



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Forest Bank

**For reporting year
1 November 2021 – 31 October 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/YOI Forest Bank is a privately run category B male prison, located in Manchester which has been operated by Sodexo for over 20 years. Currently designated a reception and resettlement prison, it can hold up to 1460 men and young adults. The prison has three primary purposes: to receive those recently remanded in custody and hold them until their court appearances are concluded; to hold those who are serving short prison sentences; and to hold those requiring resettlement support as their release date approaches. Convicted men with time to serve would be expected to be allocated to training establishments elsewhere.

The prison, originally opened in 2000, has relatively modern buildings. It has an operational capacity of 1460. There are eight residential houseblocks with a total of 16 wings. There is also a healthcare centre, with a 20-bed capacity and a care and separation unit (CSU) which can house up to 25 residents. Other areas of the prison include: an education centre with classrooms, a library and computer suite. Facilities also include a chapel, a sports hall and an all-weather sports pitch. There is an industries wing comprising separate workshops, a reception centre, a visits hall, an administration block and kitchens.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Over the last year, the prison has continued to deal with its transition from a local prison to a reception and resettlement prison, the impact of Covid-19 and the impact of restrictions on the regime, on staff (almost a quarter of staff were there for a year or less), and on prisoners. It has, also, had three new directors since November 2021, the latest being appointed in August 2022.

In August 2021, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) issued Sodexo with a formal improvement notice because of its concern about the safety of prisoners and the conditions in which they were being held. In February 2022, there was an unannounced inspection of Forest Bank by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) jointly undertaken with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the regulator for health and social care services in England and Ofsted, which undertook the inspection of the education department. Acknowledging the impact of Covid, that Forest Bank was still transitioning from a local prison to a reception prison and that there was simply not enough space to accommodate all new prisoners (about 300 a month), resulting in significant numbers of prisoners being diverted to other prisons out of the area, the inspection judged the prison regime as poor. Ofsted judged the education provision within the prison as inadequate. However, HMIP did acknowledge that following the HMPPS formal improvement notice, there was swift intervention: a new director and deputy director were appointed to lead the prison and an extensive programme of refurbishment to the wings was carried out with significant improvements to living conditions. HMIP, whilst aware more work needed to be done to reduce the levels of violence, to reduce the levels of drugs and other illicit items being brought into the prison as well as maintaining staffing levels, was nevertheless encouraged that these matters had been identified and were beginning to get addressed.

In September 2022, the operational capacity of the prison was increased by 96 bringing it up to full capacity of 1460 prisoners. Under the guidance of the new Director, a comprehensive programme of reform has been instigated. The key priorities are to create momentum as well as prison stability for a sustained period focusing on good prisoner management, regime consistency with an emphasis on purposeful activity for prisoners, keeping prisoners safe and the prison secure.

For the year up to the beginning of the period of this review the overriding concern was the containment of Covid in a fast-moving, dynamic environment. This was dealt with in the Board's last report. As we entered this reporting period, the prison was back to a level 2 site with restrictions significantly eased, although staff absences continued for a considerable time.

Under the guidance of the new Director, the key priorities have changed, and the focus has moved to deal with the two main issues on the agenda: the fabric of the prison, with its safety, humanity and decency implications, and the ability to finally gear up to the role of Manchester's reception prison.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Covid, violence, drugs, staff shortages and inexperienced staff have all contributed to prisoners not feeling safe for much of this reporting year, (1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022). However, with a comprehensive reform programme now in progress the situation has improved over the last few months. Levels of violence and self-harm have started to come down since September 2022 and it is hoped that this continues.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

With lockdown restrictions only being eased towards the end of 2021, it meant, as was the case in many prisons throughout the prison estate, that most prisoners were locked up for 23 hours each day, often in cramped conditions, with another cellmate in a cell originally designed for one. There was little to no purposeful activity although in-cell education and booklets were handed out. Prisoners also had to eat their meals in their cell, many of which needed refurbishment and next to a toilet that was not fully screened off. Efforts were made by staff to allow prisoners out for a shower but those testing positive for Covid were kept in isolation in their cells often for as long as 14 days.

With the refurbishment of all the residential wings now complete, the easing of lockdown restrictions and the prison's focus on increasing purposeful activity through industries, education, gym and social visits, there has been a significant improvement in prisoners' living conditions and the prison regime.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Generally, prisoners' health and wellbeing needs are reasonably met. The standard of healthcare received by most prisoners is positive with all internal services resumed since the pandemic. Prisoners can now use the kiosk to make appointments which is a welcome improvement. Pressure on the NHS means that a long waiting time for an external appointment is the norm. Waiting for a dental appointment in the prison has similar waiting times to that in the community. However, the waiting times for transferring prisoners under the Mental Health Act to hospital are too long, although it is accepted that this is outside HMP Forest Bank's control. Finally, there is a strong and dedicated integrated substance misuse team working with prisoners helping them address their drug and alcohol addictions.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

As the purpose of the prison has changed and the majority of prisoners are now remand or unsentenced prisoners, who mostly are at HMP Forest Bank

for less than eight weeks, the focus on resettlement and ongoing offender management work has less relevance. However, the offender management unit (OMU) continues to assess risk, offer traditional courses such as the Thinking Skills Programme, as well as offering short courses dealing mainly with the use of violence in the prison and a restorative approach for both perpetrators and victims. There is also assistance provided in writing CVs, preparing for job interviews, as well as back-to-work courses.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

What measures will you take to ease the ongoing pressure on HMP Forest Bank to make space for the large number of prisoners arriving from court each weekday so that prisoners do not need to be diverted to other prisons outside the area?

