



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Deerbolt

**For reporting year
1 October 2021 – 31 September 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 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

At a baseline level, a maximum of 529 sentenced male prisoners aged 18-29 can be accommodated at HMP/YOI Deerbolt, near Barnard Castle in County Durham. Operational capacity was reduced to 387 from June 2019, later to 337. The reductions in prisoner number have been due to prison redevelopments with wings being taken out of service for major refurbishment. These refurbishments have faced lengthy delays and progress seemingly has stalled at the end of this reporting period, despite major investment.

Deerbolt was first established as a young offender institution (YOI) for 18- to 21-year-olds on sentences of up to four years, and has education, work training and activities to suit this prisoner group. However, it now takes men up to the age of 29. There is no restriction on the length of prisoners' sentences, and the population now includes lifers and those on long indeterminate sentences.

The main providers of services in the prison are Novus (education), Amey (works/maintenance), Spectrum (healthcare) and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (mental health). Visitor care and support is provided by the voluntary agency the North East Prison Aftercare Society (NEPACS), which also offers provision for family days and group work with young fathers.

The purpose-built establishment was opened in 1973. It includes an administration centre, 10 residential wings with exercise yards (including the new K wing and segregation unit), substantial industrial workshops and education classrooms, a gymnasium, reception and a chapel, a reducing reoffending unit and visitors' centre. The buildings have been maintained over the years and have regularly been refurbished by the prison to meet both the latest regulations for fire safety and general standards. The prison has recently benefited from a new tarmacked through road, and the removal of asbestos has begun on some wings. Such recent improvements include new windows and better showers. The external CCTV units have been improved, the gymnasium has been refurbished and a new car park offers better access for staff and visitors alike.

There are extensive areas of grass, and cultivated plots of flowers and vegetables, which are on the whole well kept but certain areas have faced much decline, such as the pond area to the north of the site. That said, Deerbolt also benefits from many green areas that the prison has, during this reporting period, begun to use once more.

Prisoners are received from a wide catchment area. However, 40% of the total population of Deerbolt are from the North East region making it the majority cohort. Although, many prisoners find themselves far from home, since the Covid lockdown, new prisoners have mainly come from the local region. Some face-to-face visits have been allowed for the last several months of this reporting period, but with reduced numbers to enable social distancing. However, social video calls have now been readily offered which have been helpful for families who live a long distance away.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

In our previous reports, the IMB at Deerbolt has understandably outlined the impacts the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of their annual reports. As a consequence of this process, IMB numbers at Deerbolt declined to only two members with more than one year's experience at the beginning of this reporting period. While the Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, a level of caution should be considered due to the overreliance on objective data and not as much 'on the ground' monitoring for supporting evidence as usual. We hope ministers are aware of these constraints. These were particularly impactful on the Board's ability to attend prison reviews and record data, over time. Despite this, after a recruitment drive, our fresh crop of members have offered great energy to the role, and it has been refreshing to hear that we are now able to provide very effective and unique monitoring of many key areas of the establishment.

While the Board recognises the enormous difficulties facing the Prison Service at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and as the Prison Service continues to recover from the past years, the Board continues to be concerned with the lack of purposeful activity at a time when prisoners can still be locked up for up to 22 to 23 hours a day. Deerbolt appears to be an outlier in the region with regard to the continuation of this lack of meaningful activity. Staff shortages at Deerbolt are undeniably to blame for this process and such challenges cannot be overlooked. Despite this, the senior management team have understood these challenges and with new recruitment managed nationally for the prison beyond their control, they have thought outside the box to provide a regime. For example, Deerbolt has taken staff on detached duty from other establishments in the north east.

However, last year, we cited that a previous HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report found that Deerbolt's management were justifiably criticised for the outcomes for the prisoners at their establishment. In this reporting period, it would be fair to suggest that the prison has made small strides, but we must stress that the management has faced challenges making this a difficulty. Deerbolt now not only houses more complex prisoners with longer sentences than before, but also those up to the age of 29. With facilities and courses tailored to prisoners between the ages of 18 and 21, this age increase has made it very difficult for the management team to navigate this ever-changing landscape of prisoner needs, in a bid to promote a rehabilitative culture.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the establishment?

