction programme ended in 2018-19. The additional psychologist post to help meet clinical needs has yet to be filled. Like other small units in Whitemoor, F wing suffers a disproportionate number of regime closures because of staff shortages. A further two men may be held in designated CSC cells in the main segregation unit, where monitoring is more difficult because of their separation from the main unit, pending moves to other CSC locations.

Unlike a similar unit at Full Sutton, whose residents can use the main gym and library, Whitemoor's CSC residents are restricted to the wing. Although the unit has a garden and greenhouse within its exercise area, opportunities for purposeful activity are few. There is a gym, pool table and a kitchen, as well as an under-used craft room. All residents work as cleaners, even though the size of the area means that there is insufficient work to justify this arrangement. There are no other jobs on offer. Education options are limited.

Bridge unit

The Bridge unit has capacity for 12 residents, one of whom can be a peer supporter. During the year occupancy has varied, but at the end of the reporting year there were nine full Bridge prisoners. Seventeen men were referred: seven from Whitemoor and 10 from other establishments. Three men progressed from the unit, and two men were deselected for poor behaviour. It seems that it has been difficult for the Bridge unit to fulfil its potential and role as a national resource to help men prepare for a move to normal location. Its residents sometimes express dissatisfaction with the regime and a number are deselected, returning to segregation.

The unit's physical proximity to the segregation unit (and its historical use as part of that unit) result in its sometimes being used as a segregation overflow. During the reporting year the segregation unit has hardly ever operated with its established complement and consequently the regime offered by the Bridge has too often been impoverished. The difficulty has been compounded by the staffing detail needs during the pandemic, when staff have been transferred from the Bridge to allow the regime on the wings to function, leaving the Bridge unable to carry out its therapeutic role. High level commitment is needed to enable both the segregation and Bridge units to function as discrete units and we hope that this can now be a priority for the prison.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

For most of the year, a Covid keyworker format was in use, with a focus on wellbeing, family and immediate needs. The national exceptional delivery model

(EDM) identified four priority groups (Terrorist Act (TACT) prisoners; the extremely vulnerable; those close to release; and those involved in the ACCT process), but this was varied at Whitemoor to give a wider range of prisoners access to support. The priority groups remained the same but the number of prisoners offered key worker support was increased gradually (by about 10) each month to include those who were finding the Covid restrictions particularly difficult, as recommended by wing managers. The restrictions necessitated by Covid meant that the key worker scheme had to be managed on a wing rather than a whole establishment basis and this inevitably resulted in temporary arrangements, with key workers supporting prisoners whom they had not previously known. But it did ensure wider coverage and national data shows that Whitemoor significantly outperformed the other high security prisons in the delivery of key worker sessions in the year April 2021 to March 2022. The Board is impressed by the commitment of the CM managing the scheme and commends prison management for the compassion and flexibility that underpinned their approach.

Nonetheless, as the responsible CM is the first to acknowledge, there remain questions about the quality of delivery. Officers who have the skills and empathy to be effective key workers report that they find the sessions worthwhile and even enjoyable; prisoners with key workers of this calibre also report a positive experience. But some officers, particularly those who lack the skills and life experience to relate effectively to those they support, find it difficult to establish a rapport and the sessions are then of little value. Too often sessions are not held formally as planned, but conversations take place on the hoof.

The CM who leads the scheme has put a particular emphasis on quality since the special Covid arrangements came to an end in mid-April. He has held two key worker training sessions and is monitoring 25% of NOMIS entries on key work each month, with other senior officers looking at another 10% each. A key worker advocate spends time on the wings, advising staff and helping develop skills. There are also key worker champions on each wing, some of them very young but no less committed for that.

The energy and commitment dedicated to the key worker scheme are typical of the approach to staff-prisoner relationships that Whitemoor aspires to. Other examples include the regular consultative meetings that the governor in charge of residential holds with wing representatives and the support given to the Prison Rehabilitation Culture Council. Such meetings are relaxed and open, with prisoners expressing their views freely and officers actively listening. It is a pity that the staffing crisis affecting the prison makes all of these things so much more difficult, with staff turnover undermining the establishment of stable relationships, inexperienced staff being asked to carry out duties they are not yet ready for and everybody feeling constantly short of time.

