



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swaleside

**For reporting year
1 May 2022 – 30 April 23**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Swaleside is a category B training prison.

It was opened in August 1988 as part of a group with HMPs Stanford Hill and Elmley. However, from 1 April 2017 it became part of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE).

The certified normal accommodation (CNA) is 1,111 in single cells over eight wings. The CNA includes the care, separation and reintegration unit (CSRU) and the healthcare unit.¹

At the end of April 2023 just under 90% were category B prisoners, just under 10% were category C and less than 1% were category D.

There was one foreign national prisoner who had completed his sentence and was awaiting deportation (under the Immigration Act).

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

Background to the report

This report is being written during an unprecedented period of staff shortage. This has a direct and major impact on the regime the prison is able to provide and consequently on the wellbeing of both prisoners and staff. It has a negative impact on the fair and humane treatment of prisoners.

To put the shortage into context: the agreed complement of Band 3 uniformed staff is 264. However, the number actually available at the time of writing is only 180. This number is being augmented by approximately 40 detached duty staff from other prisons.

The geographical situation of Swaleside on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent is an exacerbating feature in the staffing difficulty in that it is an isolated area and has many competing opportunities for staff. It is also adjacent to areas offering good links to London as well as the Kent coast.

Staff losses are continuous and are mostly of experienced staff that the prison can ill afford to lose. These losses are largely to other Government departments, especially the Border Agency, which recruited 29 officers directly from Swaleside during the reporting year. The police and civil service are also attracting officers and staff from the prison. Recruitment is hardly keeping pace with the staff losses and inevitably the new recruits lack the experience of the officers they are replacing. About 35% of uniformed staff have less than two years' experience and experience is vital in building a positive and constructive relationship with prisoners and improving their well-being.

The reporting year has also been challenging, because of the hangover from Covid in the early part of the year. Infected staff needed to take time off work and prisoners had to be organised into cohorts to avoid cross-contamination.

Over the summer of 2022 only a very restricted regime could be provided and that was not consistent. Prisoner work was limited to the kitchen, DHL (canteen, from H wing), wing cleaners and, latterly, F wing prisoners. Time out of cell for prisoners was, at one point, just 30 minutes. Access to education was also restricted to in-cell learning.

The lack of meaningful activity for prisoners on all but two wings has given the Board concern and this concern is echoed by the prisoners themselves. The impact on the mental health and general well-being of the prisoners hardly needs explanation and the incidence of self-harm, serious incidents and attacks on both prisoners and staff were likely to have been exacerbated by the restrictions. Deaths in Custody (DICs) were at very worrying levels. Staff themselves have been frustrated by their inability to implement anything approaching a full regime.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) recognised these problems and the Board commends them for the positive action they have taken, with the support of Regional and National safety teams, to improve the situation. The prison regime was reset in October 2022, so that a basic but consistent regime, named Core Day 0, could be provided by the limited number of officers available.

From that low base the decision was taken to bring in a significant number of detached duty staff from other prisons and to reduce prisoner numbers to bring them into balance with the available officers. This involved the closure of both A and C wings, reducing prisoner numbers from a CNA of 1,111 to 828 at the end of April.

The regime has been gradually improving, giving prisoners more time out of cell and greater access to work, education and religious observance. The steps in this gradual process have been named Core Days 1, 2 and 3. The latest stage in this process, Core Day 4, due to be implemented in June 2023, is expected to return the regime largely to what it was before the pandemic.

Against such a difficult background, the Board commends the SLT, officers and detached duty officers, service providers and administrative staff for their efforts to implement an improving and worthwhile regime.

3.1 Main findings

How safe is the prison?

- Prisoner-on-prisoner violence at Swaleside fell over the year
- Prisoner assaults on staff were on a disturbing trend in the early part of the year, but, following the introduction of Core Day 2/3 and the closure of the two wings, they are now declining
- Serious assaults have shown a steady decline and run at about 4% of the overall figure
- Self-harm cases have fallen steadily during the year
- Open Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork documents (ACCTs) remained stubbornly high for most of the reporting year but towards the end fell significantly as the regime improved
- The decision to restrict the amount of sugar that prisoners can buy from the Canteen has reduced the amount of illegal alcohol brewed in the prison and the introduction of airport-style x-ray machines at the gate has improved security and safety significantly. However, drugs, especially spice, continue to be an issue

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

- The humane treatment of prisoners is questionable given regime restrictions for most of the year, especially given the lack of meaningful activity and the confinement of prisoners to their cells for long periods. Although the provision of in-cell education packs helped alleviate boredom, there is little doubt that the increase in self-harm was partly brought about by the removal of a normal regime. The severe shortage of uniformed staff is the overriding reason for the restrictions in regime. The Board welcomes the improvement in regime that is currently being implemented and the increase in prisoners' access to work, education and religious observance
- The Board is concerned that the showers on so many of the wings are either not working or below acceptable standards
- The segregation unit provides a fair and safe regime and the Board regularly attends Good Order Or Discipline (GOOD) reviews. There is concern, however, about the length of time some prisoners remain on CSRU

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

- Health provision for prisoners has improved since Oxleas took over the management of healthcare in May 2022
- The dentist's surgery has not been available for some months due to refurbishment
- Prisoners' mental health was badly affected by the restricted regime and limited time out of cell, but, as the regime has improved, prisoners' mental well-being also appears to be improving
- The time limits for assessing and transferring prisoners to secure or specialist mental health care units is not being met
- Blossoms (a social care provider) is providing a good level of personal care for prisoners requiring support, although there is a continuing problem of wheelchair access for prisoners with disabilities

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

- The changes to the Offender Flow and Allocation system and the direction to receive short-term and younger prisoners has caused a great deal of disruption. The extra work has taken staff away from their previously accepted roles
- The Employability Hub is yet to become fully functional and the Board is concerned that prisoners are being released without adequate preparation and support
- Access to education, library services and workshops has been restricted by staff shortages and this is only now beginning to improve
- Work on the Offender Management Unit (OMU) has been dramatically impacted by staff shortages during the reporting period and this has had a detrimental impact on sentence progression

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Indeterminate sentences for Public Protection (IPPs) were abolished in 2012 with the government stating that they were "not defensible". However, the change did not apply to prisoners who were already serving IPP sentences, and this left them in limbo with little hope of release. The Board are concerned that the Government has rejected the call from the Justice Select Committee to resentence IPP prisoners and reduce the licence period from 10 to five years. This is neither decent nor humane and the Board would urge the Minister to review the department's response to the Justice Select Committee's report.
- The Board remains concerned about the retention and recruitment of staff. 29 experienced officers from Swaleside were recruited directly by the Border Agency during the year and numbers were also lost to the police and civil service. These other agencies offer better employment terms than HMPPS for all levels and grades of staff. The result is that Swaleside has been compelled to hire expensive agency staff and transfer in detached duty officers from other prisons on higher pay and bonuses, as well as paying their hotel bills. Some detached staff do not seem to have the same level of commitment to

supporting and engaging with prisoners as local staff. The prison also has to encourage officers to work long hours of overtime. In the Board's view it is a false economy to maintain such a sharp differential between the terms and conditions of HMPPS staff and those of other agencies.

