



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ford

**For reporting year
1 November 2021 – 31 October 2022**

Published April 2023



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	6
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	10
5. Fair and humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	18
7. Progression and resettlement	21
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	26
Applications to the IMB	27

All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

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 Ford is a category D open prison with an emphasis on resettlement.

It was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station. It is situated in West Sussex, two miles from the coast and three miles south of Arundel. It covers an area of 110 acres bisected by a busy class B public road. Ford railway station is a mile away.

The open estate is required to cater for category D prisoners assessed as suitable for open conditions within the criteria agreed between the Governor and the prison group director for Kent, Surrey and Sussex prisons. Prisoners selected for transfer to HMP Ford should present a low risk to the public and a low risk of absconding.

The operational capacity of the prison during the year to 31 October 2022 is set out in detail in section 5.1, but in summary, following the closure of B wing in the previous year, the operational capacity started and ended the year at 389. The prison does not take prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences. All available spaces are offered to His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS's) population management unit.

The accommodation, all of which is now single occupancy, is comprised of a brick-built block with 214 single rooms (A wing), two other brick-built accommodation units with 55 rooms and 120 converted containers (pods). The brick-built accommodation all has shared washing and toilet facilities but the pods each have their own facilities. There is accommodation for 15 prisoners with some degree of disability.

Plans had been approved for a major expansion in the current reporting year, but at the end of this reporting period, the expectation is that this will not come on stream until early 2025.

Prisoners have access to a well-equipped gymnasium and outdoor exercise equipment. The prison infrastructure is maintained by Gov Facility Services Limited.

Resettlement assistance for prisoners is provided by the pre-release and resettlement team.

On-site academic education is provided by Weston College and vocational training by Chichester College. Both are supplemented by prison staff.

The Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction provides practical qualifications and training to prepare prisoners for work both before and after release. Other on-site opportunities for prisoners to work or be trained include those at DHL (distribution warehouse for prisoners' 'canteen'), waste management, bicycle refurbishing and some IT facilities. The prison runs engineering, horticulture and injection-moulding (now closed) workshops and has amalgamated a number of workshops into the Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction. Land-based activities supply local municipal planting as well as providing HMP Ford and other prisons with plants. The prisoner-run café/gift shop Serving Thyme continues

to be popular with the local community. These working opportunities which had been heavily impacted by Covid-19 were mostly fully operational by early 2022.

Voluntary organisations providing support to prisoners include the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact), Spurgeons, Samaritans, Shannon Trust, Sycamore Tree, the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) and several other veterans' support organisations. After the year end, Spurgeons lost the contract for family engagement to Pact.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This report covers the 12-month period ending 31 October 2022 and tracks improvement and deterioration from year to year. This is not a one-off snapshot assessment of the prison.

The Board operated with fewer Covid-19 restrictions and after exiting the National Covid-19 Framework in May 2022, the prison operated without restrictions. A new Governor arrived in April 2022.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The IMB believes that the prison is a safe environment and this is borne out by the exit surveys on prisoners being released in the second half of the reporting year where the number of respondents who reported feeling safe outnumbered those who did not by approximately 9:1. The IMB, however, is very concerned that men were being sent to Ford who were unsuitable for open prison. See section 3.3. This resulted in some prisoners commenting to the IMB that they felt unsafe due to drug related debt and other connected issues.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The governors and staff at HMP Ford treat prisoners in a fair and humane manner. Genuine grievances are dealt with in a balanced way and the number of complaints remains at a low level.

Of great concern though, is the continued deterioration in the property infrastructure at Ford, particularly A wing and healthcare. Examples include the problems with the E wing showers, washing facilities and most recently, the failure of the heating systems, which impacted on older and more vulnerable prisoners, and illustrate the need for major investment. The delay in the new build project is a disappointment and so is the absence of a plan for the replacement or complete refurbishment of the older wings (A, R and Q). See section 5.1.9.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The healthcare department provides a very effective service to the prison population. They were most effective in managing the return to a largely post Covid-19 scenario and work well with the other teams, notably substance misuse and wellbeing, to meet the wide-ranging needs of the prisoners.

The chaplaincy team continues to provide an excellent service, both religious and pastoral. See section 5.5.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The reducing reoffending team are to be congratulated for their efforts and success in finding meaningful work opportunities for prisoners during their time at Ford, with an increased focus on potential long-term employers, including post release. On a

normal day, over 100 prisoners are working or in education outside of the prison. See section 7.1.1.