5.4 Equality and diversity

After a long break equalities meetings have restarted. The equalities team continues to use Wayout TV, noticeboards and the prisoners' news sheet, Moor News, to maintain contact with residents and promote their work on family and cultural links.

The number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) logged and considered over the last year was 234: 14 were upheld whilst another 3 were

partially supported. 190 were not supported, as it was judged that there was no evidence of discrimination. Work is continuing to improve the process of ensuring any relevant complaints are recognised and converted into DIRFs by the complaints clerk and the equalities administration staff. Since this issue has been highlighted the equalities team has received a significant increase in the number of complaints that they have struggled to keep on top of (24 were still outstanding at the end of the reporting year).

There are currently 46 foreign national prisoners (FNPs) from 22 different countries housed in Whitemoor, excluding UK residents. Contact with embassies remains problematic in many cases because of the incompatibility of embassy switchboard systems and the telephone arrangements for prisoners, but we hope that the appointment of an additional manager within the equalities function will improve the focus and support on FNP issues.

Foreign national prisoners particularly valued secure social video calls for making video contact with family and friends overseas. It is a great pity that following internal network problems, the service was unable to deliver a reliable product. HMPPS reported that a network infrastructure change was deployed shortly after which has improved in call connectivity for social video calls. Whitemoor felt it had no choice other than to suspend the service because of frequent breakdowns and the shortage of staff for supervision: this meant that prisoners were left without a platform for family contact from the beginning of May to the end of the reporting year.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy has continued to offer support to all residents and staff who require it, but corporate worship and faith celebrations have been significantly curtailed over the last year. Since the return to Stage 1, corporate worship is one of the few areas that have not been restored to pre-Covid arrangements: under national instruction, a strict limit has been applied to the number attending both Muslim prayers and Christian worship for security reasons. The chaplains find this distressing because they believe that, in the nature of corporate worship, all members of the faith should be able to assemble in one place. We are told that there have been extensive discussions at both national and local level to resolve this issue. That may be so but they have not removed the unhappiness about the decision. The significant role the chaplaincy plays in the lives of many prisoners provides sufficient justification for efforts to continue to find a solution that all can accept.

5.6 Incentive schemes

During the pandemic, adjustments were made to the incentives scheme to ensure that men did not lose privileges like a television when they were locked up for over 22 hours a day. By the end of the reporting year, however, the scheme was running as normal. Across the prison as a whole, around 70% of prisoners are on enhanced privileges, 30% on standard and only 2% (or around eight men) on basic. These figures are from June 2022 but are representative of the general situation throughout the reporting year. There are far more prisoners on enhanced privileges in D wing which houses men with personality disorders, than in other parts of the prison. At the

end of the reporting year, the annual review of the incentives scheme was due, but the governor responsible for residential reported disappointingly little interest from the men. Board members sometimes hear complaints about prisoners being 'nicked' and losing privileges too readily, but the experienced men have a good understanding of the way both the adjudications and incentives schemes work: a member of the PIPE unit commented, 'If you don't want to get nicked, you should bang up in good time.'

5.7 Complaints

The Board is encouraged to note the attention given in the previous year and continued this year to getting complaints answered in a timely fashion. Reply deadlines are tracked and reminders sent. Weekly statistics are sent to managers with complaints overdue, and prisoner complaints are discussed and trends noted at monthly senior management team meetings.

There was a decrease of 26% during the reporting year in the first level of complaint (Comp 1), from 2,893 to 2,396, and a 17% decrease in the follow-up (Comp 1A), from 595 to 439. Of these, 80%, a small increase, and 63%, a small decrease, respectively, were responded to within the time limit. These complaints were about a wide range of issues: the most common were residential (15%), property (17%), and food (5% from 11%). There were again particularly long delays and unsatisfactory answers, causing anger and distress, when the complaint had to be sent to a previous establishment, often concerning missing personal property.