- The refurbishment of showers throughout the establishment should be completed, with necessary funding provided. The identified faults with recently installed showers should be remedied as a matter of urgency.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Board shares the concerns expressed by the SLT that there have again been deaths in custody during the year. A thorough investigation is being conducted by the LTHSE into the causes. However, a national investigation is perhaps required to establish either commonality of cause irrespective of prison type and to highlight specific issues relating to particular establishments.
- The length of time spent in CSRU by a number of prisoners remains far too long and far exceeds normal recommendations. An effective means of reducing this time should be sought as a matter of urgency.
- The Board remains concerned about the impact of the recently introduced Offender Flow and Allocation system. Swaleside is a category B trainer in the LTHSE but is now receiving younger prisoners with shorter sentences. This is detrimental to the stability of the prison and the well-being of older, longer sentenced prisoners. The change should be re-examined and the benefit examined against its detrimental impact.
- The continued reliance of HMP Stanford Hill on the kitchen at Swaleside for the preparation of its food continues to cause major issues, as has been stated for several years. The stalled installation of kitchens at HMP Stanford Hill should be restarted urgently and be completed without further delay.
- The Board has raised before the inadequacy of basic apprentice officer training and believes that training must at least result in them knowing what to expect when they arrive at their establishment. Support for new officers has improved considerably at Swaleside, especially with the introduction of the mentoring system. However, this is no substitute for proper basic training.
- The inequality of opportunity for prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs) and vulnerable prisoners still needs to be addressed, despite progress made in that direction.
- The Board remains concerned regarding the mental health of prisoners who have suffered long-term lockdown. This is evidenced by the high number of ACCT cases, self-harm cases and violent incidents. The first indications from the recent improvement in regime are positive. However, the necessity for increased psychology and psychiatric services still needs to be assessed.

- Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) has improved the rate at which out-of-action cells are brought back into use. However, far too many cells remain unusable.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Keywork has been a major casualty of staff shortages and is currently restricted to only the most vulnerable prisoners. As the regime improves, the Board would urge the Governor to extend Keywork to all prisoners as a matter of urgency and encourage wing staff to engage more with prisoners.
- As the regime gradually improves with the implementation of the Core Day programme, the Board would urge the Governor to ensure that more prisoners are provided with meaningful work and education in line with their sentence plans.
- The Board remains very concerned at the situation of IPP prisoners. Courses and programmes should be made available to them so that they can have the opportunity to demonstrate that they are no longer a danger to the public.
- The Employability Hub is not yet functioning as it should. New prisoners are not receiving appropriate induction and the Board is very concerned that prisoners are being released from prison without proper support.
- We are pleased to note that in-cell technology has now been installed throughout the prison. This is bringing improvements for prisoners and for the operation of the prison. However, the Board is concerned by the abuse of the technology by some prisoners.
- Facilities for female officers are inadequate and it is not acceptable that they have to share locker rooms with male staff. This needs to be addressed, especially as there are now many female officers working in the prison.

3.3 Main Areas for attention noted in the report 2021 / 2022

Issue raised	Progress since the last report
<p>TO THE MINISTER</p> <p>The Board is extremely concerned at the continuing low numbers of staff and the seeming inability to recruit. The inequality in pay and conditions when compared to other government agencies is certainly a factor in the cause of this issue, together with the accessibility of the geographic areas in which the prison is situated. The low number of staff severely impacts the mental health and well-being of the prisoners and staff. Urgent action is needed to remedy this situation.</p>	<p>Although some progress in recruitment has been noted, there has been a continued outflow of staff which has more than offset any benefit and a continued reliance on detached duty staff. The situation has recently improved by the transfer out of prisoners allowing the closure of two wings. This change has resulted from the action taken following the enquiry into excessive deaths in custody.</p>

<p>The Board shares the concerns expressed by the Senior Management Team (SLT) regarding the number of deaths in custody during the year and appreciates that much investigation is being conducted by the LTHSE into the root causes of these. However, a national investigation is perhaps required to establish either commonality of cause irrespective of prison type or to highlight specific issues relating to particular establishments.</p> <p>The length of time spent in CSRU by a number of prisoners is far too long and far exceeds normal recommendations. An effective means of reducing this time should be sought as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>A thorough investigation involving senior LTHSE staff from all relevant disciplines has taken place over the past year. This has resulted in several practice changes and, as noted above, a real reduction in Operational Capacity allowing better use of staff.</p> <p>No change in this has been noted, although there is an occasional success in moving prisoners between establishments. However, this often results in a move from one CSRU to another.</p>
<p>TO THE PRISON SERVICE</p> <p>The Board is concerned at the detrimental aspects of the recently introduced prisoner flow and allocation system such that Swaleside, a category B trainer in the LTHSE, is receiving young (21 - 24), shorter sentenced (as little as four weeks) prisoners to the detriment and the well-being of older, longer sentenced prisoners. This change should be re-examined and the benefit examined against its detrimental impact.</p> <p>Prison staff should ALL have access to up-to-date body-worn cameras as issued to police and other services. Current equipment is inadequate and inappropriate and should be replaced urgently to support the reduced number of staff.</p> <p>The continued reliance of HMP Standford Hill on the kitchen at Swaleside for the preparation of its food continues to cause major issues, as has been stated for several years. The stalled installation of kitchens at HMP Standford Hill should be restarted urgently and be completed without further delay.</p> <p>The Board has seen examples of inadequacy of apprentice officer training and believes that training must at least</p>	<p>The change to the Offender Flow System continues to cause problems. It is conceivable that the recent transfer out of mainly Cat C and Cat D prisoners will improve the situation. Hopefully this will allow the key role of the establishment in dealing with longer term B Cat prisoners but this remains to be confirmed.</p> <p>The older BWCs have now been replaced and the prison has sufficient numbers of the new devices for allocation to staff.</p> <p>There has been no change to this situation which continues to require urgent consideration.</p> <p>Whilst there has been little change in the basic training provided to new recruits, within the establishment there is a much improved support</p>