When analysing the safety of an establishment like Deerbolt, a simple question would be to ask whether IMB members feel safe on visits. We do. This premise is backed up by past data that outlines that Deerbolt does have a good safety record relative to comparator prisons. However, outside of the control of staff, there are still some prisoners who feel under threat, often our monitoring shows that this is because of debts incurred when locked up or because of inter-gang rivalries. Deerbolt staff continue to call upon their skills and experience to seek intelligence about prisoners' gang affiliations in order to promote safety in the establishment and on many occasions during this reporting period, staff have been able to integrate prisoners into programmes despite often complex allegiances. The nature of gang affiliations is at times often difficult to predict and understand, which sometimes makes prisoners join gangs for their own safety or because they are forced to do so. This process is often not simply due to where the prisoner is from in the United Kingdom. As a result, with some prisoners it would be difficult to suggest that Deerbolt is a safe place for them.

While the numbers of assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and on staff are low, following a reduction in regime restrictions evident in 2022 there have been a couple of notable incidents in the summer of this reporting period. However, after post-incident investigations, of which we were a part, the reasoning for these incidents was a lack of regime and prisoners were 'protesting'. Again, this in turn comes back to the very issues the prison faces with low staffing numbers. Therefore, prisoners are locked up for longer periods of time than hoped by the management team, and then develop anxieties with regard to moving back to normal regimes, and the negative cycle continues with some prisoners not feeling safe at the prison. However, towards the end of this reporting period, the IMB at Deerbolt noted that changes in senior management, complemented by increases in staffing, have seen great promise in terms of the safety of the establishment with the reintroduction of purposeful activity and a tangible increase in morale evident between prisoners and staff.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

As per our last two reporting periods, there is no doubt that the regime and staff, both individually and collectively, do their best to treat the prisoners fairly and humanely. Moreover, the Board believes that prison staff hold quality one-to-one communication with the most vulnerable. However, the Board is concerned by the interaction with the wider population in Deerbolt. The infrequent level of key worker sessions and the low number of wellbeing checks would highlight this. Although Deerbolt successfully attends to the most vulnerable, the IMB feels that the population at Deerbolt would benefit from increased dialogue on a regular basis. The IMB would hate to think that some prisoners may feel as if they are unsure of what is expected of them while at the establishment and worse still, that they may feel forgotten by the regime. As regularly stated in this report, this situation can overall be attributed to low staffing numbers.

The IMB has also received a record low number of applications to speak to us and to use our services. This itself could imply that prisoners are indeed being treated fairly and humanely. However, our reduced ability to be visible due the IMB under complement in this reporting year may yet again explain this. Nevertheless, the IMB believes the prison has done all that they can do to promote our presence in a bid to promote fair and humane treatment.

Further, the IMB would also like to praise Deerbolt staff, particularly those in the segregation unit, for their organisation, compassion and commitment to the more complex prisoners at Deerbolt. The prison also regularly houses prisoners who would like to be kept in the segregation unit for their own safety and in this reporting year there have been several very difficult prisoners. While Deerbolt does not have suitable facilities to deal with many of their complex needs, the staff have understood challenges and have built relationships, showed patience and have directly communicated with the IMB to keep the Board in the loop as to their circumstances. Traditionally, staff would have had to show patience in waiting for 'problem' prisoners to be transferred out to more suitable establishments. However, this year it has been particularly difficult for staff to organise such transfers. Given population pressures in the north east, a lack of mental health beds and logistical issues, the staff have gone above and beyond to try to facilitate moves when required and when this is too difficult, show patience in developing a relationship with the prisoners in question.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

In recent reports, healthcare staff (both physical and mental) have been deservedly commended for their high-level service. The IMB is confident that health and wellbeing needs are being met and there are very few issues with this provision at the time of this report. There is also a very good working relationship between healthcare staff, the wider prison and the IMB.

However, while Deerbolt has excellent facilities for exercise, there is a common theme that prisoners are still spending too much time in their cells with little to do. We are, however, confident that the Governor and staff at Deerbolt understand this and are looking to fill vacancies to enable the prison to go back to a normal regime. This would increase opportunities for exercise and with it improve an already well-performing area of the prison. With the gymnasium reserved mainly for those who are behaving and adhering to the regime, the IMB hopes the prison is also aiming to offer the opportunity of exercise to those who are behaving less well, who may in fact need the endorphin release the most.

How well are prisoners progressed towards transfer or successful resettlement?