5.8 Property

The limited number of prisoner movements as a result of the pandemic has reduced the demands on reception to deal with incoming property. The CM reports that it has generally been possible to meet the deadline of three days for delivering property to new arrivals but the number of complaints about property continues to be substantial (see section 5.7), the most troublesome of which relate to the handling of property coming in or transferred from previous prisons. The purchase of an itemiser to check for illicit substances would help the reception team to maintain these high standards, but unfortunately it cannot be justified on cost grounds. The prison-wide volumetric check carried out towards the end of our reporting year revealed the extent to which prison rules about the volume of property prisoners can hold and the disabling of electronic equipment in high security prisons are generally disregarded in the wider prison system. The Board considers that this is further evidence of the urgency of the need to introduce a national scheme for the movement of property between prisons, as advocated by the IMB at national level. (A New Property Framework was published shortly after the end of our reporting year.)

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. In early 2021 a new dental care provider was appointed. This service took time to become established and there were no routine dental clinics during April and May. A further change in the provision of dental care at the start of 2022 resulted again in there being no routine clinics. Healthcare staffing levels remained relatively consistent through the year, with on average a 12% shortfall from full complement partly due to long term absences, and coverage was supported by agency staff.

Complaints averaged under 15 per month, with a number being multiple complaints from individual prisoners. As a total the complainants represent less than 3% of the total prison population and complaints relate to less than 0.5% of the number of appointments completed; over 90% of the complaints received were responded to within the designated time period.

The interim head of healthcare has taken some useful initiatives to improve the quality of life for prisoners by arranging for a garden to be developed in the healthcare yard and by introducing occasional visits by a Pets as Therapy dog.

When prisoners arrive at Whitemoor, they are screened for any difficulties they may have: hearing or speech difficulties, mobility or coordination problems, learning difficulties or mental health issues. Thirteen men are registered diabetics.

Whitemoor has 15 prisoners with diagnosed attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. This and autism and Asperger's syndrome are managed and supported by healthcare staff and the mental health team.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There was a consistently high number of appointments fulfilled throughout the year, with on average 73% of appointments being fulfilled each month. Of the cancelled or unfulfilled appointments, 75% were due to prisoners not attending or their non-availability for other reasons.

Waiting time for routine GP appointments averaged under five days throughout the period, which is no worse than outside the prison. Nurse-led appointments were fulfilled over 84% of the time, with the missed appointments principally due to non-availability of the prisoner. There continued to be long waiting times for dental, optical, physiotherapy and podiatry, often up to 10 weeks: this is worse than in the wider community.

There have been three different dental providers since the start of Covid and the waiting time for routine dental appointments was more than 12 weeks on average; provision for urgent care was maintained and enabled patients to be seen within one to two days.

Secondary healthcare appointments in hospital and other clinics, both as telephone consultations and clinic visits, continued. However, as for the rest of the population, these were subject to cancellation and long delays and less than 50% of those scheduled were fulfilled in any month

6.3 Mental health

Mental health referrals remained similar to previous years, with the majority receiving an initial triage assessment within the five-day target, which is equal to and often better than in the community at large. Regular reviews and appointments with psychology and psychiatry were maintained, with over 80% fulfilled as scheduled.

The number of ACCT documents opened during the year reduced and all were seen by the mental health team during the active period of the ACCT, though attendance by the mental health team at the regular ACCT reviews was again disappointing.

6.4 Social care

Social care is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council. There were again 11 prisoners in the total population who had a disability or medical condition that qualified for support under adult and social care legislation and who received some intervention to help them to maintain their independence. We are not aware of any problems with the service.

6.5 Exercise regime

During Covid, exercise took place morning and afternoon, as statutorily required. Prisoners were allowed out of their cells for half a day, either morning or afternoon, and could choose to take the exercise session during that period, though not all prisoners chose to go outside for exercise.

