



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Channings Wood**

**For reporting year  
1 September 2021 – 31 August 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**

HMP Channings Wood is a category C adult male training and resettlement prison with a capacity of just over 700. The prison operates a split site regime across all areas for the two groups of prisoners it holds: main location and people convicted of sexual offences (PCSO).

The prison opened in 1974 on the extensive site of a former Ministry of Defence base and is in a rural area of south Devon between Totnes and Newton Abbot. The site is bounded by a high fence and there are several public footpaths around the perimeter. Internal fences separate the two prisoner groups and control prisoners' movement on the site. After the decommissioning last year of one living block (LB7), there are now seven permanent LBs, as well as one that is temporary (LB9) comprising Bunkabin living pods. There are also workshops, a kitchen, a care and separation unit (CSU), a health centre, a well-equipped gym and sports hall, a multifaith place of worship and a separate chapel, greenhouses and polytunnels, and buildings housing other services. All buildings are either single or two storey.

The eight living blocks are split between main prisoners (LB2, 3, 4, 6 and 8) and PCSO (LB1, 5, and 9), with LB2, LB6, and LB9 housing enhanced prisoners. New receptions are placed in LB1 and LB8, which during the pandemic have been reverse cohorting (i.e. quarantine) wings. Five of the living blocks have a central entrance area, off which there are offices, classrooms, a servery and two association rooms. Cells in these blocks are on four corridors on each wing, two on each floor, arranged at right angles to each other. Most blocks have single cells with a toilet and communal showers, while LB8 has double cells with ensuite showers. Part of LB1 has been equipped with bunk beds for dual occupancy by new arrivals.

Education and vocational courses are provided by Weston College, the Shaw Trust, JobCentre Plus and Prospects, which offers careers guidance.

Healthcare services are provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG), whose staff are based in a health centre adjacent to the CSU. There are no inpatient beds. Nursing staff are on duty every day and the out of hours GP service is provided by Devon Doctors. Most acute care is provided by Torbay Hospital. PPG also provides on-site pharmacy services and social care. Dental health services are provided by Time for Teeth. The psychology service is regionally managed across the south west cluster of prisons and oversees offending behaviour courses. The integrated substance misuse service (ISMS) is contracted to PPG.

### 3. Executive summary

#### 3.1 Background to the report

This reporting period has been the first time since the 2018/19 annual report that the Board has been able to conduct direct monitoring for the full 12 months. The period was marked by the stop/start progress towards a return to 'normal' regime. It had been expected that Stage 1 of the exceptional delivery model (EDM) would be achieved by December 2021. Frustratingly for prisoners, their families, and staff, it did not come until late May 2022 due to the number of Covid-19 delta variant outbreaks in the New Year. A gradual and phased 'near-normal' regime was achieved by late July. Final enhancements were still being implemented in early September.

As both a direct and indirect consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, several Board members took the decision to resign and although the Board's paper strength is currently nine, this masks the fact that the figure includes five who were appointed in November 2021. For most of the period of the report, monitoring duties were carried out by a few experienced members. This has meant that while all statutory duties were being completed, there was little opportunity for focussed or thematic in-depth monitoring. The Board's priority was to maintain a reasonable presence each week, with an emphasis on engaging with the men in order to hear their voice.

The Board notes that despite the residual frustrations experienced by prisoners who could see the community outside opening up when they were not (due to higher Covid-19 case numbers than earlier in the pandemic), the prison remained largely settled despite the slower easing of restrictions. In the Board's opinion this was due to the leadership shown by the senior management team (SMT) to try to maximise purposeful activity and time out of cell; effective communications; the commitment of wing staff and very importantly, the tolerance of most prisoners.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) carried out an unannounced inspection of HMP Channings Wood between 18–22 July 2022. As part of their inspection and report<sup>1</sup> they conducted a prisoner survey of nearly 180 men, some 27% of the prison population at that time. The Board's Chair contributed to the visit and was involved in the fact checking process. The Board has therefore been able to draw on the report findings and the survey results to triangulate its own evidence and judgements.

While these mostly broadly align, members' conversations with prisoners and monitoring of their special interest areas across the reporting year have resulted in a more positive impression of education, skills and work activities provision and a less positive view of offender management than found by HMIP.

Last September, the Zahid Mubarek Trust report<sup>2</sup> found that over 80% of IMBs did not provide enough detail in the equality and diversity (E&D) section of their annual reports. For this reason members felt that this section should be fuller this year

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<sup>1</sup> *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Channings Wood 11 and 18–22 July 2022*

<sup>2</sup> *How Independent Monitoring Boards report on Equalities in Prisons*, September 2021

## **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The number of prisoners harming themselves during the year shows a drop of 17% over the number recorded in the previous year. This reduction is welcomed by the Board, though members note with concern HMIP's finding that self-harm incidents at Channings Wood are above the average for comparator prisons. The trend in recorded assaults is also downwards over time, although the figures for 2021-22 are similar to those seen in the previous reporting year. The Board has noted an increase in the use of force over this reporting year, up from 187 incidents in 2020-21 to 238, an increase of 27%. This can partly be explained by the progressive relaxation of the regime and greater association. However, when compared to the last similar period which straddled normal regime and Covid-19, the number of incidents is actually down by 8%. HMIP found that use of force at HMP Channings Wood was lower than at similar prisons and that the scrutiny of use of force was excellent. The Board takes a very similar view and finds that force does not appear to be overused and seems to be used proportionately. Overall, the prison provides a largely safe environment for those in custody.

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

Last year, within the limits imposed by the EDM, the Board judged that prisoners were treated with fairness and humanity. This year the judgement is more nuanced across the areas monitored. Over the reporting period equality and diversity has become more embedded, chaplaincy provision remains strong and the segregation unit is still well run by committed staff. The Board believes that most of the time most men are treated with respect by most of the staff and notes that HMIP found almost 80% of men felt that they were treated respectfully. However, the residential services experienced by prisoners remain very variable, depending on their location. The Board echoes HMIP's finding that many cells and showers need refurbishment. The Prison Service continues to fail dismally with the reliable delivery of property on transfer between establishments and this remains an issue of concern to the Board and of huge frustration for prisoners. The area where the prison has performed least well in the Board's judgement is key work, with monitoring regularly highlighting a lack of access to offender management unit staff and key workers. The Board fully endorses HMIP's priority concern that key work is not sufficient and is failing to support sentence progression.

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

Despite the high turnover of staff and the challenges presented by Covid-19, a reasonable standard of healthcare services has continued to be delivered to the prisoners throughout the year. Certain services, such as dentistry, have required external support to manage waiting lists. The accessibility of the services would appear to match those available in the wider community. Improvements have also been made to the way in which healthcare complaints are dealt with and the gym timetable has been carefully reconstructed to enable structured access by all prisoners wishing to use the facilities.