What measures will you take to ensure that the transfer of prisoners to hospital under the Mental Health Act occurs within the Department of Health guidance timescales?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Can you provide reassurance that adequate resourcing will be made available to provide for a staffed inpatient unit and further therapeutic services as part of the contract bid made by Spectrum and their provision of regulated activities at HMP Forest Bank from April 2023?

TO THE DIRECTOR

With the appointment of a new head of education, skills and work, as of January 2023, can the Director give assurance that a curriculum more aligned with prisoners' needs will be implemented?

Progress since the last report

Since we last reported, there has been an improvement in prison conditions at Forest Bank. A new Director has been appointed, who will hopefully remain in post for the foreseeable future, and a reform programme is in place. Whilst levels of violence within the prison are still too high, both violent incidents and self-harm have come down in recent months. The residential wings, CSU and healthcare have all been refurbished and both purposeful activity and out of cell time have increased. A new head of education, skills and work has been appointed and it is hoped that this will help address the educational needs of the changing demographic and prison population now at Forest Bank.

The IMB is happy to acknowledge the significant improvements in the prison regime which have taken place in the last four to five months.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The enhanced activity of the security team has made the prison a safer place to reside and work in. All staff now pass through airport type security every time they enter the facility with individuals being picked at random by the system for a more thorough search behind screens. This is complemented by a full body scanner in the reception area for prisoners as they are booked in. During its inspection in February 2022, HMIP found, however, that Forest Bank's outcomes for prisoners' safety were not sufficiently good.

4.1 Reception and induction

With the prison's change of purpose, reception numbers have increased significantly on a daily basis, which continues to be a challenge, as up to 30 new prisoners (both remand and sentenced) arrive daily from court. Approximately 60% of prisoners spend less than eight weeks at Forest Bank. This led to the creation of an early days centre based on E wing where first time prisoners are inducted over a five-day timetable and repeat prisoners receive a fast-track two-day version carried out by staff, Insiders, Listeners, and members of the chaplaincy before they are settled into residential units. One new development has been the preparation of induction handbooks for non-English speaking foreign national prisoners, which are kept up to date in the ten most popular languages and which can be printed off in reception as they arrive.

HMIP, when it inspected in February 2022, was concerned that although the reception area was clean, and processes efficient, the assessment of prisoners' risks were not always explored thoroughly during initial safety meetings. Peer support provided in the first few days was found to be good, but the induction programme was still not running in full, and too many new prisoners felt ill-prepared for prison life. Vulnerable prisoners felt significantly less safe on their first night compared with the rest of the population. Since then, the early days in custody processes have been reviewed and developed. Early indications would suggest that improvements have been made and that prisoners do feel safer. Safer custody has taken over E-wing to accommodate the most vulnerable prisoners through their initial days in custody, during which risk assessments are carried out.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The head of safer custody or the Director chairs a weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) where managers proactively deal with the needs of the more complex cases and try to reduce cases of both self-harm and violence. The figures at the end of this section compare the level of self-harm over the period January 2021 to December 2021 and January 2022 to October 2022

and show that whilst the levels remain high, they have begun to come down in the latter part of 2022. Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) (V6) continues to be operated throughout the establishment and daily figures are published on operational reports, split down by wings. There were regrettably five deaths in custody during the reporting period. Three of these are currently being dealt with by the Coroner and two were deemed to be by natural causes.

HMIP, during its inspection, recorded that the level of self-harm had dropped by about 20% since the previous inspection and that levels were similar to other local prisons, but found that there was insufficient support for prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide. The safety team was small and did not have a sufficient profile across the prison. Prisoners could not reliably access a Listener (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) and the scheme was not promoted well. The operation of the new assessment, care in custody and teamwork case management process for prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm was not good enough.

Table 1: Level of Self-harm:

	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
2021	114	65	57	76	64	110	81	99	91	72	76	89
2022	83	70	61	78	75	85	130	103	65	50		

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

HMIP found 24% of men felt unsafe due to violence. Although there was a spike in violence generally over the summer of 2022, this was due to a specific set of circumstances which have since been addressed. The prison in recent months has witnessed a reduction in violence, the number of incidents being back to what it was in November 2021. However, it is of concern that in-cell violence continues to rise. Changes have been made to senior management within the safer custody team, who through weekly safety intervention meetings (SIM) continue to oversee violence management interventions and address violent behaviour within custody. Safer custody also oversees the process of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) for the most violent prisoners, who are allocated a responsible manager who operates to a review timetable and agrees any further actions. The team has introduced a new violence reduction policy through a number of different programmes and a new safeguarding policy for adult prisoners, including a referral process if required. Despite the challenges Forest Bank faced during the pandemic, the prison's CSIP self-assessment has now been signed off for successful CSIP implementation by HMPPS. Another new initiative involves a weapons amnesty where a secure depository is circulated around the facility to remove dangerous and illicit weapons.