By the end of the reporting year, normal arrangements applied, with basic and unemployed prisoners exercising for half an hour in the morning and everybody else having an hour and 20 minutes Monday to Thursday with an extra 25 minutes on Fridays. There were morning and afternoon exercise sessions at the weekends.

Prisoners in segregation too often had to choose two of the three elements of their regime, with the result that exercise was sometimes lost.

6.6 Soft skills

The prison's continuing commitment to the Rehabilitation Culture Council is very much to be welcomed. The prisoner coordinators, who take this role as a full-time job, are confident and articulate and well able to lead discussion with management on behalf of the prisoners. The relationship between council members and governors is relaxed and friendly, and appropriate challenge is an established part of the relationship; the group is skilled at problem-solving. Towards the end of the reporting year neither side had any problem in welcoming an IMB member to a prisoners' pre-meeting, where the discussion was frank and purposeful. The challenge for all is how to spread this culture more widely across the prison.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education provision has continued through Milton Keynes College. The college engaged with 188 learners over the year, who enrolled on a total of 334 courses, 245 of which were accredited courses. There were 426 completed courses, 146 of which were accredited, covering a variety of subjects including music, construction and the award in education and training.

Delivery of education continued via in-cell packs and one-to-one wing visits by education staff until the middle of August 2021, when workshops were opened to groups taking courses in ICT, art, and functional skills (FS) maths and English. Initial priority was given to learners who were close to undertaking examinations in FS maths and English.

The use of in-cell packs continued in sport and business (until the prisoners returned to a classroom in April 2022), mentoring, English as another language, food safety and cleaning principles. Some outreach provision was delivered in the segregation unit and on D wing, including unaccredited maths, English, business, art, wellbeing and study skills. Eleven residents from the segregation unit, Bridge and healthcare completed 17 subjects through the outreach programme, with seven waiting for a place to become available. Many learners are opting to continue with in-cell packs where possible; however, some are lacking the motivation to complete their courses. At the end of April there were 29 learners past the expected end date of their course; education staff are hoping to re-engage them sufficiently to complete. An internal quality review conducted by Milton Keynes College (MKC) found the packs to be detailed and developmental, enabling learners to improve.

A recent open day by MKC did not attract any support so a student support worker has been tasked with encouraging prisoners to engage and attend the next session.

Numbers enrolling on distance learning programmes and with the Open University have increased over the last year, with eight currently enrolled and eight more hoping to gain a place. Chromebook laptops are available to these learners should they want them. Wayout TV continues to be used where appropriate.

Issues with staffing and inconsistent opening of classes appear to be forcing the education department to continue to use a blended learning model whereby in-cell packs will be utilised alongside classroom delivery to ensure learning is consistent and to allow staff to be moved between work areas on different days.

The library continued to keep residents supplied with books and DVDs, with officers delivering them onto the wings until March 2022. The request and delivery system has worked well and been appreciated by the residents. Full prisoner access has been reinstated and enables browsing through the expanded collections of vocational and LGBTQ+ books. The Storybook Dads scheme is yet to return, but the Swaps initiative, whereby prisoners can exchange information with young relatives through structured worksheets, continues to help some residents. Whitemoor is about to become the pilot site for a digital version of Storybook Dads that it is hoped

will allow men to video themselves reading to their children and enhance the feeling of contact between family members.

7.2 Vocational training, work

At the end of the reporting year all employment opportunities were running at full capacity. None of the employment areas requires more than 30 workers at one time, and this is sufficient to provide for the current population. Motivation amongst residents and non-attendance issues are being monitored by residential staff. The use of progression plans to support evidence of a prisoner's progression in a particular role is hampered by workshop closures. The Max Spielmann workshop has closed and the prison is yet to replace it with an opportunity for those with the potential to work at a higher skill level.