The recent survey conducted for HMIP, which indicated that two-thirds of prisoners self-identify as having mental illnesses, is a concern. The mental health referral processes work well, but there are difficulties coping with prisoners in crisis with

severe needs. The segregation unit has been used on a number of occasions to keep mentally unwell prisoners safe and there has been difficulty in accessing beds in establishments able to provide the required level of care and treatment within reasonable timescales. Initiatives such as the THREADS programme (Trust. Hope. Resilience. Empathy. Action. Direction. Strength), horticulture courses and the Out of the Box programme, all to help mental wellbeing, are to be commended. Overall, the Board believes that the prisoners' health and wellbeing needs are being met.

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

In last year's report, the Board wrote 'that a return to normal service will take both time and a sustained effort' and judges that this is currently a work in progress. While HMIP was critical of a lack of staff to run the education, skills and work programme effectively, the Board's monitoring indicates the priority attached to both increasing attendance levels and delivering a high quality curriculum. And although inspectors were critical of leaders who had not ensured that all prisoners attended education and work on time, in the Board's view this was often due to operational staff shortages, rather than a failing on the part of education and skills staff.

In terms of offender management, the Board's monitoring has revealed significant prisoner dissatisfaction. On rota visits one of the most frequent issues raised has been the difficulty experienced trying to access offender managers, together with the availability and awareness of key workers. The Board also remains concerned by the time taken for prisoners who are recategorised as category D to be transferred, due to the acute lack of capacity in other establishments.

The Board considers that resettlement arrangements remain good and are expected to improve once Channings Wood accesses the community accommodation services tier 3 project (CAS-3). The creation of dedicated employment hubs and the imminent establishment of an employment advisory board are also to be welcomed. The provision of family contact is judged by the Board to be very good.

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

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

With the increasing levels of concern expressed over the provision of mental health services, what will the Minister do to help the Prison Service deal with the growing number of prisoners with complex mental health conditions, especially those requiring placements in specialist secure accommodation?

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

Prisoners arriving late on a Friday report a significantly poorer induction experience than those arriving during the core working week. What will the Prison Service do to minimise the number of routine planned transfers taking place on a Friday?

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

Given current resource levels, what plans does the Governor have to implement an effective key worker system over the coming 12 months?

### 3.4 Progress since the last report

Issue raised	Response given and progress made
<p>To the Minister: What measures are planned to address the backlog in the provision of offending behaviour programmes?</p> <p>What is being done in order to minimise the detrimental effect on men awaiting courses prior to parole board hearings while at the same time ensuring that public safety requirements are met?</p>	<p>It is acknowledged the delivery of Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) suffered during the reporting period and this was primarily due to a focus on delivering Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) during the pandemic in accordance with national guidance. The staffing situation at the prison has significantly improved, however, it is important to note that this did not impact on the delivery of programmes as the prison's OBPs team has always been fully resourced.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Programmes have resumed and waiting lists and waiting times are now more in line with those experienced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Programmes staff are up to strength and should be fully operational by the end of 2022.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service: Why are the Prison Service and its contractors unable to manage the efficient and secure movement and storage of prisoners' property, particularly during transfers? The loss of personal items causes a great deal of frustration and unhappiness for the individuals concerned that often detracts from their ability to settle. The costs to the Prison Service in replacing lost items must be significant.</p>	<p>Further to last years' response, there was a pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework due to Covid-19. Following further extensive consultation and feedback, adjustments to the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework have been made. The Framework is currently going through the necessary clearance processes and will be published as soon as those processes are concluded and is expected by the Summer. Note: Issued 01 August 2022.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Lost or missing property, especially on transfer, is the single biggest cause of applications to the Board and prison complaints. As yet, there are no signs of any improvement in this area.</p>
<p>To the Governor: What can be done to ensure that men arriving at Channings Wood late on a Friday receive the same level of support during the reception process as those arriving during the working week?</p>	<p><b>Comment:</b> This continues to be an issue noted by the Board and commented on by staff. The Governor has stated that he has no control over the late arrival of new receptions, as this is run by a contracted service provider. However, under a reprofiling exercise the establishment have extended the opening times of reception to ensure sufficient staff are available. In</p>



	addition peer mentors are provided and additional staff have been identified for the induction units. There is no prospect of admin staff working longer on a Friday though.
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## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

The Board is pleased to note that the number of late arrivals to the prison (those arriving after 5pm) has fallen over the year by almost 50%, according to reception staff estimates. The problems reported in previous years when men arrive late are still apparent. For example, they do not always quickly receive PIN numbers for telephone calls, canteen lists or food menus, especially if they arrive at the start of the weekend late on a Friday. Records show that an average of 20 men are received into the prison each week. During the year, Board members have monitored arrivals and have noted men being treated respectfully and with dignity and compassion. There is always a member of the healthcare team present when men arrive, and testing and any necessary health procedures are carried out efficiently and appropriately. There are no reported problems with prisoner escort records. Reception orderlies provide effective support both in welcoming new prisoners and assisting with administration and practical tasks, such as storing property.

There are separate reception cells for mains prisoners and for vulnerable prisoners, and there have been no reported problems with any of these arrangements. New arrivals are quickly allocated to LB1 (VPs) or LB8 (mains) and are provided with first night packs. While HMIP noted that first night accommodation for most prisoners was good, they judged that newly arrived vulnerable prisoners were often placed in dirty, ill equipped cells and heard allegations of violence, bullying and intimidation in the unit. The Board had not received such reports but will monitor this area of reception and induction more closely in future.

The Board continues to receive applications from prisoners about the loss or non-arrival of property. The efforts made by reception staff to track prisoners' property have been observed and prison record keeping often demonstrates repeated attempts to contact other prisons to address prisoners' concerns, often without positive responses.

The well-organised induction programme begins within the first few days of prisoners' arrivals. These effective systems for inducting men into the prison are organised by staff and induction orderlies. The Board aims to resume its place in face to face or 'virtual' induction programmes in the near future. Most men questioned by Board members were positive about the induction programme, and they welcomed the support provided by staff and orderlies in their first days at Channings Wood.

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

There have been 306 reports of prisoners harming themselves during the year, a drop of 17% over the number recorded in the previous year. Comparisons are difficult because many self-harm incidents involve the same person. For example, the 34 incidents recorded in July 2022 involved 22 individuals. Nevertheless, the lower number is welcomed by the Board, though members note with concern the HMIP finding that self-harm incidents at Channings Wood are above the average for comparator prisons. The monthly average is 28 incidents with a range of 44 in September 2021 to 18 in March 2022. Self-harm remains the main reason for men

being placed on an assessment, care in custody and teamwork document (ACCT), as in the previous year. Cutting is still the main method of self-harm and, like assaults, incidents are most likely to occur on LB1 or LB4. Prison managers collate useful data on self-harm incidents and ensure that staff are aware of repeat self-harmers and the drivers of self-harm, for example, bullying, frustration at treatment, loneliness and noise interference. The Board notes that prison managers have implemented a range of strategies in an attempt to reduce the number of such incidents, including detailed complex needs support plans (in place for six prisoners at the end of the reporting period) and the very practical debt support programme.

