



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Sudbury

**For reporting year
1 June 2022 to 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

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/YOI Sudbury is an open category D resettlement prison for adult and young male offenders. The current population sits at 621 prisoners¹. Plans to increase the prisoner capacity of the prison during the reporting year have been subject to changes; currently it is expected that when construction work on the new accommodation units is completed in late autumn 2023, the capacity will be around 661 plus nine overcrowding spaces.

Many of the buildings are now old, the site having been originally erected during World War Two. The dormitory buildings were originally intended to be only temporary and are now difficult to maintain and improve to modern standards. Most of the rooms accommodate two prisoners with fewer single rooms available.

The prison occupies a rural location but is well connected by road to several large towns.

The prison population is complex, comprising a range of age groups. Currently prisoners are aged between 18 and 70-plus years.

¹Figures 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

- Reduced number of assaults.
- Low levels of self-harm incidents and assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) case management for prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm.
- Improvement in the challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) system.
- Low number of Use of force incidents.
- High level of staff commitment to support networks for prisoners struggling to cope or experiencing crisis across a variety of reasons.

Fair and humane treatment

- Improved staff-prisoner relationships.
- Beneficial outcomes for prisoners as a result of the prison's resettlement focus on the recruitment practices of external work employers.
- Reduction in the number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted.
- Potential for the community council (COMCIL) initiative to improve communication between the prison and prisoners.

Health and wellbeing

- The medication tracker unit is still not in use despite over a year of waiting.
- Whilst the independent substance free living (ISFL) dormitory initiative is positive, its introduction has shown that some necessary systems were not functioning effectively, resulting in scepticism among prisoners.

Progression and resettlement

- Some evidence of improvement in the delivery of the education offer.
- Creditable success in creating and maintaining external employment places, access to which has been shown to improve many prisoners' chances of gaining employment on release.
- The Sunbelt welding training model for incentivising work has clearly been successful and could be replicated.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Board has commented on the negative impact of some responses from probation services in the community to prison offender manager (POM) requests for action in processing prisoners' applications for release on temporary licence (ROTL). Can the prison service explain what lies behind this problem and what can be done to improve matters?
- The Board's observations are that the prison's ongoing challenges of preventing the entry of illicit items seem to indicate a lack of human and technological resources to combat and discourage this behaviour. Will it be possible to address this in future resourcing allocation processes?

- The Board has commented on the low levels of functional skills attainment amongst prisoners arriving at the prison, despite many having served substantial sentences in the closed estate. What can be done to address this and ensure that education provision in closed prisons helps prisoners to be ready for the external work opportunities offered at prisons such as Sudbury?
- Opportunities for resettlement activities at the prison are significantly hindered by lack of connectivity affecting Wi-Fi availability. Can this be addressed?
- There have been ongoing concerns noted by the Board that prisoners transferred in are often late and therefore are disadvantaged because they arrive outside the normal working regime of the prison. Is the Prison Service able to influence the transport contractors to improve this?
- Whilst acknowledging that the Board's annual reports repeatedly comment on the general poor state of prisoner accommodation at Sudbury, it remains an extremely live issue for prisoners and therefore bears repeating again. The extent to which the prison is able to make any substantial improvements to dormitory accommodation, in particular, is limited. What can be done to make the environment for prisoners better?
- This report refers to the issue of prisoner property not being efficiently transferred with them as little improved since we reported on it last year. What can be done to ensure that a prisoner arrives at Sudbury with all the property he is entitled to in his possession?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- We have commented on the high proportion of positive mandatory drug testing (MDT) outcomes. What measures can be put in place to address this?
- There is no quiet space for prisoners who may wish to find some respite from sharing a room on a busy and often noisy dormitory. Can suitable accommodation be found to address this?
- The Board has noted a substantial number of complaints which were not processed by the deadline. What measures can be put in place to address this?
- Prisoners have reported to the Board the perceived inconsistencies between offender management unit (OMU) staff in processing their ROTL applications and in the communication of progress with these. What measures can be put in place to ensure more consistency in this process?
- The Board has commented positively on the focus this year of identifying the needs of the young adult and age 60-plus groups. Will this work be continuing with the aim of encouraging more prisoners in these groups to engage with employment opportunities?

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Progress
Poor standard of dormitory accommodation	Work has been carried out throughout the year to improve shower areas on all dormitories and the Board has observed that this has significantly improved the environment for prisoners. Dormitory toilet area refurbishment is now under way and due to be completed in the coming year. Kitchen areas on dormitories have been allocated some microwaves, fridges and toasters, but the number of these remains fewer than prisoners feel is required. The Board acknowledges that provision of these appliances supports prisoners in the transition to release in encouraging them to cater for themselves. As has been documented on many previous occasions in IMB annual reports, the capacity to allocate more appliances is always severely limited by the electrical infrastructure, which cannot support additional electrical demand.
Monitoring of access to ROTL by those with protected characteristic group – race	Scrutiny of the allocation of prisoners to ROTL has been undertaken this year and the resulting data shows that the number of ethnic minority prisoners successful in accessing ROTL are very closely in line with the proportion of ethnic minority prisoners across the population at Sudbury. The Board is reassured that this issue will continue to be monitored through the work of the diversity and inclusion committee. The Board will continue to monitor allocation to ROTL by protected characteristic groupings through visits and attendance at relevant committee meetings.
Success of the Inclusion Step Forward initiative	Unfortunately, it was not possible this year to launch the course due to staff turnover issues. However, the substance misuse service (SMS team) anticipates being able to launch it – or something similar – in the coming year.
Development of the curriculum and take-up of courses	Efforts have been made this year to provide meaningful certification for all courses and to implement a more relevant digital awareness course. The composition of the curriculum has not changed significantly since last year. The Board still has some concerns regarding prisoners' withdrawals from courses, and for much of the year there has been a significant gap between planned course capacity and actual allocation to courses.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

Practice the Board has observed has resulted in ongoing concern over the support offered to prisoners who are struggling to cope for a variety of reasons, from day-to-day issues to events such as illness, accident, or death within their families. In these circumstances, however, staff work seamlessly across functional areas to ensure that permission to make visits are organised wherever security issues can be resolved.

