



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Huntercombe

**For reporting year
1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

- 2.1 HMP Huntercombe is a category C prison for foreign national adult men. It stands in a rural location, with limited access to public transport, outside the village of Nuffield between Reading and Oxford.
- 2.2 Its operational capacity is 480, split between six residential units, with a mixture of single and double cells and a segregation unit comprising five cells and one special accommodation cell. Huntercombe was originally built as a prisoner of war camp during World War II, since which time the buildings have been added to and extended in order to provide a secure and improved environment for its present use.
- 2.3 The prison complex includes educational facilities, an indoor gym, an outpatient healthcare facility, workshops, gardens, sports pitch, exercise yards, a visits hall, a cafeteria run by prisoners and a multi-faith sanctuary.
- 2.4 Education is provided by Milton Keynes College (MKC) and healthcare by Practice Plus Group (PPG), which subcontracts other healthcare providers such as dentists, physiotherapy and podiatry. General maintenance is provided by Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL), which has an office and works hub on site.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

3.1.1 In 2022 there was a return to the normal regime at HMP Huntercombe, following the previous years where Covid-19 had severely disrupted the work of the prison. The Board was pleased to see prisoners returning to meaningful activity.

3.1.2 The members of the Board were able to monitor in person throughout the year, except for a short period between 25 July 2022 and 9 August 2022 when the prison was once again designated an outbreak site.

3.1.3 HMP Huntercombe had many new staff join throughout the year and many of these were new to the roles. The Board would like to commend all staff for the work that they do with prisoners to help them use their time in prison effectively and help them progress. The Board also noted that there were three new members of the senior management team.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board considers that the prison is a safe environment for prisoners.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board believes that in general prisoners are treated fairly and humanely.

The exception is the ongoing incarceration of men who have passed their sentence expiry date and are held under immigration powers (IS91s), who remain under convicted criminal conditions. It is particularly disappointing that, although the minister in his reply to our same concern last year indicated that matters were improving, the data clearly shows they are not. See the Board's recommendations to the minister in section 3.2 and section 7.3.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The contract for provision of outpatient healthcare was retendered during the year and PPG was successful in being awarded the new contract. Work is ongoing to fully utilise the new contract; however, there was a seamless handover to a new head of healthcare with no adverse effect on prisoners. There were some difficulties experienced by prisoners in access to NHS services, but this was similar to the situation outside the prison. The Board was pleased to note an improvement in the sharing of information about prisoners' health with prison staff.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The resettlement team has developed well throughout the year, providing improvements for prisoners progressing towards resettlement. However, due to the lack of resettlement programmes and courses available in the wider prison estate,

which include internationally recognised accreditations, progress towards successful resettlement remains limited.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

In response to the Board's report of 2021, the Minister of State for Justice wrote on 8 August 2022, 'A Joint Home Office and HMPPS Early Release Scheme (ERS) Taskforce is focusing on removing barriers earlier to speed up the efficiency of ERS removals ... the numbers being returned via ERS are almost back to pre-pandemic levels.' Despite this reassurance, the Board has witnessed an ever-increasing number of foreign national prisoners (FNPs) transferred to HMP Huntercombe without a deportation order (DO), without which removals under the ERS cannot be facilitated. At the end of the reporting year, only 76 men from a roll of 469 had had a DO issued. (paragraphs 7.3.3 and 7.3.4)

In addition to the above, the lack of triaging of all FNPs by the Home Office prior to their arrival at HMP Huntercombe, and thus many arriving already past their ERS date, (paragraph 7.3.4) remains a matter of grave concern to the Board.

Once again we would draw the minister's attention to the ongoing issue of FNPs who have passed their conditional release date (CRD) and are held as IS91 under immigration powers. The Board has noted no improvement in this matter since first reporting it in our report of 2020. (paragraph 7.3.2)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

To facilitate the upgrading of the antiquated heating and hot water systems, repeated breakdowns of which not only cause inconvenience but cause frustration and resentment towards prison staff and senior management. (paragraph 5.1.1)

To urgently replace the part of the healthcare facility which has water ingress and is therefore not a suitable working environment.

To review the education contract in order to reinstate popular and worthwhile courses into the curriculum (paragraph 7.1.1) and to enable the full information, advice and guidance (IAG) level 4 diploma and City and Guilds course to recommence. (paragraph 7.1.4)

In the minister's reply to our report for 2021, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) stated: 'The Board can be assured that the new Framework will enable property to be handled with efficiency, care and respect.' As can be seen in paragraph 5.8.3, there remain significant issues about property transfers between prisons.

