



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Garth

**For reporting year
1 December 2021 – 30 November 2022**

Published June 2023



Contents

Introductory sections 1 - 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	5
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	10
6. Health and wellbeing	14
7. Progression and resettlement	16
The work of the IMB	18
Board statistics	19
Applications to the IMB	19

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 Garth is a category B training prison. It opened in 1988 and holds long-term and life-sentenced prisoners. It has a maximum operating capacity of 845 and is now part of the long-term high security estate (LTHSE). There are seven residential wings and a segregation unit which is sited adjacent to the prison's healthcare department. Prisoners are housed in single cells with only a few cells adapted to specifically meet the needs of the physically disabled or men with mobility needs. There are also three specialist units:

- The Beacon unit treats people with profound personality disorders.
- The Building Hope unit accommodates prisoners with additional needs that can be disruptive.
- The Residential Support unit is for vulnerable prisoners who have not been convicted of sexual offences.

The prison is set in a rural location which has no direct connections to main line train services. There is only a poor bus service from Preston, Leyland and Chorley, which are the nearest towns. There is ample parking for visitors who travel by car and there are reliable taxi services in the area.

Various services are provided to the prison. Some are contracted locally or regionally whilst others are provided directly by national contracts with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Some of those services and providers are listed below:

- Primary healthcare – GMMHT*
- GP healthcare – locum GPs from various agencies
- Dental services – Smart Dental Services
- Mental health services – GMMHT*
- Substance misuse services – Delphi Rehabilitation Service
- Adult social care – Lancashire County Council
- Pharmacy provisions – shared pharmacy with HMP Wymott
- Optical services – optometrist – privately employed by GMMHT*
- Education and training – Offender and Learning and Skills Service/NOVUS
- Shared learning – University of Central Lancashire
- Prisoners' canteen – DHL
- Main food supplier – BIDFOOD
- Library services – Lancashire County Council library service
- Listeners and phone line support – the Samaritans
- Prisoner transport – Geo-Amey (main contractor)
- Facilities maintenance and management – Amey

*GMMHT Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

During this period the effects of the Covid pandemic began to abate and the prison began to move towards a more normal regime. However, this was not fully achieved by the end of the period. On the whole the prisoners responded positively to the required restrictions but some frustrations did begin to manifest themselves.

Throughout the Covid period there was a large turnover of uniformed staff and it quickly became apparent that up to half of the staff had no experience of managing a normal regime. This problem was overcome to some extent by good staff mentoring but some problems remain.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Security is a priority for the senior leadership team led by the Governor. Safety is much improved since changes and improvements were made to the remodelled entrance and gate area which have taken place since the last report. Clearly, stopping illicit items coming into the prison directly affects the number of weapons available to prisoners, so reducing levels of violence (see section 4).

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The ongoing staff recruitment and retention problems mean that there continue to be many inexperienced staff in the prison. However, it is felt that there are no significant problems in this area (see section 5).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

No significant issues have been identified (see section 6).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Few prisoners are normally released from this prison. This period has been affected by Covid restrictions and transfers to other prisons have therefore been negatively affected (see section 7).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Recruitment and retention problems occur throughout this prison. However, it is felt that many of these problems are caused and perpetuated by inappropriate policy making and direction from the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS. When the Board discusses these issues with the managers and staff in the prison it is clear that staff are most concerned to do efficient and effective work but that they feel

disempowered by inappropriate direction and imposed policies. To remedy this, at least in part, it is strongly recommended that policy makers, from the top down, should be more willing to consult with those at the coal face who are actually doing the job and who most clearly know what is required.

The Board continues to be very concerned about the recruitment of staff. It is now the practice to recruit prison officers remotely and to place them in the prison without the Governor and senior managers being enabled or allowed to give their views on the suitability of the appointee for the prison – or the prison for the appointee. This all too often results in new staff not staying because they did not feel adequately prepared for what they would encounter. It now transpires that probation officers are being similarly appointed and placed, with similar results.