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Given the issues across the prison estate with overcrowding, there has been a marked increase in the prison population at Sudbury during this reporting year with over 151 new prisoners arriving between March 2022 and April 2023. This has inevitably caused additional pressure on systems for processing new arrivals. The Board was pleased to note that staff coped well with this situation given the significant increase in receptions in a very short period of time. The prison expects that receptions will continue to be higher than usual well into the autumn of 2023.

4.1.2 The prisoner induction programme is continuously evaluated and updated to improve the effectiveness of information provided to prisoners when they arrive. There has also been a focus this year on improving prisoners' attendance at induction sessions. The Board has noted mixed responses from recently arrived prisoners in respect of the value of some of the sessions in the programme. The specially designated dormitory accommodation for prisoners on the induction programme remains well supported by peer mentors and prison staff. Prisoners with needs requiring additional support continue to access the 'All about me' scheme, which currently has five prisoners on it.

4.1.3 The IMB remains concerned that prisoners who arrive at Sudbury out of working hours for the healthcare centre may potentially be at risk until they can be seen by a healthcare professional the following day. Prison staff in the reception area do their best to ensure that prisoners in such a situation are safe. However, Sudbury does receive prisoners transferred with very little notice and their anxiety levels can be heightened on arrival, especially if they have been in the closed prison estate for some time.

4.1.4 An onsite shop has been set up recently to cater for the needs of prisoners arriving late in the day and who may not have received items they had requested through their canteen order because of being transferred. This is welcomed by the Board because, as well as enabling new prisoners to get basic items on arrival, it has reduced the likelihood of them getting into debt with existing prisoners.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There have been three reported incidents of self-harm during this reporting period. As there are no healthcare beds at Sudbury, prisoners who have self-harmed are returned to closed conditions. Less than 4% of the current Sudbury population have had a history of self-harm noted on the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS).

4.2.2 Eighteen assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened during this reporting year. This is the lowest number recorded for the past four years. Data regularly monitored within the prison highlighted that being the subject of an ACCT did not always result in a prisoner's transfer back to closed conditions. Four of the total for the year were initiated whilst the prisoner was in the secure accommodation unit (SAU). However, the decision to return them to closed conditions had already been taken and was not influenced by them being subject to an open ACCT.

4.2.3 The Board has noted that during this reporting year the Samaritans agency, who train prisoners as Listeners to support their fellow prisoners at times of need, has encountered some difficulties with delivering this training and supporting prisoners wishing to become Listeners. We are pleased to note that this situation has now been resolved and a coordinator has been appointed. Currently, there are three trained Listeners and more to be recruited to the role.

4.2.4 There have been no deaths in custody in this reporting year.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 During this reporting year, there had been seven recorded assaults, of which six were prisoner on prisoner and one was prisoner on staff. The Board is pleased to note that this is a reduction on last year when there were 11 recorded assaults. Of the six prisoner-on-prisoner assaults this year, one resulted in a hospitalisation. Every assault is thoroughly investigated and considered at safer custody meetings, which are held monthly. Because the number of assaults at Sudbury are so low, it is impossible to identify any links as to cause. Other injuries triggering suspicion about how they occurred are also carefully investigated, though it is sometimes difficult to reach conclusions if the individual chooses not to reveal how it happened.

4.3.2 The Board is pleased to note that the reporting process for challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) has improved since our last report; this should enable prisoners who believe they are being intimidated by others to feel confident that their concerns will be addressed.

4.3.3 This year a total of 229 prisoners have been transferred back to closed conditions. Of these, 15 were returned for their own safety as they were at risk of harm due to debts relating to drugs. Seven prisoners were transferred to the closed estate for closer monitoring of health conditions, such as deterioration in mental health status, which cannot be provided at Sudbury. One prisoner was returned to closed conditions because he was unable to cope with living in open conditions.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 On occasion, IMB members have been witness to incidents in the SAU involving prisoners held there before being returned to closed conditions - usually involving individuals who display angry and aggressive behaviour because they are resistant to the proposed transfer. Members have always been able to report that staff involved were able to de-escalate the situation safely and without the need to apply restraints. The Board is able to report that it has witnessed positive staff behaviour and concern for the individual prisoner concerned. Staff were unaware of IMB presence on some of these occasions.

4.4.2 The system of dynamic risk assessment noted in our report last year continues to work well and reduces the need for the application of ratchet handcuffs when transferring prisoners to the SAU. For example, of 113 transfers to the SAU between January and May 2023, only eight resulted in handcuffs being used.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 Preventing the supply of illicit substances into the prison is a continuous challenge. The Board has observed that the issue seems rarely to improve. Prison data supplied for this year shows that targeted weekly searches by the national search teams are finding cannabis, tablets, steroids and syringes. The challenge for the prison is that, despite the success of these searches, the items confiscated are quickly replaced by more. Local teams, which include dog handlers, have also been successful in identifying hiding places for illicit items. In the previous reporting year, there were 1,238 finds; in the first half of this reporting year there have been 477 finds.