3.3 Progress since the last report

3.3.1 The in-cell telephony which was installed at the end of the previous reporting year was welcomed by prisoners, particularly those with families overseas who were unable to visit.

3.3.2 The work done in the prison with the healthcare provider to ensure appropriate sharing of healthcare information has improved information awareness. (paragraph 6.1.7)

3.3.3 The prison staff have worked hard to respond to complaints in a more timely way. (paragraph 5.7.2)

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 After an extended period of operation under national Covid-19 restrictions, the prison returned to a full regime for the majority of 2022. Until that point these restrictions continued to impact upon transfers of prisoners, their induction and procedures at reception and discharge. At year end, the daily roll had increased to 469 (from 447 in December 2021).

4.1.2 There was a short period between 25 July 2022 and 19 August 2022 when the prison was designated a Covid-19 outbreak prison.

4.1.3 In reception, the social distancing arrangements put in place during Covid-19 are no longer in place, although stocks of items such as masks and sanitising gel and gloves are held there should they be required. Immediate needs such as language support are identified and a comprehensive assessment process is undertaken. Prisoners are also routinely screened to determine the presence of objects that they may have secreted within their body.

4.1.4 With the diminution of the incidence of Covid-19, the isolation unit (reverse cohort unit, RCU) on one landing has closed, allowing the prison roll to increase accordingly.

4.1.5 Formal induction takes place on Patterson wing on Saturdays and during the prisoners' period on this wing, a decision is taken on appropriate wing allocation.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans opened (96) was fewer than in 2021 (100), which was the year during which the new more comprehensive ACCT documentation went live at Huntercombe. Six IS91 prisoners were on ACCTs during the year. This downward trend is encouraging and the Board recognises the good work being done by staff across all grades with and for the prisoners while in their care.

4.2.2 There were no deaths in custody during the reporting year.

4.2.3 The monthly safer prisons and weekly safety intervention meetings (SPM/SIM) have continued throughout the year. Board members attended these meetings where possible and prisoners on open ACCTs are routinely discussed at these meetings. The meeting minutes are distributed to Board members, providing an opportunity to follow up any concerns.

4.2.4 The Board has continued to prioritise attending ACCT reviews of prisoners in the segregation unit and on the wings, where possible in person or by familiarising themselves afterwards with the review outcome.

ACCT plans opened January to December, 2020-2022

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot	Avg
2022	13	6	12	3	8	14	9	8	7	5	4	7	96	8
2021	4	4	11	8	12	8	7	12	8	8	10	8	100	8
2020	12	9	15	10	16	8	1	7	10	5	8	14	115	10

4.2.5 With regard to prisoners refusing food, the total for the year was 23; this was one less than in 2021 and a slight increase from the previous year (21), when statistics were first collated by this Board. In the reporting year, the maximum number of food refusals in a month was four (January and July), while in May and October no prisoner refused to have food.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The prison has continued its policy of zero tolerance of violent incidents; the average monthly figure for violent incidents (five) is slightly up on the previous year, though lower than the figure in 2020 (six). For reference, the average monthly figure in 2019, being the last full year prior to Covid-19 restrictions, was seven. Therefore, the figures for the next reporting year may illuminate any discrepancies caused by Covid-19 restrictions.

4.3.2 The long-standing issues of the failing heating and hot water supply to the prison (paragraph 5.1.1) resulted in an incident in November when a large number of prisoners on one wing refused to lock up at the allotted time in the evening. Although no violence occurred, it required the Governor to attend and explain the issues with the heating and hot water across the prison in order for the situation to be resolved and the men return to their cells.

4.3.3 The issue of prisoners becoming indebted to other prisoners on the wing and the consequent potential for violence has long been recognised across the prison estate. In an attempt to better understand the extent and nature of the problem, HMP Huntercombe undertook a survey of prisoners, also issuing guidance and information to staff. The survey results were reported in November. No prisoner acknowledged any issue with debt themselves, though they did state they were aware of debt issues among other prisoners. Vapes, followed by drugs, food and canteen, were reported as being the most common reasons for incurring debt. The Board recognises that debt will remain an issue but is encouraged that efforts have been made to raise awareness among staff and to gauge the extent of it at HMP Huntercombe through such surveys and the use of prisoner forums.