Ministers have from time to time advocated longer and more punitive sentences. This appears to be consistent with the longstanding mantra of being ‘tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime’. This Board fully agrees that all prisoners should be sentenced appropriately and that all reasonable steps should be taken to protect the public and to reduce the number of victims of crime. It is frequently suggested that by creating longer and stricter sentences the wishes and needs of the public are met. This is only true, however, if the public are properly informed about the pros and cons of sentencing and prisoner management. Longer sentences can be expected to further damage many prisoners unless the right work and training are provided to them throughout the sentence. The reality is that the lack of the right staffing and other resources such as education and vocational training will not achieve the desired results and can be expected to exacerbate the problem.

During the reporting year, the Secretary of State for Justice indicated that he was minded to take the power to block transfers to open prisons whilst announcing an intention to take control of aspects of the decision-making of the Parole Board. This Board feels that these stated intentions are harmful for the rehabilitation of prisoners and insulting to the many staff and parole board members who work so diligently in these areas.

For many years this Board, like many others, has expressed concerns about the ongoing plight of IPP prisoners. The Parliamentary Justice Select Committee carried out a review of this sentence. Its conclusion recognised that in many instances IPP prisoners have been treated very unjustly and have been damaged by the sentence. They recommended that legislation should be enacted to finally resolve this injustice by resentencing those prisoners. The Secretary of State, and therefore the government, has indicated that he will not act upon his recommendation and it therefore appears that this problem will be perpetuated indefinitely. As has previously been stated, this Board has no desire to see any more victims of crime created. It also recognises that many of the IPP prisoners still in custody, or who have been recalled to custody, are damaged by the length of time they have served for the offences they have committed. All offending is serious but it cannot be right to impose what is effectively a life sentence for an offence that would otherwise receive a sentence of a few months. It is a matter of simple justice, and of the greatest urgency, that this injustice should finally be resolved.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board continues to be concerned about the deteriorating condition of the prison. Considerable investment needs to be made to bring it up to a reasonable standard. The ongoing concerns about the functioning of Amey need to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Provision for prisoners and staff with disabilities is poor and urgent investment is needed to provide lifts and stair lifts in relevant areas (see section 5.4).

For many years the waiting area for prisoners in healthcare has been wholly inadequate. The Board has repeatedly reported this but with no progress being made. It is again strongly recommended that this problem be resolved with the necessary finance being provided.

It is understood that the Probation Service is seriously under-staffed but the understaffing of the offender management unit needs to be addressed. This Board is concerned that inexperienced and trainee probation officers are now being placed in prisons. This is of concern in a long-term prison such as Garth where the needs of the prisoners are complex and require management by experienced staff.

Whilst Garth normally releases few prisoners and resettlement planning is not normally a high priority, it should be noted that in excess of a hundred category C prisoners are presently being held at Garth because of ongoing progression problems. This needs to be addressed urgently.

TO THE GOVERNOR

During the Covid era the Governor changed and a new deputy governor was appointed. Together they have addressed many of the problems caused by lockdown and have worked to improve recruitment and staff absences through sickness. They have also worked to make the senior leadership team a more cohesive unit but more needs to be done in this area and throughout all grades of the staff team.

Throughout this year the key worker scheme has not worked effectively because of staff shortages and consequent cross deployment. This should resume as quickly as possible.

3.4 Progress since the last report

Issue raised	Action taken
IPP	No progress
Deaths in custody	The number of deaths compared to previous years is much reduced. There is a death in custody plan in place against which good progress is being made.
Staffing and recruitment of prison officers	Recruitment is ongoing but there are real concerns about recruitment and retention of staff.
Prisoners' property	There continue to be grave concerns about the transfer of prisoners' property.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception area for new prisoners at Garth is spacious but gloomy and could benefit from upgrading. Prisoners arriving at Garth are checked in at a desk area which has little privacy. New arrivals have property and belongings checked, the prisoner receiving a property card which he checks and signs, this lists all of his belongings that have been brought with him. Problems occur when other property is left at the sending prison for later onward transport.

There is a first night interview which aims to assess risks and vulnerabilities. Prisoners are given information with regard to their first two weeks' induction at Garth together with information about the prison. Not all of the information given is up to date.

Before leaving the reception area an initial triage health check is conducted to ensure that any ongoing health issues are identified and that the prisoner has sufficient medication for immediate use. A fuller health check is conducted within two days. A triage nurse is in attendance in the reception area.

There are two holding cells in reception, one of which does not have a toilet.

A body scanner is in operation which can identify objects concealed within the body.

Initially prisoners are placed in cells in the reception area before being moved to the induction wing where they stay for full induction and assessments. They are checked regularly through the first night.