<p>result in those staff knowing what to expect when they arrive at their establishment. Shortage of trained staff exacerbates failings in this respect.</p> <p>The inequality of opportunity for prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs) and vulnerable prisoners still needs to be addressed, despite progress made in that direction.</p> <p>The Board has concerns regarding the mental health of prisoners who have suffered long-term lockdown as evidenced by the high number of Assessments, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) cases, self-harm cases and violent incidents. The necessity for increased psychology and psychiatric services should be assessed.</p> <p>The continued occupancy of the life limited room in healthcare by one paraplegic prisoner whose needs are different, whilst there are a number of other prisoners who qualify for the use of this room, requires urgent resolution.</p>	<p>network in place. This approach provides a 'buddying' system and the availability of experienced staff to provide help and encouragement.</p> <p>There has been a concentration of available work (especially DHL Canteen) for the PCOSOs but little other change to available support.</p> <p>This situation continued to deteriorate in the early part of the year, due to the regime restrictions. Recent improvements to allow more time for work and education may improve this situation. A meaningful reduction in self-harm has been noted.</p> <p>This situation was resolved earlier in the year after a delay of nearly five years.</p>
<p>TO THE GOVERNOR</p> <p>A solution should be found to the lack of external gate security (EGS) staff as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>Wellbeing checks for all prisoners must be increased and maintained regularly to prevent self-harm.</p> <p>The Board believes that more could be done to avoid self-seclusion by prisoners and wonders whether more help should be sought from psychological services.</p> <p>The Board is again concerned at the lack of discipline and cleanliness at wing serveries and believes that this should receive immediate attention. This approach should insist on the use of temperature probes and 'whites' to avoid a health risk to prisoners.</p>	<p>The availability of gate technology has recently allowed the required level of security to be introduced although the shortage of Grade 2 staff often impacts the system.</p> <p>There is now a reliable system in place to ensure that required wellbeing checks take place. Initial responsibility is with the wings.</p> <p>Psychological services work closely with all wings and help to focus on self-secluding prisoners. The number of these prisoners genuinely self-secluding has been steadily reducing and, at the time of writing, is 8.</p> <p>The Board recently conducted a survey of all wing serveries and concluded that hygiene is variable. Whites are worn on some wing serveries but only partly on others; equipment is thoroughly cleaned on some wings but less so on others; temperature probes are used sporadically. This has been reported to the SLT. The Board is pleased to note that temperature</p>

<p>Training in the use of Planet FM (which enables staff to report issues with the facilities themselves, including for example broken cell doors or toilets) should be given to senior officers (SOs) and above to ensure a correct interface is maintained with GFSL.</p> <p>The number of adjudications dismissed or 'not proceeded with' has continued at a high level. Further staff training is required to remedy this situation.</p> <p>Adjudication awards should be re-examined to ensure that appropriate outcomes for prisoners are available. This seems particularly pertinent for prisoners producing hooch or distilled liquor.</p> <p>Challenge, Support and Intervention Plans (CSIPs) should receive more attention from custody managers (CMs) as evidenced by minutes from the weekly safety intervention meetings (SIMs).</p> <p>GFSL should be tasked with improving the rate at which out of action cells are brought back into use.</p> <p>The installation of showers throughout the establishment should be completed. The identified faults with recently installed showers should be remedied urgently.</p> <p>The IMB is concerned at the occasional failure to be invited to serious incidents and planned moves to the CSRU and would appreciate the necessity for this to be reiterated to all senior staff.</p>	<p>probes will in future be attached to the serving trollies and monitored by the Kitchen.</p> <p>All Band 4 officers have now been trained to input into Planet FM and in future such training will be included in the Band 4 and 5 development programme.</p> <p>The backlog has been much reduced and currently stands at 50 outstanding adjudications. The Deputy Governor is now responsible for scrutinising all adjudications.</p> <p>Governors follow the agreed guidelines which continue to need revision. The Deputy Governor is now responsible for checking all adjudications to ensure standardisation.</p> <p>The requirement for CMs to support CSIP is now well understood and integrated. There is still work to be done but the smaller number of prisoners is now allowing for more focused support.</p> <p>GFSL are aware of the urgency to bring damaged cells back into use and the situation has improved.</p> <p>Showers, even recently refurbished showers, continue to evidence problems relating to poor drainage and lack of ventilation.</p> <p>The necessity for the IMB to be informed of serious incidents and planned removals has improved but does not yet seem to be imbedded.</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Until recently, as a Cat B trainer and part of the LTHSE, the prison's population was fairly stable, catering for often older prisoners with 4+ year sentences. There were few new arrivals.

However, a directed change of approach saw an increase in new arrivals and of young and short-term prisoners, some with only weeks to serve. This is disruptive and has had an immediate and detrimental impact on the regime and services, as well as the stability of the establishment. It has also caused concern to existing prisoners and has impacted the well-being, especially of the older and longer-term prisoners.

There were only 168 new arrivals at Swaleside in 2020/21. However, this number rose to 357 in 2021/22 and 341 2022/23.

The Employability Hub was set up to assist with this change of approach, and to collate all of the Induction and Resettlement services under one roof. The Hub is yet to become fully functional and the Board is concerned that prisoners are not being adequately prepared for their time at Swaleside.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Cases of self-harm were worryingly high with 91 reported in both August and September 2022. However, the figures have shown a steady decline since. There was a spike in self-harm when A wing was closed. However, the downward trend then continued, reaching 38 in April 2023. Swaleside figures are well below the average for the LTHSE comparator group.

From a relatively low level in May and June 2022, open ACCTs rose and remained stubbornly high for most of the reporting year. Taken at the first of the month, there were between 25 and 41 ACCTs outstanding until the spring of 2023 when the regime improved. Since then, the number of open ACCTs has fallen significantly to 29 in March and 14 in April 2023. The quality of ACCT documentation is variable and the results of a survey by the Board were escalated to the Governor.

It is very sad that the Board has to report ten Deaths in Custody (DICs) during the year. Initial reports suggest that four were from natural causes, four were self-inflicted and two are awaiting further information. The facts of the cases will be determined by the coroner's court. This comes on top of seven DICs in 2021 / 22. As previously reported, an investigation has begun by the LTHSE, because of this worryingly high number of DICs. It is enquiring into the causes, identifying any commonality and addressing the issues. Considerable support is being provided to the SLT at both regional and national level. Security and Safety analysts are now working together to reduce the 'data gaps' and surveys are now being put in place to highlight problem areas and issues.

Regime restrictions are likely to have been a significant factor, so the Board especially welcomes the improvement in the regime, as Core Days 3 and 4 are implemented.