At the end of our last reporting period, the pandemic and staffing issues meant there was more or less no education or vocational training, with no progressive rehabilitation. While in-cell packs were used to deflect the attention of prisoners away from their current circumstances, the method's suitability as a rehabilitation tool can surely be questioned. However, with education classes starting again in the summer of 2021, good progress has been made in re-establishing normal routines for the provision of education and vocational studies within this reporting period. It is

apparent that prisoners are now much more gainfully engaged in some form of activity during the working day. However, the IMB remains concerned, especially about the perception of how frequently provision is cancelled due to staffing or accommodation issues.

As a result of this, the perception from our members is that while Novus staff endeavour to provide education services, the service is perhaps focused on quantity of allocation rather than quality of provision. As a result of this, we have big concerns about the success of the prison system's education contract in providing a rehabilitative culture.

However, while we feel prisoners' progression could be improved through skills gained, dialogue between case managers and the resettlement service is performing at a very high standard with prisoners often resettled to suitable accommodation on release.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

There are often rumours that Deerbolt is accepting older prisoners and that the prison is 'closing'. What is the long-term plan for Deerbolt's youth offender institution status?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

We are members of the local community and we understand that staffing is difficult in all sectors in our region and as per our response last year, we are aware that there are efforts to discuss recruitment. However, we wonder what has been done uniquely to address the staffing levels at Deerbolt?

We understand the challenges for education staff and contractors, however, what is the current success level of the Novus contract and how is it being measured?

We would like to know what plans the Prison Service has to reduce recidivism levels at Deerbolt.

In our last reporting period, HMPPS stated that we have access to data from the performance hub, but overall what are the current key performance indicators of Deerbolt prison and how is it performing?

TO THE GOVERNOR

The IMB understands and respects the hard work the management team has put in through difficult circumstances and challenges this year. What are the plans for education with an ever-changing cohort?

Who in the prison is directly involved in measuring the effectiveness of Novus?

3.4 Progress since the last report

It is undeniable that since the last report there has been much progress within the prison. The reintroduction of education provision, the increased opportunities for meaningful activity and, for example, the work that staff have carried out to think outside the box have all helped to provide a regime despite low staffing and ever-changing prisoner demographics. Moreover, the high performing healthcare provision and the great work of the staff in the segregation unit are two particular areas which should be lauded for their continued work.

However, moving forward, for further progress to happen, the IMB at Deerbolt feels that more support is required for the management team. In our last report, as members of the community who actively compete for staff with businesses such as Deerbolt, we cited that staffing issues were a concern regionally and that, for our businesses to succeed we had to change the pay level for staff wages to be more competitive and to get the right candidates. We feel that though Deerbolt staff have seen slight pay increases, to get the right staff and maintain those who are currently in post, this must be reviewed once more. Getting the right candidates would allow the prison to continually run an effective regime. We feel that the current key prison challenges could all be improved by investment in a bid to eventually reduce recidivism rates in the wider community (e.g. by increasing key worker sessions, education provision and meaningful activity).

Issue raised	Response given	Action taken
<p>To the Minister</p> <p>Have ministers understood the challenges regarding employing new recruits in the north-east of England?</p>	<p>His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) say they hold monthly meetings with recruitment bodies locally and the senior management team to ensure exit interviews are conducted.</p>	<p>There have been some increases in staff numbers during this period, particularly with staff on detached duty from other establishments, but radical action is required to provide local solutions to specific recruiting challenges.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service</p> <p>Could there be an easier and less time-consuming way of prison staff logging prisoner interactions so that independent groups such as the IMB can be aware of prisoner interactions?</p> <p>When transfers are the logical conclusion but other prisons with greater provision are reluctant to facilitate moves, does the Prison Service have powers to be able to force transfers of prisoners to more suitable establishments?</p> <p>Can we receive increased information from the prison service on statistics between similar prisons?</p>	<p>HMPPS defined the difference between wellbeing checks and key worker sessions regarding the offender management in custody (OMiC) model.</p> <p>HMPPS says there is an operational escalation model for such prisoners and that they are regularly, and coherently reviewed.</p> <p>HMPPS says we are welcome to receive information from the HMPPS Performance Hub which provides information for comparisons between prisons.</p>	<p>The IMB is now confident in regard to the framework and understands that all information has to be recorded. We would perhaps suggest that the reasoning behind our question about logging prisoner interactions is to free up staff time to help with staffing issues as opposed to questioning the framework. We suppose this question can be reviewed in the future.</p> <p>The IMB is still concerned about the time taken to transfer prisoners from one establishment to another. However, we now understand that this is not always due to the dialogue not being there; this could be due to other reasons.</p> <p>The IMB is happy to be offered this service, however, we would wish to find out more about the key performance indicators and how they are measured.</p>
<p>To the Governor</p>		