The kitchen has suffered staff shortages within the catering team throughout the year. This has given the prisoners a difficult employment experience and has not led to the development of the catering skills or qualifications they would have expected.

7.3 Offender management, progression

During the last reporting year, the prison has carried out 136 reviews and has recommended a downgrade for 13 men. The national category A review team has downgraded seven category A prisoners to category B and two classified as at high risk of abscondment to standard A.

There were 64 progressive moves to lower category prisons, partly facilitated by the decanting process: 57 prisoners to category B and seven to category C. The vast majority of these moves (44) were implemented in June and July when the decanting process began, with only eight happening since the beginning of October.

7.4 Family contact

The prison positively promotes and encourages family contact and, to judge from pre-Covid-19 observations, demonstrates excellent visitor/staff relationships. The reporting year covers the period from when some Covid restrictions were in place to normal activity. During this time every effort was made to enable social visits within Covid-safe restrictions. Initially the number of visitors per prisoner and the length of the visit were limited; children were not allowed to visit; face masks were required; and the Ormiston cafe was closed. Not surprisingly, take-up of face-to face visits was poor, owing to these restrictions, which made the long distances travelled by visitors feel not worthwhile. Gradual adjustments were introduced as restrictions were lifted. Visits now take place on two days during the week (fortnightly for high-risk prisoners) and every other weekend; the first family day since Covid took place recently.

The visits centre provides a welcoming venue for families and incorporates a wide variety of activities. Plans to fence a small grassed area outside the visits centre to create a dedicated play area for children have not yet been implemented.

Telephone provision is via phones located on the spurs. However, in-cell telephony has now been approved and should be scheduled within the current financial year. This is much needed. Last year the IMB wrote to the minister with our concerns about the lack of adequate phone provision. Good efforts are made to optimise

access to phone and email contacts, but access to phones is a continual source of stress. The use of secure social video calls via Purple Visits was well received across the population and provided an excellent way for families to maintain contact. The contract was ended and awarded to an internal HMPPS provider on 1 May 2022. Initially there were technical issues following internal network problems which caused Whitemoor to suspend the service while the problems were resolved. A good deal of extra administrative work has been necessary to re-register all the contacts of prisoners who wish to use the system, and set up procedures to operate it. Notification that the provision was restored came just after the end of our reporting year on 27 June 2022, but shortage of staff to supervise calls and continued reliability issues left the system still unused beyond the end of the reporting year. Prisoners expressed regret that they had lost access to this invaluable means of contacting their families.

7.5 Resettlement planning

HMP Whitemoor sits within the LTHSE and, therefore, does not generally release prisoners directly into the community. Resettlement work is primarily focused on completion of offending behaviour programmes (OBP), providing education and developing employment skills. However, throughout this reporting year, progress has been limited because of the backlog from the Covid period, which caused delays in the completion of OBPs, or reduced the ability to offer them, due to the restrictions placed on the prison in line with national frameworks. The system was initially clogged up, and priority had to be given to men nearer the end of their sentence, or facing other time constraints. This left many of the prisoners feeling in limbo from the arrested progress, risking frustration and a sense of hopelessness. Routine assessments were restored by the end of the year, though it will take some time to address the backlog.

The work of the IMB

It has been another difficult year for the Board, with its membership reduced to the lowest number we can remember and with Covid concerns continuing to impact on our ability to visit the prison in the earlier part of the year. We appreciate the efforts of the Governor and her team to keep us informed. Recruitment to the IMB remains extremely challenging: recruitment rounds have passed more than once without a single applicant. And when candidates do come forward they are too often deterred by the long drawn out bureaucracy of the process. We recognise that the secretariat is trying to make improvements but the changes are very slow in making any impact on the ground.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	136
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	0
Total number of weekly segregation reviews attended	52

Applications to the IMB (including via the 0800 telephone line)

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	3	0
C	Equality	1	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	2	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food and kitchens	7	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	3
H1	Property within this establishment	6	2
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	2	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	6	12
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	2	8
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	5	0
	Total number of applications	40	37



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