4.5.2 In addition to illicit substances, the search teams have also found alcohol, iPhones, chargers, SIM cards, cables, bank cards, food and money. The Board notes that these items are popular and being illegally introduced to prisons across the estate.

4.5.3 A total of 454 mandatory drug tests (MDTs) were undertaken between April 2022 and March 2023; 65% of these showed positive results. The most frequently identified substances detected were cannabis, pregabalin, cocaine and opiates.

4.5.4 Those prisoners referred to an independent adjudicator having tested positive for banned substances or being in possession of a smart phone had additional days added to their sentences varying between six and 28. If the prisoner appealed the decision successfully, the additional tariff could be reduced by half. This initiative was noted in the Sudbury IMB annual report for 2021 to 2022 and the Board regarded its introduction as potentially helpful in deterring prisoners from possessing banned items. However, we note that the potential reduction of tariff following appeal seems insufficient deterrent to prisoners with very little sentence left to serve, or who have already served lengthy sentences and for whom an additional two weeks may seem minimal. It is the view of the Board that the level of potential additional days may well not discourage some prisoners from possessing illegal items or failing to comply with the zero-drug tolerance ethos the prison strives to ensure.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 The prisoner council has now been replaced by a prisoner-led initiative, COMCIL, that runs weekly forum activities for prisoners. Each forum focuses on a specific aspect of prison life, with all grades of prison staff taking part alongside prisoners. There has been an emphasis on ensuring clear communication between the prison organisation and prisoners. There is visual evidence of improved systems for informing prisoners of decisions which affect them and activities which may interest them in the new COMCIL notice area on the central corridor of the dormitory building. COMCIL has been active since the spring of this year, and if continuity of prisoner and staff involvement can be achieved, it will no doubt improve prisoners' experience.

5.1.2 Board members' observations of interactions between staff and prisoners have been generally positive and constructive, with clear efforts to resolve challenging situations in a non-confrontational way.

5.1.3 Sixty single-occupancy accommodation pods received during the pandemic to provide space for isolating those with the virus will be retained until the end of 2023. The majority of dormitory rooms are for two people so the pods have been popular with prisoners. The new 60-bed accommodation block currently being built will be prioritised for those prisoners in external employment, many of whom work shifts.

5.1.4 In the main dormitory areas, most shower facilities have been refurbished. These areas are much improved. A programme to refurbish the toilets is under way and should be completed in the next year. The two disabled-access shower facilities have been upgraded to an extremely high standard. The kitchen areas on the dormitories have also been upgraded and some microwaves, fridges and toasters provided. It remains difficult for the prison to provide more of these items because the electrical infrastructure of the site cannot support them. These improvements have been welcomed by prisoners.

5.1.5 The Board has received regular comments from prisoners regarding the lack of a quiet space for them to read, study or enjoy some respite from the busy environment of the dormitories. This seems especially necessary where so many prisoners have to share their living accommodation and has been reported in our visit records on numerous occasions.

5.1.6 The outside seating provided for prisoners last year is to be increased since it has proved popular with prisoners. In good weather, some education classes are held outside, which has also been popular with prisoners.

5.1.7 The Board reported last year that there was a regular problem on the site with vermin. We are pleased to have seen a strong focus on this problem this year, and that the vermin control measures have reduced the level of infestation, though not completely eliminated it.

5.1.8 The food served to prisoners continues to be of a high standard, despite supply issues during this reporting year. There have been some comments to the IMB that menus have been changed at the last minute because of these supply issues. However, the catering staff have been able to continue to provide enough choice to meet a variety of dietary needs and preferences. Special religious

occasions during the year are catered for. The Board noted that kosher meals are ordered in from an outside supplier to ensure the necessary standards are met. In general, the prisoners are satisfied with the food they are provided with, and there have been no applications to the IMB this year concerning dissatisfaction with the food.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Sudbury does not have a segregation area. It does have a secure accommodation unit (SAU), consisting of two cells with en-suite toilets. A separate shower area is available, but there is no provision for exercise since most prisoners are located within the unit for short periods and not more than 24 hours.

5.2.2 The Sudbury monitoring and review group (SMARG) analyses data relating to all prisoners located in the SAU every three months. Factors including ethnicity of prisoners, the reason for being located there and the authorising prison governor are carefully considered so that the prison can be sure locations are made appropriately. This system also enables staff to identify any trends in causes for location in the SAU so that these can be addressed. The data for this reporting year does not indicate any significant issues in respect of prisoners who were being located in the SAU.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The Board has observed a strong focus on the improvement of staff-prisoner relationships during this reporting year. It has been reported to the Board there has been an improvement in the number of recorded contacts with prisoners as a result. There has been a reduction in the number of applications to the IMB regarding relationships between prisoners and staff from three in the previous reporting year to none this year.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The population at Sudbury has increased by about 100 prisoners since the IMB reported last year and, as mentioned in section two of this report, will continue to increase during the autumn of 2023. However, the increase in prisoner numbers has not significantly altered the make-up of the Sudbury prisoner population in terms of the protected characteristics groupings (age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

5.4.2 The focus on creation of an environment at the prison within which all prisoners are treated fairly and with respect - which the IMB reported last year - has continued through the work led by the diversity, inclusion and engagement (DI & E) lead manager. This work is monitored carefully through the quarterly diversity and inclusion committee, which comprises the senior managers responsible individually for the protected characteristic groupings and the Governor of the prison. This group also has prisoner representatives. Comprehensive data is presented at the meetings enabling the scrutiny of a range of issues on how fairly prisoners are being affected by prison systems and equality of access to opportunity. Members of the IMB regularly observe these meetings. A new diversity and inclusion training package for staff has been launched during this reporting year. This is mandatory training for all staff and has been added to the prison's training plan.

5.4.3 The diversity and inclusion committee has been able to use the data collected to identify any trends which may indicate that members of a particular protected characteristics group are under- or over-represented compared to the proportion they represent of the total population at Sudbury. This scrutiny is applied across a wide range of activities, systems and opportunities in the prison. For example, during this reporting year it was identified that there was occasionally an under-representation of black prisoners accessing external employment. The diversity and inclusion group commissioned an in-depth study of applications for external work and success rates at application and interview stages to ensure that recruitment processes in employers' organisations were not biased in any way. The prison is committed to ensuring that it will challenge any identified bias which might disadvantage prisoners from protected characteristic groups, and this scrutiny is now incorporated into the systems used by the prison in its dealings with employers. An outcome of this work has been the identification of a need for support for some prisoners with curriculum vitae (CV) and interview preparation, which the Board understands is showing some improvement since the appointment of information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff. The Board is keen to monitor progress on this in the coming year.

5.4.4 A similar level of scrutiny has this year been applied to the allocation of release on temporary licence (ROTL), when the issue of how ethnicity might be affecting this was raised by prisoners. The data received by the diversity and inclusion group clearly shows that the number of prisoners successful in accessing ROTL are very closely in line with the proportion of prisoners belonging to ethnic minority groupings across the total Sudbury population. This outcome has been communicated to prisoners who raised concerns.

5.4.5 Prisoners and staff concerned that they may be experiencing discrimination based on a protected characteristic can submit a discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF), which will then be investigated in a process overseen by senior managers. In this reporting year, there have been 15 DIRFs submitted, of which 14 came from prisoners (under 3% of the population) and one from a member of staff. Of these, 12 concerned ethnicity/faith or belief, two concerned disability and one was regarding sexual orientation. This is a significant reduction in DIRF submissions from last year, when there were 35. Because a proportion of the DIRFs are submitted anonymously, it is not possible to identify which ethnicity those prisoners belong to. Mandatory training on DIRF procedures for all staff, including senior managers, will commence this year.

5.4.6 The Board has been encouraged to observe that in this reporting year the system for processing DIRFs has been made more robust and a quality control element added, in which the completed investigation and response to the prisoner who submitted it is overseen and signed off by a senior manager.

5.4.7 There has been a welcome focus this year on identifying specific needs of young adults and those over 60 years of age, triggered by data trends showing these age groups are less likely to engage with external work opportunities. Focus group activities with prisoners from these categories highlighted the need for targeted support with job applications and interview skills, and this is being addressed.

5.4.8 The prison has two wheelchair-adapted dormitory rooms and a number in which the doorways are wider than average to accommodate a wheelchair. There

are two disabled-accessible shower/toilet areas on the dormitories and in the reception area and visits. All areas, except the temporary pod accommodation units, are provided with ramp access. The Board notes that whilst there have been negligible numbers of wheelchair users at the prison in the past, the aging and expanding prisoner population may trigger an increase in demand.

5.4.9 The prison publicises the interpreting and translation service which can be made available for non-English speaking prisoners. The prisoner induction document received by prisoners on arrival is available in a variety of languages. A range of adjustments can be made for hearing-impaired prisoners, including use of a smartphone to support video-calls instead of telephone calls. A small number of staff are able to use British Sign Language.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy at Sudbury supports both prisoners of all faiths and those who have none. It is led by a full-time Imam supported by part-time Anglican, Free Church and Catholic chaplains. Other faiths are supported by sessional chaplains.

5.5.2 A new multi-faith building is currently being constructed and should be completed by late autumn 2023. This facility will provide larger accommodation for faith-based activities and space for personal support when necessary.

5.5.3 Bereavement and crisis counselling are available from the chaplaincy to all prisoners whatever their faith background. Video-link facilities are available for prisoners unable to attend the funeral of a near-relative.

5.5.4 Faith-based festivals are well supported at Sudbury. IMB members have attended carol services. The month of Ramadan was well supported and many prisoners participated; arrangements for the provision of food during the fasting period were appreciated by prisoners.

5.5.5 Some Board members have received comments this year from prisoners about a lack of presence in the chapel when they have gone there seeking some support. Board members have certainly observed that recently there is rarely any orderly around to help and signpost prisoners seeking support. This was not always the case and orderlies used to greet visitors, which was encouraging. Given that the chaplains are often engaged in one-to-one work with prisoners and not readily available to anyone seeking support, it seems unfortunate that the orderlies working in the chapel are not currently visible and able to meet and greet.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 In the absence of a segregation unit at Sudbury, the incentives scheme is the principal mechanism through which staff can positively manage behaviours. Reviews which are triggered by prisoners found to be in possession of illicit items inevitably result in demotion to basic level. It is routinely the case that repeated offences of this kind result in transfer back to closed conditions. However, it is unusual for significant numbers of prisoners to be on basic level, and the number on enhanced level far exceeds this. Data available this year shows that the number of prisoners on basic level between July 2022 and June 2023 only rose from 1% to 2% of the population in one month of the year. The number of prisoners on standard level was between 9% and 12% all year. Prisoners on enhanced level consistently represented between 87% and 90% of the Sudbury population.