Once risk assessments are completed the prisoner is transferred to a permanent location in the prison suitable for his needs and perceived vulnerabilities. This process generally works well.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There have been four deaths during this reporting year, either from natural causes or substance misuse. This compares with eight in the previous reporting year (2021) which included instances of self-harm. It has been mentioned in previous reports that inquests take a long time to be heard and, at 30 November 2022, there were six inquests still to take place, some from previous years. Investigations into deaths are expedited and reports are sent to the Coroner's Office to reduce delay. However, it can take more than two years to receive the coroner's findings. This impacts negatively upon prisoners, their families and staff.

The reduced number of deaths in the period suggests that the prison's death in custody action plan is working well and the prison has actively improved its processes throughout the year.

The safer custody department has delivered training to staff regarding the new ACCT procedures. Many prisoners have complex issues and are subject to ACCT procedures. Complex case meetings take place for prisoners who are identified as

having significant needs and vulnerabilities, with a view to either continuing or varying the ACCT process. Representatives of healthcare and prison staff take part in assessments and the support of prisoners subject to the ACCT process, which clearly works well. The IMB monitors this area and attends assessment meetings by invitation.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

As the prison began to open up after the pandemic, the regime changed to allow prisoners more time out of cell. However, the Board began to receive an increasing number of applications from men who were complaining about the continuation of lengthy periods confined to their cells. For the whole of the year the prison did not resume a regime similar to that before 2020. Although the Board noted that there was a gradual increase of incidents on wings, these were not at an unmanageable level and staff managed them well. During this period meaningful progression of prisoners was adversely affected by the regime constantly changing.

Staff shortages caused by recruitment and retention problems and unacceptably high sickness absences continued to cause problems. Keeping prisoners in their cells to minimise risks was essential but this resulted in increasing frustration amongst prisoners and incidents began to increase. The segregation unit was invariably full, with some prisoners being held on the wings in segregation conditions.

4.4 Use of force

During the year, 124 uses of force were recorded. This is fewer than in recent years and fewer than in comparable prisons. Scrutiny meetings take place which Board members attend and when force has been used it is usually felt to be proportionate and justified.

Body-worn cameras are worn but an unannounced HMIP inspection found occasions when they were turned on too late and footage was not always downloaded and stored.

During this reporting period the Board attended two serious incidents, both involving prisoners going 'on the wire' on F and G wings. Both incidents were resolved safely and professionally and involved the National Tornado Team.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Since August 2022 the prison has had some much-needed investment to improve the gate area and now greatly improved search procedures are conducted both in respect of staff and visitors. This has seen a definite reduction in the number of illicit items entering the prison.

The Governor, or his deputy, regularly attends the Board's monthly meeting. He gives a regular report regarding security. During 2022 we were informed that, in the main, there was a good flow of intelligence into the security department. A weekly bulletin is circulated identifying areas which may be of heightened security risk and

managers are made aware of the key threats. Drugs continue to be a major problem throughout the establishment.

The National Search Team was deployed for a week in September at Garth and this deployment was most effective, finding weapons, mobile phones and drugs. This operation generated a flurry of complaints from prisoners regarding how the searches were conducted and the disrespectful way some prisoners felt that they were treated. Allegations included damage to prisoners' property. The Board is of the opinion that some of these complaints were justified and that lessons should be learned.

There continue to be finds of drugs in the prison and the making of "hooch" continues. Search and prevention are greatly helped by the regular deployment of search dogs.

In November 2022 HMIP inspectors found that mandatory drug testing involved a high number of prisoners and that drugs were easily available in the prison.

5 Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Nearly all of the prisoners live in single cells at Garth and very few men are required to share a cell. Some cells have poor ventilation and there are frequent complaints about poor maintenance. Some cells are in need of basic furniture including tables and chairs. However, most of the men personalise their cells and do try to take pride in their environment.

Most showers on the wings do not have sufficient privacy, and most are in need of full refurbishment. Floor coverings and tiles in many areas need replacing. The infrastructure of the prison will not improve within the present budget and spending limits and as the prison is now over 35 years old parts of it are crumbling.

The main kitchen producing and supplying meals to the prisoners is kept scrupulously clean and is well-managed and the food is of a good standard in spite of the small daily budget allowance for each prisoner.