4.3.4 The total number of violent incidents over the year were:

Number of violent incidents, January to December, 2020-2022

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot	Avg.
2022	4	4	4	4	5	4	2	9	7	8	4	2	57	5
2021	2	4	4	5	0	6	4	4	3	3	1	4	40	3
2020	4	8	7	3	13	7	5	7	5	5	6	3	70	6

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 The Board is now invited to attend the meetings held by the prison to review body worn camera (BWC) footage and receive notes from the use of force (UoF) meetings. The latter are held on a quarterly basis and a Board member was able to attend the three meetings during the reporting year and also a number of the BWC reviews.

4.4.2 There were 53 incidents where either planned or unplanned force was used; as a snapshot: in Q3 there were 18 incidents requiring UoF. However, as seven of these involved one prisoner, the importance of the regular meetings is made clear rather than a reliance on overall statistics. In the first three quarters of the year there was an average of seven planned occasions where force was used, with a monthly average of four unplanned incidents. There were no incidents where UoF was required for personal protection, the majority being recorded as 'prevent self-harm' or 'prevent harm to others'.

4.4.3 There were no occasions this year when either batons or PAVA were used.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Mandatory drug testing (MDT), both random and pre-determined, was reintroduced in April 2022, together with intelligence-led searching of cells. Cannabis (as opposed to 'spice') has become the substance predominating the finds this year. More generally, the Board is concerned about two issues arising from the presence of illegal substances on wings: firstly how they arrive there, and secondly the debt issues that inevitably arise (see 4.3.3 above with regard to the latter). In respect of the way illegal drugs enter the prison, searches are conducted at social visits, and prisoners are routinely screened in reception (see 4.1.3 above). The Board is pleased to be able to record also that periodic searches of staff are undertaken and feedback on the results is provided by the Governor at our monthly Board meetings. The Board has not been made aware that illegal drugs have been found during staff searches.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Whilst the accommodation is generally up to date, clean and tidy, there is a serious ongoing issue with the reliability of the prison heating and hot water system. Due to a major leak that cannot be located, as at the end of December 2022 there were four temporary boilers serving four of the five prison wings, and one temporary boiler serving the rest of the prison. Alongside this, boilers were scaled up and there was a significant problem with the district main, which has never been replaced since it was put in. Whilst this will be expensive to repair, the prison is spending significant amounts of money putting in place temporary solutions whilst the key problem of the new district main will at some point have to be resolved anyway. The frequency of areas of the prison being without hot water and heating is increasing and the result of this is that in certain areas of the prison, for example in segregation, prisoners are having to be escorted and moved to other wings for showers, which is not ideal. The decision as to when to replace the district main is now critical, as the prison cannot function properly in the medium to long term with temporary boilers. The unreliability of the prison heating and water system creates frustration and unnecessary stress for prisoners and staff alike and needs to be resolved.

5.1.2 The new kitchen is still in the process of being built, having been delayed mainly by the need for a new generator to power the unit. With a new power transformer (required to run the kitchen fully off the main supply) being put in place in early 2023, it is hoped that at some point in the next 12 months the new kitchen will be operational. It has been planned carefully to ensure food preparation respects all faiths and dietary requirements. The opening of the new kitchen will also mean that the old one can be refurbished and repurposed (see 5.5.3 below).

5.1.3 The prison has introduced a new menu ordering system to be used by the prisoners. This new menu sheet needs to be filled out a little more carefully than the old one, and as such has had a few teething problems since being introduced. This has resulted in prisoners not receiving the food that they think they have ordered, causing frustration. The biggest problem exists in Patterson wing, where there is a higher percentage of new prisoners who during the induction process are now having explained to them in more detail how to avoid errors in completing the new form. There have also been supply issues that the prison has been experiencing.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Board members attend the segregation unit regularly to visit and speak individually to prisoners. Not all prisoners wish to speak, but those who do value the opportunity. With improved communication so that the Board is informed when they are taking place, Board members continue to attend segregation adjudications or discipline (GOoD) reviews when possible. These are held in a professional manner, with the segregation staff generally being very supportive and working well as a team with the prisoners in the segregation unit in what can be a very challenging environment.

5.2.2 It is good to note that in 2022, with the most recent information provided to the end of September 2022, all initial segregation health screens (34) were completed in the two-hour time period and all review boards (20) were held within the specified time. These results have been positive for both staff and prisoners in the unit.

5.2.3 Most prisoners were returned to the wings after review. During the year the longest stay in the segregation unit was 61 days and this one individual was eventually transferred to another prison.