<p>Do you think there is more that could have been achieved this year to reduce prisoner lock-up time?</p>	<p>The prison says that there is, of course, more that can be learnt looking back in hindsight, but they are continuing to try their best to ensure that this is not a concern in the future.</p>	<p>The IMB is confident that the prison Governor is aware of our concerns about meaningful activity and is attempting to work through this ever-changing landscape.</p>
<p>Are there things that can be done to use the green space within the prison, particularly on the outer perimeter of the establishment?</p>	<p>The Governor and senior management team say they are looking into the potential to bring in initiatives to utilise the facilities within the prison.</p>	<p>The IMB is satisfied with the work the prison is trying to achieve to utilise the facilities. With incentives scheme changes, the prison has had a local professional football club in offering training, has run successful sports days and has introduced a park run initiative to utilise these facilities. The IMB is happy with the vision of the management to utilise Deerbolt's potential. There could, however, be more innovative schemes.</p>
<p>What do you see as the future of key worker sessions and other official logged methods for important prisoner interactions?</p>	<p>The senior management team say they are trying their best to adhere to the OMiC model for prisoner interactions but that they can always improve with key worker sessions.</p>	<p>The IMB is still concerned with the low level of key worker sessions happening in the establishment but realises that this is not due to the prison not endeavouring to provide this form of prisoner interaction. Moving forward, this is an area that we will continue to monitor.</p>

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The safer custody team monitor and share information about vulnerable prisoners via weekly meetings.

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception and induction of prisoners on their arrival in to Deerbolt is thorough.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

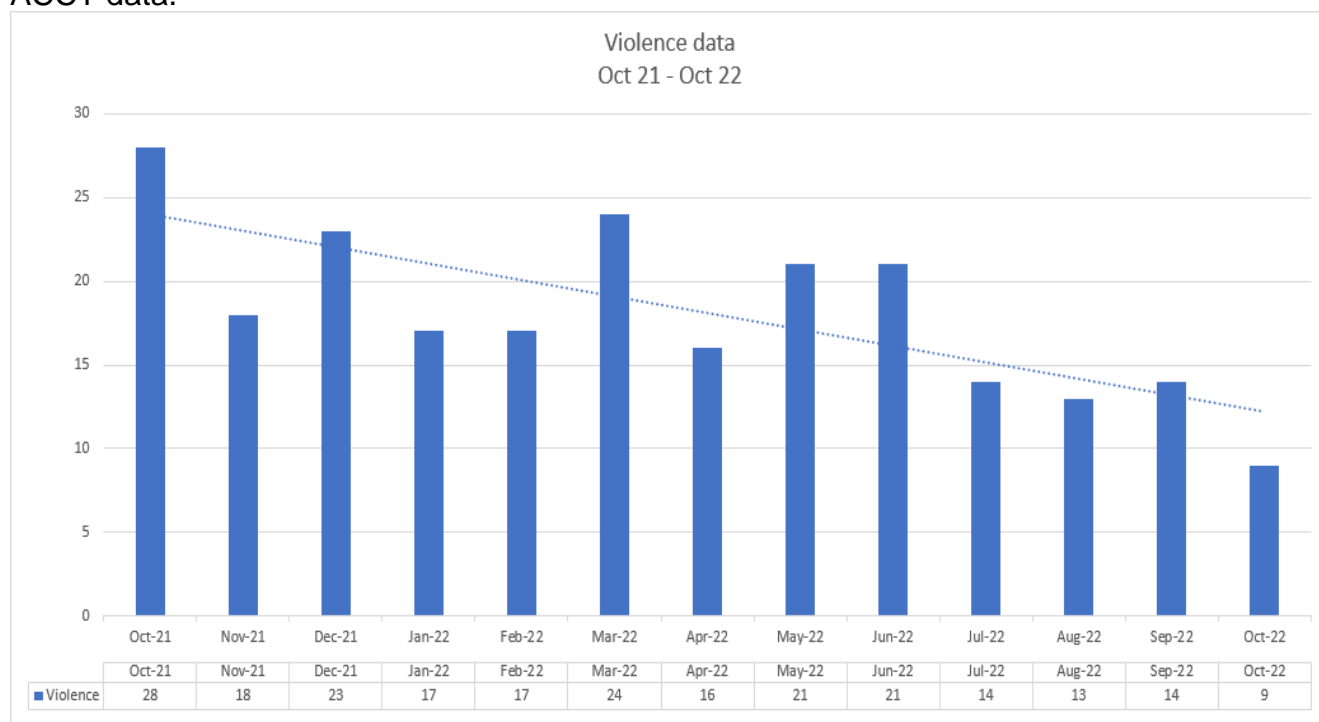
Thankfully, there were no deaths in custody and no suicides in the reporting year. Incidents of self-harm do occur regularly at Deerbolt. Given the age profile of the prisoners, this is perhaps not surprising, as HMPPS data shows 18-24-year-old prisoners are more likely to self-harm than older prisoners. The IMB believes this may be further exacerbated at Deerbolt as many prisoners accommodated here are far from their home areas which can increase problems of isolation.