The new employment advisory board (EAB) and more recently, the prison employment lead (PEL) have brought a welcome focus on a more holistic approach to the resettlement needs of prisoners. It is still early days for these positive developments, and challenges remain in areas such as the lack of housing provision for released prisoners and particularly the lack of support from the Probation Service.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- 1 It is concerning to report that the worsening situation in the Probation Service is significantly hampering the ability of Ford to deliver on its resettlement mandate. In spite of the positive efforts of the offender management teams at Ford, the progress of prisoners is slowed down by the lack of available probation resource, most notably in London. See section 7.6.2.
- 2 The issues described above re the Probation Service were compounded further during the year by the failure of the Metropolitan police to carry out the checks necessary to allow the prison to deliver on its resettlement objective.
- 3 Together with IMBs throughout the country, we continue to stress that sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPPs) are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners. There are seven prisoners serving IPP sentences in Ford at the end of the reporting year, all of whom have served over their original tariff, with one individual having served 15 years over their original sentence. See section 7.6.5.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. The most serious issue for Ford during the year has been the high number of unsuitable prisoners arriving at Ford. This includes prisoners:
 - a) with less than six months to serve (In the year to September 2022, 457 men arrived at Ford and 52, 11%, had less than six months to serve); and those
 - b) who had only been partially assessed for re-categorisation to open conditions, or were re-categorised by default. Many were quickly identified at Ford as being unsuitable.

Both of these kinds of prisoner cause problems across many aspects of life at Ford. Those in a) above feel resentment at not being able to take full advantage of what is on offer at Ford. In some cases, these prisoners lost their release on temporary licence (ROTL) privilege upon arrival, and hence feel they are going backwards at a critical time in their sentence.

Those in b) above increase the risk of absconds, decrease levels of safety and waste resources across Ford.

2. Whilst there have been some improvements in the accommodation, these are largely cosmetic and much more is needed. The Board commends the prisoner projects team who have carried out much of this work. See section 5.1.9.
3. Whilst accepting that the country is facing significant economic headwinds, it is nonetheless disappointing to report on the level of uncertainty in committing the funding for both day to day activities and most particularly capital projects. The reversal of the progress on the plan to replace B wing and the health centre, with completion now pushed out to 2025 from the original 2023 is a good example of this. See section 5.1.2.
4. It is disappointing to note that too often HMPPS procurement processes are not delivering solutions to the prison on a timely basis. A current example of this is the ongoing delay in installing secure prisoner lockers with mobile phone charging facilities. See section 4.1.1.
5. The lack of consistency between prisons as to what items are allowed to be held continues to cause unnecessary problems for prisoners. We note that there does not appear to have been any movement nationally to meet the recommendations set out in the national property framework. See section 5.8.

TO THE GOVERNOR

1. The Board commends the investment made to support a more motivated staff team. This has made a noticeable difference in the day to day life of the prison, showing a clear commitment to improving prisoner outcomes. There is more still to do and we support the Governor's ongoing commitment to this all-important work.
2. Although the issues with the D wing washing machines reported last year have to all intents and purposes been resolved, it is disappointing to find that the new accommodation domestic quality washing machines are not sufficiently robust to stand up to what is in effect an institutional workload. Ongoing personal laundry issues impact on the morale of the men and impede those at work. This is a matter that should be addressed, with the prison providing a more robust solution for such equipment. See section 5.1.11.
3. Last year, the Board commented on the progress that had been made in responding to concerns raised in our 2020 report concerning diversity and inclusion. We have again been impressed with the Governor's commitment to this area and applaud the steps taken. As HMP Ford plans for a significant growth in numbers, so the investment needs to continue. See section 5.4.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The year under review was dominated by the return to normality with pre Covid-19 practices and activity levels now fully re-established. The Board congratulates the Governor on the way he and his staff handled this transition and have since taken the prison forward.

This allowed the prison to successfully refocus on its resettlement priorities, using positive developments such as the prison employment lead and employment advisory board to create a broad, prisoner-centric approach.