The service provided by the Samaritans has been reintroduced following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. The Board monitored support to vulnerable prisoners during the period that the Samaritans were not able to offer a service. Safer custody staff played an important role in supporting prisoners' sense of wellbeing through the deployment of trained Listeners on both main and vulnerable prisoner LBs. Listeners reported to Board members that during the Samaritans' absence; they were called upon between five and 15 times per week. They said that they felt well supported by prison staff and thought that temporary arrangements were working well.

The Board is aware of four reported deaths in custody during the reporting year. Two of these occurred after the men had left custody (one from an overdose of paracetamol) but within 28 days of their release, hence the inclusion in statistics. One of the remaining investigations has been closed with a finding of death by natural causes and a coroner's report is awaited on the other.

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

In the reporting period, there were 102 reported assaults. Of these 29 (28%) were assaults against members of staff, of which three (10%) were recorded as serious assaults. There were 74 (72%) assaults against other prisoners, of which four (5%) were recorded as serious assaults. This is well below the rate of assaults on staff in comparator prisons but very slightly above the number of prisoner on prisoner assaults seen in the same comparator prisons.

The figures for 2021-22 are similar to those seen in the previous reporting year, when there were 106 reported assaults. The trend in recorded assaults is downwards over time. Prisoners now have more association time and have returned to work and education following the lockdown period, but there has been no return to violence and assaults levels seen in the past. Assaults of all kinds are most likely to occur in LB1, LB3 or LB4, which mirrors the anecdotal information gathered by Board members from conversations with prisoners or from the interviews which Board members conduct during applications. Perpetrators of assaults are most likely to be awarded periods of cellular confinement in the segregation unit. Victims of assaults receive support from the range of prison services, including health, psychology, the Trust. Hope. Resilience. Empathy. Action. Direction. Strength initiative (THREADS – see Section 6 below) and the Listener service. Most prisoners who access such services are positive about the support received but a common complaint is that the quality of service from their key workers is variable and heavily dependent on the approach of the individual delivering that service.

Numbers of men self-isolating vary from month to month. Prisoners who are seen by Board members offer several reasons for their self-isolation, including: concerns

about their health or Covid-19 (for example, 41 prisoners were self-isolating in LB1 in January alone, because of Covid-19 concerns); refusal to engage in work or other activities; a desire to stay out of 'harm's way' as they approach the end of their sentences. Evidence from members' weekly visit reports indicates that men are more likely to self-isolate on LB 1 and LB 4 than in other living blocks. The Board is concerned that information regarding men who are self-isolating is not always made available to members on their visits. This contrasts with information about prisoners who are in the segregation unit, which is always available to Board members. As a result, Board members cannot be sure that they know the numbers and location of all self-isolating individuals. Often members only find out when visiting the wing. The Board would welcome a more efficient system for notification from prison managers in this area of its work.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

The Board has noted an increase in the use of force over this reporting year, up from 187 incidents in 2020-21 to 238, an increase of 27%. This can partly be explained by the opening up of the regime, and when compared to the last similar period that straddled normal regime and Covid-19, the number of incidents is down by 8%. Control and restraint (C&R) remained the single biggest usage and use of force for personal protection showed a significant rise, up by 44%. Use of batons was the same as the previous year, being drawn twice but only used once over the 12 month period (both in August 2022 once the regime had opened up fully). In both cases the Board was able to view video footage. The prisoners had improvised weapons and were behaving aggressively, one attempting to snatch keys. However, the one actual baton strike (on the leg) had not been captured on video footage.

Over this period there has been no use of pelargonic acid vanillyl amide (PAVA) when its issue was limited to trained use of force instructors. Since September 2022 PAVA has been deployed more widely to trained operational staff.

From the records of meetings and data provided by the prison analyst, the Board has seen no evidence that force has been used disproportionately against Black, Asian or minority ethnic prisoners, but notes a significant over-representation of prisoners aged 25-34 (prison population of approximately 30% but involved in 49% of incidents). This is in line with last year, but shows a slight shift from the previous comparable year when 18-24 year olds were over-represented. The majority of prisoners involved in use of force incidents (89%) subsequently engaged with the formal debrief process and of these only five (4%) went on to make a formal complaint.

The national tactical response group (NTRG) was called to one serious incident in March 2022. This was monitored by Board members, and control and restraint was used to escort the prisoner to the care and segregation unit (CSU) after he surrendered and when his attitude became non-compliant. He was seen by a Board member in his cell but chose not to speak to them.

HMIP found that use of force at HMP Channings Wood was lower than at similar prisons and that the scrutiny of use of force was excellent, but noted that some staff were reluctant to use body-worn cameras. The Board takes a very similar view and finds that force does not appear to be overused and seems to be used proportionately.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

During the second half of the reporting year, the prison resumed the mandatory drug testing programme (MDT) which had been suspended during the period of Covid-19 restrictions; 35 men are tested randomly each month. With the lifting of many of the Covid-19 related restrictions on social visits, staff reported an increase in the presence of illicit items detected within the establishment, even in the CSU. The response included more searches of men returning to the wings from visits (which prisoners have brought to the Board's attention through applications) and a more overt presence of search dogs at the entrance to the visits hall, had an impact. The use of body scanning equipment on new arrivals is now more common, with a consequence being the number of men temporarily placed in the segregation unit. Managers reported that the risk of illicit items coming in with new receptions had increased and that this had led to more prisoners being segregated for a minimum period to maintain the safety of staff and prisoners. An agreed amnesty process had reduced the number of prisoners subsequently found guilty on adjudication. A body scan audit recognised that the establishment was conforming to best practice, with all scans for those presenting as positive being correctly identified.

The amount of synthetic cannabinoids or Spice used or discovered in the prison continues to decline. Staff report that illegal, homemade alcohol (hooch) is more commonly found once again, especially at times of festivities or when sporting events are underway. In its recent inspection, HMIP reported prisoners' views that drugs are much harder to get hold of in prison now than a few years ago: 29% of prisoners said they could get drugs in the prison compared to 76% in 2018. Inspectors concluded that this was the result of active intervention by staff, including body scanners, intelligence-led investigations, and careful checks on prisoners' mail. The Board is aware from seeing the regular security bulletins and daily occurrence logs that there are many successful finds and objects thrown over the perimeter fence are regularly intercepted, but it cannot comment on what might go undetected.

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

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

The quality of accommodation varies by LB. Many are clean, and cells well kept, but up to 52 prisoners continue to be accommodated in shared cells. Twenty percent (245) of prisoner complaints logged during the reporting

related to residential issues, the largest category. The Board has regularly expressed concerns about the very poor state of showers in LB1 and LB4, lacking privacy screens and often having dirty clothing on the floors. A revised process for decency audits by staff and senior managers is being introduced and its effectiveness will be monitored by the Board in the coming year. The Board is encouraged that remedial work is planned from September 2022 but is disappointed that there continue to be water leaks in LB6 corridor and three unusable cells. At a wing representatives' meeting in May, the head of residence highlighted that many issues had 'been dragging on too long'.

The Board is pleased to report the installation of in-cell telephones on all the LBs. was completed in July. It is too early to comment on the impact of this new facility other than there has been an increase in IMB applications via the 0800 number.