5.6.2 The Board has been pleased to see this year that there has been a drive to ensure prison staff log positive as well as negative observations about prisoners' behaviour. The IMB has not experienced this year the level of comments from external work prisoners about their perceived increased likelihood of receiving negative comments that was noted in last year's report. The prison is effective in its recording of referrals and reviews, and the ratio of positive to negative comments are reviewed quarterly. The focus on encouraging positive observations where appropriate referred to above has arisen from analysis of this information. The data for this reporting year demonstrates that throughout the year positive comments have averaged at 63.5% of all comments entered, and negative ones averaged at 30%.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 571 complaints were made by prisoners; 28% of these concerned missing property, usually on transfer between prisons. Almost 68% of the complaints received were processed within the required timescale. However, in the six months to April 2023, only 56% of complaints from current prisoners at Sudbury were processed within the required timescale. The Board notes that, whilst acknowledging that in these cases an interim response has been provided, this data demonstrates a high rate of failure to respond to complaints within the agreed timescale.

5.7.2 In the six months to April 2023, 31% of complaints from current Sudbury prisoners concerned offender management issues. The Board has noted a level of frustration among some prisoners with perceived delays in having their applications for ROTL processed, which may have contributed to the significant number of complaints on this issue. Complaints regarding canteen issues were the next most frequently received.

5.7.3 Complaints from prisoners analysed by age and ethnicity/religion are broadly in line with the proportional representation of each group within the Sudbury population as a whole. However, the Board has noted that the 35-44 year age group was over-represented by 25%.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 It is extremely disappointing to report that, despite the publication of the HMPPS prisoners' property framework during this reporting year, there has been little progress in ensuring that prisoners' possessions arrive safely with them on transfer from another establishment. The Board has noted that the issue of property not satisfactorily transferred with prisoners continues to rate as the most common issue for prisoner complaints. The number of applications to the IMB this year regarding property mislaid on transfer is the second highest it has been. The matter of addressing prisoners' applications to the IMB regarding property not transferred is always challenging, given the difficulties of contacting other establishments for information; it is, therefore, always time-consuming and frequently unproductive.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 The provision of healthcare continues to be delivered by Practice Plus Group and includes pharmacy provision. Dental services are subcontracted to Time for Teeth, and the physiotherapy and chiropody provision is delivered by Premier Services. Social care at Sudbury is provided by Derbyshire County Council.

6.1.2 The healthcare centre operates seven days a week and offers two evening surgeries to provide access for prisoners who work outside of the prison during the day. The mental health team are currently unable to provide evening surgeries.

6.1.3 Prisoners registered with the healthcare centre range in age from 20 to 75 years.

6.1.4 Prisoners can make complaints direct to the healthcare provider and their records for this reporting year show these were all dealt with to prisoners' satisfaction by the manager of the healthcare centre, and therefore none needed to be escalated to the provider's organisation. There have been six applications concerning health to the IMB in this reporting year. Three of these concerned prisoners' need to demonstrate eligibility for single room accommodation on health grounds. All six IMB applications were dealt with by the onsite healthcare manager and the outcomes accepted by the prisoners concerned.

6.1.5 The Board would like to acknowledge the work done by the healthcare team throughout the recent rapid increase in population at Sudbury. They satisfactorily completed 151 assessments of new arrivals in one month in addition to continuing with their daily workload. A bid has been made for additional staffing to ensure the safe delivery of healthcare at the prison as the prison population continues to increase.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Access to a registered nurse is provided daily and, where necessary, referral appointments to appropriate healthcare professionals are made following assessment.

6.2.2 A general practitioner (GP) is employed for 12 hours a week, with locum cover when necessary. Currently there is approximately a two to three week wait for a GP appointment. When immediate attention is necessary, the healthcare staff access local urgent care units or hospital accident and emergency departments. Currently there are no nursing staff at Sudbury authorised to prescribe medication. If a nurse prescriber is required in the absence of a GP, this is provided by an agency.

6.2.3 The IMB noted in last year's report that there were 122 prisoners on the waiting list to see a dentist with an approximate wait of 20 weeks. Currently there are still 106 on the waiting list and this means a wait of between 14 and 20 weeks. The provider does commission additional dentist sessions when the resources are available, but the situation has improved very little. Prisoners are encouraged to visit their own dentist in the community when they are on ROTL for home visits, but many of these also have long waiting lists. Any urgent dental needs are met by a local dental practice. Prisoners are currently having to wait about two weeks for a physiotherapy appointment.

6.2.4 The number of prisoners with complex health needs has risen from five in the last reporting year to 10 this year.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 A psychiatrist holds a caseload of prisoners at Sudbury and visits every two weeks. Following assessment, individuals are assigned to a member of the mental health team as required. Currently the healthcare department is fully staffed with mental health nurses. There is at present no access to psychological services.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 Social care services at Sudbury are provided by Derbyshire social services. During this reporting year, the Board has witnessed first-hand effective collaborative work across various agencies in the management of a prisoner with complex needs both before his arrival at Sudbury and since.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Prisoners at Sudbury enjoy the freedom of movement provided by an open establishment. Many prisoners comment that this represents a welcome change to life in closed conditions. The prison has made positive efforts to enhance the general environment of the site, for example with the provision of outside seating and tables (see 5.1.6), by careful maintenance of the site and the provision of floral displays.

6.5.2 All prisoners have the opportunity to attend sessions in the gym, though often this is restricted to weights work. Various additional activities are offered in the evenings, such as badminton. Prisoners have been able to sign up for walks in the nearby Peak District, though staffing issues have made the future of such activities uncertain. The outdoor gym equipment continues to be well used.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The substance misuse service (SMS) sees all new arrivals as part of the induction programme and provides information on the services offered, including how to access support. If prisoners do not attend this induction session they receive an information pack. The prisoner must acknowledge the receipt of the information on a reply slip, and failure to do so means they will be reported.

6.6.2 Referrals to the SMS have increased in recent months in line with the increase in the population at Sudbury.

6.6.3 Sessions delivered include those on substance misuse and motivation. Acupuncture is available as part of prisoners' treatment plans.

6.6.4 There have been discussions during this reporting year between the SMS team and the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) service to develop drug awareness sessions for families and carers when they attend the prison. The plan is to include information on the use and administration of naloxone (a drug to manage substance misuse overdose). The dialogue continues but there have been many challenges to overcome.

6.6.5 The Board has noted an absence during this year of representatives from Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous due to a lack of volunteers. Every effort is being made by both organisations to recommence visits to Sudbury.

6.6.6 This reporting year has seen the introduction of a dedicated dormitory for prisoners who want to live in a drug-free environment. The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) dormitory houses prisoners who have been assessed for suitability and who must sign a compact to begin living there. The compact details what is expected of prisoners in terms of behaviour and remaining drug and alcohol free and includes required consent to weekly drug testing. The incentives available to prisoners who meet all the requirements of the ISFL dormitory include additional visits, extra gym sessions and laundry facilities. Whilst occupancy of the ISFL dormitory has been completely voluntary, it has not been without its teething problems. At the time of reporting, life on the dormitory is beginning to be more acceptable to the prisoners located there, and others who have heard of their experience are requesting to be considered for location there. However, the Board has received some comments from prisoners involved in the ISFL project that the incentives for compliance initially promised have been slow to be delivered, resulting in some asking to leave the dormitory. Prisoners on the ISFL dormitory are supported by staff who have been ISFL-trained alongside the SMS team. The Board will continue to monitor this important initiative closely.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 Prisoners have to complete a three-stage work skills programme, with incentives for the completion of each stage. The programme is completed whilst they attend workshop activity within the prison. The successful completion of the programme is a requirement before prisoners are eligible to apply for jobs outside the prison. Essential skills valued by employers, such as timekeeping, respect, communication and working as a team, are included in the programme. The Board has noted that in recent months the prison has increased the focus on punctuality and attendance at work. However, we have noted with concern that some prisoners who have a legitimate need to leave their workplace for appointments are failing to return once these have been completed.

6.7.2 No art or music tuition is provided. A music room is available for use at weekends and some creative activities are run by the substance misuse service. Creative writing opportunities exist through the library and education services. This year, eight prisoners entered the Derby Book Festival flash fiction competition with two of them achieving success. An entertainment committee has been set up which runs weekly quizzes, and other social activities are planned. The IMB recognises the value of these initiatives and hopes that the prison will succeed in supporting them to continue.

6.7.3 Occasional meditation sessions are offered by the Anglican chaplain, in addition to a weekly yoga session which the Board has noted is much appreciated by prisoners who take part.

6.7.4 Family and relationship courses are offered, and monthly activity and social activities are available for prisoners whose contact with family, visitors and/or other prisoners is seen to be limited. One of these sessions observed by a Board member attracted 27 prisoners and staff and was very positively received by the prisoners present.

6.7.5 The prison has made arrangements for peer support to be available in a number of areas. The COMCIL weekly forums (see 5.1.1) have been initially very successful, attracting 30 to 50 prisoners. There are prisoner orderlies in the

reception area whose role is to help new arrivals settle in. On the central dormitory corridor, there is a prisoner information desk (PID) run by prisoners and providing a full range of necessary forms and documents likely to be required by prisoners day to day. Although a peer support worker is scheduled to be available within the PID, on a number of occasions in recent months we have observed it to be closed or unstaffed.

6.7.6 A small wildlife garden has been set out and there is a link with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. However, the garden needs further maintenance and, since the departure of a member of staff, the liaison with the trust has lapsed. Given the undoubted contribution of the exposure to wildlife to a person's wellbeing, this seems to be a missed opportunity. It may be useful to consider offering education and employment opportunities in the conservation sector.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education at Sudbury is provided by People Plus. It is located in two buildings which are welcoming in appearance and have attractively presented displays. The facilities available are well maintained and have good accessibility. Functional skills courses are provided at entry level and levels 1 and 2 in English and maths. Digital skills courses have now replaced information and communications technology (ICT). A small number of prisoners are following Open University courses and other distance learning courses. The IMB has noted an improvement this year in access to computers, which are available in both education buildings. The library computers are also accessible on Saturday mornings and two weekday evenings. Laptops have been allocated to prisoners undertaking full-time study, and Coracle laptops with no network connectivity for learners on external work placements who have no access to onsite IT during the day. However, it has been observed by Board members that regular technical issues, including limited Wi-Fi access on site, cause frustration for prisoners. Many prisoners transferring to Sudbury have come from establishments with much more up-to-date IT facilities, often including widespread laptop availability. Unfortunately this year, Prison Service budgetary factors have made it impossible to upgrade the Wi-Fi and laptop provision at Sudbury. Given the aim of equipping prisoners for release into the community, the Board hopes that this will be addressed when resources can be secured to ensure prisoners are better prepared for the rapid developments in digital technology they will undoubtedly face in the community and at work.