The Board is also very sad to report the deaths of a Swaleside officer and a detached duty officer. Initial reports suggest that these were self-inflicted and the Board commends the Ambassador team for the support they provide to staff. In addition one of the agency chefs in the kitchen sadly died on duty, most likely from natural causes. Again the facts of the cases will be determined by the coroner's court.

There are currently 11 Listeners to help prisoners in distress and the Board is pleased to note that a further 12 are due to be trained by the Samaritans. Grab packs for Listeners are now available and best practice is being established with reference to reports from other prisons.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

As noted above, much work has been undertaken during the period of this report to improve safety and to begin to analyse the root causes of violence and assaults so as to begin to produce further action plans. These are being put together with the help of the regional and national safety teams.

There were 231 incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner violence at Swaleside during the reporting year, up from 138 in the previous reporting year. The number increased in November 2022 as Core Day 0 was initiated. It remained high for the next few months with the number of reported incidents running mostly at over 20 a month. It then declined until the closure of A wing which saw a spike. Improvements to the regime following the introduction of Core Day 3, together with the closure of C wing, saw a decline to 13 reported incidents in April 2023. It is yet to be established whether this is a continuing trend. Prisoner-on-prisoner violence at Swaleside is near the average for the LTHSE group of prisons.

There were 214 prisoner assaults on staff during the reporting year, down from 234 previously. Assaults were at worrying levels in the early part of the year. They remained high in November 2022 after Core Day 0 was introduced and again spiked when A wing was closed. Reported monthly assaults on staff fluctuated from the mid to high teens to the low twenties. However, following the improvements to the regime with the introduction of Core Days 2 and 3 and the closure of the two wings, reported numbers began to decline, falling to 13 in April 2023. Again it is yet to be established whether this is the beginning of a trend. Assaults on staff at Swaleside are above average in the LTHSE Group but not the highest.

The Board is pleased to note that serious assaults have shown a steady decline since their high point in August 2022 with the only spike being seen when A wing was closed. This category makes up about 4% of the overall figures for violence. It is very slightly above the average for the LTHSE Group.

Self-isolation was relatively high in the early part of the year with between 16 and 24 prisoners self-isolating as at the 1st of each month. The figure has fallen during 2023

with only 8 self-isolating at the beginning of April. Debt and gang-related issues are often the reasons for self-isolation.

4.4 Use of force

Early in the reporting year a dedicated Use of force Coordinator was appointed to take ownership of this critical role within the establishment. Almost immediately control and restraint (C&R) refreshers for all the operational staff were started. Two sessions of 16 staff, twice a week, aided by an instructor borrowed from HMP Elmley were put in place. This has now been updated and renamed SPEAR training, (Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response). As soon as 50% of staff were trained, PAVA was introduced. 68% are now trained in SPEAR and PAVA.

200 new Body Worn Cameras are now operational and available to all staff who come into contact with prisoners. Expectations are high that this will help reduce violent behaviour and therefore reduce the frequency of the use of force. Each member of staff is mandated to wear a BWC at all times when on duty. In April 81.4% of all incidents of UoF were accompanied by BWC footage. This footage will also improve the effectiveness of adjudications, providing incontrovertible visual and oral evidence.

The quality and frequency of Use of Force meetings has improved dramatically over the past year, following the appointment of the Use of Force Coordinator. The meetings, regularly attended by health and safety (H&S), SLT and the IMB, review BWC, hand held camera and CCTV footage of incidents and any planned removals. Good and poor practice are identified and the lessons learned are communicated to staff involved and noted for future training. Paperwork and reports are also scrutinised and similarly taken forward for future improvement. Any reward and recognition for good practice is distributed to those involved. Statistics are being accumulated for future learning. One emerging statistic is that a high percentage of UoF incidents involve unemployed prisoners. It is hoped that, as the establishment opens up through Core Day 3 and beyond, this trend will decrease.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Drugs and especially spice continue to be a major issue. However, the use of a body-scanner in Reception, as well as technological advances, have reduced the availability of mobile phones in the prison. The introduction of airport-style x-ray machines at the gate has improved security in general.

The decision to restrict the amount of sugar prisoners can buy from the Canteen is aimed at reducing the amount of illegal alcohol brewed in the prison. This is supported by the use of specialist dogs trained to locate home-made alcohol. Initial evidence suggests that this is working. However, it is too early to show up in the monthly figures with the number of reported incidents of “under the influence” (alcohol and drugs) in April 2023 remaining steady at 13.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The maintenance of cells and common areas remains a problem, due to staff shortages. Repairs and maintenance are not being carried out on a regular or even emergency basis.

In the winter, heating in the wings is adequate, but the high temperatures experienced in the summer of 2022 (>30°C), led to widespread complaints of extreme and unbearable conditions in the cells. The prison provided electric fans but this merely resulted in moving hot air around the cells. This situation is exacerbated by the restricted openings of the cell windows.

The condition of some of the wing showers, especially on Golf and Echo wings, remains a concern. During wing visits several prisoners have complained that the showers are in an appalling state and they have become deeply frustrated by the lack of any apparent action over many years. Some wings have had the showers refurbished and it is hoped that funding can be found to improve the showers in the remaining wings.

Both Alpha and Charlie wings are now closed and it is hoped that this will free up a number of staff members to improve conditions in the remaining wings for the benefit of all prisoners and staff.

A number of complaints have been received regarding the quantity of food being provided by the kitchen. A Board investigation has confirmed that the food leaving the kitchen is of sufficient quality and quantity to feed each wing. The problem would appear to be that the size of the portions served to the prisoners is at best, haphazard. This results in smaller servings for those prisoners arriving later at the servery and this has led to the complaints.

The kitchen at HMP Swaleside also provides meals for the nearby Cat C prison, Stanford Hill. This situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future and it results in even more significant pressures on the kitchen staff. Currently, about 820 prisoners at Swaleside receive 3 meals per day. A further 440 prisoners at HMP Stanford Hill are also provided for. Meals are provided at a budget cost of £2.70 per prisoner per day.

At certain times of the year, the kitchen has to provide suitable menus during religious festivals such as Ramadan, Passover etc. This, coupled with special dietary requirements, such as vegan, vegetarian and allergy meals, increases pressure on the kitchen. They have coped with these pressures very well. There has been a dramatic reduction in specialist meals provided under the F35 ruling (whereby prisoners are given additional food for medical reasons). This was as a result of a determined investigation by both kitchen and healthcare staff, supported by the Governors, which has reduced the number of prisoners on F35s by approximately 50%, resulting in considerable savings to the kitchen budget.