Recreational equipment is available on most of the LBs. The Board is encouraged to learn that this is being explored by the senior management team. Some cooking facilities (kettles, toasters, microwaves) are available for prisoners on some of the LBs and members would like to see these facilities extended.

Hot meals were being served at lunch time as a Covid-19 mitigation measure but have now returned to the evening service, although members observe mealtimes are often early. The Board has expressed concern about the small breakfast packs and the 'carbohydrate loaded' plates of some prisoners. Special diets and dietary preferences including sealed packs are however catered for appropriately. In April and May faults with the new Athena digital menu system caused issues and its use is still suspended. The serveries are staffed by prisoners but they do not always wear the appropriate whites. The HMIP survey reported that 56% of respondents found the food to be 'bad or very bad' and 55% reported that they only had enough to eat some of the time or never. However, food issues only generated 4.9% of prison complaints and only a few IMB applications. The food books on each wing are generally used to some effect and food issues are frequently discussed at wing representative meetings.

There have been some problems with clothing and laundry reported to the Board. In March the laundry was out of action for two weeks and laundry was diverted to HMP Leyhill. Members have observed washing being dried on radiators as some prisoners preferred not to use the laundry service, stating that items were frequently shrunk or lost. Prisoners report to members that they would welcome laundry and drying facilities on the wings as they use buckets and bins for washing their clothing. HMIP's survey found 54% of prisoners said they had enough suitable clothing.

Canteen has been a recurring issue at wing representatives' meetings and through IMB applications. Piloting of a new clothing catalogue in the spring raised issues together with delays in receiving refunds from the supplier DHL. At meetings and in conversation with members, prisoners also reported problems with mail, especially

time-sensitive legal mail being delayed. The Board escalated these concerns to managers, but problems are still being reported and the Board's view is that the experience prisoners receive is dependent on their location.

## **5.2 Segregation**

Occupancy in the CSU over the reporting year has varied with some very low numbers early in 2022. Most prisoners placed there were short term residents, being held either for good order or discipline (GOOD) reasons or for their own interest (OI). In February for example, 10 prisoners were in segregation for a total of 113 days with only two prisoners exceeding 25 days and none being there for more than 40 days. In total 261 prisoners were detained in the CSU during this reporting period, with only one prisoner beyond 42 days.

Communal areas in segregation including the exercise yard, access to telephones and library books are satisfactory. The shower area, whilst generally clean, needs some refurbishment.

Many prisoners have spoken positively to members regarding their relationships with CSU staff. The HMIP survey in July 2022 found that 61% of prisoners who had been in segregation reported that 'staff had treated them well'.

Members have attended GOOD reviews, though these have not been as frequent as in the pre-Covid period given the relatively lower occupancy rate this year. Members observed that the review board's decision-making process adequately considered prisoners' welfare and individual exit planning. The reviews monitored have mostly been conducted in a constructive and inclusive way in which prisoners were encouraged to engage. This has usually resulted in a return to normal location in a timely manner.

The Board's greatest concern with the CSU is those prisoners who have been detained there with acute mental health issues whilst waiting for places in secure mental health units elsewhere. This was highlighted in the 2019-2020 report and is still a problem. Members have observed a supportive and empathetic approach from staff to the prisoners in their care and their efforts to manage complex needs.

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

Throughout the reporting period Board members have observed many examples of positive and effective interactions between prisoners and staff, noting that generally staff were helpful and supportive when dealing with prisoners' needs or concerns. The Board notes that this is reflected in the HMIP prisoner survey, which found that 79% of prisoners said they were 'treated with respect' and 75% said they had 'a member of staff to turn to'. On a few occasions, however, members reported that a minority of officers displayed a more dismissive and uninterested approach to some prisoners. Only a small number of prison complaints related to unfair treatment (six out of 1,235) or an unhappiness with staff (three out of 1,235). However, in applications to the Board, prisoner/staff relationships were the third highest category, with 34 out of 227(15%).

The Board remains concerned that the key worker scheme, which was only resumed in May 2022, continues to fall short of its targets. While the infrastructure to support delivery is in place the system is not yet embedded. Senior managers are prioritising key work through the introduction of weekly drop-in sessions on the wings and the

appointment of named officers to become wing champions. These steps are welcomed but it is too early for the Board to comment on the impact of these initiatives.

By the end of this reporting period the total number of active key workers was 136 for a population of just under 700 prisoners. The Board has been told that just over 90% of prisoners have an allocated key worker, that most key workers are allocated within 11 days of a prisoner's arrival and that their first session takes place within 54 days. However, a recent small qualitative survey undertaken by IMB members revealed that at least 60% of prisoners either did not know of or had not met their key worker and that the details were either not passed on to or registered by the prisoner. It is also concerning that the prison data on the delivery of key worker sessions currently stands at only 5.46% of the target.

In July 2022 HMIP recorded as a priority concern that key work was not sufficient and did not support sentence progression. The Board shares this assessment and considers that although plans for resourcing key workers are in place, operational delivery is very slow and unlikely to improve in the short term.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The Board is pleased that since January 2022 the staffing of equality and diversity (E&D) has been more firmly in place. The Board continues to monitor that the staff's time is appropriately ring fenced for E&D duties. There is an equality action plan in place overseen by the Governor and the equality action team (EAT) and reviewed by the EAT meeting members. More recently, each governor has been allocated to one of the nine protected characteristics and attends the meetings. The Board will be interested to monitor the impact of this approach over the coming year and welcomes the intention to hold more regular monthly EAT meetings.

IMB members have attended two EAT meetings during the reporting period and received reports documenting the Lammy analysis and emerging recommendations and actions. Broadly speaking the prisoners with protected characteristics appear to experience only slight disparity in a few areas, which are brought to the EAT meetings for action. In March, for example, adjudications were held on 24.6% prisoners from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic community (16.6% of the prison population).

The Board noted that 55 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRF) have been submitted over the year. However, only four were during the months of September to November 2021 with none in October. This was monitored by members during the rest of the reporting period, to determine both prisoners' awareness and confidence in the process. Since December, 51 DIRFs (an average of 6.3 per month) have been logged. Board members have directed prisoners towards the DIRF process when it was clear that a protected characteristic featured in their issue or complaint.

Prisoner equality representatives and forums, before April, were inactive or less active. More recently efforts have been made to reinstate both. A young person (YP) representative was appointed for both mains and VP, as was a representative for Pride in Prison (PIP), but a racial support and equality (RISE) representative was yet to be appointed. Members have met with equality representatives who have supported prisoners from these groups. They highlighted concerns including limitations on the movements of some representatives around the LBs, which



affected their ability to meet with other prisoners. Of more concern was their view that some staff had an inappropriate attitude to some prisoners with protected characteristics including those on the autistic spectrum. One such incident that the Board was made aware of was discussed with the Governor and the staff member involved was made aware of the impact of his remarks.