There are some concerns that the main meal is served too early, i.e., at between 11am and 11.30am. The evening light cold meal is served at approximately 4pm. This service has been operating for some years. Previously the hot meal was served at the later time. The Board is concerned that prisoners are having to wait too long for their hot food between the light afternoon meal and breakfast.

Refrigerators and limited cooking facilities are available on most wings and prisoners can make food purchases from their canteen if they have the funds to do so.

There continue to be ongoing problems regarding repairs and maintenance of kitchen equipment and laundry equipment on the wings. This is too frequently not carried out in a timely fashion. The contract for maintenance throughout the prison is held by Amey. They have consistently failed to improve their performance, often despite the best efforts of their staff in the prison, and it is strongly advised that their contract should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit is situated in close proximity to the IMB office giving easy access for visits by Board members. During 2022, the 22 cells have regularly been in use with approximately 300 prisoners beginning segregation for varying periods of time. In addition, there are two special accommodation cells and cells for prisoners on dirty protests. The prison has a segregation, monitoring and review group (SMARG). The Board is invited to attend and to contribute at the meetings. Each quarter the group receives reports from relevant staff members including the mental health team and psychology. Many of the prisoners, including IPP prisoners, have long-term mental health issues and the mental health team allocates a named nurse for each prisoner.

Throughout the year there were also men held in segregation conditions on the wings as cells were full on the unit. This is not ideal but it is inevitable given the size of the Segregation Unit. This questions the effectiveness of support and guidance given on the wings. For example, the key worker system is seriously adversely affected by ongoing staffing problems.

Board members have noticed a distinct improvement in the way the segregation unit operates with a dedicated staff team working on the unit. The prison officers, healthcare and the mental health team representatives work together to ensure that prisoners are well supported. ACCT reviews are conducted with the segregation reviews to ensure the relevant parties are present.

A number of prisoners have been held in the segregation unit for six months and more. This is largely caused by problems relating to the relocation of prisoners to other prisons and to secure mental health hospitals.

During the year 2,612 adjudications took place. The number of complaints to the IMB about adjudications totalled only four. The Board has had no concerns about the adjudication process, although it is noted that delays can be caused by prisoners requesting adjournments to seek legal advice.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

Working relationships between staff and prisoners generally appear to be good although about one third of applications received include complaints about the treatment of prisoners by staff. During the recent HMIP inspection it was noted that 67% of prisoners said that they were treated with respect by staff and the Board would state that from observations around the prison this would appear to be about right. However, 35% or more of prison officers have less than three years' experience in post and their levels of engagement vary.

The Board feels strongly that the key worker scheme needs to be effectively reintroduced as a matter of urgency. Prisoners frequently expressed concerns that they did not know who their key worker was. Prisoners need that first point of contact, and working effectively as a key worker can greatly enhance job satisfaction for staff.

Constant changes to the regime caused by staffing problems and, of course, Covid, have caused serious disruption to the prison at times and this has been exacerbated by frequent cross-deployment of staff which inevitably loses continuity of management and support.

Throughout this period the prison council has met regularly. It has been well attended by prisoner representatives and constructive dialogue has taken place between prisoners and the Governor and other senior managers.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The equalities team at Garth has been proactive in working to ensure that all prisoners feel part of an inclusive community. are celebrated with a variety of events happening in the prison.

There are a variety of support groups which have been set up for specific groups of people and black, Asian and minority ethnic cultural awareness sessions have been staged which, we are told, have been much appreciated by prisoners.

There are a significant number of prisoners with disabilities and their needs are not always able to be met. Some have difficulties accessing elements of the regime. Others have carers to assist them. At a visit of HMIP inspectors in November 2022 concern was expressed regarding the lack of training and supervision of carers.

On a daily basis, wheelchair users are not able to move about the prison independently. There are only two lifts in the entire prison. One of those is sited in the stores department. Work to install stair lifts began pre-Covid in 2019 but has not been completed. This affects prisoners and affects the prison's ability to employ staff with disabilities. This work, which of course will require significant funding, needs to be completed as quickly as possible.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

HMP Garth has a well organised and established chaplaincy team which caters for the prisoners' wide range of faiths and religious beliefs. The team is presently fully staffed apart from one vacancy for the Rastafarian faith, of which currently 12 prisoners are followers. Whilst that post is vacant these prisoners are welcomed and encouraged to visit the chapel.