The observed response of prison staff to incidents of self-harm appears to be caring, supportive and thorough. However, self-harm does remain an ongoing concern to the IMB. An IMB member attends the weekly SIM meeting whenever possible and are given full access to ACCT data.



4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Prisoner violence on an individual basis is an ongoing problem particularly resulting in damage to cells, as is the gang culture prevalent between certain groups of individuals. Management of individuals by staff, awareness of associates and non-associates and coordinating intelligence has proved crucial in containing trouble. Gang culture, prisoner violence and substance abuse are well recognized issues at Deerbolt and statistics reported daily in the stability report. An IMB member attends the weekly SIM meeting whenever possible and are given full access to CSIP and ACCT data.



Use of force, both in terms of the number of incidents and the number of prisoners involved, is not currently a concern of the IMB at Deerbolt. When there is an incident of use of force, we are quickly made aware of the circumstances surrounding the use. When appropriate, the Board are made aware and are invited to view BWVC footage.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Substance misuse and how illicit substances enter the prison is an ongoing problem. The IMB have discussed with the Governor the searching regime at the prison and he has acknowledged our concerns.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing and food

Residential wings – The refurbishment of A, D and F wings has been delayed and will not be completed until March 2023. We understand that the costs have also increased significantly. All three wings have been closed rather than being completed one wing at a time.

The wings and kitchens are as clean as they can be given the age of the prison. Only I wing does not have in-cell phones. In September I wing only had three working showers out of 10. The wing had 53 men in the cells. Most of the communal showers were repaired after we raised the issue with the Governor. These showers are poorly screened from the corridor. This wing is next in line for refurbishment. J wing has had up to 16 cells out of use, including the only wheelchair accessible cell in the prison. Some were out of use due to damage caused by prisoners, but most due to water leaks from the ensuite shower facilities, possibly due to poor maintenance.

Laundry – Most of the equipment is old and two machines are out of order. Any breakdowns prove hard to repair. The contingency plan with Holme House works when required. However, if the prison capacity increases to over 500 when the refurbished wings are ready, some investment in the laundry may be required. Prisoners who wear their own clothing are reluctant to send it to the laundry and wash items in the basins in their cells.

Food – The menus are intended to achieve the recommended calorie intake of 2,500 for adult men. The budget is a little over £2 per person per day. The menus are surprisingly varied given the budget. Most of the calories of the food come from carbohydrates. Prisoners have raised the quality and portion size of food with IMB members and at wing forums. Most prisoners supplement their food with canteen orders. Vegan and healthy options are available. Around 50 Muslim prisoners are catered for and during Ramadan are given their meal choices outside the fasting period. Some prisoners with low BMI are monitored by healthcare and have extra food packs e.g. milkshakes. Additional food can also be prescribed for prisoners taking prescribed medication which makes them feel hungry. Issues with the catering order continue, leading to late menu changes. Snack stations are being introduced in each wing to enable prisoners to prepare some food for themselves between mealtimes.

Polytunnels are being repaired and an additional gardening party will be working in 2023 to grow food to go to the kitchens to be used for the prisoners' meals.