The year was also characterised by several negative factors, which are on the whole outside the control of the Governor. Responsibility for these lies elsewhere but they have an adverse impact on the men and the staff at Ford. The main factors, which have already been detailed above, include:

1. unsuitable men being sent to Ford
2. an under-resourced Probation Service
3. the mismanagement of contracts by parties outside of HMP Ford

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and Induction

4.1.1 The reception area copes well with the number of prisoners going out on ROTL each day. These may be going out for paid work, on resettlement day release (RDRs) or resettlement overnight release (RORs), and can total 130 or more. One problem area is the mobile phones which the prisoners can take out with them and which have to be returned to secure lockers before the prisoners check back in. These lockers do not have a facility for recharging the phones and, whilst most prisoners can charge them at work or on home visits, it causes real problems to some of them. The reception staff have been trying to help as best they can but it is disappointing that the order for replacement lockers with charging facilities was mishandled and the funding has been lost.

4.1.2 All prisoners are given a full induction course the week after they arrive at HMP Ford. These are once again face-to-face presentations from each area of the prison as they were pre Covid-19. This is much more effective than the limited information which could be handed out during the Covid-19 restrictions.

4.1.3 To support the general wellbeing of the men the prison has two safer custody representatives and two induction orderlies. The induction orderlies are to be congratulated for their hard work and their contribution to settling the men into Ford, setting out expectations and helping resolve early problems and issues. Overall, the induction team of officers and orderlies work well together and display good humour. This in turn supports good relations between the staff and the men.

4.1.4 Prisoners arriving at Ford are initially health screened before a fuller medical within seven days, after which their details are entered onto the Datex System and monitored accordingly.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There were no deaths in custody during the reporting year. There were no instances of self-harm during the reporting year, compared with two the previous year.

4.2.3 There were two assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened during the reporting year. In one case the prisoner was returned to closed conditions the same day. In the other case the situation was satisfactorily resolved at Ford. The Board believes that ACCTs at HMP Ford are sympathetically and humanely managed.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

4.3.1 There was one case of prisoner-on-prisoner assault during the reporting year, compared to five in the previous year.

4.3.2 There were five cases of use of force by staff, with the majority being relatively minor. None involved the use of PAVA spray.

4.4 Absconds and failures to return

4.4.1 During the reporting year there were seven absconds and 12 failures to return. The Board commends the work of the staff in seeking to establish the reasons behind these incidents and the work done to spread the message to prisoners of the outcomes of absconding, which almost without exception results in re-arrest, an extended sentence and no prospect of a return to open conditions.

4.5 Returns to closed conditions

4.5.1 There were 167 prisoners returned from HMP Ford to closed conditions in the 10 months to 31 October 2022, which seems a large number in the context of an operational capacity of 389. This is unsettling for the men already in the prison and takes up valuable resources that could be used elsewhere.

4.5.2 During the summer of 2022, based on intelligence, a full review of the prison population was carried out, which highlighted that a large number of prisoners may have been transferred to Ford during the preceding year with insufficient preparation, or review/assessment of their suitability. This is possibly a result of overcrowding in the London prisons. As a result of this review, 51 prisoners were sent back to closed conditions.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 At the year end the prisoner capacity was 389, of which 214 were housed in the brick-built A wing, 55 in two separate brick accommodation units and 120 in converted containers (pods). The pods were deployed when a large part of the prison was condemned and have now been in place for over 12 months. The prison does not have any accommodation specifically designed for disabled people, but one landing (C1) and eight pods have some modifications to support those with physical needs. It is however, concerning to note that the alarm system in the pods is not suitably connected hence they are unable to be fully utilised.

5.1.2 Further redevelopment works were planned to improve and extend the accommodation and replace and upgrade healthcare. It was disappointing to hear during the year that this centrally led procurement and deployment plan failed at an early stage, with a key supplier of the modular buildings becoming insolvent. Although the Board welcomes the fact that procurement is now underway again, at the time of writing, shortlisting had not been completed and no formal dates are on the table.

5.1.3 We reported last year that some pods had double bunks. We are pleased that these hazardous, unusable bunks have now been removed.

5.1.4 We also reported last year, and in previous years, that the accommodation in A wing and the two brick billets was tired and difficult to maintain and keep clean, with poor washing facilities and insanitary kitchen / washing up. Despite good local efforts to clean and refurbish some kitchen areas, as one would expect another year on, there is further deterioration.

Some E wing showers have been shut since early summer 2022 awaiting a capital project to repair infrastructure, which has been the subject of significant delay; at the end of the reporting year there was no progress, though we have since been informed that the work started on 9 January 2023. There appears to be a pattern of long lead times and lack of urgency once issues are managed outside of the prison itself. In the meantime, men have temporary portable showers outside of the block. Although these showers are clean, the men find the water temperature intermittent and as winter approaches they are reluctant to move from inside to outside and back, so tend to use showers on other corridors, putting pressure on these facilities.