Staffing of the kitchen remains a problem at the higher band levels. This has resulted in a significant increase in costs, due to inevitable increases in the use of agency

staff. Agency staff costs during the current year reached £470,000. If there were enough Band 3 permanent staff to cover the need for agency staff, the cost would be £252,000 i.e. a potential saving of £218,000. The kitchen manager is seeking further prisoners to undertake basic hygiene certification to enable more use to be made of the existing workforce. During the year there were a small number of power cuts and pressure problems which were resolved quickly by all involved.

The use of appropriate clothing and coverings remains an issue and this has been reported to the Governor on a number of occasions. Despite action demanded by the Governor and wing staff, little appears to have been done to improve the situation. The prison states that “whites” and coverings are readily available. The prisoners say that is not the case. The IMB will continue to keep this matter firmly in the discussions with senior staff.

Several issues have arisen during the reporting year regarding the delivery of meals to the correct area. Prisoners and staff have made the situation worse by not informing the kitchen when prisoners need their meals at their place of work or their wing. Fortunately, the kitchen is now informed on a regular basis of the appropriate delivery site for each prisoner’s meals daily.

There remains extreme pressure on the kitchen at HMP Swaleside, and this will remain unless, and until, the nearby HMP Stanford Hill ceases to rely on HMP Swaleside to provide its meals. Whilst there have been a number of attempts to build a suitable kitchen at HMP Stanford Hill, it is unlikely that this will happen until 2025 at the earliest. This is an issue that the Board has raised over many years.

5.2 Segregation

GOOD reviews are now being regularly taken by the new Governor and Segregation CM. A marked improvement in the quality of these reviews has been noted, with a willingness to know and understand the prisoners’ concerns and support a change in behaviour. The recording of these reviews has now been digitalised with copies available via the secure internal computer system.

The unit is kept extremely clean and the work of the orderly is to be commended.

The unit is well staffed with a dedicated and experienced cohort of officers who treat the prisoners with respect and understanding and attempt to sort out problems quickly and efficiently.

Food portions are generous with any excess being distributed to those that request more.

Of concern is one prisoner who has served in excess of 1,100 continuous days in various Segregation units around the country. SLT are acutely aware of the problem and it is hoped that a solution can be found in the near future.

Also of concern is the number of cells out of action, 6 at the time of writing. The cost of refurbishment, the availability of parts and the speed which these cells can be returned to use have a serious impact on the ability of the unit to function effectively.

The increased use of CSRU during the reporting period has meant little attention has been paid to the previous re-integration plans. Nevertheless, in the short period January-March 2023 41 prisoners were transferred out of the unit with 30 of these returning to a wing. This is a considerable achievement and reflects the close working relationship between the CSRU staff, Psychology, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Inreach) and the Swaleside Outreach Services (SoS) unit.

As mentioned in previous reports the CSRU runs and coordinates adjudications for the whole establishment. It has been of concern that many adjudications were either dismissed or not proceeded with due to errors in paperwork or because they are out of time. There was an improvement last year, with this figure falling to 20% of all cases and in the most recent three months it has been further reduced to 15%. Proven cases are currently running at around 50% of all cases.

While a large number of adjudications are being raised, some of these would be better handled as incentives scheme actions, either giving a downgrade or a warning. It appears that staff are nervous about doing this. This results in an inaccurate or misleading security picture of the individual concerned, adding additional risk to the establishment. SLT are aware of this and are working towards a solution.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

A further impact of the staff shortage and, especially the loss of experienced staff, was the almost total withdrawal of the key worker scheme at one stage during the year. The Board often spoke with prisoners who were frustrated that they had no support from their keyworker and often did not even know who their keyworker was. This led to considerable worry for prisoners, increasing their mental health issues, and it may be a factor leading to the increase in deaths in custody.

The Board is pleased to note that, as the regime has improved, keywork has been stepped up. During Core Day 3 it was focused on the most vulnerable prisoners, initially those on the psychologically informed planned environments programme. However, keywork is due to be extended further as Core Day 4 is rolled out.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board finds overall there is little evidence of general inequality, and the prison management is committed to ensuring that any reports of discriminatory action or activity is addressed immediately. In order to assist with this there is a regular Community Forum and regular Wing Forums where prisoners can air their views and be listened to.

The appointment of a new Equalities Lead and the introduction of an Equalities Scrutiny panel, meeting monthly, give an oversight and early warning system for anything that may crop up. Also, compliance with PSI 32/2011 is ensured.

One criticism that the Board has is that the Equalities Lead is a lone post and therefore there is a high workload, meaning there is a backlog of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs). The given response time has increased from 5 to 14 days in order to help address this, at least statistically.

Below is a breakdown of prisoners by Religious and Ethnic categories:

Religion 21/4/23	Number of Prisoners
Adventist	2
Agnostic	3
Atheist	4
Baptist	2
Buddhist	20
Christian	76
Church in Wales	2
Church of England (Anglican)	112
Church of Jesus	8
Eastern Orthodox	4
Greek Orthodox	2
Hindu	8
Jehovah's Witness	5
Jewish	17
Methodist	1
Muslim	243
No Religion	129
Pagan	10
Pentecostal	6
Rastafarian	16
Roman Catholic	119
Russian Orthodox	2
Sikh	6

Ethnic Description	Number of Prisoners 21/4/23
A1-Asian/Asian British: Indian	13
A2-Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	12
A3-Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	12
A4-Asian/Asian British: Chinese	1
A9-Asian/Asian British: Any Other Background	23
B1-Black/Black British: Caribbean	91
B2-Black/Black British: African	59
B9-Black/Black British: Any Other Background	35
M1-Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	26
M2-Mixed: White and Black African	4
M3-Mixed: White and Asian	6
M9-Mixed: Any Other Background	12
NS-Prefer not to say	3
O2-Other: Arab	2
O9-Other: Any Other Background	15
W1-White: Eng/Welsh/Scot/N.Irish/British	385
W2: White: Irish	12
W3: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	16
W9 White: Any Other Background	61
-	9

As at the time of writing, there are 19 DIRFs awaiting investigation. 68 were submitted in Q4 2022; 50 in 2023 YTD May. This represents a sharp downward trend. A great deal of work has been done on DIRFs and an improved system has been established, ensuring that much of the responsibility for investigation and response rests with the wing CMs. For Q4 only 4 were upheld and 2 partially upheld. Actions were still taken even if the complaints were not upheld. Analysis shows that the number of DIRFs from the *C of E* plus *No Religion* cohort is , disproportionately high. Many of the complaints relate to the attitude of officers toward prisoners and, where the same staff name has appeared more than twice, the individual has been referred for on-line Equalities training.