5.2 Segregation

There are 13 cells and two special accommodation cells. The segregation unit has been decorated and upgraded during the reporting year. Cells have new flooring, toilets and basins, which look better and are harder to damage. Furniture has also been replaced. Prisoners can make phone calls in their cells. The exercise yard has been resurfaced and decorated. Exercise equipment is available and posters with

suggested exercise routines are displayed on the walls. A library and static exercise bike are available within the segregation unit and the room provides a suitable space for staff to talk to the men in private.

Seven prisoners spent more than 42 days in segregation (compared to three in the last reporting year). One of these prisoners was recategorised and transferred to a higher security prison. The other prisoners refused to leave the segregation unit. They seemed to be attempting to negotiate transfers to other prisons or to particular wings within Deerbolt. These moves were not supported because of safety concerns due to their behaviour towards staff or other prisoners.

The IMB could not attend reviews when social distancing measures were in place, due to the size of the room, and subsequently has attended infrequently due to our own recruitment issues. Reviews which were observed followed the set procedure and appeared fair.

Use of special accommodation has been infrequent and of short duration. The IMB has been informed promptly and is satisfied that the use of this accommodation has been proportionate to the behaviour of the prisoners.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The low number of key work (KW) sessions was raised in our last report and remains a concern. Around 30% of the expected KW sessions take place. Many of the applications made to the IMB are about not being able to talk to prison offender managers (POMs), probation officers or KWs. Staffing levels in the prison have been low which has resulted in prisoners spending too much time on restricted regimes rather than in purposeful activities. However, recruitment campaigns have increased staffing levels slightly and retention has also improved.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Diversity and equality management team meetings are held bi-monthly. Discrimination incident training has been provided for staff and prisoners and a diversity and inclusion learning hub is available – this includes material on neurodiversity and hidden disabilities. Discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) are sent to Durham County Council for quality assurance. Staff and prisoner forums meet quarterly, attended by staff and prisoner representatives.

A calendar of events is available and published on Wayout TV around the prison. These events include religious festivals, Remembrance Day and autism and dyslexia weeks. Themed meals are included in the menu to highlight some celebrations. Managers have access to detailed statistics about the prison population and how many men have any of the protected characteristics. They are able to monitor the application of the incentives scheme across, for example, ethnic groups and age groups of prisoners.

The IMB is confident that Deerbolt takes diversity and inclusion seriously. Training has been provided throughout the year and the low level of complaints about discrimination or inclusion supports this view.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Deerbolt has a multi-faith chaplaincy team which has been stretched during the reporting year due to staff changes and vacancies. Nevertheless, the IMB has observed the team providing support to prisoners and staff regardless of their religious beliefs or lack of faith. Religious services are available, as are private prayers for friends and family. The chaplains are trained counsellors who are able to support and care for all in Deerbolt – a valued and valuable resource for the prison.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme is in line with the national framework and is reviewed every six months. Prisoners are informed via leaflets and wing forums when the process change. As Deerbolt came out of social distancing and other pandemic measures, the incentives scheme introduced a three-month good behaviour period to achieve enhanced status, rather than the previous 28 days. This is a challenge for some of the prisoners. The scheme was updated at the end of our reporting year and enhanced status now includes access to a weekly football league, a park run, games consoles (providing they meet security criteria) and access to the twinning project with Hartlepool United football club.

5.7 Complaints

The majority of complaints relate to property issues (27% in the six months to October 2022) and most of the property referred to was clothing. A small number of complaints were about reduced gym access for prisoners employed within the prison. Managers are working on improving the scheduling so that employed prisoners do not lose their gym access. Complaints increased during the summer months when the regime started to open up again. Complaints information (number, themes and trends) is discussed at the daily briefing with the Governor, and the business hub manager conducts detailed analysis of all complaints for the senior leadership. Officer response times have been reduced to ensure prisoners get their replies within the target of five working days (10 if the complaint is about an officer). Reminders are given at the daily briefing so late responses are now unusual. Complaint forms have recently been revised to make them more user friendly and will be launched soon. Feedback is given by the business hub manager at the weekly performance meeting. There are encouraging signs that the number of complaints is going down.

IMB members have been approached by prisoners regarding the absence of complaint forms on the wings. We have observed this ourselves and have noticed the absence of IMB application forms as well. We understand that the business hub staff are addressing this issue.

5.8 Property

During the year the Board observed that personal possessions did not always arrive with prisoners where they had been transferred from other establishments. Inevitably these were eventually resolved

An external manager analysed the complaints process within Deerbolt, resulting in several instructions being given to achieve improvement. Early analysis shows a reduction in property complaints.

See also comments above under section 5.7 (complaints).

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Physical healthcare and drug and alcohol testing services are provided by Spectrum. Historically, a GP service has been provided by Barnard Castle surgery, although this contract is ending in December 2022 with the service now employing 2 locum GP's and 1 ANP.

Dental care is provided by Burgess and Hyder.

Mental healthcare is provided by Tees Esk and Wear Valley Foundation NHS Trust (TEWV) and the Humankind charity.

A local delivery board, chaired by the Governor, meets monthly, and an IMB member is invited and regularly attends.

There has been a common theme during this reporting period of staff sickness and staff vacancies with healthcare suffering staffing pressures. It is pleasing to note, however, that the service provided by healthcare has not been compromised by such pressures and medication and care have always been provided in a timely manner.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Non-attendance at appointments has been a common theme throughout the reporting period. Reasons given are that prisoners do not want to get out of bed, have gone to work or the gym, and staffing issues generally around the prison, with a lack of officers meaning there is not enough time to get all the patients to healthcare. New systems have been put in place where patients are now informed the day before that they have an appointment and whether they need to attend during 'line route' or if they will be collected. Whilst this is still work in progress, indications so far are positive, with non-attendance being reduced. More focus is now being put into collaboration with the wing officers.

Covid vaccinations have continued to be rolled out with successful uptakes.

Following problems during the pandemic with dental care, clinics and check-ups together with waiting times have improved vastly.

There are very few issues with physical healthcare at the time of this report, and the healthcare team should be commended for their work, efforts and success rates given the staff shortages. There is a very good working relationship with the various healthcare team members and the wider prison, which appears key to the current success.

6.3 Mental health

All the staff vacancies have been filled, although there were delays in prison vetting which then caused a delay to start dates for new staff.

During the pandemic, care was delivered one to one. Since restrictions were lifted, group work has now been rolled out again, although the limited regime at Deerbolt

due to staffing pressures has impacted on the number of group work sessions and attendance at group work sessions. Some of the group work activities include a trauma group, an acupuncture group, a book group, a Gym group, a therapeutic art group, and many cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions. In addition, the Mental Health team also plans to run a sleep clinic.

The CEO of the Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust visited the mental health team in June, and commended the team following a prompt by an ex-patient's family who gave their thanks for all the support their son had been given whilst at Deerbolt.

6.4 Social care

Very few prisoners have social care needs, but local authority social care assistance can be delivered where there are individual needs.

6.5 Exercise, regime

The limited regime at Deerbolt, due to staff shortages, has had implications for prisoners' time out of their cell each day. Feedback from prisoners, particularly the 25 to 29 age group, suggests that the regime is restrictive in comparison with other prisons in the adult estate – more time locked in cells, no access to kiosks and prisoners treated as young adults rather than adults.

Structured on-wing activity (SOWA) has restarted and evening gym sessions are available. The gymnasium provision was also reviewed and relaunched in October 2022. Deerbolt has the benefit of some excellent exercise facilities, including the gym and playing fields. As Covid restrictions were lifted, prisoners had more time allowed for education, training, exercise, association etc.

There is a common theme noted by Deerbolt IMB that prisoners are still spending too much time in their cells with too little to do. The Governor and staff at Deerbolt appear to appreciate this and are trying to fill the vacancies left by staff shortage which in turn will assist in getting prisoners back to a full and normal regime.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Vacancy rates within Humankind have been high due to long term sickness.

While, the prison frequently performs high level work to ascertain prisoner intelligence and structures activity comprehensively to support supply reductions, towards the end of the reporting period, there were still no group work sessions being delivered due to the staffing levels in the drug and alcohol recovery team (DART). The priority was new transfers in for induction and harm reduction and structured face-to-face work. One of the vacancies is for a support worker, and once in place, recovery co-ordinators can start delivering groups.

DART regularly attend healthcare board meetings, and it is clear that there is good collaboration with the other healthcare teams.

DART has worked very closely with the team on the induction wing to make sure that new inductees were able to get harm reduction advice in a face-to-face session, even if this was at cell doors.