2022 has seen the lifting of restrictions in place due to the Covid pandemic and the chapel has resumed full operations. Various religious festivals and celebrations have been organised by the chaplaincy team throughout the year. Representatives of the team attend prison meetings and can be seen daily visiting the wings and segregation unit.

Provision is made to celebrate all faiths' special days. There are 16 faith leaders working at the prison on a part-time basis. Special events take place over the year to celebrate Christmas, New Year and Ramadan. All possible care is taken to meet the needs of all religions and faiths.

The introduction of laptops to each prisoner has facilitated the ability for a prisoner to directly request a visit from the chaplaincy and has speeded up the process for contact.

The chaplaincy team offers supportive bereavement counselling to prisoners and to staff who may have lost a family member or friend. When requested, and allowed, it may be possible for the live streaming of a funeral service to be arranged in a private area of the chapel, for the prisoner to attend and watch proceedings.

The chapel and facilities are frequently used for prison meetings and there is a quiet room available for prisoners' private prayers and reflection.

It is unfortunate that there have been occasions when, due to a lack of prison officers, it has not always been possible to facilitate the movement of all prisoners who would like to attend chapel services.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The Board is satisfied that the incentives scheme is working well and offers no further comment at this time.

5.7 Complaints

During 2022 the prison dealt with 3,966 complaints from prisoners. The Board undertakes a monthly quality check of the responses to the complaints. This exercise is a random 10% sample. In the main it is found that responses are timely and reasonable and address the issues raised. It is noted that the inspectors expressed some concerns about responses to complaints.

5.8 Property

During this reporting year, 101 out of a total of 306 applications to the IMB concerned property issues. The majority of these applications concerned the transfer in of property from other prisons. This is an issue that has been referred to in numerous previous reports without any progress being made towards a resolution of the problem.

Whilst problems may, and do, arise in other prisons, the main concern is that the companies contracted to move prisoners, in this case usually GeoAmey, are more concerned with transporting prisoners than their property and they normally allow each prisoner to only bring two bags of property with them. This means that other bags are left at the sending prison where, all too often, they 'go missing' or items from them disappear. It is recognised that some prisoners will take this as an opportunity to make excessive claims for losses but a solution needs to be found. On previous occasions this Board has suggested that the transporting companies might purchase secure trailers which would facilitate the transportation of all of the prisoners' property. This might need some investment from government, but it would go a very long way towards resolving the problem.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

All members of the Board visit healthcare regularly but one member liaises more closely with the department. Throughout the pandemic this has been maintained and it is gratifying to say that the rate of Covid infection in Garth has been lower than in most prisons, thanks to careful management and the good treatment offered by the healthcare team.

Prisoners' applications relating to healthcare were mostly concerned with accessing appointments, but in numerous instances this came about due to a shortage of prison officers available to allow movements or provide escorts.

Prisoners with chronic conditions generally receive good ongoing treatment and support either in healthcare or on the wing.

For many years the waiting room in the healthcare department has been a cause for concern and is clearly not suitable. It is a gated cell-type area with wooden benches and on occasions it houses too many people. There is no access to toilet facilities. Hygiene standards are questionable. HMIP inspections have raised concerns with which this Board fully agrees and we again strongly advise that this problem is resolved as a matter of great urgency.

HMP Garth shares a pharmacy with HMP Wymott, which is adjacent, and the supply of medicines generally takes place efficiently and effectively.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Staff respond promptly to urgent calls and to any incidents that require urgent care or first aid. All staff in the prison are trained in life support skills.

All prisoners are offered immunisations and vaccinations. The process for this has been well managed to ensure that all prisoners have been kept safe from infection.

6.3 Mental health

Once a prisoner is assessed and identified with mental health problems, support and intervention are readily available. Many prisoners have very complex needs and staff offer various levels of support. There is a good multidisciplinary team of nurses, psychiatrists and psychologists. Joint planning for the care of prisoners takes place to improve the quality of Care Plans for individuals.