5.2.4 With only five segregation cells available, occasionally during the year when the unit is full, prisoners under segregation rules must be held on the wings. Whilst not ideal, review meetings for such prisoners are conducted in the segregation unit and if applicable prisoners are returned to their wing after a decision is taken as to whether they should remain under segregation rules.

5.2.5 Board members attend the quarterly meetings of the segregation, monitoring and review group (SMARG) in order to continue to understand the challenges faced by both prisoners and staff.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The key worker initiative was working well prior to the pandemic but was suspended for a period during the national lockdown. It is now re-established and will become increasingly important in the delivery of the planned future regime design (FRD) currently being discussed for Huntercombe. Whatever the detail of the new regime, it will aim at increasing purposeful activity to support rehabilitation. It will be centred around 'personalisation', where each individual prisoner will work with the prison to plan their progression from their first day at HMP Huntercombe. Through the wing forums the current prisoners will be given a voice regarding FRD.

5.3.2 In addition to our own observations, the Board has spoken to equality and Listener orderlies and is of the opinion that in the main staff and prisoner relationships are good and that treatment by staff is generally fair and humane. It is encouraging that the equalities team has expanded and there is now a duty equality representative on every day and prisoners can request to see them via the wing staff.

5.3.3 In addition to Board members' own observations, the Board reviewed the complaints made during 2022. A total of 1314 complaints were made, but only 42 related to a named staff member, and where a named member of staff was mentioned, there were 25 different staff named, suggesting there was no staff member involved predominantly.

5.3.4 A training programme delivered by the Samaritans is planned (the 'postvention' programme). It will be aimed at helping staff deal with the distressing circumstances experienced following a death in custody.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 HMP Huntercombe, as a foreign nationals prison, contains diverse national and ethnic groups. They represent a large variety of different cultural and religious

backgrounds and this can sometimes be a cause of tension amongst the prisoners. The Board believes the prison handles issues around diversity and equality within the prison well. The equalities team has expanded this year and there is now a duty equality representative on every day.

5.4.2 A questionnaire for prisoners and staff was circulated during 2022 and they were asked to contribute how they thought equalities at HMP Huntercombe could be improved and what to develop. There was an excellent response rate and equalities staff have been able to incorporate many of these ideas into the development plans for the next year.

5.4.3 The prison has an equalities officer and maintains a categorisation of the nature of the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) applications and the number upheld. There is no evidence that the Board has seen that the DIRF review process is anything other than robust and fair. A total of 41 DIRFs were submitted in 2022 (compared to 52 in 2021), of which 21 were deemed not to fit the criteria for a DIRF and were converted to a complaint. Twelve of the 20 DIRFs (60%) referenced race as the protected characteristic.

5.4.4 A review of the DIRFs by the HMPPS regional lead for equalities suggested the quality of responses to these DIRFs had improved compared to those of 2021.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The pastoral care team within Huntercombe reached a full complement of 12 this year, with the appointment of a new Roman Catholic chaplain. The team represents all faiths and provides services, religious teaching and association groups within the prison.

5.5.2 The percentage of different age groups and ethnicities engaging in chaplaincy services now closely reflects the population average. 2022 saw the closure of the chapel because of building works, and this has presented logistical problems at times, in terms of finding places to gather for worship. There has been a significant increase in the number of Christians engaging (possibly related to the arrival of the new Catholic chaplain) and Friday prayers regularly has an attendance of over 100.

5.5.3 A new multi-faith centre is being planned on the site of the current kitchen.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 HMP Huntercombe is aiming to provide a rehabilitative culture, within which prisoners feel safe and motivated to change and find new roles for themselves as law-abiding members of the community. As part of creating the environment in which that can happen, it offers opportunities for prisoners to earn privileges consistent with national policy as a reward for good behaviour and performance. Currently it applies the incentives scheme in the national framework of three levels: basic, standard and enhanced. However, the prison is considering introducing a fourth **incentives** level that might contribute as a selection criterion when considering applications to the enhanced wing (Rich). The governor responsible for the incentives scheme has been

researching numerous incentive schemes to further develop the current scheme, particularly those that incorporate peer-led mentoring, and this is potentially an area that will be further explored.

5.6.2 Over the year the average distribution of incentive levels in the prison has been 2% on basic, 42% on standard and 56% on enhanced. It is noted that the majority of prisoners on basic are young, but there appears to be a reasonably even spread regarding ethnicity in this group. This compares to the Board's annual report in 2021, where it was noted that there was an increased representation of young prisoners on basic and that over half were black prisoners.