One area which continues to challenge Forest Bank is young adults between 18 and 25, who are disproportionately represented in violent incidents. Although still in the initial stages, the prison is in the process of developing a young adults' wing with selected staff and support services aimed at addressing the needs of this group. In addition to the above measures, an incentives scheme has been re-introduced and utilised along with the introduction of a fresh start wing for prisoners displaying anti-social behaviour. The effectiveness of this remains to be seen, as it may bring its own problems, with the focus more on punitive measures than promoting good behaviour. It is hoped, however, that the creation of a fresh start wing which prisoners refusing to transfer out of Forest Bank will also be put on, will ease the ever-increasing daily pressure of moving prisoners on to other establishments. Prison security has been improved, which has reduced the amount of contraband in the prison. It is thought this may have had an impact on violence but as yet, management is unclear if there is a link.

Table 2: Level of Violence

	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
2021	65	39	58	44	49	47	59	49	54	40	47	59
2022	52	52	52	53	53	62	50	79	68	53		

4.4 Use of force

The trends for use of force (UOF) are monitored by the safer custody team. It has three members for the current year: a manager, who reports directly to the head of safer custody, a senior officer, and an analyst. A weekly use of force review meeting with other departments checks that the force used is lawful and compliant with policies. It also provides recognition for staff and identifies key learning points. The roll out for the use of rigid bar handcuffs and training for all operational staff has been completed and the use of handcuffs is now recorded as UOF. There is an appointed UOF coordinator who monitors all relevant activity and provides support to staff from initiation to completion of the paperwork. All UOF activity is recorded on the daily operational log.

HMIP found that the number of incidents involving the use of force was high. It also found that a range of data, although reviewed and analysed, was not used to make improvements. It recommended that staff should receive more training and supervision to give them the confidence, knowledge, and skills to engage meaningfully with prisoners, support those who need their help and

challenge poor behaviour consistently. In response to this recommendation the prison has created a wing expectations document regarding applying consistent standards and there are one-to-one meetings between staff and managers, but this is an area that requires more work. As indicated in the table below, whilst the number of UOF incidents has reduced since the latter part of 2021, the figures remain higher than desirable.

Table 3: Use of Force

	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
2021	141	91	130	92	110	128	141	90	113	122	123	113
2022	91	97	110	91	90	66	74	96	62	88		

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison continues to take a proactive stance against contraband, focusing on the supply of drugs and illicit items, organised crime and staff corruption. Various measures have been introduced to improve the overall security and good order of the prison. With the increased deployment of the northwest area search team sniffer dogs and professional handlers, there has been a notable increase in the amount of goods detected, particularly around the perimeter fence area but also in cells, incoming mail including alleged legal mail, and around general areas of the prison such as the visitors' car park. Secondly, the exercise yards have been covered in much heavier duty netting. This, combined with the new improved windows fitted, make it significantly harder for prisoners to retrieve throwovers. The prison will be installing additional netting and it is anticipated that this will make it harder for associates of prisoners to throw in contraband from the adjoining parkland in which the prison sits.



Netting covering the exercise yard

HMIP, although finding that 40% of prisoners said it was easy to obtain illicit drugs, which was higher than the average for other similar prisons (26%), it was lower than when it inspected the prison in 2019, when it was 61%. It also found that intelligence received was good, that the security team worked well with the integrated substance misuse team and that the links with Greater Manchester Police were effective. The security team, HMIP found, had a good understanding of the risks posed by staff corruption.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The main residential section of the prison comprises wings A to F. These have recently undergone significant refurbishment to raise the standards of decency and prevent access to contraband.

Cells have been freshly painted, all windows replaced, and all repairs carried out. Cells are reasonably well equipped. The prison has employed a selection of prisoners in the role of decency peer workers to maintain the upkeep of the wing. Some prisoners say this role helps maintain the wings' sense of pride and improves their overall sense of purpose. Decency workers also attend regular meetings to report and monitor any emergency issues relating to living

conditions. Overall, the communal areas on wings are found to be generally clean and tidy when monitored by the IMB. Shower facilities are currently at a poor standard, the drainage is poor, and they appear generally dirty. The shower rooms have a screen near the main entrance but no sectioned cubicles, therefore there is insufficient privacy for prisoners. There are plans to refurbish all shower rooms on residential wings, the CSU, and healthcare but at present this work has not started.

During the pandemic, prisoners had to eat their meals in their cells, which was unpleasant as they had to sit next to the toilet which was not screened off. Now, with restrictions eased, they have the choice to eat communally or in their cell. The IMB received six applications with concerns relating to kitchens and food during this period. This increased by two applications from the previous period. Kitchens are monitored regularly by the IMB, as are wing serveries. The establishment had an issue with pest control, which has now been dealt with. This impacted negatively on the prison's previously high hygiene rating, however, following the recommendations from Salford council, the prison has now been reassessed and the previous rating has been restored. Several changes have been made this year to promote prisoner wellbeing, which include displaying all nutritional information about food for all individuals, including staff. This information can be accessed on kiosks available on each wing and is available on the printed menu in the dining area. Menus are now changed every six months, aiming to provide balance and diversity to meal choices. Kitchens support a diverse range of religious and cultural festivals as well as providing several daily choices for vegetarians, vegans, and for religious and special dietary requirements.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit comprises 24 cells with an additional constant observation cell, meeting room and two specialist cells. There are two showers, a wing sery and two designated exercise yards. The segregation unit is usually found clean, tidy and well managed when the IMB has observed. The unit has also been part of the refurbishment programme. Rounds are carried out daily by managers, chaplaincy, and the health department, which includes doctors, nurses and mental health support. The Board attends adjudications and good order reviews and can report, in its experience, that procedures are usually carried out correctly. The focus around prisoner decency is rightly continued to the segregation unit. Each day prisoners have time to clean their cells, use the phone, shower and exercise, though the exercise yard is very small, bare and has no equipment. There are plans however to allow prisoners to exercise together, subject to safety and security considerations.

HMIP during its February 2022 inspection found that the use of segregation was slightly higher than at its last inspection in 2019 and that almost half of those prisoners were waiting for their adjudication and could have been held on the main wing. The IMB noted that, during the refurbishment of the unit this year, numbers held in segregation dropped significantly but on completion of the works the numbers again increased to full, or almost full capacity.

However, it is fair to say, most prisoners the IMB speaks to in segregation say they are well treated by staff, which corresponds with HMIP's findings. We would also agree with HMIP that staff have a good knowledge of those in their care and that interactions are polite.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The staff-prisoner relationship continues to be positive overall; prisoners appear to have good relationships with gym staff, chaplaincy, kitchen and workshop staff. It has been reported by staff that the key worker scheme that started in such a positive manner is continuing to struggle due to ongoing staff shortages. Staff report they have 10 to 22 prisoners each who they need to support with key work. Each session should take place weekly for 45 minutes. The timeframe includes supporting the prisoner with several areas including self-harm, relationships, mental health and education and includes a write-up. Staff say they find it extremely difficult to carry out quality, person-centred key work sessions as it is often in addition to their primary duties. Several prisoners who were asked about key work either could not identify who their key worker was or could not recall their last session.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The diversity and inclusion action team (DIAT), with its dedicated manager, has continued to make all staff and prisoners aware of Sodexo's policy on diversity and inclusion. It also works hard to ensure that any individual's special needs, such as getting reading glasses, a hearing aid, or accessible transport, is catered for.

During the reporting period, DIAT had monthly awareness themes across the prison. Examples include LGBT+, transgender themes, international women's day, stress awareness, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, the over 50's, learning disabilities and Black history. It also holds a one-to-one surgery, often daily, with prisoners who request it. As a result, 149 prisoners were placed on personal evacuation plans (PEEP) and 127 disability cards issued. One hundred and sixty-nine prisoners who self-declared learning difficulties were subsequently referred to the education team for further support. The team, which works closely with the foreign nationals co-ordinator, has made 307 in-cell calls to men needing help. Overall, 1638 prisoners declared either on induction or during the year that they wanted to be flagged as needing support. There was a total of 47 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) handed in by prisoners. This was down from 73 last year.

HMIP, during its inspection, found that whilst there was some good data collection, it was limited to issues such as use of force and adjudications. It further found that whilst the prison analysed the data effectively and identified disproportionate outcomes for certain protected groups, it was not followed up by action.

This was particularly the case where, through focus groups, the prison had identified that black and minority ethnic prisoners felt disadvantaged when it came to work allocations and thought their views were not considered to the same extent as those of other prisoners. The prison did not, however, investigate or address those negative perceptions. Support for transgender prisoners was found to be sufficient and prisoners said they had good contact with the diversity officer.

At the time of HMIP's inspection, there were 177 foreign national prisoners, 33 of whom did not speak English. The prison has a dedicated foreign national coordinator who provides good support and runs a fortnightly surgery alongside immigration officers from the Home Office. Interpretation services were used as well as bilingual staff, for example, for key work sessions. However, some prisoners struggled with everyday tasks, such as making applications through the kiosk. Social video calling facilities for foreign national prisoners were available, but the uptake was low, even though the prison had made significant efforts to advertise the service in different languages.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The Board is pleased to report that following the disruption caused by Covid, the chaplaincy team can now deliver their usual standards of support to the prison population. Worship and religious classes have now resumed and are well attended by prisoners. The team continues to respond to around 40 applications per day from prisoners, which takes a significant amount of their time but provides resolutions to many problems. They also ensure that weekly resources from chaplaincy HQ faith advisors are distributed to prisoners according to their faith.

All the partner agencies who worked with the chaplaincy prior to the pandemic are back on board. These include the Message Trust, the Prison Fellowship, the Phoenix Trust, AA, the Light House Church, and the Mothers Union. Funeral escorts and visits to dying relatives can be arranged by the chaplaincy and, provided that security clearances and risk assessments are completed, prisoners are allowed to attend funerals of loved ones. The team have signed a senior leadership agreement with CRUSE Bereavement Services. A bereavement counsellor now comes into the prison weekly. This service currently has a waiting list of around 30 men.

5.7 Complaints

There have been, during the reporting period, a total number of 3,512 formal complaints from prisoners. This total is made up of 3,147 Comp 1s, 257 Comp 1As and 81 confidential access complaints. This compares with last year's figures of a total of 3,187 complaints which was made up of 2,898 Comp 1s, 222 Comp 1As and 67 confidential access complaints.

5.8 Property

Property continues to be an issue, but the prison recently changed how parcels for prisoners are accepted into the establishment, to help control stored and lost property. Parcels are no longer sent via post but are delivered in person at the prison. Prisoners book a time slot within their first 28 days of arrival and their family or friends deliver the parcel by hand. Items still follow the same security procedure, but are returned immediately if unsuitable or the prisoner has maximised the amount of property they are allowed to hold. This aims to lessen the storage of property within the prison and prevent prisoners' belongings from going missing. Prisoners have a 28-day property window to receive property when they first arrive at the establishment. After this the window closes and prisoners can refresh their property by exchanging like for like items. Prisoners are also entitled to apply for seasonal property every twelve months. Low staffing levels within the department have impacted its efficiency at times but this has been improving in recent months. Prisoners can request property or ask for any property-related support via the kiosks on wings.

Property issues brought about by transfers and court appearances are significantly down from last year. The Board continues to work with other IMBs to resolve property issues created by transfers. Missing property within the prison is also an ongoing issue, with regular complaints from prisoners that property goes missing when they are moved from their wing to the segregation unit.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare provision has achieved and maintained a good standard during 2022. There is a clinical head of healthcare in post who is well respected inside and outside the prison and has a stable workforce. A member of the nursing team attends GOOD reviews, CSU safety reviews, multidisciplinary and ACCT reviews.

The healthcare in-patient unit consists of 10 residential cells, one observation cell, and two shared cells, which can hold up to four beds (three if hospital beds). The unit acts as a residential area for men waiting for either a secure bed or assessment and men identified as having social care needs under the Care Act. On arrival at the establishment, the prisoner receives an initial reception screening focused on first night safety and risk factors including mental health and substance misuse.

On a limited number of IMB rota weekend visits, and particularly during the summer, IMB members noted inadequacy in staffing levels in the healthcare

unit, resulting in delays in prisoners accessing showers or being unlocked for other appropriate reasons. This resulted in the IMB meeting with the Director, who agreed to prioritise staffing in healthcare despite general staff shortages.

6.2 Physical healthcare

All prisoners are offered first night screening on arrival to the prison, followed by a secondary health screen. The primary care team continue to deliver vaccinations in line with the national immunisation schedule. A triage system is offered Monday to Friday using the kiosk system to ensure patient confidentiality, following a recommendation for improvement by the joint HMIP and CQC inspection of February 2022.

The healthcare team continues to offer chronic disease management, health advice and treatment for minor ailments and emergency care. There are also external services who regularly hold clinics in the healthcare department, which include physiotherapy, podiatry and optometry. As the service continues to recover post-pandemic, HMP Forest Bank has resumed all internal services and continues to ensure that the rate of attendance at clinic appointments is maintained. Pressure on the NHS generally continues to make long waiting times the norm for external appointments, whilst the dental service waiting list is reflective of that in the community.

The joint HMIP and CQC inspection of February 2022 found that, despite raising significant concerns at the last two HMIP inspections, the inpatient unit remained poor. The inspection found that ‘there was a lack of clinical leadership to coordinate health care input and no continuous nursing presence. Time out of cell was very limited and there was a lack of therapeutic activities. Patients could not routinely access the day room as it was constantly being used for other purposes.’ The inspection report also recommended that ‘[T]he inpatient unit should deliver a clinically led, purposeful and therapeutic environment.’”

That recommendation was only partly accepted by HMP Forest Bank, because the healthcare provision there does not currently have the commissioning or funding for a staffed inpatient unit or the provision of further therapeutic activities outside of the current psychological wellbeing practitioner services. The need for this resource is recognised by NHS commissioners and the head of healthcare. Sodexo healthcare are currently extracting themselves from the core HMPPS contract and this will be completed by 1 April 2023. A review of the current space for delivery of these services will also be included.

In relation to the part of the recommendation concerning time out of cell, this has increased following easing of Covid-19 restrictions and prisoners are now able to socialise in the day room, with a separate session for those with vulnerabilities. The prisoners in healthcare are also able to attend the servery to collect their own meals whilst face-to-face group education in the dayroom has resumed.

6.3 Mental health

The mental health service at HMP Forest Bank is provided by Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. The primary mental health team offers assessment and support to residents with common mental health disorders through a routine triage, whilst the secondary mental health team (In-reach) offers a service to address severe and enduring mental health needs. There is also a psychological intervention service, which delivers informed interventions such as how to deal with anxiety, not sleeping, stress, etc.

In addition to the case management of residents with severe and enduring mental health needs, the in-reach team provides case management for learning disabilities and other neurodiversity (i.e. autism, ADHD, acquired brain injury). The team also has responsibility for coordinating hospital transfers under the Mental Health Act and remissions from care settings back into the prison estate. A high level of multi-agency working is required within the secondary mental health team, and this includes involvement in multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meetings, pathfinders, and the prison's interdepartmental risk management meeting. The service includes a visiting psychiatry service, which attends the prison on a sessional basis, and input is provided to both primary and secondary mental health patients to inform treatment and risk management. These appointments take place on the residential wings. Prisoners can self-refer to the service via the electronic kiosk system and access a triage appointment with primary mental health.

The most recent HMIP and CQC inspection found that most prisoners requiring a transfer to hospital under the Mental Health Act were still waiting too long for a transfer – nine out of the 12 transfers took between 21 and 159 days. However, the same inspection report found that at HMP Forest Bank 'discharge planning was effective and close liaison with other prisoner partners and community providers made sure patients receive continuity of care post-release.' The inspection report recommended that 'transfer of patients to hospital under the Mental Health Act should occur within Department of Health guidance timescales.' This recommendation was not accepted by HMP Forest Bank on the basis that although the prison supports the transfer of patients to hospital under the Mental Health Act in a timely manner, the lack of available beds falls outside of HMP Forest Bank's control. The IMB has also raised this issue. Whilst accepting that the decision to transfer prisoners to hospital is outside the control of Forest Bank prison, we are, nevertheless, concerned that waiting times for a transfer under the Mental Health Act are too long and detrimental to prisoners' mental health.

6.4 Social care

The prison works closely with the local authority. An assessment is made of all those entering HMP Forest Bank, and where appropriate, an allocated social care worker, who works closely with the clinical teams, is appointed to ensure that prisoners' needs are met.

6.5 Exercise, regime

In late 2021, there was another outbreak of Covid-19, resulting in a national lockdown of prisons once again. HMIP found during its inspection in February 2022 that leaders had been slower than other prisons to restore the regime. It was particularly critical that time out of cell for most prisoners was very poor and that there was an absence of purposeful activity with only about 20% of prisoners involved in such activity.

By the end of October 2022, the time a prisoner was out of their cell was 6.5 hours, which compares with only one hour out of cell during Covid.

The gym is fully operational and is also open two extra evenings per week. A new fitness hub will open in Workshop 5 which focuses on activities geared towards general fitness (yoga, relaxation, keep fit) and offers a six-week programme.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

HMIP found the drug and alcohol rehabilitation team was a well-led team of skilled and motivated staff who work closely with other prison departments to inform and improve practices. This continues to be the case. Newly arrived drug and alcohol dependent prisoners are promptly assessed and provided with access to clinical treatment through the specialist nurse or duty doctor. With the prison now having mostly remand prisoners, the focus of support has shifted. Staff concentrate on keeping safe those who might be detained for a short time through clinical treatment, coping strategies and low intensity support.

6.7 Soft skills

The Street Soccer Academy has resumed. This project tackles youth homelessness and involves prisoners through in-cell learning and activities on the artificial grass pitch.

7. Progression and resettlement

Since the HMIP inspection and the new Director's appointment in August 2022, there has been a concerted focus on increasing purposeful activity. By the end of October 2022, the average hours per week prisoners were engaged in purposeful activity was 15.85 hours. Senior management hope by February 2023 that weekly purposeful activity will average 18 hours per week.

Four workshops are now fully operational.

7.1 Education

Ofsted, who inspected Forest Bank's provision of education, skills, and work at the same time as HMIP's inspection in February 2022, found that Forest Bank's provision for education in every area was inadequate. It further found that education was not a priority for senior prison leaders and managers who had not aligned their curriculum to meet the changing needs and demographics of the prison population or to meet local skills needs. The content of the curriculum was far too narrow to provide prisoners with the breadth of knowledge, skills and behaviour that would be useful for their next steps.

It also criticised the department's assessment of prisoners with regard to their starting points, prior knowledge and skills as well as their future aspirations at the outset. Prisoners' individual learning plans, it found, were vague and targets often too generic. Learning support for prisoners was extremely limited, with many prisoners relying on their peers to help them with their work. Ofsted found managers did not know which prisoners had additional needs, including learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the allocation of places was found generally to be neither fair, equitable nor timely. The pay policy was out of date and did not reflect current pay rates in the prison or the adjustments made to take account of the pandemic. Prisoners received lower rates of pay for attending education than most of their peers who attended work activities. This discouraged those prisoners who needed to improve their English and mathematical skills from attending classes.

With the high turnover of prisoners, 60% staying for less than eight weeks and 79% being transferred to other establishments in the last quarter, it has been challenging for the education department to deliver its curriculum in the way it had previously. Since the inspection, a process of reviewing content delivery has been undertaken. The current emphasis for the curriculum is on providing unit accreditation courses which can be continued at other establishments when a prisoner moves on. There is also a recognition by the department that there needs to be more focus on induction and assessment of needs as well as the broadening of the curriculum generally. This has begun, to some extent, by the appointment of a horticulture instructor, due to start in January 2023, and active attempts to recruit an arts and crafts tutor. It is encouraging that the numbers attending education have increased again since the easing of restrictions and it is hoped, with an increase in pay for education and the possibility of an extra £2 for homework done to a good standard, more prisoners will be encouraged to attend. A new head of education, skills and work has been appointed and is due to start in January 2023 which will hopefully mean the delivery of a curriculum more aligned to prisoners' needs.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Current vocational training includes the following:

- Level 1 (L1) award in recycling

- L1 award in practical cleaning (bodily fluids, food areas, buffing)
- L1 award and Level 2 (L2) certificate in warehousing and storage (stopping delivering L2 from January 2023)
- L1 cleaning principles
- L1 server operative
- L2 health and safety

Internal accredited courses on construction are provided for those who are sentenced and have a scheduled release whilst unaccredited workshops are provided for those on remand.