6.7 Soft skills

Covid regimes have generally affected most activities, although towards the end of this reporting period, group activities had restarted as referred to in section 6.3 above.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Over the last year, good progress has been made in re-establishing normal routines for the provision of education and vocational studies. It is apparent that prisoners are more gainfully engaged in some form of activity during the working day. There are still challenges being faced by both the prison and Novus to fully staff all areas of expected provision. The IMB remains concerned, especially about the perception of how frequently provision is cancelled due to staffing or accommodation issues. We are, however, aware that cancellation of provision due to operational constraint is a widespread problem within the prison system. We also remain concerned about access to education and training, particularly for age 25+ prisoners. The vocational training options are limited and have not changed since the prison age range was increased, though we understand that the prison has a new focus on employability skills – the IMB will monitor these developments.

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Interestingly, a study by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) found that young adults were less likely to participate in education, training, or work activities while in custody compared to adults. The study also found that young adults were more likely to have poor literacy and numeracy skills, which can make it more difficult for them to engage in and benefit from education programs.

In 2016, the Ministry of Justice's report 'Reducing reoffending through skills and employment' found that prisoners who participated in education and training while in custody were more likely to find employment after release and less likely to reoffend. A more recent study by the EPI showed that prisoners who took part in education, training or work while in custody were 15% less likely to reoffend within a year of release compared to those who did not.

Lessons observed in maths and English were in small groups. It was noted that the prisoners were not as engaged as those in vocational studies. An encouraging take-up has been observed by prisoners of the scheme Storybook Dads. They can record bedtime stories on to compact discs which are then sent home.

The library is now fully functional and staff from Durham County Council are working to provide a range of books requested by the prisoners. Earlier on in the year, 336 visits or requests had been made to library services and this will undoubtedly have risen significantly since then, reading providing a significant escape from the realities of prison life. It was felt that library provision during the Christmas break could be better, to give access to reading materials whilst less activity is going on elsewhere.

These all appear to represent imaginative and very welcome developments. However, as these are all very recent initiatives, their impact will only become fully assessable in the next reporting period.

7.2 Vocational, work

Since the appointment of a new acting Governor in September 2022 a range of new initiatives has already been introduced, including educational programmes focussed on first aid, Active IQ and fitness instructor and football coaching skills.

During visits by IMB members, it has been pleasing to see more engagement with the range of courses currently on offer. Barbering, decorating, the bike workshop and carpentry prove popular and the level of positive engagement by prisoners during lessons is encouraging. It would appear that resources available are not being used to their full potential, for example, a range of equipment/wood working machinery is unable to be used due to a lack of appropriate servicing/repair when required.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The IMB has long had concerns regarding the lack of dialogue between case managers and prison officers to successfully progress prisoners through their complementing sentence plans. However, the IMB is confident that when the work is joined up, the case management and progression work is at a very high level. We say this particularly as we are constantly kept in the loop regarding the progression of prisoners, especially when they have a complex case.

There are only two accredited programmes in Deerbolt: the Thinking Skills Programme and Kaizen. The Kaizen programme is one-to-one with a long waiting list. Prisoners have expressed concern about not being able to do the Kaizen programme and do not seem to be able to talk to their POMs about how this will be addressed.

7.4 Family contact

Historically, family contact through visits can be limited. Given that Deerbolt houses prisoners from much wider reaches of the UK, visiting by family members can be challenging, the main issue appearing to be less available public transport and distances covered (because of the costs involved).

Visits now take place regularly and follow the same format used before the pandemic. The number of family days across the year has also recently been increased from six to 12. More use is made of social video calls which can go some way to alleviating this problem. Prisoners have raised concerns about the 10-minute limit on telephone calls, especially for those with children. The North East Prison Aftercare Society (NEPACS) team have regularly received praise from visitors, and IMB members are continually impressed with their work.

A large portion of applications from prisoners to the IMB are regarding requests for transfers closer to home.

7.5 Resettlement planning

At Deerbolt, prisoners are supported by a P/T, pre-release and short sentence operative. As per our last reporting period, the IMB is very confident about the quality of resettlement planning at Deerbolt, with staff regularly praised both locally and regionally for their work.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	2
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	132
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line*	N/A
Total number of segregation reviews attended	3

*if relevant

Applications to the IMB (including via the 0800 telephone line, if relevant)

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	x	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	x	2
C	Equality	x	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	x	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	x	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	x	0
F	Food and kitchens	x	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	x	2
H1	Property within this establishment	x	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	x	1
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	x	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	x	1
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	x	4
K	Transfers	x	3
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	x	0
	Total number of applications	x	24



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