7.1.2 It has been observed by the Board this year that staffing issues for the education provider have been improved. English and maths delivery has suffered some disruption due to staff sickness, maternity leave and turnover, but sessions have been covered as necessary. Board members have observed that relationships between teaching staff and learners have in general been very good, with learners speaking positively about most teachers and the support they are receiving. All prisoners are assessed at induction to identify additional learning needs. The results of these assessments are made available to all staff and any necessary support is delivered by learning support tutors in classes.

7.1.3 It should be acknowledged that for most prisoners arriving at Sudbury their primary goal is to access vocational opportunities within and outside the prison which can help them to prepare for employment on release. In addition, the average length of stay at Sudbury is relatively short: 75% of arrivals will remain for a year or less and 45% for less than six months. The implication for education and training is that there is very little time to take on any courses of substantial length. The disruption to the transfer of prisoners to open conditions across the prison estate in the first quarter of this reporting year created a great deal of disruption to normal prisoner movements, and resulted in some prisoners arriving at Sudbury with less than one month remaining to serve. Indeed, it was noted by the Board that there were some instances of prisoners arriving with less than a week left to serve before release. At induction, prisoners are given an outline of education opportunities available, and also reminded that there is a requirement to have achieved a minimum of level 1 in English and maths in order to apply for external work opportunities. This naturally provides an incentive to engage with these courses. It has been noted by the Board regularly throughout this year that a significant number of prisoners arrive at Sudbury

with very low levels of attainment in English and maths, despite many having spent considerable time in the prison estate. During this reporting year, 18% of arrivals at Sudbury were below level 1 in English and 21% were below level 1 in maths. The prison does undertake liaison with the closed prisons routinely sending prisoners to Sudbury to ensure that the requirement for prisoners to achieve level 1 to access external employment is understood.

7.1.4 There has been a significant improvement in the number of prisoners starting level 1 courses in English and maths during this reporting year following the return to normal operation after the pandemic. However, only 77% of planned places in courses were actually allocated, resulting in a restriction of opportunity for prisoners. Of those who began and completed English and maths courses this year, success rates were high at 97% for English and 85% for maths. However, the Board has noted with concern that the issue of learners withdrawing from courses once begun, which was reported in last year's report, remains an issue with 11.3% withdrawals in English and 4.8% in maths. For learners assessed as neurodivergent, the withdrawal rate was double that of other prisoners, though success rates for those who remained were broadly comparable. Data provided shows similar patterns for learners within the mixed-race cohort and those in the 18 to 25 age bracket.

7.1.5 The Board notes that, compared with last year, more prisoners were motivated to progress to level 2 in English and maths, and this may well reflect an improved standard of teaching and relationships with learners (see 7.1.2).

7.1.6 Curriculum planning is underpinned by labour market intelligence and regular needs analysis with prisoners. Obviously, the resulting offer has a strong focus on providing training which will provide qualifications and experience in line with traditional employment opportunities. The Board would like to see consideration given to utilising the Sudbury site for the development of training and education related to the rapid expansion of employment opportunities in conservation and biodiversity.

7.1.7 The IMB reported last year that there is no provision to teach English as a second language (ESOL), and this remains the case.

7.1.8 A very small number of prisoners engage in training or learning activities outside the prison. Attempts to develop apprenticeship provision have been frustrated by concerns raised by employers.

7.1.9 The library service is provided by Suffolk Libraries. The library is welcoming and well resourced.

7.1.10 The library continues to be run positively and imaginatively. Storybook Dads (where prisoners record a story for their children) has now recommenced, and of particular note is the weekly reading group which was begun, and is run by, a prisoner and regularly attracts eight participants.

7.1.11 Library displays raise the awareness of equality issues as well as World Book Day. The library was key in promoting the recent 'flash fiction' competition and the prison was complimented in the Derby book festival's press release.

7.1.12 The monthly footfall into the library generally exceeds 3,000. About 90% of the Sudbury prisoner population visit the library at some point. From January to March 2023, 57% of loans were books and 43% media items. The make-up of

prisoners using the library is broadly in line with ethnicity and religion protected characteristic groupings across the population, although use by white prisoners is proportionately higher and by Asian prisoners proportionately lower.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Internal work opportunities at Sudbury provide the chance to gain qualifications in bricklaying, painting and decorating, and catering. Other courses offered include rail engineering track maintenance, Step into Construction, and employability. Other work within the prison includes the Recycling Lives project, market gardens, and wood assembly work. Prisoners are also employed in the kitchens, laundry, recycling collection and as dormitory cleaners. In this reporting year, the prison has recognised that in some areas the qualifications available require improvement to offer more value to prisoners in their ability to secure employment on release. A recently established work area this year has been the Sunbelt workshop involving experience and training in welding. The pay structure in this workshop has offered opportunities to earn pay bonuses based on productivity and has proved extremely popular with prisoners. If the prison were able to negotiate similar contracts with other organisations, it would clearly benefit many more prisoners. The Board has frequently received positive comments from prisoners about the support offered by the tutors and supervisors in many, but not all, areas.