The D2 kitchen which is shared by two billets did not have a connected sink from early summer 2022 until October 2022. This meant that the men were washing up crockery in the showers for five months.

There are further areas of deterioration, with the lower ground floor link corridors having leaking roofs when it rains, creating a potential slip hazard. Whilst a bid has been submitted to address this, it is not expected to happen in the foreseeable future.

5.1.5 The quality and quantity of food is important to the men both in in terms of morale and welfare as well as nutrition. We have commented before that it is challenging to provide an interesting, varied and nutritious menu on such a low daily budget of £2.19 per man per day. We have also noted before that the quality of ingredients delivered to the prison via the national supplier is often of poor quality.

This situation has not changed, and indeed some food such as meat (for instance lamb) is of very poor quality. The Board is worried that this will be exacerbated by the impact of the inflationary pressures. As previously noted, the national contract has been in place for some time.

5.1.6 Having said this, the kitchen staff and men working in the kitchens have to be congratulated for their flair and imagination – some excellent food has been produced. As with any year the men in the queue will vary in their reflections from 'better than where I came from' to 'the food is dreadful'. A large number of men continue to take 'cook packs' which they supplement with canteen purchases to create their own meals.

5.1.7 The dining hall is a soulless place which lost most of its chairs and tables during Covid. This means there is less space or opportunity for wider engagement for the men. The Board is delighted to hear that the prison has now sourced some new chairs and tables and that this will enhance the space and hopefully encourage the men to socialise at mealtimes. The tables arrived in November 2022, and it will be interesting to report next year how these are used.

5.1.8 In general, in relation to the wider accommodation and facilities the Board continues to be concerned that infrastructure repairs and upgrades are slow and laborious. Equipment has to exceed end of life and fail entirely to warrant replacement, but in any event, there does not appear to be any planning for this. So, with long lead times this leads to local problems when an item does eventually fall beyond repair. For instance, there does not appear to be a plan for the upgrade of the obsolete boilers, so if they fail there will be issues with heating for some months whilst new services are commissioned.

5.1.9 The prison is already experiencing wider issues with the fabric of the heating system, for instance pipework failed recently. Although GFSL locally could repair some pipes, some were a gauge no longer manufactured and so repairs will take weeks whilst a replacement is fabricated. This resulted in men in the wing set aside for elderly or prisoners with support needs left cold – 200 blankets had to be sourced, alternate heating appliances found and healthcare instituted welfare checks. This puts a strain on the prisoners and staff and could be avoided if proper repair and replacement programmes were put in place. B wing was only replaced, albeit with temporary accommodation, when it was condemned at very short notice. What needs to happen before A wing has a reasonable level of refurbishment?

5.1.10 On a positive note, the Board is pleased to note an increased rigour in checking cleaning and general tidiness of the wings, with the responsibility for oversight residing with the orderly officers. The kitchens in the accommodation units are equipped with better quality microwaves and some now have grill machines. Sadly, this equipment does 'walk' sometimes and some of the men may overuse or take less care of the equipment than is helpful. However, others encourage people to take care.

5.1.11 We also note that the previous issues with laundry equipment and availability in A wing are now, to all intents and purposes, resolved, but problems are now arising in the newer pod accommodation. The domestic quality washing machines are particularly problematic in that they are not the most robust domestic machines, so are not surprisingly now failing due to what is in effect institutional usage. This

causes extreme frustration for the men. It is not helped by the fact that the men in A wing do not always adhere to their allocated washing machine areas.

Failure of personal laundry impacts on the men's wellbeing and also places an unnecessary burden for men at work, with potential consequences on the way they present to the working world. The Board notes that the machines, like other equipment, have been subject to vandalism which is disappointing. We understand the prison has considered plans for extending CCTV to some shared areas and also is looking into new initiatives for a managed launderette on site. The IMB looks forward to hearing more about these initiatives which could help resolve these long-standing problems.