5.6.3 The Board noted that in the last two months of the year the proportion of prisoners on basic had increased significantly to approximately 6%. It has been suggested that this increase may be related to an increase in positive mandatory drug tests (MDTs).

5.6.4 Prisoners placed on basic regime are referred to the stoicism course, automatically, which aims to help men by providing an opportunity to consider alternative ways of feeling about events and to develop improved skills to deal with emotional or difficult issues.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The prison received a total of 1314 complaints during the reporting year, an increase of 12% on 2021. There are no consistent trends between any of the religions or age groups and complaints. Property remained the major source of complaints, with 254 (19%) complaints received. Of these, the majority (72%) related to problems with property outside of HMP Huntercombe.

Type	Number	%
Total Number of Complaints	1314	100
Stage 1 Complaints	1029	78
Stage 2 Complaints	155	12
CA Complaints	130	10

Most Common Complaints	Number	%
Property	254	19
Residential	184	14
IEP	162	12

Response Time	Number	%
On Time	1166	89
Late	132	10
Outstanding	16	1

External Complaints Overview	Number	%
Total	180	14
Answered On-Time	130	72
Answered Late	44	24
Outstanding	6	3

5.7.2 Of the 1314 complaints received by the prison throughout the reporting year, 132 (10%) were beyond the target response time and 16 (1%) remained outstanding. This is a significant reduction on the 65 complaints that remained outstanding at the end of 2021, and the prison should be commended for this improvement in this aspect of the complaints process.

5.7.3 Each week throughout the year the prison employed the policy of randomly selecting four complaints addressed by different responders, which were supplied to the senior management team for quality assurance. Every month 10% of complaints are randomly checked by the business hub manager to assess the quality of the responses.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 In 2022, 27 applications received by the Board were property related (compared to 28 in the last annual report). A further breakdown of these figures shows that it is still particularly difficult to resolve issues related to property coming into the prison and being mislaid in transit.

5.8.2 The number of applications to the IMB regarding complaints about property managed inside the prison remain the same. If property has been genuinely mislaid, which happens for whatever reason, and the prison accepts responsibility, then the Board urges the prison to recompense any prisoner within a reasonable amount of time and not allow the situation to drag on. The inability to locate property causes unnecessary stress and frustration. It is not always the monetary value that impacts on the prisoner's wellbeing, more than the emotional stress caused regarding the property's whereabouts.

5.8.3 The Board notes that there is a new updated national prisoners property policy framework that was introduced in November 2022. One of the key areas that can cause an issue is the volumetric control of property that prisoners bring into HMP Huntercombe, and misunderstanding of the regulations can cause frustration and tensions in reception. However, until there is general improvement in communications and processes throughout the prison estate, issues with property will remain a challenge.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Healthcare at HMP Huntercombe is provided as an outpatient service under contract by Practice Plus Group (PPG). There is no inpatient provision. All other services, for example general practitioners and dentists, are provided as subcontractors to PPG.

6.1.2 During the year the provision of primary and secondary mental health was integrated and, following a contractual change, is now provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. This change is regarded as beneficial; however, the proposed changes in delivery have not yet been implemented.

6.1.3 During the year a new head of healthcare was appointed.

6.1.4 A partnership board exists comprising the commissioners of healthcare, PPG as the provider and the Governor, representing the prison. A representative of the Board is usually in attendance at these meetings.

6.1.5 In September, a report entitled Patient Perspectives – Healthcare Views was published by Empowering People Inspiring Change (EPIC), based on patient views within HMP Huntercombe. Broadly, the report was favourable, but a number of recommendations were made (such as improving healthcare inductions and a detailed review of health inequalities relating to patients with disabilities). All the recommendations are under active review and will be discussed by the head of healthcare with the Board during the first quarter of 2023.

6.1.6 In December, a report entitled Patient Perspectives – Views on Health Equality was published by EPIC. This will be reviewed by the Board in the next reporting year.

6.1.7 The Board is pleased that agreement has been reached between the prison and PPG on the sharing of appropriate medical information about individual prisoners between PPG and prison staff with the consent of the prisoner.

6.1.8 Staffing remains at around 74% of full complement, with the shortfall being made up of regular agency staff and bank staff who cover vacancies. This is not entirely satisfactory, but is a problem typical of the wider healthcare staff situation in most prisons and in the NHS.

6.1.9 PPG recorded 165 concerns and complaints during the year, which was an increase on the 117 last year. The main themes were medications, waiting times for appointments in secondary care and gaining access to medical records via the subject access request process.

6.1.10 A major problem for the healthcare team has been the continuing deterioration in the fabric of part of the prison occupied by healthcare, involving the ingress of water on a regular and totally unacceptable basis. This is a major problem, which may result in some of the healthcare team having to relocate to another part of the prison on a temporary basis, but the underlying problem requires urgent attention

to enable the team to work effectively, and for their own health and wellbeing to be protected while they continue to provide services to prisoners.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 The healthcare team has worked hard to regain ground lost during the Covid-19 pandemic. Backlogs and waiting lists have been managed internally. External hospital services have struggled to catch up, and there remain delays for assessment and treatment at hospital.

6.2.2 HMP Huntercombe has a different topic for health promotion each month in line with national health promotion topics.

6.2.3 The health team works well with the offender management unit to plan the discharge of prisoners being transferred or deported. A pre-discharge health clinic is held a few days before departure and an appropriate supply of medication is given.

6.2.4 Due to pressures across the prison estate, new arrivals have been arriving later in the day than had happened previously. A new post of early days in custody nurse has been created to assess new arrivals to the prison, particularly later in the evenings. The Board welcomes this addition to the service.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 In line with the new contract, the integrated primary and secondary mental healthcare team is now provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (see 6.1.2). There has been continuity of service, with the staff transferring to the new provider.

6.3.2 The Board will be looking closely in 2023 at the advice given to prison staff for dealing with lower-level behavioural issues with prisoners as the new contract settles.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 There is a memorandum of understanding with the local authority, and PPG has been commissioned to deliver social care when needed.

6.5 Exercise, regime

6.5.1 Access for the prisoners to gym and other exercise times have improved in 2022 as the pandemic eased, and the positive attitude of the gym staff is appreciated by prisoners.

6.5.2 The sports hall has been out of commission for the second part of the year due to weather damage to the roof. A return to access to this facility will be welcomed by the prisoners.

6.5.3 During the first half of the year, whilst various stages of the national regime were in place and when HMP Huntercombe became an outbreak prison in mid-summer 2022, the gym staff were only able to offer activities in defined bubbles on the wings. However, full use of the gym, which remains an extremely popular activity in the prison, and the Stoic course run by gym staff, were resumed mid-year and increased in numbers as the year progressed.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The psychological drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) continues to be provided by Midland Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and it carries out individual interventions on the wings as well as running group sessions for prisoners.

6.6.2 The Board is pleased to note that there is an increasing number of prisoners who leave the prison no longer using drugs or alcohol.

6.6.3 During the year the DART team has taken part in the Stigma Kills campaign run by the NHS addictions provider alliance. The campaign aims to highlight the damaging effects of stigmatising language and attitudes towards those who experience addiction.

6.6.4 There has been an increased detection of drugs within the prison. The active and passive search dogs have been in the prison on 228 occasions.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Milton Keynes College is the education provider.

7.1.1 Staffing issues have remained a problem throughout the year resulting in both art and barbering being removed from the curriculum. There were insufficient staff to cover the English for speakers of another language (ESOL) classes at various times during the year, and construction was also affected adversely by the tutor being on prolonged sick leave. In addition, all industries staff were placed on training at some point in the year, those newly recruited to learn their area and some others requiring additional training as specialists in the defined areas.

7.1.2. The contract with Oxfordshire County Library Services to provide the library services was terminated mid-way through the year and taken over by Milton Keynes College. Initially lack of staff was a problem, but by the end of the year, three part-time librarians were able to provide full cover for four days of each week. By the end of the year, group activities had been reintroduced and all areas had direct access time allocated to the library, and various reading initiatives, such as Storybook Dads and Raising Readers, were readily available.

7.1.4 The Shannon Trust reading programme was recommenced during the latter quarter of the year, during which time 15 mentors were trained and began immediate employment and by the end of the year were helping around 75 learners.

7.1.5. It was with regret that the Board noted that the full information, advice and guidance (IAG) courses were curtailed at the end of June 2022. Until that date, these courses had included a level 2 certificate, level 3 certificate and level 4 diploma IAG qualification from City and Guilds. Prior to March 2020 these courses were attended by around 15 men, and achieving level 3 or above provided a job qualification recognised outside prison. After release, graduates from these courses have gone on to be youth offender team workers, working with, not for, probation, anti-violence projects, training prison officers and welfare support officers. Whilst in the establishment, the IAG graduates, known as peer advisors, were able to help and advise other prisoners on many matters, including immigration, deportation and resettlement, and were generally located around the wings, thus readily accessible to all prisoners.