7.2.2 The fully functioning diner outside the gate at Sudbury, offering training in barista skills, provides authentic customer-facing front-of-house roles, in addition to kitchen-based work. The garden shop outside the gate sells produce grown within the prison through the market garden work area and offers genuine retail experience for those working within it. Both the shop and diner are well used by members of the public, and regularly receive positive comments from customers.

7.2.3 A personalised learning plan is completed for all prisoners shortly after their arrival and is used to guide them in suitable pathways to education and training. A backlog within this process - which arose in the spring of this year as a result of the disruption to transfer into open category prisons (see 7.1.3) - has now largely been addressed.

7.2.4 The IMB has this year been impressed with the work of staff in the resettlement area in liaising with employers regarding job vacancies for ROTL and on release. During this reporting year, resettlement staff have collaborated with 36 employers, which has generated 170 external work placements. In the first five months of this year, 239 prisoners had worked on the external work scheme, with only 11 being dismissed by employers. There is no shortage of warehousing-type opportunities, but employers have been reluctant to offer more specialised jobs. The lack of opportunities in office-based, fitness and catering areas has been a source of frustration for some prisoners. The prison regularly placed external workers in charity organisations before Covid-19, but these disappeared with the onset of the pandemic and have been very slow to return.

7.2.5 Discussions have been initiated with the Prince's Trust with a view to providing increased opportunities for younger prisoners but, to the frustration of the staff involved, have not as yet progressed.

7.2.6 The Board has received comments from prisoners regarding the prisoner pay structure; this has been raised in our monthly reports and with the Governor. A

review of prisoner pay has been undertaken this year but, as yet, there have been no improvements to pay levels.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Staff in the offender management unit (OMU) remain under pressure from staffing shortages and the recent increase in the prison population. Despite these challenges, most prisoners receive their initial interview with a prison offender manager (POM) promptly.

7.3.2 Almost a third of complaints made through the prison's system this year have related to aspects of offender management. Members of the Board also receive a significant number of verbal comments from prisoners about management of their sentence, with almost 19% of formal applications to the IMB this year relating to these issues. Many prisoners with whom the Board has interacted have recognised that delays in processing their ROTL applications, for example, are often caused by the complexity of having to manage many different agency responses outside the prison, and express appreciation of the work done on their behalf by POMs. It would seem that frequent significant delays in processing ROTL applications result from an apparent lack of ownership within the Probation Service to respond promptly to requests from POMs. Members of the Board still detect a perception among some prisoners that there is a lack of consistency between POMs in interpreting and communicating the complex regulations on approval of ROTL applications. Board members regularly receive comments from prisoners showing they would welcome more regular communication from the OMU on the progress of their ROTL applications. Morning drop-in sessions to give access to OMU staff were well attended, but have been discontinued.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 The prison has recently renewed the contract with the PACT service for providing family support. The new contract has added the provision of meet-and-greet staff for prisoners' visitors. This has enabled visitors new to the prison to ask questions and feel comfortable with the visits environment.

7.4.2 Themed family visits are arranged throughout the year. The prison reading group provides appropriately themed children's books to match these events. Small goody bags in keeping with the theme of the event are also provided. The charity Make Some Noise attends each family day to provide activities encouraging children to play with their parents.

7.4.3 Every fourth Friday of the month, a kids' club is held in the diner outside the gate partly run by prisoners, and breakfast is provided.

7.4.4 The Board has observed that these family-based activities are extremely well organised by the prison and very much appreciated by prisoners and their families.

7.4.5 Prisoners who have few or no family ties can meet monthly for a coffee morning with various activities available.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Of 352 men released in the year ending March 2023, 55% went into employment. The Board is encouraged to note that 69% of those released who had been on the prison's paid external working scheme went into employment, and this

reflects positively on the good work done by resettlement staff in securing the places and supporting prisoners in accessing them. Prisoners are supported in finding employment in various ways, including being taken to job clubs in the community and through the organisation of meetings with prospective employers within the prison. A series of prisoner journey events has been set up with former prisoners outlining their career development since release. The first of these events was well attended with 45 prisoners present. In last year's report, the IMB was pleased to comment on the setting up of an employment hub, and is encouraged to see that this year the hub has been further embedded within the prison and is regularly advertising a range of job vacancies in its new location in the through-the-gate hub area.

7.5.2 The Board has noted in at least two previous annual reports that prisoners regularly find difficulty in setting up bank accounts whilst still serving their sentence, and is disappointed to find that this remains an issue for many. The prison has attempted to rectify this by agreeing with one bank to support prisoners on ROTL opening accounts.

7.5.3 There is a good range of support for prisoners prior to release, which includes help with driving licence and passport applications, debt management and addressing court fines.

7.5.4 Strenuous efforts are made to ensure prisoners are released to suitable accommodation. In this reporting year, only three men have been released with no accommodation in place, compared with seven in the last reporting year.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	4
Total number of visits to the establishment	210

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	3	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	0	0
C	Equality	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	4	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	3	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	2
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	6
H1	Property within the establishment	0	1
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	7	4
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	7	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	3	0
K	Transfers	0	2
L	Miscellaneous	6	1
	Total number of applications	35	32

Annex A

Service providers

1	Maintenance	AMEY
2	Prisoner transport	GEOAmey
3	Education	People Plus
4	Library	Suffolk Library Service
5	Healthcare	Practice Plus Group Time for Teeth (dental) Premier Service (physiotherapy/chiropractic) Derbyshire Social Services (social care) Inclusion (substance misuse service)
6	Through-the-gate services	Information, Advice and Guidance team PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust)
7	Canteen	DHL



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