5.1.12 DHL provides the canteen service at Ford, from where prisoners can buy a wide range of products. In previous years we have commented on high prices charged when compared to supermarkets outside and this continues to be the case.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 As an open prison HMP Ford does not have a segregation block. Instead, it has cellular accommodation which is used to house up to four prisoners who are to be returned to closed conditions. This is adequate and the prisoners are rarely held overnight. Whilst there are no facilities for outside exercise, in the unlikely event that they were to be held for longer periods, arrangements would be made for supervised exercise. The treatment of these prisoners has been observed as fair and consistent. They are told where they are going and why, and are visited by healthcare before they leave. The IMB is informed as a matter of course when a prisoner is admitted to the cellular accommodation and wherever possible members visit. No issues of note have arisen.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff / prisoner relationships appear to be good with few ongoing areas of issue during the year. The prison has worked hard at improving communications and encouraged the men to use the forums that are available to them such as the offender management unit (OMU) drop in, offender consultative committee (OCC) and similar. The OCC is made up of two or three current prisoners. A large proportion of men are out of the prison at work during the day and the prison has a generally relaxed atmosphere. Clearly, as reported in 4.5.1, men are returned to closed if they abuse the open conditions. This can be a source of tension, but also positively influences the general stability of the prison. The stresses previously reported in terms of expectations around ROTL have generally been addressed, but the shortage of outside probation staff is having an adverse effect on the men's expectations and that can impact on their engagement with the OMU. It is also clear from the IMB confidential survey issued to men upon release that men who are transferred to Ford with less than six months to serve are bitterly disappointed by the lack of opportunities they have. They indicate that they are not treated fairly as they have limited access to ROTL due to the time taken to be 'boarded', and no opportunity to work outside.

5.3.2 The OCC at Ford has the active ear of senior staff and prisoners, and they provide a forum and drop-in sessions etc for ensuring the good working of the prison. There are charitable activities that encourage engagement and positive activities

around major national fund-raising days, such as the Macmillan coffee morning, which provide a level of positive interaction between the men and the staff. Notice boards are regularly updated with information.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The level of diversity and inclusion monitoring has been developed over the year with breakdowns across all areas of activity, including work/ education/ incentives / adjudications /accommodation. In reviewing these statistics, the Board notes that the monitoring is not highlighting any anomalies or discrepancies and is a true reflection of the prison population.

5.4.2 We note that there has been an increase in the number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted this year, with 26 compared to a final total of 12 last year. However, on examination the Board is satisfied that whilst the majority (19) were linked to one prisoner, all had been reviewed, answered and given proper and full consideration. We note in the IMB confidential survey that the men indicate they are treated with respect, fairly and that there is no indication of any ongoing concerns or fears around diversity and inclusion. This is not to say individuals at times do not perceive issues, but these do seem to be addressed if raised with the prison.

5.4.3 The Board noted that the diversity and inclusion meetings had become less effective, which was partly due to lack of engagement by prisoners who are out at work and explained that it was not an issue for them at present. Officers have reduced the number of meetings, which are now quarterly, and are aiming to make them more relevant and interesting. There is one diversity and inclusion representative for the prison with each of the diversity and inclusion strands having a nominated representative as well. The Board will continue to monitor this.

5.4.4 We note that as in other years events and special meals were in place for Black History Month, Eid and Ramadan. The OCC was involved in putting on quizzes for the men, which were popular.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 As reflected in previous reports the chaplaincy continues to give an excellent service providing spiritual and pastoral support to the men. The Board has noted the excellent level of support the chaplaincy team has offered to individuals who have suffered bereavement or have sickness within their wider family.

5.5.2 The chaplaincy team has, at the end of the reporting period, extended its activities on Saturdays to provide support to the large number of men now out at work during the week. External agencies have now returned, post Covid, and new groups such as a drumming group and a choir have started up. Outreach services and connections to community groups and projects continue to be actively pursued, for example Restorative Justice.

5.5.3 The Ford Forward Project (a charity set up by the previous chaplain to help with resettlement, and sometimes access to mentors and housing on release), is of

particular note. A member of the project team sees every prisoner four to six months prior to release to offer post release support and contacts.

5.5.4 A wide variety of faiths are catered for, including Church of England, Catholic, Muslim, Church of Scotland and Free Church as well as Rastafarian and Pagan when needed. We note that the multi-faith room, although fully set up, is still a temporary facility and is awaiting replacement as part of the redevelopment of the prison.

5.5.5 The number of prisoners at HMP Ford who are under 30 years of age has increased in the reporting year. This has seemingly contributed to a reduction in numbers attending services. Even with religious festival celebration meals like Eid, prisoners came and collected the meal and took it back to their rooms.