7.3 Offender management, progression

As Forest Bank is now a reception prison and the only one in the Greater Manchester area to accept prisoners on remand, the proportion of men on remand or unsentenced is between 60% and 80%. This has put enormous pressure on the prison to find available spaces, resulting often, because of the demand for places from courts, in some prisoners being taken to other prisons miles away from their home.

The number of sentenced prisoners requiring offender management unit (OMU) work is much lower than before because of the prison's change in function. HMIP reported in February that it found significantly fewer prisoners (17%) reported that they had a custody plan compared to their previous inspection (35%).

Prison offender managers (POMs) are now working to national standards for all prison responsible cases and see their newly allocated prisoner three times within the first three months and a minimum of once prior to the case handover stage.

There have been the following developments:

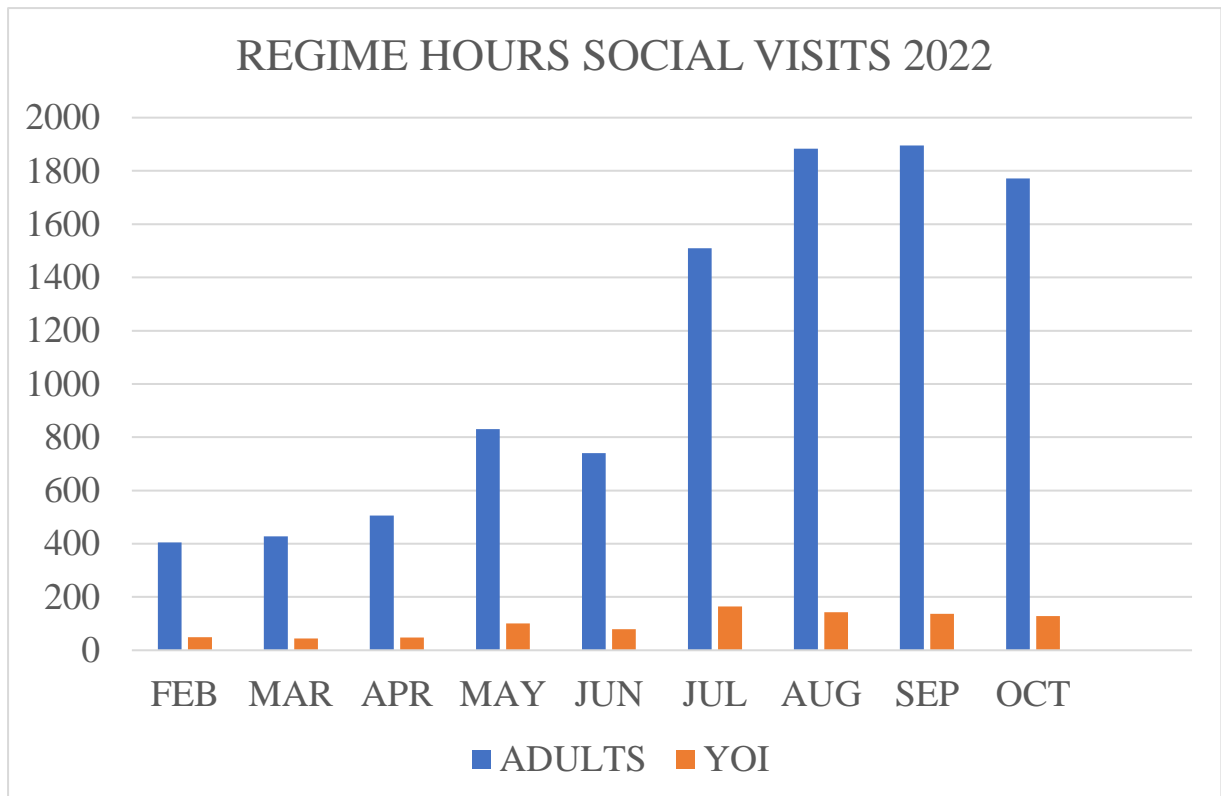
- Prison offender manager to community offender manager handovers now take place face to face within the prison unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- POMs are focusing on delivering more one-to-one work via HMPPS interventions toolkits, which they hope will be rolled out by January 2023, primarily to young adults.
- There has been a relaunch of the integrated offender management surgeries for six Greater Manchester cohorts: Tameside, Stockport, Oldham, Bolton, Bury, Greater Manchester north and south. These surgeries provide face-to-face meetings held within the OMU with the prisoner, probation, police and other relevant stakeholders to discuss pre-release planning. Between fifteen and twenty surgeries have taken place since April 2022.
- The change in function also means that the prison is no longer responsible for completing assessments of the risks and needs of newly sentenced prisoners. However, because of delays in moving longer sentenced prisoners to more appropriate prisons, Forest Bank

staff sometimes start these assessments, only for the prisoner to be transferred, leaving another prison to complete the assessment.