Prisoners who are aged over 50 make up 24% of the total prison roll, with 3% of these being over 70 (no increase on last year). They mostly live on LB5, where social care packages are provided for up to five prisoners, and between 15 to 19 others are supported by the buddy scheme. Dedicated indoor and outdoor activity facilities for retired and disabled prisoners have been planned, and forums for older prisoners and veterans have been reinstated.

Young prisoners (under 30 years old) are approximately 25% of the prison roll. They were observed to be less likely to engage with the regime prior to Stage 2 and their representatives told the Board that they 'wanted greater access to the gym and education to fill their time' once these were available again. At the same time the Lammy analysis reported that young people under 30 have been overrepresented in use of force, self-harm and violent incidents. In March 2022, 42% of CSIP referrals (mainly for debt and bullying issues) prisoners under 30. The Board welcomes the work of E&D staff and YP representatives to explore this further but is not yet aware of any significant impact.

It is reported that approximately 40% of prisoners have a self-disclosed disability, including autism and special learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD). The HMIP prisoner survey reported that this group was 'significantly less positive about safety, time out of cells and food'. This may correlate with the number of complaints received from prisoners accommodated on LB5. Adjudications were held on 32% of prisoners with self-disclosed disabilities and this is being examined by the safer custody team. Members will need to monitor the outcomes for this group of prisoners going forward.

Roman Catholic prisoners including those from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities also featured disproportionately higher in both use of force and adjudications, and both the chaplaincy and the CSU team have been tasked to examine this further.

Five percent of prisoners identify as LGBTQ+ and have active representatives and a forum to plan and promote event planning during the year, such as LGBTQ+ history month in February. There have been three prisoners who identify as transgender and one as gender fluid over this reporting period. The Board has monitored that their local agreements are in place and delivered effectively.

Of the prison population, 16.6% of prisoners are Black, Asian or minority ethnic, and there is a representative and a forum in place which discusses a range of issues, such as the access to Afro-Caribbean products.

There has been an increase in the number of foreign nationals at the prison with around 35 in February and 41 at the end of the reporting year. The largest group are Albanians (10) followed by eight Polish and six Irish prisoners. Immigration advice sessions are facilitated regularly by the prison, but the Board is not aware of the regular use of interpretation services. It is more common to observe other prisoners taking on this role.

This year the Board judges that awareness of and support for E&D issues is becoming more embedded and is more consistently resourced than last year, but any effects of this more positive approach will need closer monitoring.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

Staffing levels in the chaplaincy have generally remained sufficient for team members to be very active during the restrictions of the exceptional delivery model regime and beyond. There were shortfalls in cover from March to May 2022 when there was no Roman Catholic priest available and then again towards the end of this year when there was no Mormon chaplain. Hindu, Sikh, and Rastafarian chaplains are provided on a rotational basis through shared posts across the Devon and North Dorset cluster prisons. This enabled all prisoners who wish to practise their faith and attend services to do so when the prison moved to stage 2. Since the end of May, mains and VP prisoners have attended separate services for the larger faith communities, whilst some combined services are held for smaller groups, such as Jehovah Witnesses. All religious festivals were celebrated, often with a gathering that included food that was specially prepared in the prison kitchen. HMIP's survey found that 91% of those who said they had a religion said they could attend a religious service, and 77% said their beliefs were respected.

Prior to collective worship being resumed in May 2022, the chaplaincy provided a high level of one-to-one pastoral support to prisoners, either in their cells or by bringing them to the chapel, especially when this was in support of their emotional health and wellbeing. Other community agencies have provided more specialised support services, such as Cruse Bereavement Support, and the Salvation Army, which usually has a waiting list for their services. As well as regular services, discussion groups and religious education classes, suspended following Covid-19 restrictions, were being reintroduced.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentives scheme was fully reinstated on the return to stage 1 when the revised local incentives policy was issued in May 2022 as part of the return to normal. This meant that the basic level, which had been suspended during EDM, was restored. An element of the new policy was the establishment of a new incentives forum made up of prisoners from all backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics, to ensure a wide representation. This forum is intended to examine the fairness of the incentives policy and address issues raised by prisoners. While meetings are planned for a minimum of twice a year, they are yet to take place, but their effectiveness will be monitored by the Board for any inconsistencies regarding disproportionate treatment or outcomes across protected characteristics.

Issues which are most often brought to the Board's attention include a perception that the policy is applied inconsistently or unfairly; that on transfer to HMP Channings Wood, prisoners' levels are reviewed to assess if they are at the appropriate level (enhanced prisoners have complained that they revert to standard until staff are satisfied that they warrant enhanced status); and that enhanced status does not bring with it sufficient privileges (members often hear this on LB2).

At the time of writing there were six prisoners on basic, 159 on standard and 480 on enhanced levels, which is fairly typical of what the Board has found.

## **5.7 Complaints**

Management information provided to the Board showed that there were 1,235 complaints over this reporting year, averaging 103 a month, with January and March peaking at 121 and 120 complaints respectively. This is a significant increase on the same period last year, with an average of 68 complaints per month, which was also an increase on the pre-Covid monthly average of 60. This may reflect prisoners' frustration with the prolonged EDM period. The Board notes that the highest number of complaints concerned residential matters at 245 (almost 20%), with 123 (10%) about property, 96 (7%) about staff, 83 (6%) about work, and 63 (5%) about mail/censoring. IMB applications reflected prison complaints to a certain degree; property was the top subject at 21%, but was followed by healthcare issues (17%) and staff/prisoner relationships (15%). This may be due to prisoners being more confident raising staff concerns with the IMB rather than other staff and the fact that there is a separate system for healthcare complaints.

Members regularly monitor the complaints process and its effectiveness by examining the monthly quality assurance checks and complaint outcomes and gathering prisoner feedback. In May 2022, for example, of 112 complaints received, eight responses were found to be out of time and another 19 required interim responses. Generally, most responses were timely and some were helpful, but the Board agrees with HMIP's judgement that responses to complaints, although reasonable overall, were often too brief and poorly worded.

The Board has also noted that analysis of complaints received from Black, Asian, minority ethnic prisoners in a typical month were disproportionately lower than the population. This may suggest that this group of prisoners do not have as much confidence in the system as other groups and members will monitor this over the coming year.

## **5.8 Property**

Applications to the Board concerning property issues made a resurgence following the resumption of transfers between prisons. Over the reporting period 48 (21%) applications were about property. One-third of these related to property missing or lost at Channings Wood (8%) with two-thirds either lost at other establishments prior to or during transfer. At 21% this is approaching the 30% level recorded by the Board pre-Covid restrictions. The loss of personal items causes a great deal of frustration and unhappiness for the individuals concerned that often detracts from their ability to settle. The new prisoners' property policy framework was introduced during the final month of this reporting period. It is too early to say whether it will have much of an impact on a system that does not seem fit for purpose and which has been the subject of the Board's question to the Prison Service for the last two years.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Healthcare has been provided by PPG since October 2020. There is no in-patient provision at the prison. Throughout the reporting year there have been many staff changes at both managerial and practitioner levels, including the head of healthcare. At times this has placed a strain on service delivery, with the remaining staff asked to work additional hours and the extended use of agency staff when recruitment proved difficult. However, the commitment of staff has remained high throughout. This was acknowledged in the recent Care Quality Commission element of the recent HMIP inspection. Healthcare staff have maintained a 100% attendance rate at first reviews for prisoners on ACCTs and similar high attendance rates at segregation reviews and wing representative meetings. Nurses conduct screenings with all new arrivals at the prison to determine any urgent medical need, ongoing treatment and medication being taken. Follow-up assessments take place within seven days. It has been noted that prisoners sometimes do not arrive with their medication, which can cause difficulties if this is not available at the prison pharmacy.