5.5.6 The prisoner/staff choir meets weekly. They sing at the Christmas carol service which is a great contribution to the sense of community.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The majority (around 90%) of the prisoners are on an enhanced regime as would be expected in an open prison. Generally, some 10% of the population will be on standard regime, usually only temporarily after an adjudication. It has been possible to reintroduce the basic level now that all the rooms are single occupancy and there was one short spell of basic for one prisoner during the year.

5.6.2 Any changes in incentives levels include discussion with the prisoner and are regularly reviewed by a senior officer and are monitored by the diversity and inclusion team to check the ethnicity and faith percentages in each category.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The prison has a good system for monitoring complaints. Internal complaints are dealt with in good time and external complaints are chased by the business hub when they are late in responding. As in previous years, the focus of a majority of complaints are issues with property. In early November 2022 there were a total of 13 complaints open, all of which involved other prisons, and just six were overdue.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Men continue to arrive with more property than they are allowed but at present the prison can store excess property within the reception store. It continues to be the case that there is a lack of consistency between prisons as to what items are allowed to be held. As previously reported, prisoners can arrive with items which were bought perfectly legitimately at their previous establishments but which are not permitted at HMP Ford. This understandably gives rise to complaints about the lack of consistency across the prison estate and a feeling that a promotion to category D status is not what it was made out to be.

5.8.2 We note that there does not appear to have been any movement nationally to meet the recommendations set out in the national property framework. For example, the following have not been implemented:

- Standardisation of volumetric levels of property between prisons.

- Recommended electronic logging of property which could be carried over when transferring to other prisons.
- Exclusion of educational materials from the volumetric limit allowed.

At Ford, individual officers in reception help to trace possessions from sending prisons and advise new arrivals as to how to initiate chase-ups. This is to be commended but it does not take the place of an official policy working smoothly.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 The delay to the new building over the whole estate is particularly disappointing for the healthcare department. The building is cramped and dingy, which makes it very difficult to promote an open and healthy environment both for prisoners and the staff.

6.1.2 There was a resurgence of Covid-19 across all establishments in late December 2021. Although HMP Ford was largely unaffected and at stage 1, mass testing was reintroduced nationally, 100% of staff and residents complied and four new cases were identified. Health services continued after the mass testing was completed. All prisoners going out on ROTL were given lateral flow tests both on departure and return.

Vaccinations were given a high priority, with 96% of over 50s and 95% at risk of flu delivered. Similar figures were delivered for MMR, meningitis and hepatitis B, and 100% for shingles.

6.1.3 With the merging of healthcare and the integrated substance misuse service (ISMS) and the subsequent uplift of staffing levels, the Board was pleased to note the emergence of a higher profile within the prison. There is a healthcare presence in most areas of the prison, with the lead being part of the senior management team. Core hours have been extended to 8-6 to accommodate late arrivals and those going out to work. The primary care staff have remained flexible in their working hours in order to prioritise receptions.

6.1.4 When there is an abscond or failure to return, healthcare reviews its own case management to see if there are any trends or lessons to be learned.

6.1.5 Following the report from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman on a death in custody in July 2020, published in July 2021, a long-term conditions pathway is now in place. A local audit has been developed to ensure the pathway is being adhered to.

6.2 Primary healthcare

6.2.1 With the return to stage 1 and moving forward from Covid-19 restrictions, events around the establishment and numbers accessing outside work increasing, a fresh look was taken regarding the timing of appointments. Medication lockers were installed so those accessing outside work could collect their own medication outside the core day. Also, weekend appointments were offered as well as phone consultations. Both these initiatives have proved very successful and the numbers using them have steadily increased.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The emotional health and wellbeing service is led by a part time psychiatrist, three mental health nurses, one full time and one part time occupational therapist.

Recruitment is ongoing for a part time psychologist. The service operates from its own suite of rooms which is currently separate from the main healthcare building.

6.3.2 The wellbeing service offers workshops and drop in sessions to address anxiety issues alongside joint relaxation sessions and a wellbeing sleep group. An average of 60-70 prisoners are seen every month.

6.3.3. A member of the health and welfare team attends every safer custody review and provides ongoing support for patients with severe and enduring mental health conditions.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 More than 6% of prisoners at HMP Ford are over the age of 60, and so the prison must make accommodation for this cohort of in terms of health and social care needs. The Board commends the healthcare response when there was a problem with the heating in A wing during a cold snap, and welfare checks were made on every vulnerable prisoner, including over the following weekend.