Dip testing and overall comparisons have found no evidence of bias in response to complaints and applications as far as protected characteristics are concerned. The IMB does receive some applications alleging racial bias, but these are not common, are investigated and have not been sustained. During the year, the IMB received 101 applications under the heading of “Equality”. This is up from 19 last year. However, as a result of switching to the Custodial Management System (CMS) for our applications, the overall total of applications is roughly 5 times what it was last year. Therefore, this is not out of line.

The prison computer system shows 30 prisoners with mobility issues, but there are only 6 wheelchair accessible cells. There is also a regular problem with lifts being out of order, which apart from the issue of prisoner movement, also has the added effect of seriously inconveniencing visitors with mobility problems.

Swaleside has 18 ‘retired’ prisoners.

There is a disproportionately high level of Muslim prisoners (31.2%) relative to the Muslim population in the community.

Swaleside now houses 6 transgender prisoners. There were some issues regarding adequate clothing for these residents, but these have now largely been resolved. There is one issue in that the CMS system either only recognises the birth name or the first name registered for each of these prisoners. This means that the system only reflects the male names and not the chosen female names, which the Board would suggest needs addressing.

PCOSO workers continue to man the DHL workshop, as they had done throughout the duration of the pandemic. There has been an issue with prisoners on split shifts Education/DHL missing lunch because of misdirected trolleys, and not having time for ‘domestics’. There are also still equality issues within some areas of the prison for the vulnerable prisoner and PCOSO wings. Job opportunities are limited and there is currently no access to ICT or catering.

There are a number of Forces veterans (15-18), mostly on H wing, who no longer have a separate platform to express their views. This is being re-addressed with a Care After Combat breakfast club.

There have been a number of minor issues that have been recognised and have been or are being tackled:

- in-cell technology is only in English (Swaleside has 131 Foreign National prisoners)

- laptops are inappropriate for visually impaired prisoners
- lift issue as previously stated – this resulted in one prisoner being asked to ‘bounce upstairs on his back-side’ in order to get to his destination
- kitchen menus are only in English
- for most of the year Healthcare had no in-cell telephony
- no Pagan or Rastafarian Chaplain
- no corporate worship for any but Muslim and Christian religions, with Christian weekly and Muslim only fortnightly
- lack of clothing for transgender prisoners – now addressed
- there have been issues with some wings, particularly G and H, getting to visits due to lack of staff
- although the incentives scheme system has been dip-sampled and found to be largely applied fairly, there was some skewing of enhanced status in favour of white prisoners

Positive areas that we can highlight:

- access to work allocation is balanced
- all wings have taken part in Equalities Forums to air their views. These will be held quarterly
- many and various celebrations have been recognised and activities have been organised so that staff/prisoners can participate. A Diversity & Inclusion calendar has been published. Celebrations include:
 - LGBTQI+ History Month
 - Traveller Month
 - Pride Month
 - Parkinson’s Awareness Month
 - Autism Acceptance Month
 - Disability Awareness Month
 - Black History Month
- introduction of a Gender Forum
- complaints analysis is reflective of the demographic
- Muslim staff proportionate to outside community
- the adjudication statistics are broadly reflective of the demographic
- there are no disparities in the regime based on religion or nationality
- Neurodiversity information has been distributed to all staff covering topics such as: Learning Disability, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), Autism, Dyslexia and ADHD
- there are approximately 120 twenty-one to twenty-five-year-old prisoners in Swaleside, and a monthly Young Adult Forum has been set up to give them a voice

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Staff shortages and ongoing Covid restrictions at the start of the year impacted the work of the chaplaincy. The situation improved over the year, but providing escorts to conduct prisoners to worship has remained a problem.

- A new managing chaplain has recently started and is focusing on communication between all faiths
- The faith council has one representative on each wing, apart from H wing where there are two
- As part of induction, in-coming prisoners are seen by the chaplaincy within twenty-four hours of arrival at Swaleside
- Religious classes are held once a week

The chaplaincy continues to liaise with prisoners' families via telephone or email when there is a family bereavement or serious illness. When a death in custody occurs, both a governor and a chaplain visit the family in person to provide support.

Sycamore Tree continues to provide a six-week victim awareness course for twenty prisoners, four times a year. Prisoners may be required to attend the course as part of their sentence plan or can request to do so.

For much of the year Muslims were only able to attend Friday prayers once a fortnight (rather than every week), because of the lack of an appropriate room and because there were only two Imams available. A third Imam is currently going through the security process, but this will take several months.

The chaplaincy remains unable to recruit a Rastafarian or Pagan chaplain.

5.6 Incentives scheme

In June 2022 the National Framework for Incentives was reviewed at HMP Swaleside. A working committee was set up comprising senior management, officers and education staff. Various prisoners across the establishment were also interviewed regarding changes. Because the percentage of 'Enhanced' prisoners was thought to be too high, it was decided to put in place a 'Super Enhanced' grade for prisoners, with 20-30 currently at this level.

The Super Enhanced is for trusted prisoners who have contributed much extra by their behaviour and their contribution to prison life, assisting both other prisoners and staff. Prisoners wishing to be 'Super Enhanced' may apply by writing about themselves and setting out what they have achieved. This is sent to their Wing CM for examination and then to a member of the SLT to be assessed. It has been successful over the last 12 months and another review will take place in June 2023.

5.7 Complaints

The total number of complaints received by the prison for the reporting year (excluding Healthcare and DIRFs) was 1,116, some 831 fewer than the previous reporting year and a reduction of 43%. Most of the complaints were regarding canteen, property and residential issues with the biggest increase being in property complaints.

Prison data confirms that complaints were responded to within targeted timeframes more than 92% of the time. The complaints department at HMP Swaleside continues

to provide a good service to prisoners, with few complaints being made by prisoners to the IMB regarding delays to answering genuine complaints.

5.8 Property

Property loss continues to be a major source of complaints to the IMB, including property lost during transfers from outside the prison and within the prison, especially after cell clearances. The Board conducted an investigation into the problem and noted a wide variation in the quality of paperwork which seems to be the root cause of the problem. The SLT is aware of these shortfalls and a notice was recently sent to all staff reminding them of the importance of completing the paperwork properly.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Improvements have been made since the start of the Oxleas' contract in May 2022. Staffing levels have fluctuated at times, especially at weekends, but are now moving forward to an acceptable level. There is a monthly Life Limiting meeting and Healthcare operational meeting with Governors and staff which the IMB attends. The Board have observed very good communication between healthcare staff and prisoners. Medicine hatches on the Wings have improved matters. The lift access to healthcare has been a long-standing problem for prisoners with disabilities and only one lift was working at the time of writing.