7.1.6 Since July 2022, the IAG course has been curtailed and currently simply delivers the Northern College of Further Education (NCFE) level 2 certificate, which enables those who complete it to become orderlies for resettlement, safer custody, allocations and library. (para 7.5.2)

7.1.7 It is disappointing to note that the Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2022 returned a verdict of 'insufficient progress' since its last inspection in 2017. The Board does not have sufficient expertise in this area to either corroborate or refute these findings, but would question whether sufficient notice was taken of both the impact that extended periods of the restricted national regime had on numbers able

to attend education and activities and the ongoing issues of staff shortages within these areas.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1. During 2022 the numbers attending work areas varied tremendously depending on the availability of staff and prison regime conditions (HMP Huntercombe was designated a Covid-19 outbreak prison between 25 July 2022 and 9 August 2022).

7.2.2 Waste management continued to run with eight men per session but was not able to run any sort of course or qualification.

7.2.3 The Wamitab course in industrial cleaning, which was introduced to comply with regulated qualifications, has not proved to be a popular replacement for the previous BICs course and the process for dealing with the course is still to be properly embedded.

7.2.4 The social enterprise workshop remains popular with the prisoners and ran relatively consistently with 15 men morning and afternoon, and during the year a woodworking facility has been added to this workshop, but it has been left to staff in the unit to try to forge links for contracts with outside retailers in order to become commercially viable.

7.2.5 The gardens operated with 12-15 men morning and afternoon; the classroom sessions were able to resume with higher numbers on a risk review post-Covid.

7.2.6 Due to external pressures on the fishing industry, the contract for lobster pots was put on hold. There are plans to reopen recycling again in early 2023 with a new activity.

7.2.7 Textiles ran for most of the year, with 15 men producing cagoules for a contract under the prison service procurement initiative.

7.2.8. Once again staffing levels in the kitchens impacted on this activity, but overall around 18 workers were employed per session.

7.2.9 Wing workers operated normally during the year and wings managed their men around the different regimes and changes that occurred during 2022.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The anticipated outcome for foreign national prisoners (FNPs) transferred to HMP Huntercombe is that in the majority of cases they will ultimately be deported to their country of origin. Throughout 2022 the average monthly roll increased from 410 in 2021 to 450 in 2022. However, the number of FNPs deported dropped from 236 in 2021 to 230 in 2022, whilst immigration bail releases rose from 158 in 2021 to 191 in 2022.

7.3.2. The Board has consistently raised its concerns for the attention of both the Minister of Justice and the Home Office regarding the continued detention in convicted criminal conditions of FNPs who are held under immigration powers (IS91) beyond their conditional release date (CRD). At commencement of 2022 this figure

at HMP Huntercombe stood at 30 and averaged 19 on a monthly basis throughout the year. We quote the response from the minister to our report of 2020 (ref ADR 090492 01/09/2021): 'I note the Board's concern ref FN who have completed their sentence but are detained under immigration powers. I hope to reassure the Board that the Home Office is committed to working with HMPPS and other government agencies to address this issue and is focused on progressing FN cases as quickly as possible.' In reply to the same issue in our report in 2021, the minister replied on 8 August 2022: 'I am assured that the Home Office remains focused on progressing cases as quickly as possible...' Despite this reassurance, the numbers of IS91s in HMP Huntercombe during 2022 remained over 50% higher on a monthly average than at the time of the concerns noted in our report of 2020.

7.3.3 The Board appreciates that the pandemic of 2020/21 created additional problems in this respect but believes that due to a lack of caseworkers at the Home Office there has been a failure to accelerate many of these outstanding cases, and even deportation orders (DOs), the keystone of the deportation process, have far too frequently been delayed beyond the FNP's early release date (ERS) and in too many cases even their CRD.

7.3.4 The numbers of FNPs arriving at HMP Huntercombe already past their ERS date throughout the year was 172 (in 2020 there were 125 and in 2021 168). The monthly average of FNPs held within the establishment and past their ERS was 218. This constitutes very nearly 50% of the cohort who could be deported. Undeniably some will contest deportation and their case will go to appeal, but due to delays in the Home Office and despite the fact that the deportation process cannot commence until after a DO has been issued, in many cases FNPs arrive at HMP Huntercombe close to, or even beyond, their ERS date, having neither received a DO nor even been assigned a caseworker. In the current year the average number of FNPs with a DO dropped to 73, by comparison with 2020 when the figure was 172 and 2021 when it was 90.