The mental health conditions of many of the IPP prisoners, currently about 50 in HMP Garth, are well assessed and supported by the psychology department, and appropriate treatments and programmes are offered. However, this is an area of significant difficulty because many of these prisoners have been badly affected by the indeterminate nature of the sentence and the hopelessness they feel about being able to progress. The Board, as in numerous previous reports, strongly urges the government to resolve the injustice of this sentence along the lines recommended by the Parliamentary Select Committee for Justice during this reporting year.

6.4 Social care

The prison has continuing strong links to Lancashire County Council, which means that assessments, when required, are dealt with promptly and with minimum delay. Despite ongoing staffing pressures, prisoners with long-term conditions have been identified and receive good support. Disability aids, such as Zimmer frames and walking sticks are supplied by the County Council. It should be noted, however, that, as mentioned above, Garth is not adequately provided with lifts and stairlifts and is a difficult environment for prisoners and staff with disabilities.

6.5 Exercise and Regime

Prisoners are encouraged to participate in gym and open air activities in the exercise areas.

It is unfortunate that throughout this reporting period, due to the split regime prisoners were put in smaller groups and unlocked separately. There has been provision of one hour a day per prisoner for exercise and in the main this has been achieved.

The regime has been so restricted that in general prisoners have been unlocked for just sufficient time to enable them to shower and undertake domestic duties. In the later part of the year the regime has been relaxed enabling prisoners more opportunities to attend gym sessions, and around 50% of education sessions. There has been little time out of cells for socialising. Full-time activity was only available to a limited number who were undertaking a peer mentor role to support those in education and to those in workshops.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Close supervision and monitoring are in place for those prisoners who are known to have drug and alcohol issues, although staff may not be aware of all those who have an addiction. There is close monitoring of medication distributed daily in the prison and a monthly tradable medication report is produced. The medication includes pain relief, anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, methadone and treatments for ADHD.

The number of men receiving regular support from the Delphi team is approximately 170. These men are supported through a range of programmes tailored to the individual needs of the prisoner.. There are group sessions, one-to-one interventions and self-directed work books. There are regular reviews with staff from healthcare and the Delphi team.

6.7 Soft skills

The Board has nothing to report in this section.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education was restricted due to the regime, with the majority of prisoners limited to two formal sessions each week, although some provision was made for in-cell study. This resulted in long waiting lists of those wanting to study. Prisoners were also enabled to study level 1 maths and English in order to progress on the pay scale, although waiting times did disadvantage some prisoners. This caused frustration amongst prisoners who were determined to progress.

The outreach education provision continued to grow, with all areas in Garth having access to some learning and weekly sessions which were held on the Residential Support unit and Building Hope unit, with a peer mentor visiting the segregation unit to support learning.

During the year 278 prisoners (35% of the Garth population) engaged in a total of 501 courses, with 33% or 266 enrolled in accredited learning and 25% or 196 achieving a qualification .

Library services continue to be well used. The service is provided by Lancashire County Council. The physical move of the library into the education department was completed and this has enabled the introduction of research opportunities for prisoners. Extra time is built into the lessons to accommodate this.

Face-to-face book groups have proved difficult to reintroduce due to the wing lockdowns. It is hoped that this can be reintroduced in 2023.

Weekly trolley deliveries to wings continue and the tried and tested book request system continues to be well used.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Workshops continue to provide purposeful activity for prisoners to support contract requirements. However, the restrictive regime has limited the number of prisoners able to participate.

Despite the difficulties during the Covid lockdown and at present, the prison has retained its contracts with the exception of Speedy Tool Hire.

The DHL workshop supplies Garth and other prisons in the area with prisoners' canteen requirements. It is well managed and meets all deadlines. The Board receives few complaints in respect of canteen deliveries.

Vocational training continued throughout the year with catering and industrial cleaning being treated as essential work.

It is anticipated that all the workshops will fully reopen during 2023.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Staffing continues to be a major problem for the offender management unit (OMU). According to the size of the population of the prison and its security rating, the

department should be staffed by two senior probation officers (there is currently one) and by 13 probation officers (until recently there were 6.7). In addition to a governor there should be 3.5 band 4 prison officers. These are in post but they are all too frequently cross-deployed to other duties. Approximately 75% of their time is used elsewhere. Two trainee probation officers have been appointed but during their training period they will effectively function as probation service officers (PSOs) which means that they will not be able to carry full caseloads and function as qualified officers. It is understood that the Probation Service is experiencing serious recruitment and retention problems, but it is strongly suggested that only experienced officers should be seconded to prisons. Because of these problems the staff in post are having to carry approximately twice their recommended caseloads.

The offender management in custody (OMiC) programme is not functioning properly, in part because of staffing problems but managers believe that it needs to be fully reviewed and revised and properly staffed.

The issue of sentence planning (OASys) is one which this Board has had cause to revisit regularly. It is known that there are rules which require assessments to be carried out post sentence and before prisoners are transferred to prisons such as Garth. This is not happening in many cases, which means that prison offender managers (POMs) at Garth are having to spend too much of their precious time catching up on work that should have been done elsewhere. This needs to be addressed urgently.

For many years this Board, like many others, has expressed concerns about the ongoing plight of IPP prisoners. Garth currently holds about 50 IPP prisoners, most of whom have tariffs at the longer end of the spectrum, but who would not otherwise have qualified for what is effectively a life sentence. The OMU, with very good support from the psychology department, is doing all that it can to move these prisoners on but progress is slow because of the mental health needs of many of these prisoners, the lack of places in other prisons and the unwillingness of government to resolve the injustice of this sentence.

7.4 Family contact

HMP Garth had the benefit of being one of the first prisons to have in-cell telephones installed in April/May 2020. This enabled prisoners to be in contact with family and friends when social visits had temporarily stopped during the pandemic. Calls could be made up to 11pm each day to people who are on the approved list of contacts for the men. During the period when social visits stopped, the men were given a weekly telephone credit of £5. That stopped and the men have to pay for the calls from their own limited funds.

When social visits stopped video calling was introduced as an alternative but it is not always reliable. These social video calls can still be arranged. During the year visits increased in availability and visitors are now able to book a visit online. There have been complaints to the IMB, saying visits do not always start and finish on time, which curtails the time a prisoner has with his family.

Early in 2022 a temporary family development role was created and the enthusiastic appointee has proved a success in introducing initiatives to improve family ties. Family days have taken place throughout the year with entertainment for the children provided by staff and volunteers, giving the opportunity for families to eat together and take family photographs, and time for the men to see and be with their children and to see them growing and developing.

In March 2022, a small trial of ten applications for Angel Tree for Mothers' Day gifts and Cards took place. A number of men (158) have now expressed an interest in using the service for 2023.

Twenty four prisoners have signed up to the Newbridge Pen Pal project and fifteen prisoners have signed up to record a monthly blog for their children.

In the visits hall the children's play area is small and only provides activities for small children. There is a good provision of food and this is readily available.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Relatively few prisoners are discharged from this prison. However, this is an area of concern because progression problems mean that there are over 100 Category C prisoners at Garth. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

8. The work of the IMB

Fluctuating membership of the Board impacts on the work that can be accomplished by the remaining members. Some work will be prioritised and from the report the reader can see what areas have been prioritised and consequently monitored. In December 2021 the Board had nine members which for various reasons reduced to five by early summer 2023. One of those in the early stages of training had to take a sabbatical for the rest of the reporting year and it is not known if or when he will return.

The Board attended the prison throughout the reporting period, starting with nine members but finishing with seven, one of whom has taken a long-term sabbatical for health reasons. The remaining members have striven to maintain a good service but new members are urgently required.

Changes to the timings and days of segregation reviews have meant that the number of reviews Board members have attended is much reduced. Officers are always willing to discuss with the Board review outcomes and progression in respect of individual prisoners.

Changes from the IMB Secretariat in the recruiting and interviewing of new members have not assisted the Board. The IMB nationally is now adopting a collaborative recruitment policy which allows for potential new members to have an informal visit to, and tour of, the prison but the interviews and appointments are to be done remotely by Zoom.

Previously the Board would organise recruitment campaigns as and when necessary. Now that is being done remotely with little participation from IMB Boards

locally. This Board is not convinced that the 'collaborative recruitment' process is the best way forward. This may save a little money but it does not appear to be saving time and it remains to be seen whether it will improve the recruitment process.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	441
Total number of segregation reviews attended	104

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	12
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	2	4
C	Equality	3	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	5	11
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	9	14
F	Food and kitchens	5	11
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	18
H1	Property within this establishment	42	71
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	29	30
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	9	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	9	35
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	72	86
K	Transfers	4	4
	Total number of applications	230	306



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.