- Strategic responsibility for reducing offending has moved to the deputy director who has overarching responsibility as head of reducing reoffending. The deputy director has also been attending strategic meetings and forums including the senior leadership forum and resettlement executive forum, which focuses on both resettlement and reducing re-offending strategies.
- Forest Bank OMU continues to offer the Thinking Skills Programme to appropriate target group referrals via OASys, a violence reduction programme, short programme sessions targeting those responsible for violence within the prison setting, and is also rolling out a restorative approach to anyone involved in violence or conflict.

7.4 Family contact

Since HMIP's inspection in February 2022, the IMB is happy to report that not only has the visits hall been fully refurbished but the numbers of prisoners allowed to receive social visits are now back to what they were pre-Covid with two additional evenings each week. One of the main reasons for the reduction in the number of social visits during the reporting period was because of Covid-19 restrictions – only 12 prisoners could use the visits hall at any one time compared with 50 prisoners before the pandemic. This meant that both sentenced and remand prisoners (the majority of the prison population) only received about two visits per month. Extended family days were also not available at that time. Below is a graph showing the significant increase in social visits since July 2022.



As social visits return to normal, the families team are also helping raise awareness of social video calls by giving information to new inductions, whom they contact within 14 days of their arrival. This is on average 350 to 400 prisoners per month. By November 2022, they will offer a range of interventions with regard to extended visits. These include such sessions as baby bonding, a cinema experience targeting children between four and 16 years old, and family days which ordinarily were run four times per year before the pandemic. The first family day was held on 26 October, with a morning and afternoon session which had around 120 people in each session. Facilitated visits are conducted by case workers when appropriate. This is usually if there is social care involvement and children are unable to visit via the usual routes or if there is a need for supported contact (usually for vulnerable or high-profile prisoners). The team facilitate on average ten visits per month.

The family team are also now running bite-size courses aimed at maintaining family contact, improving communication skills, and preparing prisoners for reintegration into the community and a return to family life. These include unaccredited courses on such topics as positive parenting and positive thinking, as well as homeward bound sessions which explore issues and challenges prisoners may face on returning home. They are run weekly with a maximum of eight prisoners and are very popular. Storybook Dads is another session available, providing prisoners with the opportunity to record a bedtime story for their child, grandchild, niece or nephew.

The process for gaining the relevant consent so that prisoner participation can take place is often a slow one as all prisoners must first be risk checked and then written consent must be obtained from the child or children's guardian or carer. A lot of consent forms are not returned and so applications cannot be progressed. In addition to the above, the team are also a presence in the visits centre, offering advice and information for people visiting the establishment.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Forest Bank is the only private prison which is part of the government's accelerator prison programme. Focusing on three priority delivery areas – education, employment and accommodation as well as health and substance misuse – it seeks to improve the support offered to those leaving prison. A key element of the programme at Forest Bank is to seek to ensure that those leaving prison are provided with accommodation and employment from the point of release giving them the opportunity to have a fresh start in life.

HMIP found that for sentenced prisoners, release planning was reasonable and had improved since its last inspection. A dedicated housing specialist had been introduced who had developed relationships with local authorities and housing providers in the community. There was also new funding from the Greater Manchester temporary housing scheme, and about 86% of prisoners now left with some form of accommodation on the day of their release which was, HMIP said, much better than most other prisons. The prison plans to develop this work further. However, HMIP also found that there was little done to support remand prisoners' needs who, due to the pandemic and delays in the court system, were often having to spend much longer on remand.

Since the HMIP inspection, an employment lead was appointed in July 2022. Careers advice and guidance as well as employment interviews with external employers continue to evolve and 96% of scheduled releases are offered employment according to prison statistics. All areas from writing a CV, to preparations for interview, to back-to-work courses are provided. Forest Bank has developed links with seventeen employers, many of whom are national companies involved in construction, warehousing and utilities.

The work of the IMB

The Board started this year with eleven members and a lot of optimism that 2021-22 would be a much better year than the previous one. Sadly, however, another Board member died in January 2022. A second Board member resigned, and two others have been unable to attend regularly because of personal circumstances. Despite reduced numbers and another outbreak of Covid, we have managed to re-establish a higher profile within the prison than was the case in 2020-2021. Again, credit must go to our dedicated Board clerk, without whose help we would struggle to function.

Since the appointment of the new Director in August 2022, we are pleased to report that, whilst there is still much to be done, a programme of reform has begun within the prison, and we are beginning to see some positive changes in the prison regime. We have also found the Director and his deputy very open to our feedback and we hope that this continues in the future as well as, where appropriate, action being taken.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	277
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line*	0
Total number of segregation reviews attended	11

*if relevant

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	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	2
C	Equality	1	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	14
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	15	16
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	7
F	Food and kitchens	4	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	47	57
H1	Property within this establishment	32	28
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	9	7
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	6	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	1	1
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	36	19
K	Transfers	4	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	29	67
	Total number of applications	197	238



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