In September 2021, a patient engagement coordinator post was created to assist in the speedy resolution of complaints. Face-to-face meetings are now arranged to resolve concerns where possible. Monthly numbers of complaints range from 20 to 30, with most complainants concerned about medication being stopped, changed, or refused. Access to medication has also been an issue raised by prisoners with the Board. Overall though, the complaints system operates effectively.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Significant efforts continued throughout the year to ensure all eligible prisoners received Covid-19 vaccinations and boosters. This was complemented by a structured and comprehensive testing regime to minimise the spread of Covid-19. The prison received recognition for achieving the highest testing rate nationally. Despite the precautions, in April several living blocks had to go into isolation status due to Covid-19 outbreaks. Gradually the numbers fell, allowing restrictions to be lifted by the end of the month. Healthcare assessed 17 vulnerable prisoners as being of high risk due to other health conditions. The HMIP report noted the 'good collaboration between healthcare leaders and the UK Health Security Agency, which contributed to the safe management of several Covid-19 outbreaks'.

Access to primary care services fluctuates, with services impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, staff shortages and staff sickness. Whilst access to emergency care has been maintained at a high level, long waiting times for routine appointments still occur. A triage system is now operated to ensure access to GP services and urgent concerns are prioritised. By July 2022 the wait for a routine appointment was 14 days, but slots for urgent cases were protected each day. In the prisoner survey conducted by HMIP, 71% of respondents stated that GP services were either quite or very difficult to access. Video consultations with consultants and other hospital based services are arranged when necessary. These are free to the prison when linking to Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, but involve significant costs for other Trust areas.

During the year managing waiting times for dental service appointments has required additional support provided by external dentists and technicians. Several staff

changes have taken place within the dental team which is now at full strength. Whilst the length of delay has fluctuated (currently 10 weeks) emergency dental work remained quickly accessible. The HMIP survey responses reflect the waiting times, with 66% of respondents indicating dental services were either quite or very difficult to access. The average wait for an optician's appointment has reduced, from up to 22 weeks earlier in the year to approximately six weeks for most prisoners. Waiting times for physiotherapy and podiatry services have also been reduced.

During the year, some prisoners from one of the VP wings reported to the Board that waiting conditions in healthcare were inadequate and unsuitable for men with health conditions and disabilities. Prison managers have made a few improvements but the environment remains challenging for wheelchair users and the waiting area is poorly heated.

### **6.3 Mental health**

At reception screening, health and wellbeing concerns are explored with new prisoners referred to the mental health team if necessary. The team has the range of skills to support prisoners across a spectrum of needs. A psychiatrist visits on a weekly basis. Urgent referrals are dealt with in a timely manner and ACCT first reviews are always attended. However, the level of demand for mental health services remains challenging. Waiting times to access group work often extend to several months, an issue mentioned in the recent HMIP report. At the time of the inspection, approximately 67% prisoners self-identified as having mental health problems, with a minority of those saying their condition had deteriorated since entering prison. The Board has monitored and welcomes several initiatives in this area.

The Trust. Hope. Resilience. Empathy. Action. Direction. Strength. (THREADS) programme was introduced in June 2022 in partnership with Recoop. Prisoners who feel vulnerable or have concerns about their well-being are helped by THREADS team members to build resilience through one-to-one counselling and peer support. Within a month of its establishment, THREADS was working with 51 prisoners, the majority of whom were vulnerable prisoners who had self-referred.

The Outside the Box (OTB) programme for prisoners with a personality disorder or with learning needs is run by a small combined operational and clinical team led by a dedicated and inspiring governor. Although Covid-19 restrictions and full staffing has been an issue, the number of sessions attended by prisoners in 2022 rose from 84 in January to 270 by June. Initiatives attended by members have included a visit by the Devon Birds of Prey Centre, when a prisoner who had been behind his door for 10 months was confident enough to join in. There have also been vocational activities for prisoners, such as bee keeping. The OTB team also ran a successful autism awareness month in April to raise staff awareness of the condition. The prisoners that members have spoken to were very positive about its impact and felt well supported and the Board notes that the project is popular with participants. Prison data indicates some successful outcomes: seven of the 11 prisoners released after working with OTB are living safely in the community and have not reoffended. HMIP rated the work of OTB as notable positive practice.

Members have also observed the seven-week introductory horticulture course jointly run by mental health staff and horticulture instructors for VPs with mental health problems. Prisoners who successfully complete the course are then eligible to return

as mentors for subsequent courses. The Board understands that this project, piloted at Channings Wood, is set to be adopted more widely.

#### **6.4 Social care**

Prisoners' needs are assessed at the initial healthcare screening at reception and subsequently. Where further intervention is indicated, prisoners are more formally assessed by Devon County Council specialist staff. Currently there are 49 prisoners on the personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) register, each fully documented, on their respective wings. A team of six buddies have been trained to provide personal care support and assistance to older prisoners with various needs, including 10 wheelchair users.

At the end of the reporting period three prisoners in the VP unit were on social care packages, with funding shared between HMPPS and Devon County Council. A local authority social worker and occupational therapist visit the prison regularly as part of their ongoing care.

#### **6.5 Exercise, regime**

When Covid-19 restrictions were imposed and wings were put into isolation, the time prisoners spent outside their cells was significantly reduced. Workshops and the gym operated with strict limits on numbers. Generally these restrictions were accepted by most prisoners who understood the need for protective measures. As the establishment moved towards a more normal regime, the timetable for the gym and sports hall was revised to reward prisoners engaged in purposeful activity. Enhanced prisoners are currently permitted four sessions per week in the gym. Those in work or education get three sessions and those who are not working get one session. All gym sessions are closely monitored by staff to ensure fairness and safety.

#### **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Prisoners who have drug and alcohol related problems are seen during the induction programme and can be referred immediately to clinicians so that their dependency needs can be addressed. Prisoners can also self-refer and are almost always seen within five working days. Statistics indicate that up to 45% men receive some kind of opiate substitute therapy. Staff have reported to the Board that some new arrivals are often in the earlier stages of their detoxification regimes, which can present challenges in providing continuity of care. The Board will monitor this apparent trend over the coming year.

