

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leyhill

**For reporting year
1 February 2022 – 31 January 2023**

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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 OPCAT Protocol (Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture) and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 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 Leyhill is a category D open prison, located just off junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds with many attractive features. Operational capacity has been recently reduced to 460 prisoners¹, housed in three residential units. Most of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century. The addition of a 40-bed temporary unit installed during lockdown for isolation purposes is now used for accommodation. Unit C1 remains closed, as it failed a fire inspection.
- 2.2 The prison holds a highly complex group. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept those convicted of sexual offences irrespective of sentence. The number of those held convicted of sexual crimes varies over time and on occasion has been above 65% of the population.
- 2.3 Half of its prisoners are aged 50+ and over a quarter are 60+. Approximately a quarter of all prisoners have some form of disability and some have two or three disabilities.
- 2.4 At the end of the reporting period, there were 99 prisoners serving a life sentence, 65 on an indeterminate imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence, and 298 on a determinate sentence. Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.
- 2.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, during the reporting period a variety of support to prisoners was provided by the following organisations:

Career information, advice and guidance: Prospects

Personal development, social and life skills, and work-related learning:
Weston College, Wayout TV/Way2learn, Prospects and CF03

Benefits and appointments on release: Department for Work and Pensions

Qualification support: Weston College, Open University

Specialist prison leavers employment support: New Futures Network –
Industries and Employment Support

Specialist veterans support –SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity

Bank accounts: Nationwide

¹ *Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.*

Healthcare services: Inspire Better Health until October 2022 then Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Mental health services: Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Integrated Mental Health and Substance Misuse Team until October 2022 then Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Lobster Pot day centre for older prisoners: Resettlement and Care of Older ex-Offenders and Prisoners (before December 2022 delivered by RECOOP, from December 2022 by Rehabilitation Culture community interest company)

The Homeless Prevention Team (HPT)

Family service providers of visits and casework: PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Prodigal Arts

Changing Tunes

Hardman Trust

Escort services to and from the prison: GEO Amey

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Leyhill is in a transitional phase, having demolished old residential units and awaits the construction of new buildings. This means that a higher percentage of the reduced operational capacity of 461 prisoners has been required to fulfil the demands of internal work and keep the establishment running so that fewer prisoners have been available for external work. This situation will be closely monitored in the coming months.

In the last year, a noticeable focus has been placed on meeting the needs of the elderly and disabled, who make up over 50% of the Leyhill population.

Due to the pressure on the closed estate, Leyhill's occupancy rate has been above 98% towards the end of the reporting year. The increasing prison population and limited number of spaces in the open estate has resulted in Leyhill accepting prisoners who would normally be placed in other open establishments.

The IMB and prison staff have concerns about the changing population demographic of Leyhill, moving from a predominantly older population to one that is younger, on shorter sentences and with far fewer sentenced for sex offences. The number of drug finds has not increased over the year, but the substances seized have often changed. Spice and cannabis have become less popular, whilst Subutex finds have increased. Anabolic steroids and syringe finds have continued to increase towards the end of the reporting year. The number of known organised crime group members has almost doubled in the last year, increasing from 17 to 33.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The safety of prisoners, in a wide range of areas, is discussed and monitored by a group made up of staff and prisoners who meet on a regular basis. The care shown for vulnerable prisoners has been evident in meetings attended by the IMB (section 4).

Self-harm incidents have been few in number and are well monitored (4.2), and only one case of violence was deemed to be a serious incident (4.3). Extensive use is made of the Samaritan-trained Listener scheme (7.4).

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Fair and humane treatment of the prisoners is evident by the community interest company manager, who has been taking vulnerable prisoners out on day release (7.3).

The chaplaincy has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support to those of all faiths and none, in particular for those in difficult circumstances (5.5).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

There was 92% uptake of the Covid vaccine in the spring, and 90% for the booster, while 76% of prisoners accepted the flu vaccine (6.2).

Prisoners have been encouraged to take responsibility for their own healthcare by holding most drugs in their own possession and by their enthusiastic involvement in the health improvement group (6.2).

Waiting times for healthcare services are in line with those in the community, and it is noted that prisoner feedback gives more compliments than complaints.

The health and wellbeing of the elderly and disabled prisoners, who constitute over half the prisoner population, has been enhanced by the provision of table tennis, indoor carpet bowls, and pitch and putt (6.5), and by special sessions for the elderly and self-isolating (often disabled) prisoners in a quieter room on their own in the over-50s centre (6.7).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

A new strategy for coordinating education, skills and work in order to reduce reoffending and enhance prisoners' employability is commended. Teaching and learning were highly rated by the prisoners in their evaluations and there has been 92% attendance in workshops and classes this year (7.1).

The market gardens, which supply the prison with vegetables for part of the year, and an ambitious scheme of recycling are among the many areas of work in which men are purposefully employed within the prison (7.2).

There is provision of both children's and family days for prisoners (7.4).

Much of the work of the former community rehabilitation company has been taken on by CFO3, with a particular focus on removing barriers to employment for those on indeterminate IPP sentences (7.2).

The process of risk-assessing prisoners applying for release on temporary licence (ROTL) has been streamlined and has enabled more prisoners to take up external work placements. However, prisoners' progress towards parole has often been slowed by delays caused by the external probation service (7.3).

The lack of approved premises (AP's), which a large percentage of Leyhill prisoners require before they can be released, results in delays to release dates, which is unjust and unfair (7.3).

While the lack of AP's remains a cause of justifiable frustration for prisoners, a positive development took place when HMPPS signed the remaining CAS3 contracts which include the South West which enables prisoners to be found temporary accommodation on release (7.3).

Nearly all of the 65 men on indeterminate IPP sentences remain in prison beyond their indicative tariff date. The IMB regards this as deeply unjust, particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place (7.3).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- a) What action will the minister take to remedy the lack of spaces in approved premises, which leads to many prisoners facing incarceration beyond their release dates?
- b) What action will the minister take to raise the food budget in line with inflation?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- a) What further action will be taken to speed up the resettlement in the community of the prisoners serving IPP sentences, many of whom have spent far longer in custody than recommended in their indicative tariffs?
- b) What steps will be taken to speed up the work and enhance the efficiency of the community offender managers (COMs) in the external probation service?
- c) Will the prison service install a general alarm system fitted to each room?
- d) Will the prison service install in-cell telephony and communication, as provided in some of the closed estate?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- a) The Board urges the Governor to build on the recent improvements made in the provision of opportunities for ROTL.
- b) The Board urges the Governor to maintain the current standards at Leyhill in the forthcoming refurbishment, upgrade of facilities and challenging expansion project.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The work of the offender management unit (OMU) has led to a marked improvement in processing ROTL paperwork, especially in the risk assessment of prisoners, so that more of them have become available for work in the wider community.

The installation of ramps for disabled access in A unit.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The safer custody group, made up of staff and prisoners, has met quarterly in the past year. Most participants have attended the meetings at the prison, while a few staff have utilised teleconference facilities. Despite the challenges of the ever-changing restrictions, the group has remained focused and aware of the impact of the regime on prisoners' safety. Areas covered include challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT), debt, relationships, social care, the pathway enhanced resettlement service (PERS), transgender prisoners, self-harm etc.

The IMB has attended safety and intervention meetings, which have exemplified the care and humane treatment of prisoners who are, or may be, vulnerable, give cause for concern or who may need a watchful eye or other assistance.

4.1 Reception and induction

Transfers to Leyhill were challenging during the latter stages of the Covid restrictions. As vaccination numbers increased, the requirements were changed in line with government guidelines. These required a negative test before transfer so that prisoners could move straight into the general population. Thankfully, there have been very few incidents of Covid in the second half of the reporting year.

Late arrivals at Leyhill continue to create difficulties for prisoners, prison officers and healthcare. On occasion, prisoners have arrived after healthcare staff have left the site, so they cannot be screened until the following day (see 6.2).

A passport-style scheme with stamps has been implemented by reception to identify which induction modules have been completed by incoming prisoners and which still need to be completed. Newly arrived prisoners have expressed satisfaction with the induction process, which allows them a two-week period to get used to the layout of Leyhill (with the help of fellow prisoner orderlies). New arrivals are provided with a letter from the chaplaincy, with contact details should they wish to speak with a member of the team. Reception orderlies continue to provide reassurance for recently inducted prisoners. Vulnerable prisoners are identified on arrival and given a chaplaincy contact number before induction. This allows prisoners with any concerns to speak in confidence with a member of the chaplaincy team. The prison management surveys new arrivals (via the prisoners' consultative committee) on their first-night experience.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The number of self-harm incidents and ACCT documents opened has remained very low, but there were five separate incidents, involving four different prisoners, that required hospital treatment. The most common reason for an ACCT document to be opened was thoughts of self-harm. There were no worrying trends in the ethnicity or ages of the prisoners concerned, or of the prisoners transferred to closed conditions. Quality assurance checks on ACCT's have been routinely carried out by staff and the IMB, and any shortfalls have been addressed.

There were, unfortunately, five deaths in custody, all from natural causes, although three of these occurred in a care home or hospital. There was a further death of a prisoner in a care home which occurred in the days after his release. There were no discernible trends, with the ages ranging from 41 to 74 years.

The prison's GOBOFF scheme, which enables prisoners to talk with a Samaritan-trained prisoner, a Listener, for emotional support, was used on average over 600 times per month. This scheme has undoubtedly made for a safer and more humane environment (see also 5.3).

However, the security clearance for Samaritan volunteers continues to be a problem, often taking three months to obtain a response. If there is an issue with the information provided, the application must be submitted again, which can result in further delays.

The safety telephone hotline, which is a method whereby family members outside can raise concerns with the prison, was monitored daily by the duty governor.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents at Leyhill has remained low. Of the 13 incidents, one was on a member of staff, and four were reported to the police. Most incidents were caused by arguments getting out of hand. However, one assault was classified as a serious incident, and two were of a sexual nature.

Following a review of the serious incident, the IMB has been concerned about the inability of prisoners to raise an alarm. During the incident, a prisoner pressed the alarm buttons located on the wing for assistance, but it did not initiate the alarm. The review concluded that the failure of the alarm was due to the fact that both alarm buttons had not been reset correctly. Both buttons must be pressed simultaneously to initiate the alarm. The IMB has been particularly concerned that prisoners are advised to go to the unit office for help. It is thus incumbent on another prisoner to raise the alarm for a prisoner in distress by banging on the office window. The process is also reliant on the unit office being occupied by a prison officer. Signage

adjacent to the alarm buttons on some of the units has been removed during decoration of the wings and has not been replaced.

The alarm system is not regularly tested.

However, the prison is to conduct a review of the night shift security procedures. The Board welcomes the implementation of regular checks of the alarm buttons located on each landing, carried out daily, to ensure that they are reset correctly. The alarm system has been confirmed as fully operational and information on how to initiate an alarm has been communicated to staff and prisoners.

The Board was also concerned to learn that the prisoner involved in the serious incident had been transferred to Leyhill as a result of a Parole Board decision, despite having a long history of mental health problems. The prisoner had spent a considerable amount of his sentence receiving mental health care before transfer to Leyhill.

Disabled prisoners are provided with a pendant-activated alarm that initiates in the wing corridor. An orderly in an adjacent room is tasked with responding to the alarm. The Board has raised concerns that there is no in-room alarm available for prisoners, other than disabled prisoners, to initiate in the event of a medical event or violent incident.

CSIPs are used to manage prisoners who are violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent, and also those prisoners who may be victims of violence. Both perpetrator and victim are managed and supported on a plan with individualised targets and regular reviews. No significant trends have been identified.

4.4 Use of force

Use of significant force is very rare at Leyhill, and includes only one major incident. There has been an increase in the number of times handcuffs have been reportedly used, with 35 incidents recorded in the reporting year. This rise is due to the change in type of handcuff being used, which has changed from D-cuffs to ratchet-style cuffs. The use of D-cuffs was not routinely recorded, whereas ratchet cuffs are. The use of handcuffs is continuously reviewed to minimise their use. Orderly officers have been empowered to use their professional judgement in making a dynamic risk assessment on the use of restraints. This has resulted in a marked reduction in their use. Each incident of use of force is reviewed by the prison management. White prisoners above the age of 50 saw the most use of force in this reporting period.

PAVA spray (similar to pepper spray and used to temporarily incapacitate someone) is not yet available for use at Leyhill, as staff training has not been fully completed.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The nature of substance misuse varies and has often been linked to newly arrived prisoners. Targeted searches and subsequent transfers to closed conditions have resulted in a more settled prison. However, the IMB and prison staff have concerns about the changing population demographic of Leyhill, moving from a predominantly older, sex-offending population to one that is younger and on shorter sentences, and with far fewer who are sentenced for sex offences.

The number of drug finds has not increased over the year, but the substances seized have often changed. Spice and cannabis have become less popular, whilst Subutex finds have increased. Anabolic steroids and syringe finds have continued to increase towards the end of the reporting year. Mobile phone finds have also increased significantly. The growing number of illicit items found in the prison may be attributed to the increase in known members of organised crime groups.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The long-awaited refurbishment of the toilets and showers was completed during the reporting year. There were some snagging issues, but these have been largely resolved. There have been several occasions when the alarm buttons in the disabled showers have been out of action due to damage. The exact cause of the damage is unknown. Protective brackets have been fitted around the buttons in an attempt to prevent impact from wheelchairs etc. On occasion, the damage has been recorded as vandalism, which can be attributed to the charging structure used by the contractor. This is not consistent with Leyhill, where there are generally very few examples of vandalism in the prison.

Most of the corridors on the units have been painted by prisoners and are now much brighter.

The installation of fixed furniture in all rooms is progressing. This will provide a standard layout for each room, which will, in the event of a fire and smoke, assist the emergency services in checking accommodation.

The kitchen manager has had a challenging year, with the cost of food rising sharply while his budget remained static. Fresh vegetables have continued to be supplied by the prison's market gardens, but prisoners often complained (via the prisoner food forum) about portion size. The kitchen was also the second-most complained about subject to the GOBOFF Listener scheme. Kitchen staff were complimented, however, on the Ramadan and Christmas meals. Such religious festival meals have been provided, where possible, in consultation with the Governor and the chaplaincy.

The Leyhill grounds cafe that is open to the general public is now managed by a Prison Service employee and is overseen by the kitchen manager. The facility opens most days and is staffed by prisoners. This is a valuable development opportunity for prisoners and allows them to engage with the general public. The cafe has received excellent reviews from customers.

5.2 Segregation

There is no segregation unit at Leyhill but there are holding cells which are typically utilised to detain prisoners for a brief period before transfer back to closed conditions or during a room search.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The personal officer scheme has been reinstated following a pause during the pandemic. Prison officers have been tasked with having a meaningful, monthly conversation with each of their allocated prisoners and recording the salient points. These entries are reviewed by more senior staff. Unfortunately, only about 48% of the prison population have received a monthly entry on their record from their personal officer. The prison management hopes to increase this figure in the coming year.

Overwhelmingly the prisoners' complaints to the GOBOFF Listener scheme concern OMU and the kitchens – at least 50% of complaints each month (see 5.1 and 7.5).

The IMB has concerns that 25% of the prison staff are relatively new to the Prison Service (less than two years) and that as many as four officers have been lent to other prisons under the detached duty scheme. The prison insists the safety of the prison is not compromised, although it is conducting a review of the night duty. The appointment of a new colleague mentor to provide support and advice for newly appointed officers during their first two years is welcomed by the Board. It is envisaged that this will also improve retention of staff, as many leave during the first year of employment.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Focus groups were held bi-monthly for each of the protected characteristics (as set out in the Equality Act).

There were 47 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) completed by prisoners and staff in the reporting year, a slight decrease from last year. Of these, 17 were submitted for alleged prisoner-on-prisoner discrimination, and 28 for alleged discrimination by staff, of which 10 showed no evidence of discrimination. Of the 11 redirected to the complaints process, two found evidence of unintended discrimination and five were proven. Scrutiny panels met to ensure that DIRFs were answered both correctly and promptly.

At the end of the reporting year, Leyhill had a diverse prison population: 87% white, 6% black, Asian and minority ethnic and 7% other. There were two foreign national prisoners. The prison continued to discuss and actively engage in issues of race and ethnicity in regular equality and diversity meetings.

At the end of the reporting year, a breakdown, by age, of prisoners at Leyhill revealed:

44	(10%)	were 70+
72	(16.0%)	were 60–69
105	(24%)	were 50–59
84	(19%)	were 40–49
103	(24%)	were 30–39
31	(7%)	were 21–29

During the reporting year, 104 of the prison population declared disabilities, with mental illness accounting for 51 of them. A further 45 had reduced mobility. There are currently three transgender prisoners, all of whom have been supported throughout the year by the equalities team.

There are 41 known military veterans in the prison, who have been supported throughout the year by SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity), Walking with The Wounded, Care after Combat and Project TLS that provides veteran support. On Remembrance Day, over 60 staff and residents attended a service led by the chaplain. There have been monthly breakfast NAAFI mornings, with over 20 veterans and the Governor attending.

Muslim prisoners have been searched and reported on more than other group, and have more issues with the kitchen provision. All searches have been intelligence-led. The issues with the kitchen have been largely resolved and, at the end of the year, there were three Muslim prisoners working in this area. Ramadan and Eid meals were appreciated by all who took part, and no DIRFs were received in relation to these.

Of the few ACCT documents that were opened in the reporting period, 59% were for prisoners with a recorded disability, 4.5% related to veterans and 4.5% concerned those with gender reassignment.

Equality and diversity are the specific responsibility of a custodial manager, whose job is to support the equalities officer and to assure the head of residential services that all aspects of equalities and inclusion are managed effectively in accordance with the prison's strategy. All of one officer's time was ring-fenced for equality issues. Diversity and equality action team meetings have been chaired by the Governor on a bi-monthly basis. They are attended by the heads of residential services and the equalities team, various representatives from the prison, including prisoners, and external agencies.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy caters for 27 faiths and beliefs, and veganism, providing adherents with congregational services where possible or, if not, with faith materials and one-to-one faith and pastoral support. Also, religious festival meals were provided in consultation with the Governor. Several funeral services were conducted for Leyhill prisoners, with the chaplaincy providing support for prisoners in their grief.

The chaplaincy team, headed by a recently appointed managing chaplain, is staffed by members of different faiths, including Church of England, Roman Catholic, Free Church, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Quaker, and Paganism.

More prisoner volunteers have recently been recruited to the chaplaincy team, with dedicated members assigned to the wings of prisoners with mobility problems. Also, the bereavement counselling service provided by CRUSE has had its staff increased.

The chaplaincy has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support. The team has nurtured prisoners in their faith and wellbeing in many ways. In particular, the chaplaincy team has supported prisoners in difficult circumstances, such as when a child is severely ill.

5.6 Incentives schemes

A review of the incentives scheme has taken place, with the enhanced level 2 stage being removed.

The incentives scheme rewards prisoners for good behaviour, providing benefits that can include increased spending money, in-room television and canteen. Levels are reviewed regularly.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints did not change significantly through the year. Property was the highest number of complaints. Pre-release/release was the second highest reason for complaint (see 7.3), and residential and work the third and fourth, respectively. The complaints were dealt with efficiently and in accordance with the prisoner complaints policy, although one confidential complaint remained outstanding for a considerable time due to a processing error. This has now been resolved.

5.8 Property

The transfer and storage of property continues to be a source of frustration for staff and prisoners. Prisoners regularly arrived at reception with more than the volumetric allowance. The volume of property stored at Leyhill is greater than the design capacity of the storeroom. The national distribution centre at Branston is reported to have limited capacity. The Board welcomed the implementation of the prisoners property policy framework, which seeks to address the problem. The policy clearly states the volumetric allowance for a prisoner's property, whether held in possession or storage. Excess property will be placed into storage. Boxes have been made available to prisoners on the units in order for them to assess their property and place excess items in storage. This has proved to be unpopular with prisoners, who have retained excess property in their possession often for many years. Overall, however, the number of applications to the IMB regarding property has reduced this year. The Board is pleased to report that the amount of property stored at Leyhill is gradually reducing.

6 Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Following a difficult couple of years keeping the residents of Leyhill safe, healthcare remains a well-respected part of the prison. There were a few cases of Covid, all of which were accommodated in single rooms with in-room sanitation.

The healthcare department underwent a change in service provider when Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, which has experience of prison healthcare, won the contract to take over at the start of October 2022. Its responsibility covers the group comprising Leyhill, Erlestoke, Ashfield and Bristol prisons. Most staff accepted the opportunity to retain their positions, and there was minimal disruption to the service already in place.

It is too early to know how this service may differ from that which was in place before, as things are still changing. However, the prisoners have not expressed any concerns thus far, other than over the current closure of the health bar, where they used to be able to buy over-the-counter chemist products. This ceased to be available with the new contract, but is expected to reopen very soon.

The IMB is concerned that there are still many new prisoners arriving after healthcare personnel have finished their shift, thus preventing the required healthcare screening being carried out on arrival, as was reported last year. A proposed extension to the healthcare working day by one hour may help, but better planning by the transport companies is required.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The service provided is comparable to that which may be found in the community. The day-to-day requirements are taken care of by a dedicated, caring nursing team. In 2022 the healthcare team won Team of the Year in Leyhill. Regular visiting services include GP's, physiotherapy, dentistry, audiology, podiatry and opticians.

Prisoners are encouraged to be involved in healthcare through their representatives, who attend the newly re-formed health improvement group. This is a forum encouraging frank and open discussion of everything to do with healthcare, and it was good to hear of the enthusiasm evinced at the first meeting since Covid.

Further responsibility in preparation for release includes holding drugs in possession, with the exception of drugs such as Subutex, methadone and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder drugs.

The age range of the prisoners, with over half being over 50, means that there are many men with chronic conditions who require monitoring and extra care, together with a high level of outpatient appointments at local hospitals.

The purpose-built palliative care unit, which has been so valuable in previous years, has been closed for most of the reporting year. The last contract did not have any provision for staffing and was therefore operated on a needs-must basis, with goodwill and agency staffing. However, one terminal prisoner was successfully accommodated in a nearby care home, and another prisoner has recently been sent under licence in the same way.

It is heartening to report that there was a 92% uptake for the Covid vaccine in the spring and 90% for the booster, while 76% of prisoners accepted the flu vaccine.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health provision is also the responsibility of the new provider, Oxleas. The service is split into two distinct areas, substance misuse and mental health. This has meant a few changes in staffing across the four associated prisons which form the South West group.

The new psychosocial substance misuse provider, now called Change, Grow, Live, is now in a position to restart group sessions following the appointment of a programmes lead. Mental health group sessions, such as anxiety management and low mood, have continued to be available throughout the contractual changes.

The ability to self-refer and for staff members to refer continues to be available, and appointments are available on a par with, or quicker than, those in the community.

6.4 Social care

Social care is provided by South Gloucestershire Council, although few prisoners need their services. Disability orderlies, however, are much needed by the prisoners for non-personal care, such as for those in wheelchairs.

6.5 Exercise, time out of cell

In February, there was a fundraiser for a cancer charity, where four teams played 11-a-side football. Food was provided by the kitchen and £1,300 was raised. The refurbishment of the pavilion is almost complete and will include wheelchair access. In the latter half of the year, plans were activated for an added focus on elderly and disabled prisoners who constitute over half the prisoner population. This has included a table tennis club, indoor carpet bowls, lawn bowls and pitch and putt. Bids have been made for an all-weather track, which is two metres wide and accessible for the disabled and wheelchair users, and for spectator benches. Over the

Christmas period a range of activities were offered, e.g. an Auld Lang's Aye Amble, Couch to 5k, a Turkey Trot (Parkrun) and a sports quiz in the visits hall.

The gym is now considered an internal workplace, and some of the prisoners act as support workers for **older and physically less able** prisoners. Other aspects of a healthy lifestyle beyond gym activities include health promotions, a health bar and an independent life skills course (to build confidence and capability for men after release) for those whose involvement is supported by their prison offender managers. In November there was a talk from the Arsenal coach, which over 40 men attended.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

These services are provided by Change, Grow, Live and are referenced in section 6.3.

6.7 Soft skills

A major contribution has been made to prisoners' wellbeing and their progress towards resettlement by the Lobster Pot. This is a community centre for the over-50s. It is no longer run under the aegis of RECOOP but by a community interest company, Rehabilitation Culture, set up by the two staff who run the centre. They now have more autonomy and flexibility in deciding how their time is used.

Besides continuing to provide a day and evening centre where older prisoners can socialise, they provide a range of activities, including arts, wellbeing, mindfulness and links to community groups which enable the men to develop the life skills needed to live a purposeful life, whether inside or outside prison. Many come for reassurance with questions about parole and to seek advice about substance misuse and resettlement. Approximately 150 men have been using the resource daily.

The staff have recently started to run separate sessions for the elderly and self-isolating (often disabled) prisoners in a quieter room on their own. Disability orderlies (prisoners) bring the men and run the sessions. They are also working with 25 younger men, mostly referred to them by the prison, who have mental health issues or need to learn the social skills needed for reintegration into society.

One-to-one support achieved a notable success with one prisoner who would not shower and was a hoarder in his cell. With sustained support, he was encouraged to shower for the first time in three months with an offer of coffee and cake by Lobster Pot staff.

Nature walks have been conducted for the over-50s where they actively identify aspects of their environment.

A radio play, 'Behind the Jump', written by a Leyhill prisoner, a Koestler Trust Gold Award winner in 2017, was performed in the chapel on a Sunday afternoon. The cast of six, plus narrator and sound technician, provided an enjoyable 45 minutes for a wide-ranging audience. A follow-up is currently being rehearsed.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

This has been a year of change in learning and skills (L&S). Some Covid restrictions were still in place at the start, but all were lifted during the course of the year. By January, 71% of the prisoners were able to attend education and 29% were age-exempt. Furthermore, there have been changes of personnel and the development of a new vision for Leyhill.

The new strategy, developed towards the end of the year, has focussed on the integration of all aspects in the three areas of education, team work skills and work employability skills, with the gym as a fourth strand. The aim is to reduce reoffending by equipping prisoners with the necessary skills and qualifications to improve potential employability. It also aims to include more of the retired and disabled prisoners who form a large proportion of the population. The strategy includes regular assessment, feedback and evaluation of the new approach. It is intended that outcomes for prisoners should supersede production targets. Over the course of the next year, the IMB will closely examine the outcomes for the prisoners.

At the beginning of the year, when Covid was still in evidence, the gym and L&S could only accommodate prisoners from the same unit and the same floor at any one time. Qualification delivery was on hold in the gym, and class sizes in L&S were limited to four.

In March, classes of eight were started and the gym mentoring qualification was restarted with a small cohort. The adoption of teaching methods which involve more sharing of men's experiences has elicited more active engagement with the induction programme. In July, as part of the quality development plan, a self-assessment report highlighted the need to develop independent learning plans to reach out and target more hesitant learners. The teaching strategy was named Blended Learning, which is a one-to-one course in functional skills which lasts a month and aims to build the confidence of reluctant learners. At the end of the year this was renamed Outreach and continued to operate on a one-to-one basis. This year, there was 92% attendance in workshops and classes.

Courses being offered from April 2022 to January 2023 included:

Subject	Number enrolled	Number withdrawn	Achievement
English L1/L2	76	3	69
Maths L1/L2	48	5	28
Maths entry level	14	3	11
English entry level	15	3	12
Painting and decorating (non-accredited)	13	2	11
Painting and decorating diploma	8	2	Ongoing
Award in creative craft	11	1	9
Employability	8	0	8
Independent living skills	31	0	31
Food safety	14	3	11
Essential digital skills	24	0	24
Barbering	8	1	7

Number withdrawn figures include those no longer in Leyhill.

Teaching and learning were highly rated by the prisoners in their evaluations, particularly the teaching on the decorating course and the cooking skills programme. One tutor has volunteered to run an arts drama session and has a group of four to five men. A new course in digital skills experience was particularly useful for men who have had no access to these skills during imprisonment and those ready for release. Currently there is an internal qualification awarded. All the above are designed to support the men into employability and personal growth.

Distance learning numbers have increased. The Prison Education Trust has approved **and financed** 90% of the 19 applications received. Additionally, 20 have been enrolled on Open University (OU) courses and both the Hardman Trust and Koestler Awards scheme have supported educational initiatives at Leyhill. Prisoners have been encouraged to continue functional skills at levels one and two, peer mentoring and Shannon Trust mentoring. A sample of distance learning and OU courses included four prisoners on agile project management, as well as 19 others on foundation certificates in accounting, shaping business opportunities and environmental science.

At the start of the year, there was no access to the library. Orderlies maintained a service, organising reservations from, and delivering books to, the residential units. Additionally, they opened the library on a Saturday with controlled access to books. This reflects the strength of their commitment to their work and their community. Later in the year, when the library reopened, there were many new books on display and requests for men to make further suggestions. One of the L&S tutors took a range of books for the volunteer arts course he was running and many books were used for OU and distance learning courses.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There are a range of vocational courses on offer:

Barbering	Level 2
Creative craft cookery	Level 1
Employability skills	Level 2
Essential digital skills	Basic skills
Food safety in catering	Level 2
Health and safety in a construction environment	Level 1
Hospitality and catering principles	Diploma
Independent living skills	Level 1
Information technology	Levels 1 and 2
Painting and decorating	Level 2
Painting and decorating	Basic skills

There is also a new health and safety in the construction environment level 1 course, which is completed in a week, with three days of teaching.

Vocational training has also faced challenges: throughout the year, it has been difficult to recruit national vocational qualification assessors for some of the courses. Furthermore, the men have reported a tension between demands placed on prisoners to attend both work and classes in L&S. There are ongoing discussions between L&S and the new head of reducing reoffending, which could mean that men have functional skills integrated into their work area. The new generalist tutor, who covers induction employment and Independent Learning Skills, has been waiting for over three months for the vetting process to be completed.

The majority of those of working age are employed inside the prison. The biggest employer is DHL, where 55 have been employed in packaging and supplying goods for other prisons. Market gardening, which supplies the prison with vegetables in the summer and autumn, provided 725kg of butternut squash for the kitchen this year. Recycling employs 20 prisoners, who recycle goods as varied as clothes, mattresses, metals, plastics and cardboard from Leyhill and two other prisons, as well as several less able-bodied prisoners recycling CDs. Other internal workplaces include the laundry, which serves five prisons and an external contractor, the kitchens, woodwork and print shops.

The IMB was heartened to hear a group of prisoners speak of the transformative effect on their lives and future prospects of their work in market gardening: they said they were fairly autonomous; found the work rewarding, knowing that it provided fresh food for fellow prisoners; enjoyed working outside and believed that their wellbeing was enhanced by the work; and that they learnt and developed new skills. One man said that, before he was imprisoned, he had relied on supermarket cast-offs, whereas now he would be able to grow his own food.

The garage has operated a team of 12 prisoner-drivers who transport about 60 prisoners (approximately 15% of the prisoner population) to work outside the prison daily. Most of these are employed by private companies, across a range of industries, and are gaining skills and experience in teamwork as well as earning wages. Most work is unsupervised, but Leyhill also sends out one supervised party per day, consisting of six prisoners and one member of staff. Mostly, they work outdoors for local authorities, for example in clearing paths and gardening.

At the end of the year, there were more vacancies for external work than could be filled. This is explained by a number of factors: a significant number of older and disabled prisoners who do not work; the limited number of drivers who also have to take prisoners on hospital appointments; the availability of minibuses and vans;

many employers will not take on men imprisoned for sexual offences. Furthermore, Leyhill is in a transitional phase, having demolished old residential units while not yet having new buildings constructed. This means that a higher percentage of the reduced operational capacity of 461 prisoners has been required to fill the numerous jobs needed to keep the prison running.

Work experience (WEX) is to be commended for continuing to place about 60 prisoners on external work in the latter half of the reporting year. It is also exploring ways of transporting even more men out on placements, for example by persuading employers to take on men at times when there is less pressure on transport. The prison is also considering the possibility of allowing prisoners to use their own vehicles.

7.3 Offender management and resettlement

Leyhill is a resettlement prison, so prisoners are understandably focussed on securing parole. However, the process is sometimes onerous and time-consuming, particularly because risk assessment has to be so much more rigorous at Leyhill, which has many high-risk offenders.

At the start of the year, even with Covid restrictions relaxed, the complaints over delays and poor communication between staff and prisoners in obtaining ROTL continued to be a major issue, both amongst prisoners and prison staff. After consultations involving prisoner representatives, the OMU introduced changes to speed up the process:

- tear-off slips to be sent to prisoners to confirm OMU's receipt of their ROTL applications
- earlier sending of letters to the prisoners confirming their ROTL dates so that they had time to arrange transport, family availability and approved premises if needed.
- the review period of ROTL to be one calendar month rather than 28 days to make it easier for prisoners to follow
- further ROTL surgeries to be set up in order to enable prisoners to be updated on the progress of their applications.

Some significant improvements have resulted: on one day in August there were 90 out on ROTL, which included prisoners on unaccompanied day and overnight release, as well as those, including prisoner-drivers, on external employment.

Despite the above improvements, there is a perception among some prisoners and the prisoner-run Route Centre that there are still significant problems with the ROTL process. These include:

- confirmation slips have not always been sent out to confirm receipt of ROTL applications, with OMU acknowledging that some bits of paper get lost or mislaid
- prisoners getting only one or two days' notice that they are going out on ROTL, which barely leaves them time to organise family visits, potential job interviews, transport, accommodation etc.
- long queues at the ROTL surgeries – the IMB has seen queues of up to 30 prisoners, as they try to find out how their ROTL applications are progressing, while acknowledging that prison officers and staff are keen to help

From August, prisoners reported that it had become far more difficult to secure authorisation to leave the prison for resettlement day release (RDR), for example to visit family and friends. The OMU reported that rules had not changed but that pre-Covid rules were being enforced. These required prisoners to show that their RDRs would contribute to their sentence plan objectives, and to community reintegration and rehabilitation in a structured way. In some cases, this has meant that prisoners were required to submit activity plans to their probation offender managers to support their applications. This in itself added further pressure on both the prisoners and OMU staff. However, as the new regime bedded in, successful monthly ROTL applications increased and, in December, 1,594 ROTL cases were approved, of which 586 were RDRs for day release in Bristol, 143 were RDRs for unpaid work, 673 were RDRs for paid work, 133 were resettlement overnight release, and 59 were for special purpose leave.

In January it was reported that there had been a marked improvement in processing ROTL paperwork, especially in the risk assessment of prisoners, so that more became available for work in the wider community. This in turn meant that WEX was able to fill all work placements on offer.

The IMB acknowledges and commends the strenuous efforts made by the OMU to speed up the ROTL application process. However, staffing resources and training commitments continue to be a challenge, while the attendance of prisoners at the ROTL surgeries unfortunately diverts the team from processing applications and other critical work.

Furthermore, the OMU has frequently reported that communication between prison offender managers (POM's), who work within the prison, and community offender

managers (COM's), who work outside the prison, has been very slow. The POM's work with the COM's to help prisoners achieve goals on their sentence plan. The COM's, also known as probation officers, are based in the community and work with prisoners to help prevent reoffending.

There is clear evidence that the external probation service has been very short-staffed and that this has contributed to delays in communication. This, in turn, has led to delays in prisoners going out on ROTL and being able to demonstrate their progress to the Parole Board. Understandably this leads to frustration and is not conducive to a fair and humane prison environment.

Much of the work of the former Community Rehabilitation Company has been taken on by CFO3, the staff of which have worked to support offenders facing barriers to employment. They have predominantly targeted those on indeterminate IPP sentences (see below), helping them to find places on training courses, providing support and advice on writing CVs, and on how to disclose offences, prepare for interview and obtain ID. Once prisoners are released, CFO3 offers through-the-gate support in the community, so that they can find secure employment.

The manager of the Lobster Pot (see section 5.5) has contributed to prisoners' progress towards resettlement by taking individuals into the community on RDRs at the request of their POM's. In particular, he takes those who have been incarcerated for many years and who are likely to be daunted by many features of the modern world.

In January there were 99 prisoners serving life sentences, 298 prisoners on a determinate sentence and 65 serving indeterminate IPP sentences. The IPP prisoners need to demonstrate to the Parole Board that they have made progress in their offending behaviour. In September, the Justice Select Committee recommended a resentencing exercise which has been rejected by the government.

Many IPP prisoners have been disappointed by reports in the media as their hopes of imminent release had been raised. The prison has shown great care for these prisoners, but feelings of hopelessness and despair have been evident. At Leyhill, nearly 100% of the IPP prisoners remain in prison beyond their indicative tariff date. The IMB regards this as deeply unjust, particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place.

The lack of approved premises, which a large percentage of Leyhill prisoners require because of the nature of their offences, before they can be released, results in delays which, together with delays in ROTL, can mean prisoners' release dates being put back many months and, in some cases, over a year. This state of affairs, resulting from a nationwide shortage of accommodation, constitutes unjust treatment of prisoners. On one occasion a prisoner was allocated a space at an approved

premise relatively close to his family and his employment seven weeks before release. He was subsequently informed that the space had been given to another prisoner and he had been allocated a space in an approved premise 30 miles away. Again the space was allocated to another prisoner before his release. He was then informed that a space was available at an approved premise 200 miles away and he would have to go to the allocated location and wait for a space to become available closer to home. On occasion, prisoners have been released to probation and the local authority has provided accommodation. The lack of availability of approved premises, change of location at short notice and allocation of accommodation on the day of release that is sometimes distant from family and employment has proved to be very unsettling for prisoners.

A particularly positive development occurred at the end of the year: HMPPS signed the remaining CAS3 contracts which will result in national coverage across England and Wales. This means that Probation can refer a prisoner to their local Homelessness Prevention Team prior to release and that temporary accommodation can be made available for up to 84 days prior to permanent accommodation being found. The team reported that the HPT had been 'incredibly effective' so far.

At the time of reporting, Leyhill has reduced prisoner numbers because existing accommodation blocks have been condemned and demolished. Another block is vacant as it has failed a fire inspection. The demolition of the units has provided space for the erection of two new units as part of the expansion project. Meanwhile, as construction is awaited, a higher percentage of the current prisoner population are required to fulfil the demands of internal work and keep the establishment running. This means that fewer prisoners have been available for external work and thus able to gain the invaluable rehabilitative experience of external employment. This situation will be closely monitored in the coming months.

7.4 Family contact

The visits department at Leyhill assists and encourages all prisoners to maintain contact with their families, friends and the community. Social visits take place in a safe, decent, and secure environment and secure social video calls take place via a laptop. Social visits take place on Saturday and Sunday from 1.30 to 3.30pm, and legal visits on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1.30 to 3.45pm. Visitors can sit in the visits centre whilst waiting to be admitted into the main visits hall and there is access to toilets. A coffee shop, Leyhill Grounds, is also available just outside the visits centre.

Social video calls, which take place every Thursday from 1.30 to 8pm, are also used to assist the maintenance of family ties. Four laptops are available, so that prisoners can speak to family and friends via pre-booked 30-minute sessions. Prisoners book

these calls by putting an application through the mail room, which then manages the bookings.

Children's family days have taken place four times this year, whilst adult family days have been held on two occasions. The sessions are planned to coincide with school holidays for children and adult family days are set at either end of the year if feasible. In the visits hall, there is a children's play area with a range of toys, books, play equipment and arts and craft facilities. There is also a 'teen zone' for older children.

The limited availability of telephones for prisoners to make calls to family and legal representatives has been raised by the Board. Each landing has only two telephones shared between its occupants. Prisoners have reported long waiting times to use phones, which often results in frustrations being aired. One unit does not have access to telephones after 8pm. Some prisoners in the closed estate have access to in-cell telephony and other methods of communication, with the ability to order canteen, receive up-to-date personal information (bank account, timetable, visits and privilege info, etc). The facilities at Leyhill are not comparable to those available in some closed prisons.

The work of the IMB

As Covid restrictions were lifted and infection levels dropped, visits by Board members to Leyhill have increased significantly compared to the previous reporting year.

There were 197 visits in 2022/2023 compared to 48 in 2021/2022. Members returned to regular visits in the latter part of the reporting year as restrictions were reduced and the number of positive cases declined.

The Governor, senior members of the team and staff have all been cooperative and supportive of the Board. The loss of an IMB clerk early on in the year and temporary replacements have resulted in inconsistencies in administration and increased workload for Board members. The business hub has provided support where possible with a reduced number of staff.

Board meetings were held remotely in the earlier part of the year and at Leyhill in the latter part of the year, with some Board members choosing to attend by teleconference. The annual team performance review was held in November 2022.

A weekly rota has been maintained throughout, with members in regular contact with staff and each other. A weekly report is prepared, with a copy sent to the Governor. There has been regular contact between the Governor and the Board chair.

The discharge survey has been reconfigured.

IT access following the system upgrade continues to provide challenges for Board members.

There was one member who died in service.

Two new members were appointed in January.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	197
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line*	n/a
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives, sanctions	3	1
C	Equality	1	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	2
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	2	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	0
F	Food and kitchens	2	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	3
H1	Property within this establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	9	6
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	13	23
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	8	5
K	Transfers	2	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	6
	Total number of applications	62	53



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