7.3.5 The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 extended the ERS from nine months to one year in order to speed up the deportation of FNPs, which to some extent mitigates the increase in numbers held beyond their ERS date. It is interesting to note that whilst the Home Office has largely been delivering detainee (IS91) paperwork within the service level agreement (SLA) of 30 days, the result has not been to increase the numbers deported but rather to increase the numbers released into the community under immigration bail. The explanation for this seems to lie in the fact that when a FNP has the prospect of reducing his prison term by up to one year and receives a payment from the UK government to accept deportation, he is keen to leave, but as this fails to happen and his CRD gets closer, and it is known that more and more FNPs are successfully applying for and getting released via immigration bail, deportation becomes less of a reasonable prospect. For example, at HMP Huntercombe, in November of the reporting year, the 27 FNPs who reached their CRD all received their detainee paperwork within the SLA; however, of those 27, only 10 were deported. The remaining 17 were released on immigration bail.

7.3.6. The number of FNPs deported within one month of their ERS window totalled four throughout the reporting year. It was interesting to note that one of HMP Huntercombe's high-profile incumbent's paperwork was ready and waiting for him to leave the day after he entered his ERS window.

7.3.7. Through 2022, the staff budget for prison offender managers (POMs) was reduced from five to four point five; for the last quarter of the year the POM team at HMP Huntercombe only consisted of three people.

7.3.8. At 31 December 2022 the number of FNPs without an offender assessment system score (OASys) was 55. The historical necessity for FNPs' OASys to be a level 3 document has now been relaxed and all FNPs are now assessed according to their risk in the same way as a British prisoner would, thus allowing for many more to only require a level 1 OASys.

Number deported each month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	17	21	25	20	10	18	30	22	27	21	10	9	230
2021	11	6	19	27	34	23	13	14	26	22	24	17	236
2020	27	33	25	3	16	24	15	27	22	33	19	24	268

Number of prisoners held under IS91s

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	30	24	27	12	8	22	19	15	23	18	19	9	226
2021	30	30	27	29	9	18	18	18	22	12	17	17	247
2020	3	7	5	5	13	5	8	16	19	23	16	24	144

CRD releases

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	0	1	1	12	3	2	1	4	3	3	2	2	34
2021	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	1	1	11
2020	2	0	4	3	5	3	4	1	2	2	3	0	29

Immigration bail releases

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	26	14	18	14	28	11	15	6	9	16	17	17	191
2021	7	11	16	22	4	10	14	14	17	13	11	19	158
2020	0	0	1	7	4	8	6	7	12	9	15	13	82

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Social visits gradually increased throughout the year, according to the Covid-19 regulations and social distancing, and by the last quarter of the year were back to pre-Covid conditions.

7.4.2 Family days recommenced towards the end of the year and were held in October, November and December.

7.4.3 Social video calls remained popular but were marginally restricted following the opening up of the regime and recommencement of visits, as the visit hall is also where the video calls are made from. However, just under 6,500 calls were made during 2022 and the average wait to make a call was 12 days.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 The resettlement team at HMP Huntercombe has continued to build on establishing relationships with charities and embassies overseas and in addition to those forged in 2021 it has established a link with BARKA, a Poland-based charity that is branching out into various other countries and is already established in various European countries and Canada. It also has offices in Milton Keynes.

7.5.2 Four orderlies trained to NCFE level 2 are now assigned to resettlement to help address prisoner issues around deportation, immigration and resettlement.

7.5.3 Careers information, advice and guidance is now provided by ACORN, with an allocation for two career advisors, but to date with only one in post.

7.5.4 The resettlement department continues to run the release on temporary licence (ROTL) programme, and through 2022 had up to 15 men in outside jobs, two with their own cars, which, given the rural location of Huntercombe, enabled teams to travel to work placements some distance away. Further contracts for men through ROTL are under negotiation for 2023.

8. The work of the IMB

8.1 Monthly Board meetings were held in the prison throughout the year. In addition, monthly video calls were introduced to keep Board members in touch with current issues.

8.2 Board members visited the prison regularly throughout the year.

8.3 Following a recruitment campaign, two new members joined the Board and one transferred from another IMB. One Board member resigned during the year.

8.4 The Board is grateful for the help and support of the prison staff in carrying out its duties throughout the prison.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	107

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	12	4
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	3	0
C	Equality	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	3	9
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	4
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	5
F	Food and kitchens	2	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	26	23
H1	Property within this establishment	15	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	13	15
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	13	32
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	29	45
K	Transfers	1	4
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	3	5
	Total number of applications	143	161



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