Weekly Alcoholics Anonymous group sessions are held together with fortnightly Narcotics Anonymous group sessions. Although there is a welcome increase in the number of voluntary groups working in the prison, such as the self-management and recovery training (SMART) team to augment in-house services, prison staff told the Board that they are only running the core elements of programmes to address prisoners' most immediate needs. They have not been able to offer more supportive, enhanced rehabilitation programmes because of staff shortages and training issues. Despite this, the prisoner survey conducted as part of the HMIP inspection showed a much more positive opinion about the quality of and access to substance misuse services compared to other healthcare services in the prison. Speaking unprompted to a member about her son at a social visit in March 2022, a mother claimed that

'prison has saved his life' as he had been an addict but was now clean, though he had told her that drugs were available in the prison.

Towards the end of their sentence, prisoners are seen by specialist staff 12 weeks before release so that necessary support programmes can be put into place. Community link workers also help prisoners to develop wellbeing strategies to try to prevent relapse and all prisoners with historic or current use of opiates are trained to use naloxone at the weekly pre-release workshops. Despite this, two of the four deaths in custody this year, which occurred within 28 days of release, are thought to have been as a result of overdoses, though this has not been confirmed to the Board.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

In other areas of this report, the Board has reported on the wide range of soft skills employed by staff to engage prisoners as part of the general rehabilitation programme. The Board welcomes the positive work that is going on to encourage prisoners to link with community groups, carry out charitable works, consider the needs of others and to take on peer-support responsibilities. There are sessions for yoga, parenting skills and creative arts, all of which are designed to stimulate prisoners' sense of their own worth and to provide them with skills which they will need when they adjust to life outside. An initiative welcomed by members has been the Our Space workshop facilitated by Theatre Royal Plymouth as part of the prison's reducing reoffending programme. This 10-week course got prisoners to engage by using ice breaker techniques to encourage participation and improvised storytelling to promote confidence and communication skills. Board members noted that during these sessions all attendees felt confident enough to play a full part. One prisoner who was discharged before the end of course production was so enthusiastic that he requested permission to attend. Another has since gained work experience with the Theatre Royal. The Board is pleased to report that funding has been secured to run another workshop in 2023.

## 7. Progression and resettlement

### 7.1 Education, library

For the whole progression and resettlement area, much of this reporting period has been a case of two steps forward, one step back as managers edged out of a restricted regime towards a new normal. Having planned to resume face to face working by December 2021, the Covid-19 spike in January 2022 and increasing infection rates within the prison resulted in a blended approach, mixing some classroom work and in-cell learning with men strictly cohorted by living block. In May 2022 the numbers learning in classrooms had begun to increase. By July, the Governor was able to inform the Board that 467 prisoners were either attending or had been allocated to education, skills and training: two thirds of the population. When HMIP visited the same month however, they found only 54% of prisoners participated in activities, which they considered poor for a training prison. The difference is the number of prisoners who were allocated to, but not yet engaged in, activities.

HMIP were also critical of insufficient staff to run the education, skills and work programme effectively. This meant prisoners waited too long to join activities and inspectors recommended that this should be given greater priority by managers. While the Board was aware of staff shortages across the prison, it cannot comment on the reasons for this shortage or judge if it is wholly within the control of managers. What has been evident to members though, is the priority attached to increasing attendance levels by those managers and the quality of the curriculum delivered by tutors and instructors.

The Board further noted that HMIP were critical of leaders who had not ensured that all prisoners attended education and work on time. This has been borne out by monitoring: the reasons were often due to operational staff shortages, rather than a failing on the part of education and skills staff. Analysis of management data has shown that overall attendance for the year 2021-22 has been above 90%. Men enrolled on courses also generally had high achievement rates, for example Maths at 89% and English at 95%. As was noted by Ofsted last year, the provision of distance learning over this period has been encouraging, with 16 men enrolled for level 3/A-level courses and another 14 on Open University courses.

The Board continues to be concerned by the availability of specialist support for prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities, which inspectors considered insufficient for the 40-50% of prisoners identified with learning difficulties and disabilities or additional learning support needs. The Board hopes that the provider, Weston College, will appoint a full-time tutor to work in this area.

An area of obvious success has been the library. HMIP judged this to be 'notable positive practice' which the Board's own monitoring fully supports. The library manager has promoted its effective use by working with partners inside and outside the prison, and a wide range of activities, including chess, music, drama, and a reader development programme involving the Shaw Trust was offered. Now fully operational again, the mini libraries on three of the LBs have been retained due to their popularity and the enthusiasm of the orderlies managing them.

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## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Many of the observations made about education by HMIP noted above also apply to vocational training. While the Board does not dispute them, it has noted the efforts of managers to maximise opportunities for men to be out of their cells through work opportunities, including enhanced cleaning, buddy support and industries. Nevertheless, Covid-19 restrictions have meant that the return to full employment has been a stop/start process. Between November 2021 and February 2022 industries were running at between 30-50% capacity due to a combination of continued social distancing and staff absences. Despite fewer men working, productivity levels in industries have still been high and in April the Board was informed that as part of the planned site expansion, Prison Service Industries intended to allocate an additional 320 workshop spaces because Channings Wood has the highest performing workshops in the country. One negative consequence however has been that, having produced so much prison furniture over this reporting period, by July 2022 the wood assembly workshop imposed a shift system to share work amongst employed men, as demand had significantly reduced. Only 25 men were at work rather than the full capacity of 48.

HMIP noted problems with allocations and the time taken for men to access training or work, but they reported favourably on the delivery of vocational training, staff and the skills acquired through work. Instructors were judged to prepare learning activities carefully and structure them appropriately to enable prisoners to develop new skills and knowledge. Prisoners developed the work-related competences expected by employers, and most prisoners who attended activities produced work of a good standard. Engagements with men during the Board's monitoring supported this. In June 2022 a member spoke to one man who was working through the performing manufacturing operations diploma. He was very motivated and was hopeful (though not over optimistic) of gaining employment. He stated that he was well supported by staff and felt that the training offered was realistic in terms of likely employment opportunities outside, mentioning wood assembly, warehouse work and construction as examples.

As the prison edged to towards a return to normal in July, other members reported similar conversations. In wood assembly, three new workers in their second week were positive about their prison employment. During a two-week catering taster course, nine men were working to prepare a buffet lunch. They said that they felt inspired by their instructor and the atmosphere was positive. At a painting and decorating City and Guilds level 2 course one man (who described himself as a persistent offender) had decided to put his time to good use. He had completed his maths and English courses and was enjoying painting and decorating. He insisted that he wanted to make a change to his life. Another man had already completed courses on first aid in the workplace and asbestos handling. A third was optimistic that the qualifications gained while in prison would make him employable in current labour market.

In a positive initiative noted by the Board, prisoners arriving at Channings Wood are assessed by information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff and any having useful skills are referred to Government Facility Service Limited so that they can be employed for work within the prison estate

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

In the Board's last report, it raised concerns about the provision of offending behaviour programmes (OBPs), very high offender management in custody (OMiC) caseloads and the resulting offender assessment system (OASys) backlog. The Minister responded to the Board's question on the impact of men being unable to access programmes required to meet parole requirements by stating: 'It is acknowledged the delivery of Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) suffered during the reporting period and this was primarily due to a focus on delivering Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) during the pandemic in accordance with national guidance. The staffing situation at the prison has significantly improved, however, it is important to note that this did not impact on the delivery of programmes as the prison's OBPs team has always been fully resourced'.