6.4.2 The occupational therapist liaises with outside community services for prisoners on release.

6.4.3 Dementia care is on offer if needed.

6.5 Exercise, regime

6.5.1 Despite several recruitment campaigns there are still only two dedicated PE officers. They have been exemplary in their support of the physical and mental wellbeing of the prison population.

6.5.2 Prisoners are entitled to three supervised gym sessions a week – this was increased from two in July 2022. Those out at work are catered for where possible in outer hours.

6.5.3 There is permanent gym equipment outside by the playing field which is open access, as well as field sports when staff are available to supervise.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 August and September saw a significant rise in the number of drug related offences. Healthcare has been involved in the review of each case. A great effort is made to encourage the prisoner to engage with the substance misuse team to address the issues, rather than an automatic return to closed conditions. The Board commends this as a positive step towards rehabilitation.

6.6.2 There is an emphasis on education regarding drugs, alcohol and smoking.

6.6.3 During the year, Ford was part of a national Ministry of Justice project to test the destructibility of certain types of vape. Whilst we understand that it is considered that vaping is one of the avenues into taking illegal substances, it is not of sufficient priority to be included in Ford's drug strategy.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 General

7.1.1 At the end of the reporting year there were 384 prisoners in Ford: see the table below which sets out the split of activity/circumstance that these prisoners carry out. In summary 185 prisoners are needed to run the prison as kitchen staff, cleaners, orderlies, stores etc. Of the remaining 199, over 50 are involved in onsite education, with 129 engaged either in external paid work or training/education.

	Number	%
<i>Internal activities:</i>		
Running the prison, inc. orderlies	185	48
On induction	10	3
Retired or ill health	10	3
English and maths courses inside prison	24	6
Chichester College of Construction	26	7
<i>External employment, training and education (ETE) activities:</i>		
Work	112	29
Training/education	17	4
Total	384	100

7.1.2 The prison employment lead (PEL) is an important new role across the prison estate (90 in total). The PEL at HMP Ford is based in the education department and acts to improve the employability of prisoners who are about to be released. Proactive engagement is undertaken six, three and one month prior to their release date. Information is then sought about their employment status six weeks after release by the Probation Service. By taking a holistic approach to individual needs, including educational ones, prisoners are helped to develop 'work ready' skills and aspirations.

7.2 Education - prison based

7.2.1 During this reporting period, a number of prison-based courses took place, including level 3 first aid, art, maths level 2, English level 2, functional skills, City & Guilds level 2, heavy goods vehicle (HGV) licences, barista and hospitality.

7.2.2 The virtual campus is a prison-based learning centre where prisoners can use online tutorials and tests to improve their education and computer skills e.g. construction skills certification scheme (CSCS) preparation, driving test theory

7.2.3 The library continues to be well used, and so it was pleasing to see the permanent appointment of a new library senior manager.

7.3.1 In September 2022, 17 prisoners were attending external educational courses, compared with 23 in October 2021:

7.4 Vocational training

7.4.2 The engineering workshop and the bicycle repair workshop continue to offer qualifications and useful experience for employment on release.

7.4.3 Prisoners are employed in land-based activities, growing plants for the gardens and for other prisons and government organisations and a new horticulture tutor is now in place.

7.4.4 The training kitchen, which offered valuable catering qualifications, has been closed since before Covid. A problem with the gas supply at the reporting year end has been resolved and it will become fully operational when the right level of demand is established.

7.5.1 One of the most important aspects of reducing reoffending is enabling prisoners to obtain paid work outside the prison. This means they can end their

sentences with cash in their bank and work experience helps them to get a job on release.

Ford offers paid working opportunities on site:

- DHL runs a warehouse which processes items which prisoners can buy, for Ford and other prisons. During the reporting period, DHL did not offer any formal qualifications although basic onsite training was provided. The opportunity for post release employment is not well developed but post year end, plans are being put together to address this.
- Impress Plastics has an onsite workshop offering paid work and also employs prisoners in their local factory, many of whom continue on release.
- Men get barista qualifications through Chichester College and then work in the onsite café Serving Thyme which is open to the public. The café is very popular with locals. Nine prisoners were working here at the end of the reporting year.

7.5.2 Once again the Board commends the efforts made by the staff at HMP Ford to engage with local employers, particularly those who operate nationally, to offer jobs to prisoners. Their focus is on work which will lead to employment after release, either in the local area, or through national employers. By the end of the year the prison was working with 46 businesses employing prisoners or interested in doing so

7.5.3 As referenced earlier, unsuitable prisoners were being sent to Ford during the reporting year and this led to ROTL being suspended, work places being lost and reputational damage to the Prison Service.