6.2 Physical healthcare

A significant number of health appointments have not been kept due to prison escort staff shortages but this is slowly improving. The number of 'did not attends' (DNAs) has reduced, although some prisoners refuse to attend their outside hospital appointment at short notice. The first e-clinic has been set up for May 2023 whereby prisoners will be able to contact a doctor through their laptops and discuss their health issues.

The dentist's room has been refurbished but is still to undergo remedial work. At present, prisoners are triaged and treated with medication or taken to an outside dentist. There are 65 prisoners on the waiting list with 20 waiting for dentures.

Optical services run well with an approximate six week waiting list.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health services have suffered due to staffing levels and a rising level of demand since Covid. The time out of cell/regime has had a dramatically negative effect on mental health but this has steadily improved with the opening up of new regimes.

The time limits for assessing and transferring prisoners to secure or specialist units out of the area were not being met. Approximately 15 prisoners were transferred during the year. There were approximately 200 referrals from within the prison for various mental health issues which were treated by prison doctors with only 30% transferred for further mental health assessment. Prisoners with neuro-diverse conditions are assessed by an Oxleas specialist nurse and treated accordingly.

6.4 Social care

The Board acknowledges a good working relationship between community care staff, healthcare and prison staff. Blossoms is a service that supports prisoners who have been assessed by Kent County Council (KCC) and are in need of personal care. The average number of prisoners requiring support was between 10 and 14 a day, each receiving two short daily visits to cater for their needs. However, there is concern regarding wheelchair use by prisoners with disabilities and that there is a shortage of cells to facilitate them. There is, however, a bigger question about the

appropriateness of the prison as a facility for prisoners with ongoing social care needs and an ageing population.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The impact of staff shortages on time out of cell and the provision of a worthwhile regime has been covered extensively throughout this report. Over the summer of 2022 only a very restricted regime could be provided and that was not consistent. Time out of cell for prisoners was, at one point, just 30 minutes.

Currently under Core Stage 3 prisoners have a minimum of one hour out of cell during the week, which is increased by engagement in education, work, SOWA (Structured On Wing Activities) and religious observance. At the weekend they have a minimum of two hours out of cell a day.

Under Core Stage 4 the plan is for prisoners to have a minimum of two hours out of cell a day during the week and 2.5 hours at the weekends.

The regime has been gradually improving, giving prisoners greater access to work, education and religious observance. The steps in this gradual process have been named Core Days 1, 2 and 3. The latest stage in this process, Core Day 4, due to be implemented in June 2023, is expected to return the regime largely to what it was before the pandemic.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

This is dealt with by Outlook and Change Grow Live (CGL) from the time of induction. Prisoners who need help with drug and/or alcohol addiction are identified and helped on the wings by specialist staff from these organisations. Regular meetings take place and each prisoner needing help is seen once a week. Approximately 250 prisoners are receiving assistance, but only 4 members of staff are available to deal with them, making far too high a caseload for each.

The ultimate progression is that the assisted prisoner should be able to move to E Wing whose criteria are due to be changed in June 2023. E Wing West will be an 'Incentivised Substance Free Living Unit' (ISFLU). To move there, prisoners must have had no negative entries for one month, be abstinent (although may be on an integrated drug treatment system (IDTS) and be subject to security checks).

E Wing South will be the 'Drug Recovery Unit' (DRU). To move there prisoners must be no longer taking IDTS and be ready to engage with CGL, be abstinent from other substances and subject to security checks.

6.7 Soft skills

The Board notes the number of peer support prisoners, including health and social care buddies, helping older and infirm prisoners, especially those confined to wheelchairs.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education at HMP Swaleside is provided by Milton Keynes College (MKC). Consistently, HMP Swaleside is one of the best performing prisons in the LTHSE in terms of starts and completions. Over the past year, MKC had 1,242 course starts, with 1,101 completions of which 1,043 resulted in examination passes, an 89% pass rate. Only 33 prisoners withdrew from their selected course.

The number and variety of courses provided by MKC increased over the year and included new courses, both accredited and non-accredited. There was a wide variety of courses made available, and these ranged from basic Maths and English courses to higher level courses on Art, Music, IT and Hygiene.

For most of the year, due to restrictions imposed regarding movement of prisoners, the library was not available to prisoners. However, a remote service was provided. The new electronic system introduced into the prison last year (CMS) resulted in over 6,000 book requests.

Visits to the library were restricted during the Covid pandemic, but footfall has now reached approximately 200 visits per month. Stock within the library has also increased with over 14,000 books available to prisoners on a wide range of topics. Deliveries of books to the wings was on average 600 per month. Actual active borrowers from the library have more than doubled since the last reporting year.

In the current year, nearly 12,000 items were issued, an increase of 23% on the previous year. In addition to books the library holds over 2,000 DVDs and approximately 400 music CDs. These were loaned out over 5,000 times. Out of the total population of the prison over half were active borrowers during the current year.

The library staff have been so successful that they have been put forward for a national award by KCC.

It has been noticed over the past year that several very proficient readers have been left out of planning, as the focus has been on basic reading skills. Consequently, under the auspices of MKC and, with the Governor's support, a new "Book Club" is being established. Proficient and prolific book readers will be able to come together in a small group to discuss in depth the contents of chosen books.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The road to recovery for meaningful activity post Covid, particularly for the workshops, has been long and erratic.

Production in the workshops was decimated by Covid. DHL and the kitchen kept going out of necessity, and industrial cleaning and waste management (with bins parties of 8 to 10 twice daily) also continued. Some attempts have been made to resuscitate the workshops, but the results have been patchy, largely due to a shortage of staff. Progression from Core Day 1 through to Core Day 3 has been severely hampered by a lack of qualified instructors. As at March 2023 the following positions were being advertised:

- 1 x band 4 cycle repair instructor
- 1 x band 4 TV repair instructor
- 1 x band 4 engineering instructor
- 1 x band 4 woodwork instructor
- 2 x band 2 waste management support

The temporary post of Industries Manager was also advertised. Interviews are due to be held during May.

Even where there are qualified instructors, there may not be sufficient of them to run the workshop and/or train prisoners for particular qualifications. A prime example of this is the main Engineering shop where the role of supervising instructor was designated as a Lone Post, meaning that only supervision can take place and no training. This instructor is due to retire in August, the result of which will be to reduce both Engineering shops to one supervisor in each.

Industries

Workshops: The workshops continue to be affected by staffing issues, encompassing movement, attendance, and supervision/training.

There has been no marked improvement in man hours worked. To give a snapshot, statistics for 17th and 18th April are shown below:

Sessions Allocated: 554

Sessions Attended: 399

% Attendance: 72.02

This the lowest figure for some time. However, it will have been affected by the reduced Op Cap. The break down is as follows:

<u>Shop</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Attended</u>
DHL	282	195
Bike Repair	16	8
Food Pack	49	27
WMU	62	41
Ind. Clean	35	35
Engineering	26	18
Woodwork	2	2
Headhones	82	73
Totals	554	399

The Multi-Skills workshop, managed by Education, has another 6 attendees per session. This could rise to 9 and they will have the opportunity to gain a Level 2 City & Guilds diploma.

As these figures cover 4 sessions, the average number of attendees is only 100. Even with the reduced Op Cap it is still a pitiful return for the workshop space and

investment. Also, the number of prisoners able and willing to earn a qualification which can be used in the community is approximately 50, if and when the courses start running again, based on these returns.

It is hoped that Core Day 3 will address the logistical problem that sees work hours as low as 1.5 hours per morning and 1 hour per afternoon, or even lower on occasion. As mentioned above, this work is not necessarily productive or meaningful.

The DHL contract workshop is running near full complement again, though there are some logistical problems concerning split shifts and allocated time for domestics.

Cycle Repair is starting to take off with a much busier shop having turned out a number of refurbished bikes made available to staff for exercise purposes. The number of non-attenders has been dealt with and a 12 week City & Guilds course has been put in place, with those that complete it having the option to stay on as peer mentors for the next cohort.

Woodworking no longer has a full-time machinist, so at the moment prisoners can only assemble pre-cut parts until instructors are trained.

Horticulture is on the back-burner.

Engineering now requires Level 2 Maths and English in order to qualify to work there.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Work on the OMU has been dramatically impacted by staff shortages during the reporting period. For instance, there are currently only 11.5 POMs (Prison Offender Managers) instead of the budgeted 20.5. There have been many instances of prisoners being unable to discuss their issues with their designated POM. Probation staff within Swaleside have also been under great pressure due to lack of numbers.

This problem has been exacerbated by an increasing workload, due to imposed changes to the Offender Flow process, especially the requirement to receive short-term and younger prisoners. Swaleside has also been confronted by the need to consider release support and the requirement to assess Home Detention Curfews. This has caused a great deal of work taking staff away from their previously accepted processes.

The problem has been exacerbated again by the number of prisoners who arrive with no initial offender assessment system (OASys) assessment. At the time of writing there are 248 OASys reviews due by end 2023 – that is 31 per month.

The support for Public Protection has very much suffered due to the non-availability of relevantly experienced staff, although this has recently improved.

Observation Classification and Allocation (OCA) support for transfers has been under particular pressure, because the prison system is operating at full capacity. Transfers out of the prison were 151 in 2020/21 during the pandemic, rising to 281 in 2021/22 and 490 in the reporting year, partly due to the closure of the two wings requiring the transfer of prisoners to other prisons.

7.4 Family contact

Family contact was limited to social video calls during the early part of the year due to staff shortages and the hangover from the pandemic.

However, social visits are now provided each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for each wing in rotation, including now the PCOSO wing. Enhanced prisoners also have an additional social visit on the third Sunday of the month.

The visits centre is run by the charity, Pact, with Blossoms responsible for the children's facilities.

Cells now have in-cell phones which makes family contact easier. However, there has been a considerable backlog in allocating PIN numbers which has added to the frustration, especially of newly arrived prisoners. The backlog is now being brought under control.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Until recently, resettlement services were not directly provided by Swaleside as the establishment was part of the Long Term High Security estate and was not normally releasing prisoners from custody.

However, Swaleside is now expected to perform as a Resettlement prison and, despite the falling roll, due to a lowering of the Op Cap and the transfer out of many C Cat prisoners, it is due to release far more prisoners than was originally intended. In 2020/21, 27 prisoners were released directly from Swaleside. This rose to 36 in 2021/22 and 96 in the reporting year. The current projection is for 102 releases into the community in 2023.

Following the decision to increase planned releases, the Employability Hub was set up to bring all of the Induction and Resettlement services under one roof. After a delayed implementation most of these services are now in place, but there are still staffing issues. Currently seven functions are manning the Hub, including the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service, Pact, OMU, Education and Family Services. It is hoped that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will soon join them. The Board remains concerned, though, that prisoners are being released without adequate preparation and support.

The Board is particularly concerned about the detrimental impact of the sharp increase in releases on the mental well-being of those prisoners serving long sentences and, especially, IPP prisoners. Previously they were mostly able to reconcile themselves to prison life because the population was stable. However, our regular visits to the wings provide evidence of how distressing it is now for IPP prisoners to see a steady flow of releases when they themselves have almost no hope of ever leaving prison.

The work of the IMB

The Board would like to thank our clerk and her colleagues and to highlight the invaluable support she provides. Without her hard work on our behalf and her cheerful help, our role would be infinitely more difficult.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	522
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	N/A
Total number of segregation reviews attended	407

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year Paper Applications	Current reporting year CMS Applications*	Total Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	26	27	97	124
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	9	20	114	134
C	Equality	19	11	90	101
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	31	25	102	127
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	42	44	128	172
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	29	20	90	110
F	Food and kitchens	37	18	66	84
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	107	90	191	281
H1	Property within the establishment	79	59	106	165

H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	55	59	65	124
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	16	18	86	104
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	66	50	27	77
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	62	80	140	220
K	Transfers	19	23	137	160
L	Miscellaneous	148	121	123	244
	Total number of applications	745	665	1562	2227

The tripling of the number of applications the Board dealt with during the year is concerning. It is due to the introduction of the Custodial Management System (CMS) which went live in October 2022. CMS is a messaging service which prisoners can use to communicate via their personal in-cell tablets.

The ease of use is positive. However, it has led to huge rise in the number of applications the Board had to deal with, many beyond the remit of the IMB or which should have been sent to other departments. The ease of use also allowed a small number of prisoners to inundate the Board with a huge number of often inappropriate applications. One prisoner submitted 75 applications to the Board in the first six months of 2023.

This was a significant drain on the Board's resources and detrimental to its ability to effectively monitor the prison. However, after the initial flurry of activity with the new technology, things settled down and the number of CMS applications has become slightly more manageable.

Annex A

Contractors delivering services are:

- healthcare services - Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- mental health services - Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Inreach)
- GP services - the Medical Centre Group
- optical services - the Prison Optician Trust
- education - Milton Keynes College
- maintenance services - Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- support for families at visits - Pact
- treatment for drug and alcohol addiction - Change Grow Live (CGL)



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