Managers have confirmed this, though this year they were briefly understaffed from April and, although replacements were recruited and in place by June, they will not be operational until the end of 2022. While they were unable to accurately quantify the number of men who would not have been able to access the programmes they needed to progress, the Board was told that waiting lists and waiting times are now more in line with those experienced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even so, HMIP raised as a priority concern that: 'Very few offending behaviour programmes were available for prisoners assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm. This limited progression...was especially acute for high-risk life sentence prisoners'.

In terms of OMiC, inspectors found that caseloads remained high but were effectively managed by prison offender managers (POMs) and that most OASys were up to date. Their survey found that 55% of men who responded said they did not have a sentence plan, an improvement on the 69% from the Board's own survey last year. Despite initiatives to improve access to offender managers such as weekly clinics on the wings, use of in-cell phones and more tailored OMU application forms, the Board's monitoring has revealed significant prisoner dissatisfaction. On rota visits one of the most frequent issues raised is the difficulty accessing offender managers. When this is possible though, members have observed excellent engagements between men and their POMs. In their own survey HMIP reported that 34% of prisoners who responded did not know who their key worker was and this hampered progression.

The Board remains concerned by the time taken for prisoners who were recategorised as category D to be transferred. During this period, of the 72 men who progressed only 26 were able to transfer to category D establishments. While inspectors found this not to be the fault of staff at Channings Wood but due to capacity in other establishments, the fact that prisoners waited far too long for progressive transfers was a key concern for them. The Board's monitoring also revealed a very specific issue regarding one man's failed application for release under home detention curfew (HDC) conditions. While 192 of the 729 men discharged during the reporting period (26%) were on HDC, a man who was eligible and recommended was still in custody months later because the Metropolitan Police would only conduct address checks on high-risk prisoners.

### **7.4 Family contact**

Board members have attended several family days, including the children's Christmas party and a children's sports day. Even visits impacted by the

reintroduction of Covid-19 restrictions (including the Christmas Party) were seen as positive by families and prisoners. The main criticism remains the time taken to get through to the telephone booking line. A mother said, 'it can take over an hour to get through on the bookings line, but it pays to keep trying'. A more extreme claim was that it had taken weeks of attempts. Once successfully booked the experience was generally good. One visitor reported that staff were 'helpful, polite and understanding', while another said staff at visits were 'amazing, they try their hardest to make you relax'. Occasionally this was not the case and one young woman making her second visit said that her first visit had felt intimidating.

Prisoners too were positive. After the Christmas visit one said he was just relieved that visits had not been cancelled completely due to the new Covid-19 variant and that his visit was 'as good as it gets'. Although issues regarding security checks were sometimes raised most men were understanding of the need for such measures: 'it's a pity that some idiots spoil it for the rest of us'. There were some negative comments. One man who was clearly buoyed up by his visit raised the short notice given to him. Another complained that his visit had been cut short, but such feedback was in the minority. A more common cause of dissatisfaction were secure social video calls. The Board has heard of booking difficulties and technical problems. Some men were told at short notice that their session was cancelled or when at the visits hall found they could not access a terminal.

Although HMIP recorded as a key concern that the social visits area was unwelcoming and in poor repair, this does not appear to have greatly detracted from the overall experience of visitors and has been offset to a degree by the service provided by Choices and officers, who are usually observed to be unobtrusive and sensitive. The Board has been assured there are plans for a redecoration/re-equipping of the visits hall.

Prior to the installation of in-cell telephones in July, telephone contact had been an issue. Prisoners with experience of in cell telephones said their absence at Channings Wood was a major frustration and one visitor said she wished her husband was back at HMP Lewes where family contact provision had been 'amazing'. She also reported a very poor induction experience for her husband, who had been unable to phone home because his PIN had not been activated. The Board has often reported that men arriving late on a Friday cannot have their PINs activated until administrative staff are at work the following Monday. Damaged phones on the wings were also a common issue for prisoners. During their inspection, HMIP found prisoners faced long queues to speak to their family and friends and just 63% of prisoners told inspectors that they could use the phone every day.

One area of unqualified success remains Storybook Dads. HMIP judged this to be notable positive practice. This confirms the Board's monitoring where members have regularly noted a good use of the service, which is provided by enthusiastic and empathetic staff in a calm and warm atmosphere.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

In its last report, the Board's main area of concern was the provision of accommodation on release and the transfer of responsibility for this key area of resettlement planning to the external community offender managers (COMs). During monitoring visits men have told members that they have found COMs much harder

to contact than in-house pre-release practitioners. The prison's pre-release resettlement teams stressed the need to chase up COMs, telling the Board that: 'we are in the hands of others'. Another complication noted by the Board arises over the continued imbalance of offender flows, where due to population pressures in other establishments, some men arrive inside their 12-week resettlement plan window. Staff reported that it was often a challenge to find out what planning had already taken place at the sending prison. It is possible that these reports indicated early teething troubles with the new resettlement model, as by the time of HMIP's inspection in July, they reported that resettlement arrangements were good and early contact with the COM meant that release plans were generally progressed well.

Channings Wood is due to be part of the community accommodation services tier 3 project (CAS-3) which sources accommodation for men at risk of either being homeless or moved-on from approved premises. The area dedicated housing specialist has not started yet but together with the CAS-3 project should further improve the provision of accommodation on release. At a meeting in July 2022 members were told that of 57 men released the previous month (the average figure is 60), 53 had confirmed housing for the first night. Inspectors also found housing provision very good, with 85% of prisoners leaving Channings Wood over the previous 12 months going to settled accommodation for 13 weeks or longer after their release. The other 15% were referred to emergency housing services and provided with accommodation.

Two employment hubs have been established for mains and VPs, each with an employment champion and employment orderly recruited from the prison population. Part of the hubs' remit will be to meet the Governor's pledge that each man will have a CV, two forms of identification (citizen's card and birth certificate) and a bank account on discharge. Kier (the lead contractor for the planned prison expansion) intend to recruit directly from both men being released and men on release on temporary licence to work on the construction project. Once again, staff cite in-cell telephones as 'a game changer' for men seeking employment.

The well regarded pre-release briefings suspended during Covid-19 were reinstated from March 2022. Led by the head of the pre-release team, they are supported by experts including a representative from the Department for Work and Pensions and an ISMS community liaison representative, who aim to provide reassurance, practical advice for early days and signposting. At the end of the briefing those attending engage one-to-one with the briefing team. At such an event observed by the Board, of the five men attending, all had settled accommodation to go to and two stated they had job offers on release. The two with job offers appeared especially positive.

## The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	315
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	50
Total number of segregation reviews attended	22 have been attended, mainly due both to low segregation occupancy and availability of Board members

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	3	7
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	6
C	Equality	2	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	5	4
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	8	24
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	13
F	Food and kitchens	1	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	22	39
H1	Property within this establishment	3	18
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	12	30
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	11
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	18
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	26	34
K	Transfers	3	8
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	4	4
	Total number of applications	104	227



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