7.5.4 Men were employed in construction, wholesaling, driving (including HGV), catering, engineering and waste management. Thirteen of these prisoners had secured work placements for themselves.

7.5.5 The first meeting of the of the new employment advisory board (EAB) at Ford took place in July 2022. These boards were recommended as a tool to encourage local businesses to employ prisoners. Chaired by a local businessman who also has a workshop at Ford, it is hoped that it will also be able to engage with businesses in London and the south east where 74% of Ford prisoners go on release. Success is measured by the percentage of prisoners still in employment six weeks after release. Although this number is difficult to establish given its reliance on both probation and the prisoners, it was positive that in October this was 41% for Ford.

7.6 Offender management, progression

7.6.1 The system of offender management in custody (OMiC) seems to have settled down and is working well. This, together with the regular weekly drop-in sessions when men can see their prison offender manager (POM), has meant there have been very few complaints from the prisoners that they do not get the contact they need.

7.6.2 The Board noted that throughout the year progression was continually hampered by a drastic shortage of probation officers in the community (community offender managers, or COMS) in the south of England and especially in London where the majority of Ford men are released.

7.6.3 Ford probation is to be congratulated on how they have managed their prisoners this year. The prison has established posts for a head of probation plus five full time probation officers (POs). For most of the year there has only been the head of department plus two other members of staff. Trainees have helped to ease the situation.

7.6.4 There are also severe delays in some police forces carrying out the background and other checks that are required for ROTL. The Metropolitan police force are particularly slow, with two requests for background checks outstanding after four months. This has caused unjustifiable delays in men getting ROTL to access jobs outside and for home leave.

7.6.5 Together with IMBs throughout the country we continue to stress that imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners. There were seven such prisoners in Ford at the end of the reporting year, all of whom had served over their original tariff, with one individual having served 15 years over his original sentence. During the reporting year one IPP prisoner was released, one had their release agreed and four were returned to a closed prison.

7.7 Family contact

7.7.1 Ford progressed to Covid-19 stage 1 in March 2022, with the number of social visits being increased from 20 prisoners per session to 30. Covid testing for visitors stopped on 1 April. Unfortunately for a short time there was no food or hot drinks available for visitors, many of whom bring children and travel a long way. This has now been resolved. Prior to Covid-19 two volunteers from Spurgeons were always available to look after young children during visits but this stopped and has not been reintroduced.

7.7.2 Very popular family days are run with the last being attended by 150 family members. Spurgeons has lost the contract for family engagement to Pact.

7.7.3 Prisoners continue to complain about the automated message on the telephone system which informs the recipient that the call is coming in from a prison. This is causing distress, particularly if a relative has Alzheimer's or if children do not know that their father is in prison.

7.8 Resettlement planning

7.8.1 Obtaining post-release accommodation has been a problem during the year. It is known that 19 prisoners were released without accommodation between January and October 2022. In the preceding year the figure was five. This is unfortunate as the lack of secure accommodation on release can contribute to a return to criminality for some prisoners.

7.8.2 For most of the year there was no dedicated resource based at the prison to find accommodation, which, together with the cancellation by the Prison Service of the funding for the 'through the gate' service, has probably contributed to this poor performance. The result has been that the task has fallen entirely to the POMs and COMs. They have worked diligently to find accommodation for most prisoners. The recent appointment of an additional staff member was hoped to help, but this post is

based at HMP Lewes as well as being at a more senior level, and is now not expected to make much difference.

7.8.3 The independent living unit, where long term prisoners can live more independently and learn to cook, shop, budget and do laundry and cleaning, is running well and is a very useful facility to help men transition to life on release.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9 (of whom one was on extended sick leave)
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a

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

Code	Subject	Reporting year to 31 Oct 2019	Reporting year to 31 Oct 2020	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	3	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	1	5
C	Equality	1	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	11	2	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	0	5	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	8	3	0
F	Food and kitchens	0	0	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	9	4	2
H1	Property within this establishment	2	3	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	28	7	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	2	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	31	12	12
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	3	1
K	Transfers	3	0	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	7	2	1
	Total number of applications	103	48	39

NB: Meaningful statistics were not available during the reporting year to 31 October 2021.



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk.