



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wealstun

**For reporting year
1 June 2022 – 31 May 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.

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.

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.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Wealstun is a category C adult training and resettlement prison for men, situated in a semi-rural area near Wetherby, West Yorkshire. It has a certified normal accommodation of 809 and an operational capacity of 856¹.

There are 10 residential units built at different times and a segregation unit. The site also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, library, healthcare centre and a number of workshops including a mess for staff. A reception area for prisoners' visitors is located outside the main gate. Forty rapid deployment cells are currently being built and will house low risk prisoners.

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.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Strong management has meant that the reception and induction process has improved.
- The level of self-harm is quite high but tends to be prolific self-harmers and their care has been observed by the Board to be managed well by staff.
- Drugs are still being found in the prison, even with all the steps that have been put in place to stop them. There is also a number of incidents when prisoners are found with medication which they have not been prescribed.

Fair and humane treatment

- Although there has been considerable improvement in the fair and humane treatment of prisoners due to increased staffing and a strong Senior Leadership Team (SLT), there are areas which are still concerning.
- The majority of prisoners are only working part time, so they are not receiving a full wage. At a time with significant inflation, the increase in canteen prices mean that prisoners are finding it difficult to purchase anything other than the basic needs (vapes and phone credit). Not all prisoners have private funds or families to send in money and, unfortunately, those that are disadvantaged are likely to be the more vulnerable prisoners.
- The number of key worker sessions being delivered is unacceptable and one of the lowest in Wealstun's comparative group.
- The pressure to double up cells to increase prison capacity is unacceptable. It is indecent that prisoners have to share a cell for long periods of time with little privacy.
- The condition of the older wings remains a concern. Funds have been found to install Rapid Deployment Units that might have been better directed at refurbishing or replacing wings in poor condition.

Health and wellbeing

- The prison and healthcare teams have been observed by the Board to work together well and, generally speaking, issues are resolved quickly. Changes to the incentive scheme to award warnings if a prisoner refuses to attend an appointment have made some impact on attendance.
- The length of time prisoners are out of their cells remains unacceptable, even with the improved staffing levels. Part time working, limited association and an inflexible regime continue to be issues for prisoners.

Progression and resettlement

- The Board have observed good partnership working between Novus and the prison. However, the lack of spaces for full time work or education for all prisoners needs to be addressed as this is likely to hinder progression opportunities.
- Imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners continue to be held at Wealstun with very little additional support being provided.

- Good multi-agency joint working prior to a prisoner's release has been observed by the Board to be managed well but is hindered by prisoners being sent to HMP Wealstun with less than 15 weeks left to serve.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- To consider what options there are so that prison is not used to house severely mentally ill people whilst they await a place in a suitable institution.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- To carry out a review of the Assessment in Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documentation introduced in 2021 as it is cumbersome and difficult to review.
- To ensure that prisoners are not located in double cells as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners (particularly in respect of toilet facilities).
- To consider that when approval has been given to over recruit, the number of officers to go on detached duty should be calculated after the non-effectives (at college, long term sick) have been deducted thus enabling full regimes and key working to be delivered.
- To consider a complete refurbishment or replacement of the older wings (A and B wings) as it is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action for a number of reasons and is not a humane environment for prisoners to live in.
- To consider whether food budgets should be set at a national level and regularly benchmarked, particularly in times where inflationary pressures are clear, to ensure that they remain adequate.
- To ensure that prisoners with less than 15 weeks before release are not sent to HMP to Wealstun as it does not allow sufficient time to prepare them for release.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- To consider increasing prisoner rates of pay in line with inflation.
- To consider installing dry cells in segregation to allow prisoners to demonstrate their innocence when there is a possible item shown on the body scanner.
- To consider returning to full time work/education, increase workshop instructors etc.
- To ensure that prisoners get more time out of cell, especially at weekends. Where association/domestics time clashes with a prison appointment, prisoners should get more time out of cell.
- To ensure that priority is given to increasing key worker sessions as soon as possible.
- To consider doing a check of the healthcare complaints process to address concerns relating to delays.

- To consider reinstating the mental health sessions in the gym.
- To ensure that forum meetings for IPP prisoners and Lifers are set up as soon as possible.

3.3 Response to last report

The latest position on the main areas for development in the last report are provided below.

- Recruitment of staff has improved significantly and the prison is now nearly fully staffed. However, non-effectives and officers at college continue to affect the delivery of a full regime together with the requirement to send any staff above the requirement on detached duty.
- The position for IPP prisoners has not changed. The MoJ response to the Justice Select Committee report means that the IPP prisoners remain in limbo.
- Unfortunately, due to population pressures across the prison estate, the doubling up of cells at HMP Wealstun has increased not reduced.
- There is no progress on refurbishment or replacement of old wings.
- The Daily Food Allowance has been increased nationally.
- There is still a delay in moving prisoners to Cat D due to lack of places and/or transport availability.
- Lack of opportunity for any progression or resettlement for prisoners with short sentences and also for lifers/IPP prisoners. This continues to be an issue especially with the increased pressure on the prison estate.
- Key worker sessions remain at an unacceptable level.
- Prisoner pay is still an issue, especially given the recent rise in inflation and the fact that prisoners are only working part time.
- A forum for Cat D prisoners has not yet been set up.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 There were 668 receptions during the reporting year, an increase of 3.4% on the previous year (646). With an Operating Capacity of 856 (up from 832 in the previous year), the number of new receptions continues to represent a very high proportion (78%) of the total prison population. As we noted in 2021-22 this presents a range of operational challenges for the prison. We noted in last year's report that if the reception rate experienced in Q4 2021-22 had continued into 2022-23, the Board had concerns that it would impact negatively on both prisoners and staff. Fortunately, the rate stabilised at much lower levels in Q1 & Q2 2022-23 before accelerating again in Q3 & Q4.

Table 1 – Receptions

Total 2020-21	549
Total 2021-22	646
Total 2022-23	668
	Q1 82
	Q2 138
	Q3 179
	Q4 269

Table 2 – Previous Location

HMP Leeds	394 (386 in 21-22)
HMP Doncaster	108 (123 in 21-22)
HMP Hull	57 (43 in 21-22)
HMP Lindholme	45 (45 in 21-22)
Others	64 (49 in 21-22)

Table 3 – Prisoners

Sentenced	489 (510 in 21-22)
Recall	176 (133 in 21-22)
Indeterminate	3 (3 in 21-22)

4.1.2 On arrival, prisoners are escorted off the bus, their photograph is taken, and the body scanner and metal detecting equipment are used to check all new receptions for unauthorised and secreted items. In cases where scan images appear to show that a prisoner has secreted items within his body, he is sent to the segregation unit. Prisoners who refuse to be scanned are also segregated and immediately placed on report.

4.1.3 In previous reports, the Board has raised concerns about the scanning process due to the high proportion of positive scans and the consequent number of prisoners being segregated. However, the prison has implemented a number of changes to the process and the Board is satisfied that the process is managed fairly and

appropriately. Of course, some prisoners arriving at Wealstun continue to be subject to segregation as a result of the scanning process but the Board is satisfied that the process and resulting decision making are much more robust.

4.1.4 Prisoners arriving at Wealstun are all moved to I Wing initially, prior to being dispersed to other locations around the prison. I Wing conducts induction briefings and ensure that 'First Night' checks are properly conducted. In the reporting year the induction slide presentation and documentation were updated and provide a comprehensive introduction to what prisoners can expect during their time at Wealstun. Healthcare, mental health and substance misuse service workers also visit or telephone new prisoners. Officers explain how the prison regime works and identify any existing issues or concerns with new prisoners. The volume of new arrivals continues to place some strain on all parts of the prison including reception, the offender management unit (OMU) and the business hub.

4.1.5 The HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection during the reporting year noted a concern that arriving prisoners sometimes experience delays in receiving their property from reception. The Board's view is that the reception team work hard to manage the volume of activity, but that delays are sometimes inevitable. Reception is profiled to manage 25 movements per week but is often dealing with more than double this volume given the high volume of arrivals and the need to manage escorts and releases.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There was one apparent self-inflicted death in the prison in September 2022.

4.2.2 The number of ACCTs in the prison throughout the year is similar to the previous reporting period, at around 20 a week. The ACCT document accompanies the prisoner whenever he leaves the wing where he is located, including when he goes to work or education etc. The ACCT documentation was revised in 2021 with the objective of being a more comprehensive and useful document. Board members have, however, found the paperwork difficult to monitor and officers have mentioned that there is too much paperwork to see the continuity clearly. Members have seen ACCT folders bulging at the seams with papers spilling out. They have been told by officers that if a prisoner has ACCTs opened, closed and re-opened, the paperwork is just added to the one file. Safer Custody has reported that it tries to keep the paperwork to a minimum, archiving some history where appropriate, but it is accepted that the folders become bulky very quickly, especially if the ACCT is being managed outside of the Safer Custody team, such as prisoners in segregation, on constant supervision or arriving from other establishments. The Board will continue to monitor this issue.

4.2.3 Board Members have observed ACCT reviews being carried out and have noted that they are performed respectfully, providing good information, whilst enabling the prisoner to have his say.

4.2.4 Safer Custody carries out staff training, especially for Band 3s, 2s and Operational Support Grades (OSGs) in safety awareness and how to complete the

ACCT documentation. The training pack given to staff carries clear and concise instructions.

4.2.5 However, the levels of self-harm by prisoners remains high, resulting in the prison having the fifth highest figures in the comparison group of Category C resettlement/training establishments in April 2023. The incidences of self-harm range from a low of 26 in October 2022, to a high of 65 incidences in May 2023. As has been reported previously, the numbers do not indicate an increase in the number of prisoners self-harming, rather they indicate a small number of prisoners with complex needs self-harming very frequently. For example, one prisoner self-harmed 13 times in May 2023.

4.2.6 A Safety Intervention Management (SIM) meeting is held weekly and those prisoners on open ACCTs, Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIPs) and those that are self-isolating are discussed, with the input of wing Custodial Managers (CMs) and mental health staff. The single case management system appears to work well, with the prisoner and case worker able to form a stable working relationship. Those prisoners who are self-isolating, perhaps for debt or gang related issues, are also discussed. Board members have observed these meetings and commented that everyone involved is trying to be as supportive as possible to these prisoners, and a positive sense is felt when progress is made. However, lack of space at Wealstun, and across the prison estate generally, have limited the prison's options.

4.2.7 A very small number of vulnerable prisoners have been held on constant watch during the reporting year and one remained on constant watch from 10 September 2022 until 20 February 2023. Whilst Board members were concerned about this length of time, the governors shared with us his management plans and progress and it was clear that he is a very complex and challenging individual. We also noted that the prison committed considerable resources to keeping him as safe as possible.

4.2.8 There are currently 21 Listeners who are trained by the Samaritans, some of whom are able to go on to the wings to provide extra support. The training of Listeners takes approximately three months but are often 'lost' to Wealstun when they go to category D establishments.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults are generally quite low, about five a month. This more than doubled early in 2023 as a result of gang violence which the prison quickly resolved by moving prisoners within the prison or transferring them. The fact that the prison estate is near to capacity means that it difficult to transfer prisoners quickly, and little consideration is able to be given on the appropriate establishment when prisoners are transferred from local prisons. Prisoner-on-staff assaults are low (less than five a month) and are usually low level. Violence is also likely to be low as prisoners have limited time out of their cell, especially at weekends, and there are no occasions when all the prisoners on the wing are out of their cells at the same time.

4.3.2 The number of CSIP referrals increased by 20% in this reporting period. The Board has no concerns about CSIP management which seems to be thorough and have observed a number of discussions between CMs and prisoners.

4.3.3 The number of prisoners self-isolating fluctuates with no obvious connection. The self-isolating prisoners are discussed at the weekly SIM meeting and the next steps agreed.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Use of force incidents have increased compared to the previous reporting period from 256 to 275, although a number of these were the use of cuffs to relocate prisoners from reception to segregation as they have tested positive on the body scanner.

4.4.2 The monthly use of force meetings are generally well attended and a considerable amount of data is presented together with full details of any incidents. Again, the Board commends the officer responsible for his work and diligence. All incidents are scrutinised and management investigations are undertaken where necessary. The Board have seen no incidents where the use of force was excessive, although they are pleased that advice is given to officers when any concerns or opportunities for improved prisoner control or restraint is identified. Body Worn Video Cameras are still not activated as often as they should be but in each case the Deputy Governor speaks to the officer(s) concerned.

4.4.3 PAVA (an incapacitant spray) cannisters were drawn on 11 occasions and deployed 8 times. The Board have examined each of these occasions, and the outcome of the management investigations, and we are satisfied that, where necessary, officers have received advice and guidance on the correct use of PAVA.

4.4.4 There remain a number of officers who have still not been trained in Spear (personal protection training) and PAVA so are not able to carry PAVA which is a concern of the Board. Currently, 35% of officers, excluding non-effectives, require training which means that untrained officers may be involved in incidents where PAVA is deployed by other officers and will not know the procedure for aftercare of prisoners.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The security team at Wealstun work in collaboration with a range of multi-agency partners to identify and manage live and future security risks, and to enhance capabilities to stop and restrict illicit articles entering the establishment. Preventing illicit articles (particularly mobile phones and drugs) entering the prison improves safety, helps to prevent reoffending, and disrupts serious and organised crime. A medication amnesty is carried out quarterly. The most recent one resulted in some tradeable drugs being handed in, together with other prescription medicines and some 80 unknown white tablets which are currently undergoing testing.

4.5.2 Security and Operations have fostered a holistic approach to focus to preventing Illicit articles. Over the reporting year several search and disruption operations, including County Lines Intensification week, have taken place involving the prison staff, HMPPS colleagues from Yorkshire Area Search Team (YAST), Northern Dedicated Search Team (DST), Counter Corruption Unit, Serious

Organised Crime Unit, West Yorkshire Police Forensic Management Team and West Yorkshire Police search team.

4.5.3 The team continue to utilise a range of techniques and technologies to thwart the importation of illicit items. The Security Investment Programme and the Risk and Capabilities Unit have supported the introduction or ongoing deployment of a range of capabilities including:

- X-ray baggage scanner
- Reception Body Scanner
- Smiths detection ionscan trace detection (drug testing equipment)
- The photocopying of all incoming social mail
- QR bar coding of legal confidential correspondence
- Local DST (increased intelligence led searching)
- Enhanced Gate Security, with regular perimeter patrols by local staff, supported by additional perimeter checks by YAST

4.5.4 The success of these, and other, initiatives is evidenced by a reduction in mandatory drug testing (MDT) Random Positive rates (the pre-covid pandemic positive test rate of 23.72% positive tests has fallen to 15.03%). This is also likely to have positively impacted on safety outcomes as the prison has benefitted from a decrease in the level of violence and self-harm over the same period.

4.5.5 The number of prisoners who are segregated because there seems to be a positive image on the body scanner remains significant. Unless the prisoner gives up the item voluntarily, there is no way for a prisoner to demonstrate their innocence as there are no dry cells in the prison. Dry cells catch any item which may have been secreted.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

5.1.1 The need to accommodate more prisoners at Wealstun due to a lack of prison spaces across the wider prison estate places pressure on the processes established to improve standards of decency. The clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent (CRED) programme, developed to carry out a programme of repainting all cells over a three-year cycle, has been suspended since 2020-21, although wings have their own wing painters who work to maintain a basic refresh of cell accommodation and communal areas.

5.1.2 Population pressures continue to place a strain on accommodation. In the last report the Board drew attention to the requirement to utilise the 24 double cells located across the prison. Operating capacity has been increased during 2022-23 to 856. It remains the view of the Board that the operating capacity calculation should exclude any requirement to house two prisoners in one cell as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners (particularly in respect of toilet facilities). In addition, 40 Rapid Deployment Units are being installed and should be operational by the end of 2023.

5.1.3 All prisoners located in double occupancy cell accommodation are thoroughly risk assessed using the cell share risk assessment. Whenever possible prisoners are located in single cells, although it is noted that sometimes prisoners prefer to share where it supports their mental well-being and is their preferred coping strategy.

5.1.4 Decency checks on cells are completed by the duty governor on a rotational basis, reports are used to recognise deficiencies and progress repair. These are tracked through the governor's report database where CMs can monitor the feedback and identify any common themes, which inform staff briefings, training refreshers and escalation to senior management. In January 2023 a team from HMP Lindholme was invited to conduct an impartial review of decency standards at Wealstun, with a reciprocal visit to Lindholme being made by a Wealstun team in February 2023. The Board has been impressed by the results of these visits. There is clear evidence of strong mutual co-operation and purposeful benchmarking. Both Wealstun and Lindholme appear to have identified a number of improvements they can introduce to their establishments as a result of the peer review visits. Such initiatives are a good example of how positive change can be made at little or no cost.

5.1.5 The small works programme, managed by Amey continues to operate smoothly. Amey allocates 40 hours of work each week to be carried out by a handyman. A monthly review meeting monitors the work carried out against the list of required minor repairs and a plan is agreed for any outstanding items. The heads of residence have a good working relationship with AMEY which is evident in the low numbers of out of action cell accommodation and the swift response to small repairs.

5.1.6 Conditions in the older A and B wings remain of significant concern to the Board. This accommodation is also deemed unusable for prisoners who have an 'arson flag' on their record, and therefore constrains options for locating prisoners. The Board has drawn attention to this concern in each report since 2020-21 as it is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action or reconstruction/replacement. It is noted, however, that the prison works hard to ensure that facilities on these wings are clean and decent.

Clothing

5.1.7 Clothing stocks continued to be adequate for the establishment with stock levels maintained to meet requirements.

5.1.8 Some new washers and dryers have been purchased for the establishment and the laundry process is under review.

Canteen

5.1.9 The continuation of part-time work, and thus part-time pay, remains of concern to the Board, particularly as the cost of items available via the canteen have increased significantly in the reporting year. Although some prisoners may have private funds or have family who are able to send them money, there are many who are not so fortunate and so are unable to afford even basic items such as vapes and phone credit. As there are few key worker sessions (only at 20% of target in May 2023), the number of prisoners affected is going unnoticed and could actually be causing some to get into debt. The Board would like the Governor to consider increasing rates of pay in line with inflation.

Food

5.1.10 Once again, the Board continues to applaud the Catering Manager and his team for the good standard and variety of food produced for prisoners given the budgetary restraints.

5.1.11 In the last two annual reports, the Board has noted its concern that the Daily Food Allowance (DFA) was an extremely small amount to provide an adequate diet for adult men. For the most part of the reporting year the DFA was set at £2.15. Even prior to the recent sharp increases in inflation, particularly food price inflation, this sum was insufficient to provide balanced and nutritious diet. During the reporting year the Governor provided additional funding to the Catering Manager to address this issue and the daily spend on food per prisoner rose to £2.62.

5.1.12 In recent months the DFA has been increased to £2.70, but continuing high levels of food price inflation are likely to mean that this is very soon insufficient to provide three meals a day for adult men. It remains the Board's opinion that food budgets should be set at a national level and regularly benchmarked, particularly in times where inflationary pressures are clear, to ensure that they remain adequate.

5.1.13 The kitchen team continue to work closely with the Farms & Gardens team to ensure the supply of fresh produce. This is another area which has benefited from increased funding from the Governor to mitigate the impact of food price inflation.

5.1.14 In recent years prisoners with money in their account have been able to supplement their diet by making purchases from the Canteen, but inflationary increases clearly have an impact here as well, especially when prison wages have been negatively impacted by the reduction of working opportunities during the reporting period.

5.1.15 The kitchen caters well for religious diets, festivals, special dietary requirements and allergies. Every Monday the kitchen offers a menu option which is designed to support diversity awareness through themed culinary dishes and/or celebrations. The intention is to give prisoners the opportunity to try something that they may not be familiar with and to encourage discussion about other faiths and cultures.

5.1.16 The daily re-select menu continues to provide a six-option choice for both lunch and evening meals. Although funding from 'Food Behind Bars' has been discontinued, the kitchen team remain committed to educating prisoners of the benefits of selecting healthier meals including a daily lunch option of a filled baked potato and a 'gym tea option' of a pasta salad and healthy pack supplement.

5.1.17 The servery point on each wing now has a 'Servery Lead prisoner' whose role is to ensure assurance and upskilling of servers at meal service times. The Servery Leads also attend monthly Food Council meetings which are chaired by the Catering Manager.

5.1.18 It is of particular note that, despite the budgetary pressures outlined above, the Board only received three applications relating to food and kitchens during the 2022-23 reporting period.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The segregation unit is a purpose-built building with cells for 13 prisoners, including three short-term holding cells for prisoners awaiting adjudication. There is one constant watch cell and one robust cell (built in such a way as to be unbreakable). The unit is reasonably well maintained and there is a cleaner present on the unit most days.

5.2.2 Prisoners in the unit are visited each day by the Duty Governor, the Chaplain and healthcare. Every three days, they are visited by the GP and weekly, by the IMB and the Governing Governor.

5.2.3 The unit is well-run most of the time, with an experienced core set of officers. A new governor in charge occurred during the reporting period. Staff shortages across the prison impacted the unit, with some unit staff sometimes being detailed elsewhere in the prison. For example, on 22 July 2022, only one member of staff was on duty in the Segregation unit due to staff shortages, which meant that the unit was in patrol state and IMB members could only speak to prisoners through closed doors.

It also meant that whilst the canteen had been delivered to the unit, it could not be distributed to prisoners. Again, on 4 August 2022, three members of staff were on duty, but two were dealing with Adjudications, leaving one officer dealing with segregation prisoners on their own. On 7 September 2022, the unit was again in patrol state with only one regular member of staff on duty, supported by ad hoc staff from the wings. This meant that the five prisoners could not be given showers or exercise and one prisoner was already on a dirty protest.

5.2.4 As the prison regime opened up, the number of prisoners sent to the unit increased. In October and November 2022, the number of segregated prisoners hovered around 9 or 10, before falling back during the first two months of 2023. However, in March 2023 numbers climbed back up to 9 – 13 due to gang violence mentioned in para 4.3.1 above.

5.2.5 It became of concern to members that prisoners were deliberately damaging their cells in order to be transferred to segregation in the belief that this would help them to obtain a transfer to another prison. This was noted in IMB rota reports. On 9 May 2023, a member attended an ACCT review of a prisoner in segregation and he stated clearly that he had started a cell fire for exactly this reason, as he had heard of other prisoners doing the same and obtaining the desired result of a transfer out. Again, on 18 May, a prisoner told a member that he had smashed his observation panel in order to achieve the same outcome. The prison has attempted to deal with this and now makes it very clear to prisoners, in segregation reviews and in one-on-one communication with the prisoners, that deliberate damage and cell ‘smash ups’ would not result in transfers out of Wealstun. In fact, a check of where prisoners go after being segregated by the Board did not support the fact that damaging cells would result in a transfer.

5.2.6 Board members were concerned about the amount of time certain prisoners were segregated. Some were kept in for their own safety (and with their agreement) because they were shortly due for release, but those awaiting Category B transfers out faced a lengthy delay; one prisoner was in the unit for some 72 days before being transferred out due to a lack of space in the prison estate. Similarly, a small number of prisoners with complex mental health issues were kept on the unit for several weeks, again due to the difficulty in finding bed space in a relevant unit.

5.2.7 Virtual segregation (whereby a group of prisons in the local area agree the transfer of difficult prisoners) ceased early in 2022, as those difficult prisoners were merely being rotated around the local prisons. Instead, monthly meetings of deputy governors at each Yorkshire prison attend a monthly reintegration meeting which looks solely at those long-term segregated prisoners with complex needs or those who are difficult to manage. About 3-4 prisoners are considered at the meeting and every option to manage the individual at the current establishment must have been exhausted before a transfer can be considered.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 During the first few months of the reporting period, there was a significant shortage of staff which resulted in time out of cell being limited and key worker sessions being non-existent for all except vulnerable prisoners. The prison officer

pay award has seen an improvement in the level of staffing and the attrition figure. Disappointingly though, this has not been obvious to the prisoners and key working sessions are the lowest in the comparative group and the region. The board remains concerned that the prison is consistently missing their target of 80% completed sessions per week. The issue that prisoners were not allowed the opportunity to have regular key worker sessions was identified as a key concern in the recent HMIP inspection report.

5.3.2 There are significant number of officers with limited experience which the Board are concerned about as there has been an increase in applications relating to, for example, how the incentives scheme is implemented. This was also picked up in the HMIP inspection report in October 2022 which stated that “Inexperienced officers were not given sufficient support or encouragement to develop meaningful relationships with prisoners”. The prison has recently introduced the Confidence and Competence Toolkit which is to support prison officers to improve their confidence and competence in completing their regular tasks correctly. The Board will be interested in the results of the reviews once it is completed.

5.3.3 The prison has been allowed to over recruit so officers can be sent on detached duty. This should have resulted in better staffing levels. However, the number to go on detached duty is calculated before the number is reduced to take account of non-effectives with the result being that there remains a shortage of officers so a limited regime and key worker sessions is the result. This is unacceptable.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The prison’s ethnic diversity remains broadly unchanged from recent years, with approximately 75% of prisoners identifying as White and the balance from a range of ethnic minorities. Also, like last year approximately 40% of prisoners identify as having some form of disability.

5.4.2 The prison initiative to manage and monitor equality and diversity under the title IDEAL (inclusion, diversity, equality, access, leadership) appears to be a well-embedded programme within the prison. The Board attends the quarterly meetings occasionally and remains impressed with the strong leadership and commitment to the programme. Given the discipline and rigour within the process, any issues identified are done so in a timely way and a programme to address them is initiated.

5.4.3 The Board remains impressed with the process around the discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRF), which it has monitored. Redacted DIRFs and responses are subject to scrutiny on a quarterly basis at the IDEAL meeting, during which prisoner representatives are present and fully involved.

5.4.4 The prison initiates several events throughout the year to increase awareness around protected characteristics. The kitchen also provides a range of food options for all dietary requirements. Special meals are provided for all religious festivals.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 Once again the Board are pleased to report that the chaplaincy team continue to make a positive contribution to the life of the prison. The chaplaincy team visit prisoners (regardless of their religion, or lack of a belief) as part of their induction,

often meet those close to release, and offer support to those experiencing times of hardship, including bereavement. The chaplaincy team undertake daily visits to the segregation unit, offering pastoral support to those housed there.

5.5.2 Time and time again the Board hear reports of the good work the chaplaincy team do to support prisoners, often those in the most difficult situations.

5.5.3 The prison employs the following chaplaincy staff: Anglican Minister, Catholic Priest, two Free Church Ministers, three Muslim Imams, and a Buddhist Minister. There are still some faiths that are unrepresented on the chaplaincy team, these include: Sikh, Mormon, Pagan and Rastafarian.

5.5.4 The chaplaincy team offer a full programme of services, and a number of faith classes for Christian and Muslim inmates. The Board are encouraged to see that prisoners have returned to faith services/lessons following the lock down regimes.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The prison continues to operate an incentives scheme which aims to encourage responsible behaviour and for the prisoners to engage in activities and work so as to create a more disciplined and safer environment for all.

5.6.2 The Board noticed from an increase in applications and conversations with prisoners concerning the incentives scheme that there was an issue with the reintroduction of the full incentives scheme in April 2022. Some prisoners had not been in prison without Covid restrictions and a number of staff had less than 2 years' service and so had not previously had responsibility for administering the scheme. Both factors have likely contributed to the issue. The issues were raised with the Governor and the Board also analysed the information on the number of prisoners on each incentive level monthly. Some improvement has been seen and the Board will continue to monitor closely.

5.6.3 There is an in-depth review of the current incentives scheme taking place with a view to launch an amended system in August 2023. The review has involved gathering views of the prisoners to feed into the new Incentives Policy Framework (IPF). Some the findings from the prisoner data gathering include:

- not enough difference between standard and enhanced (it remains a challenge to offer extra benefits to enhanced prisoners because of the difficulty in providing variety within regimes which remain restricted).
- extra gym time was a common request for enhanced prisoners
- clear communications within the prison about how a prisoner can move up and down the policy framework.
- Incentive schemes are not consistent across prisons and often even across wings they can be open to interpretation

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The complaints process remains in a stable and well managed state benefiting from continuity of staffing. It would appear from evidence gathered during rota visits that, in the main, prisoners receive timely and fair responses.

5.7.2 During the reporting year the number of complaints has increased by approximately 12%. They have remained broadly stable in terms of classification.

Property and Residential are the dominant subject of complaints. Interestingly complaints regarding canteen have reduced by more the 50%, whilst the number relating to the incentives scheme have increased from 75 to 175 (See Section 5.6 above). Complaints relating to property remains the area of greatest concern, although given the transient nature of Wealstun's population this is probably not surprising (See also Sections 4.1.5 above and Section 5.8 below).

5.8 Property

5.8.1 The percentage of applications received by the Board in relation to property issues remains high. However, the number of property related issues has to be seen in the context of the high numbers of prisoners arriving and leaving Wealstun each year.

5.8.2 One issue identified during the reporting year is that it is not always possible to be clear with prisoners where property may have gone astray in inter-prison transfers. Prisoners can point to items listed on their previous property card being missing when they receive their property from reception but as no outbound checks are carried out when prisoners leave one establishment it is not possible to verify that all items listed on a property card actually left the previous establishment. Our monitoring does, however, confirm that the reception team at Wealstun take great care to check through inbound property and to ensure that records are properly maintained.

5.8.3 The Board have dealt with applications where a prisoner has complained that items that they have been allowed in another establishment have not been permitted at Wealstun. This issue has been pursued with reception staff and the SLT. In October 2022 a revised facilities list was published which has alleviated some of the concerns raised with us, but clearly it would be helpful for facilities lists to be more 'standardised' across the prison estate (whilst acknowledging that this may not be possible for all items).

5.8.4 Concerns relating to property are routinely raised with the Board and follow up often involves visits to reception. This gives the Board a number of opportunities to witness and understand the process that is in place to receive, record and despatch prisoners' property. Whilst this is a heavily paper based system, the process appears robust. The Board find the staff within Reception welcoming and conscientious; genuinely willing to try and resolve prisoner questions.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1. The main healthcare service at the prison is provided by Practice Plus Group. This includes support for physical health, mental health and substance misuse. The prison receives GP services through a local GP practice. Psychosocial services, psychiatry and psychology services are subcontracted through Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust.

6.1.2. During the reporting period, the Board received 31 applications from prisoners that were either directly about healthcare matters or where healthcare was one of a set of related issues raised in an application. There were comparatively few applications exclusively about healthcare.

6.1.3. The most frequently occurring issues raised by prisoners were as follows, and these are explored further in the following sections:

- Being unable to access a GP or other healthcare services and staff
- The extent to which prisoners perceived the quality and responsiveness of treatment and care met their needs
- The extent to which wing staff supported prisoners to follow-up activities suggested by healthcare
- Access to medications and/or difficulties receiving medications – with prisoners reporting delays
- Healthcare not responding to prisoners' complaints

6.1.4. Access to services and appointments – Members found that a common outcome was that an appointment had been arranged in the period since the prisoner submitted an application. In a small number of cases where this hadn't yet happened, an appointment was often expedited following our enquiries. As was the case in our 21-22 annual report, there remained a small number of instances where prisoners reported that they had not been notified of appointments in reasonable time, though this appeared to be less of an issue in this reporting period. There has been active work by the prison over the past year to reduce the number of prisoners who refuse to attend appointments including issuing an incentive scheme warning if the prisoner refuses to attend for no good reason.

6.1.5. The Board also explore concerns relating to delays in arranging external appointments with local hospitals where additional treatment is required (of which there were several examples over the past year). Delays are often due to factors outside the prison's control, but there did appear to be some variability in how well-informed prisoners were of these delays, and whether they were offered additional palliative treatment where appropriate in the interim.

6.1.6. Complaints about healthcare – Although there was a very low number of applications (3), members noted that the common issue was that as the healthcare service has a different complaints process to the normal prison process, it appeared that some prison staff were less well able to advise prisoners on how to progress their concerns. However, issues raised by the Board were usually resolved. Further investigation resulted in a full explanation for logging complaints and arranging responses from different healthcare departments. There remains scope for

improvement, however, as the healthcare complaints process does not consistently meet the apparent needs of prisoners.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1. Overall quality of care – There appeared to be a number of instances where communications between healthcare staff and prison staff had potential gaps, and where wing staff were not aware of treatment plans (including GP advice) suggested for prisoners by the healthcare team. A small number of applications required resolution from governors liaising with wing staff to follow-up advice from healthcare. An example included a prisoner with long covid and respiratory complications for whom additional exercise time had been recommended.

6.2.2. Access to medications – There were a small number of applications concerning this issue, and these were usually resolved after exploration by members. There could also be some discrepancies between the accounts prisoners had given and the response from healthcare. In a number of cases, the prisoners raising applications regarding access to medications were already well-known to the healthcare team, and the issues could relate to a difference of views on the appropriate treatment or care plan – for example where prisoners were unhappy that medications such as Pregablin had been refused and an alternative provided. The Board recognises that prisoner medication is managed in line with safer prescribing guidelines, although this is not always made clear to prisoners by the healthcare team. Ultimately it is clear that, although patients may not receive their preferred treatment, the subsequent (prison-approved) treatment for the prisoner's needs is still consistent with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1. All prisoners are screened on arrival at Wealstun by healthcare for any mental health problems, and referrals are made if required. The Board has observed good interactions between the mental health team and prisoners, particularly in Rule 45 reviews.

6.3.2. Members attended a number of SIM meetings during 2022-23. It was noted that most prisoners under discussion had on-going and complex mental health issues (e.g. ADHD) and that there was regular input from healthcare. The meetings included cases where prisoners had declined additional mental health support and there was evidence of a good multi-disciplinary approach across the healthcare team and prison staff on how to mitigate the potential for any relapses amongst prisoners.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1. Access to, and provision of, social care is not a significant issue at Wealstun due to the nature of its prison population, which has relatively few social care needs. An exception during the reporting year was the transfer of a prisoner from Leeds, who was a wheelchair user and required additional support. It appeared as though this individual had either not received the appropriate local authority social care assessment prior to his transfer. Arrangements were quickly made for the assessment to take place.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Although it is reported that the prison is nearly fully staffed, the time out of cell remains a major concern for the Board and was also noted in the HMIP inspection in October. Time out has gradually increased over the year but the regime is very strict with little flexibility. The majority of the prisoners only work part time (am or pm), they then have association, structured on wing activity (SOWA) and domestic time for 2.5 hours. There is also an hour from 17:30 – 18:30 when prisoners can leave their cells, assuming they are not on basic. The time out of cell at weekends has increased to 2.5 hours a day.

6.5.2 The concern is that if the prisoner has a visit booked, a healthcare appointment, meetings with prison staff etc. during their association time, there is no flexibility to make up the association time that is lost. There is also an issue where a prisoner who is lucky enough to work full time in the gardens, has no opportunity to shower when they get back to the wing.

6.5.3 Prisoners generally have a positive view of gymnasium facilities. Following the restrictions of the Covid period access to gym sessions is good, following a consistent regime, with two sessions per week being available (am or pm, alternating with work). Gymnasium staff have previously offered mental health sessions (staffing levels permitting) and the Board recommends that these be reinstated if at all possible.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit has been located on G wing since July 2020 and is now firmly established. The facility is fully subscribed (56 places are available) and there is a waiting list of prospective new entrants. Amongst the new benefits available to prisoners on the ISFL wing is the opportunity to purchase meal deals from the prison's catering academy. The replacement of DVD players has also been completed and the DVD loan library is being expanded.

6.6.2 Wealstun has been approached by the Regional Drug Strategy team to look at how additional flexibility can be offered from the funding available. The team are seeking to offer additional facilities and provisions to develop the unit and offer improved incentives, as well as additional staffing to deliver Compact Drug Testing and increased association periods.

6.6.3 Although the ISFL unit appears to be achieving some successes, it can only accommodate 56 prisoners from a total prison population of around 850. The Board understands that funding is available to increase ISFL take-up (either by accommodating the unit on a larger wing or by designating an additional wing as an ISFL unit). A scoping exercise has been undertaken to examine the feasibility of establishing a Drug Recovery Wing. If approved this would attract additional funding which would allow Wealstun to greatly expand drug recovery work. This would further facilitate the increased provision of community in-reach work and also allow better focus of the ISFL wing, which at present has to bridge the gap between recovery and abstinence.

6.6.4 Group work and compact testing are key components of the ISFL programme. The drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) has a regular presence on the unit. There is also greater focus on celebrating the progress made by prisoners in their recovery. DARS have set up a quarterly initiative on the ISFL unit whereby prisoners are able to apply to be considered for a Recognition in Recovery Day. This is a full morning visit with their families (including children) where they celebrate the progress made in their recovery; whilst getting some positive reinforcement from the DARS service. This has been extremely popular and feedback from the previous events show how meaningful and positive this is to prisoners and their families.

6.6.5 DARS have continued to liaise with the prison catering academy to allow prisoners to buy a cooked breakfast at the end of their structured programmes with the drug service – this is a small initiative that helps prisoners reflect in a relaxed environment, on what they have learnt across the programme and how they are going to use the skills acquired in later life. The DARS team also host regular service user forums on the ISFL unit, in collaboration with wing managers, to ensure their voices are heard, ideas are explored and projects are actioned.

6.6.6 DARS and the mental health team are integrated within the wider healthcare department. DARS facilitate a variety of drug awareness programmes (including a recent initiative on fentanyl awareness) which prisoners attend as part of a supportive measure if they are found to be, or suspected of being, under the influence of drugs. DARS works with a range of partners including St Giles Trust, Through the Gate and the OMU, and also has strong links with a wide range of community substance misuse support and prison link workers to facilitate smooth transition and care for prisoners leaving custody.

Current programmes include:

- **Structured programmes** (Four & eight week programmes dependant on individuals motivation to change)
- **Peer support group** (named 'The Men's Room' – bi-weekly support aimed at improving the mental health of men in custody)
- **SMART recovery programme** (4-week programme followed by ongoing bi-weekly peer support on ISFL wing – this is facilitated by a peer mentor)
- **Alcoholics Anonymous & Narcotics Anonymous** (bi-weekly)
- **Ad-hoc groups** (Mindfulness, Hep C Awareness, Hooch Awareness etc.)
- **Regular lived experience seminars** (where people in recovery come in to share their experience, strength and hope to prisoners to help build motivation.)

6.6.7 The prison continues to practice the use of rehabilitative adjudication awards in cases where a prisoner engages positively and is motivated to address their substance misuse. The balance between punishing substance misuse and supporting users to address their offending behaviour is a delicate one. At present, if a prisoner is adjudicated for being under the influence for the first time, they are offered the opportunity to sign up to engage with DARS around their substance misuse instead of receiving a punishment. DARS then feed this information back to the prison within a four-week timescale to ensure this goal has been met – if not, then the prisoner will receive a punishment as per policy.

6.6.8 Approximately 20% of the prison population are on opiate substitution treatment (OST) which compromises predominately of methadone, although Buprenorphine is prescribed where safe & appropriate. Buvidal is a new opiate substitute treatment option and at present HMP Wealstun have approx. 5 prisoners on this medication. As part of their treatment, prisoners must engage with both psychosocial and clinical substance misuse teams through a wide range of interventions. Prisoners are supported to create individualised care plans where they can safely look to reduce from OST.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 The Board noted in its last report that it was hoped that yoga could be taught in the gym. Staff are being trained to support this objective but do not yet have the necessary qualifications to allow the sessions to begin.

6.7.2 SOWA now provides access to music and chess. The musician in residence visits wings where prisoners are not at work (because of the part time work regime) and has proved very popular. Instruments are provided. Both the chess and music instructors have had their contracts renewed.

6.7.3 A life and living course prepares men for cooking on a budget, food safety, making beds and ironing.

6.7.4 The York University research programme with problem support champions continues. They are given training to help their peers gain problem solving skills. Securing funding to continue this work was difficult but is secured until Autumn 2023. The university's research has demonstrated the benefits of the programme. A place has been found in Safer Custody where Wealstun staff will be brought in to promote the scheme.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 During the summer and autumn of 2022 learning was hindered by poor staffing and accommodation. Sessions were cancelled at short notice when too few officers were available to escort prisoners to sessions. Occasionally a prisoner had to be returned to his wing when men from other wings were unable to be brought to a class.

7.1.2 As mentioned in last year's report, the education block suffered from a roof and ceiling collapse following storm damage. Staff and induction rooms, offices and art studios were partly out of commission. It took more than six months to get approval to undertake repair work. Classes were, eventually, relocated to the main library, the catering academy and some workshops and was well managed with little disruption to learning. By May 2023 the work on the roof was largely complete, although some minor repairs and redecoration remained outstanding. The Board understands that the education department would return in July 2023.

7.1.3 The difficulties in staffing and regime have improved steadily throughout the year. Since the new library timetable in autumn, there have been instances when officers have not known when they are due to escort prisoners to visit the library. The librarian repeatedly asked for officers to be more informative, enthusiastic, and louder when encouraging and gathering prisoners to be escorted to the library. With long distances to be walked from some parts of the prison, and strict timings, it was disappointing for prisoners and staff when prisoners have not heard about the opportunity to visit. The good news is that the total number of library users is increasing, although some wings evidence more users than others.

7.1.4 The majority of the prisoners attend either morning or afternoon in education or workshops. Morning sessions are for three hours and afternoon sessions are for two and a half hours. The Board are concerned that this is insufficient time to do anything meaningful at work and would like to see full time work available to all prisoners.

7.1.5 Throughout the year there has been difficulty recruiting staff to teach in some workshops. This is particularly disappointing as some of the vacancies are for instructors in skill areas where there is a strong need for workers in the community. Given the importance of prisoners finding stable employment on release this is an area which needs attention, and, if necessary, additional funding to be able to secure workshop instructors.

7.1.6 The need for outreach has been identified as greater than previously realised. Some men prefer to learn outside the classroom, and to support this, tutors work with one or two prisoners and give feedback after work has been completed in cells. Board members were impressed by testimony from a couple of men who praised the way they were learning.

7.1.7 From September 2023 a new manager will be in place to work in Education, demonstrating clearly the acknowledgement that the current role of Resettlement and Education governor is too large and needs to be rescoped in order to provide sufficient focus for the breadth of activities that need to be managed in a resettlement prison.

7.1.8 In December 2022, ten men successfully completed the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP). It was noted then that 75 men were awaiting to begin the programme - 32 had been referred by Prison Offender Managers (POMs) while 43 had self-referred. To meet this need on an ongoing basis requires a manager and six trainers. By May 2023 these staff were in place and are now providing morning and afternoon sessions over six-week cycles.

7.1.9 Training for the new TSP staff has been provided by an external body Intervention Services. There can be long waits for new staff before a course can be scheduled. This, in turn, contributes to delays in providing TSP courses to prisoners.

7.1.10 English, maths, business studies, art, NVQ catering, hospitality, CSCS (training for work on building sites), painting and decorating, joinery, life skills and peer mentoring are provided by Novus education. Demand for the CSCS qualifications remains high.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Part time sessions of work in laundry, farms and garden, waste management, sewing machine repairs, tailors, logistics and beverage packing have different lengths; three hours in the morning and two and a half hours in the afternoon. To make up the shortfall of hours in afternoon sessions prisoners work on alternate Fridays.

7.2.2 An industrial cleaning workshop has been set up with eight places and two trusted prisoners (red bands). The trainer liaises with the prison education team to track qualifications and establish links to find employment for men being released.

7.2.3 The Clink Kitchens scheme, working out of the kitchen, is run for about 8 learners (over six months for L1 and 12 months for L2). The qualifications are for food production. Wealstun has been selected as a 'super site' from July 2023 which means that a full time Clink trainer will be based on site to support training initiatives.

7.2.4 Most applications to the Board relating to purposeful activity were from prisoners unhappy about the job they were doing or wished to do. These problems were caused by availability of workshop spaces and the need to assess a prisoners' risk before being allocated to a particular workshop.

7.2.5 Staffing issues meant that shutdowns occurred with little notice and caused unhappiness and frustration to prisoners. This has improved with staffing improvements.

7.2.6 Farms and gardens began a new scheme called 'Plough to Plate' in conjunction with the kitchen team to plan crops that can be used to help with food preparation budget pressure. A large area has been ploughed and planted with onions, leeks and cabbage. Polytunnels have been built or improved and it is hoped that this initiative will generate a £20,000 saving to support meal preparation.

7.2.7 A piece of waste land has been improved as a peaceful garden for staff and prisoners to enjoy. The reconfigured space won the Windlesham trophy for a small area of prison gardens. The award-winning garden had been made on a patch of land that was previously a muddy mess. The bedding plants have been grown from seed, hard landscaping has been done by men using found items around the prison: unused gravel, large rocks from neighbouring field, and hand painted leftover timber.

The new garden space is a credit to the determination, imagination, and resourcefulness of the prisoners and the workshop staff. It is being used by DARS (mental health group), staff members during break/lunch time, and by officers and prisoners for key worker sessions.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The Board has dealt with a number of informal and formal applications in relation to progression opportunities, and, in particular, the time taken for a positive re-categorisation award to come to fruition (where a prisoner is moved to a suitable Cat D establishment). POM staffing shortages have impacted on the ability to progress cases at Wealstun, which when compounded with the lengthy induction processes for new staff, has negatively impacted the prisoner experience to an unacceptable degree.

7.3.2 Where a progression recategorisation has been awarded there has often been a delay of some months before a transfer can be actioned, as staff shortages in the wider prison network, lack of Cat D prison spaces and other issues, e.g. availability of transport, can mean that the system moves very slowly and the prisoner feels that they are not getting the opportunity to benefit from being deemed ready for Cat D status. At the time of writing, HMP Wealstun was informing prisoners that only essential transfers were being actioned due to population issues. This is clearly unsatisfactory.

7.3.2 The number of prisoners at HMP Wealstun serving IPP sentences has remained fairly consistent over the past 12 months (and is not expected to increase in line with general population increases given that the sentence has now been abolished). The Justice Committee report on IPP sentences across the whole prison estate found that IPP sentences cause hopelessness and despair, giving rise to higher levels of self-harm and suicide among the IPP cohort of prisoners. As such the Board believes this cohort should be carefully monitored and kept informed of any developments relating to their position. The OMU Governor has identified a POM single point of contact for IPP and Lifer issues with the intention that forums be established. Staff recruitment issues have not yet provided sufficient bandwidth to begin forum meetings. The Board will continue to monitor this issue and press for early implementation of the forum meetings.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Information sheets setting out the ways that prisoners can maintain family contact are given out to prisoners at their induction. Prison information workers are also available to help prisoners.

7.4.2 Members have observed the visiting facility on a number of occasions during the reporting year. Each session has approximately 21 prisoners receiving a visit, with 6 staff on duty. Visits are on average between 90 minutes and 2 hours. There are rarely any problems. Random searches of around ten visitors are carried out after visits conclude. A snack shop is open and run by 3 prisoners.

7.4.3 Regrettably there have been occasions on which visits have had to be cancelled due to lack of staff. For example, on 6th-7th August 2022, all social visits and video calls were cancelled due to ongoing staff shortages. The prison set out its position in a memo to all prisoners which stated that:

- Every prisoner who has a social visit or video call booked will receive a £3 phone credit
- Family/friends are informed as soon as possible
- All visitors who have had a visit curtailed will receive priority on booking their next visit.

7.4.3 Video visits are also popular, although they still suffer from occasional technical difficulties. The prison stated that from 01st July 2022, all prisoners would be entitled to one video visit a month. Such visits allow people who have greater distances to travel, access needs, childcare costs or high travel costs the opportunity to see and speak with the prisoner once a month, albeit online.

7.4.4 The prison also stated that applications from those who have a genuine need to use video visits more than once a month, due to the above reasons, and not able to utilise in-person visits would be sympathetically considered.

7.4.4 Jigsaw runs the family support project at the prison, though it too has had staffing problems, which has negatively impacted prisoners. Board members were told that this was due to the new contract being negotiated which led to delays in recruiting new staff. The team is now back to full strength and provides playworkers to support weekend visits and family days.

7.4.5 There has been good feedback for the family visit days. A typical session will include about 17 families, with 2 Jigsaw staff members and 3 officers. The sessions now run for two hours rather than 4.5 but this has proved to work well as both children and parents managed shorter sessions better. Sessions were organised twice at Christmas, once in February and twice at Easter. Members met a family member at one of these days. She had given up a day's work and set off very early to bring other members to the family day from her home in South Yorkshire. Her remarks demonstrated the difficulties that arise in cases where men are imprisoned out of area.

7.4.6 The Prison Reading Group (a charity) had supplied a book and bag for each child attending a family visit. They also supplied books for the Visitor Centre and for Christmas presents for men to give to their children (sourced by Jigsaw but the men had to pay for postage).

7.4.7 'Storybook Dads' continues. This is a scheme where the men can record bedtime stories for their children to listen to at home. According to staff, even those prisoners with limited literacy, are able to record these stories.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 The prison operates a range of pathway activities for prisoners and works to build productive relationships with businesses in the community that can lead to employment opportunities on release. In partnership with St Giles Trust, who deal with referrals from POMs and COMs (Community Offender Managers), accommodation needs for the first night of release (and hopefully beyond) are established. Other partnerships are used around other specific pathway activities where required e.g. drugs and alcohol support and mental and physical health.

7.5.2 Approximately 15 weeks prior to a prisoner's anticipated release date his release plan will be discussed at the Discharge Board. The 15 week period is not always sufficient. One to one interviews need to be set up to organise help. The Board is concerned that due to population pressures, prisoners are often sent to Wealstun with less than 15 weeks before release which does not allow sufficient time to prepare him for release. Sometimes decisions around prisoner support after release, especially accommodation, are not finalised until immediately prior to release. Whilst the Board understands that this might be due to circumstances beyond the prison's control, it notes that prisoners often find the period leading up to release to be stressful and that every effort needs to be made to prepare prisoners for a successful transition back into the community.

7.5.3 In January 2023 a Board member attended an IMB recruitment event at Leeds Library. At this event he met a former Wealstun prisoner who had been released before Christmas but who was still living at St George's Crypt (a homeless shelter) some 17 days later. The Board is therefore concerned that statistics that indicate that there is a 98% success rate with accommodation on release may not reflect the position beyond a very short period after release.

7.5.4 Links between prisoners, their POM workers and community probation officers, appear to be very fragile in far too many instances. The Discharge Board has been seen by the Board to work conscientiously to help with accommodation, paperwork, employment and myriad other details. It has been observed to be successful. A housing worker was employed temporarily and enthusiastically made links between users, however, their contract was temporary and finished in May 2023.

7.5.6 The Community Integration Scheme (CIT) is crucial to the work of the Discharge Board. They help to sort out many issues, including housing benefit, debt and housing needs, but they do not deal with sentence expiry dates and recall. CIT only deals with 20% of men, however, as not everyone has a POM or COM. Equally those receiving help can be left vulnerable when POMs and Probation officers have staffing or communication difficulties. Simple problems like lack of money for a telephone call or of a contact number create communication issues.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	193

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	20
C	Equality	1	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	6	15
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	9	10
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	7
F	Food and kitchens	3	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	23	31
H1	Property within the establishment	10	16
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	10	20
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	4	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	19	17
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	19	17
K	Transfers	5	7
L	Miscellaneous	25	24
	Total number of applications	151	200

Annex A

List of service providers

- Novus, for works, learning and skills
- Practice Plus Group for the provision of physical/mental healthcare
- GEOAmey, for escort provision
- Amey, for the provision of facilities management and site maintenance
- Jigsaw, for family intervention services



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