



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ashfield

**For reporting year
1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	3
3. Key points	4
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	11
5. Fair and humane treatment	14
6. Health and wellbeing	23
7. Progression and resettlement	29
The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	37
Applications to the IMB	37
Annex A	
List of service providers	38
Annex B	
Tables and graphs	39

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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 Ashfield is a privately managed prison run by Serco, located in the village of Pucklechurch in South Gloucestershire, around 10 miles from each of Bristol and Bath. It is a specialist training and treatment category C adult male establishment, exclusively for convicted prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences.

The prison has a baseline certified normal accommodation of 416 with an operational capacity of 400, increased to 412 in the latter part of this reporting year¹.

Accommodation consists of two main residential units, Avon, and Severn, each with four wings accommodating between 40 and 60 prisoners. Its early days centre (EDC) is a smaller, 16-cell unit which acts as an induction centre and houses new

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.

arrivals and induction orderlies. There are 260 single cells and 78 double cells in total, all with integral sanitation, and eight shower cubicles on each of the main wings. Seven of the single cells are ground floor cells which are purpose-built for prisoners with disabilities, and there are two gated cells for prisoners requiring constant supervision. There is no separate care and separation unit.

Black, Asian and other minority ethnic prisoners have slightly increased again in number over the course of this reporting period, and in June 2023 make up around 24% of the population (23% in the last reporting period), though the number of foreign national prisoners has remained constant at around 6.0%. The number of prisoners aged over 50 has also stayed fairly constant, at around 43% (42.5% last report) of the population. In numerical terms the largest individual group (25%) is now made up of prisoners aged 30-39.

There have been significant senior management changes over the course of this reporting year. As a contracted-out prison, Ashfield has a director and a HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) controller. The Director appointed in January 2022 left at Christmas and was replaced on an interim basis by another senior Serco manager, and then permanently by a new Director in March 2023. In the same period there have been two Deputy Directors, one covering on a temporary basis for the other who was seconded to the Serco national bid team for a number of months.

For much of this reporting period the prison has had to focus its attention on the re-bid process as the contract comes up for renewal in spring 2024 and will be subject to a competitive tendering process. This has meant that a substantial refurbishment programme has had to be undertaken to restore the physical infrastructure to the same level as when the contract was initially awarded. In particular, this has involved major work to the roofs and skylights of almost all buildings in summer 2023, requiring the erection of scaffolding. At the end of this reporting period, the artificial turf is about to be completely replaced. There has also been a suspension of major new projects affecting infrastructure, given that, should Serco not be re-awarded the contract in 2024, they would not receive any financial compensation for this additional outlay and investment.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The Board has observed that Ashfield continues to be a very safe and secure environment in which disruptive or violent behaviour is infrequent and, for the duration of the reporting period, reportedly illicit drugs have rarely been detected.
- Although the number of assaults has slightly increased, the majority of these are minor assaults and only one resulted in a hospital visit. No trend has been identified and the increase would appear to reflect a general increase across the custodial estate when compared with other similar establishments.
- The number of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) cases has slightly increased since the last report, but some of that increase can be

attributed to prisoners early in their sentence who are relatively new to custody. ACCTs which the Board have monitored, have appeared well managed, drawing on well-integrated support from the safer custody team, healthcare, and other residential staff.

- The number of self-harm incidents is similar to last year's report. The majority continue to be of low severity, predominantly cutting or scratching. Only two incidents were classed as serious and requiring a hospital visit.

Fair and humane treatment

- Accommodation and catering standards have continued to remain very good, with high standards of hygiene and decoration, though there are ongoing problems with some showers and in-cell wash basins considered by the IMB as unhygienic due to peeling paint and mould. Dilapidation and deep clean work is, however, scheduled to address these concerns.
- The Board has observed that the prisoners benefit from an orderly, informal, and calm environment in which staff and prisoners treat one another with mutual respect and diversity and equality issues are taken seriously by the prison.
- The implementation of the local incentives policy (IP) scheme, covering all aspects concerned with general behaviour management, is perceived, when compared to the national policy, as less incentivising and more disciplinary.
- The inability of the prison to produce annual income and expenditure accounts for the Prisoner Trust Fund (PTF) indicates that more robust management and auditing systems are necessary to provide reassurance that funds, which have been generated by prisoner telephone calls and purchases from the prison shop, have been spent appropriately.

Health and wellbeing

- The Board is pleased to report that the healthcare staffing situation gradually improved, such that by April 2023 primary care was fully staffed and by June 2023 mental health only had one vacancy. The appointment, under the new contract, of a full-time head of Ashfield healthcare and more 'Ashfield only' staff has led to a healthcare service more integrated with prison staff, including a number of joint wellbeing initiatives, all of which is beneficial to the prisoner population.
- Despite sessions provided by most of the ancillary services (podiatry, audiology, physiotherapy, etc.) being reduced under the new contract, waiting times are roughly equivalent to the services in the community or in the case of seeing a GP, better. The exception to this is the optician service, with a waiting list of over 92 in June 2023.
- The high level of medical and social care required by two seriously ill prisoners highlighted the problems caused by the lack of an in-patient care facility at Ashfield, or a suitable regional HMPPS specialist facility to which they could be transferred.
- Increasingly, prisoners, especially those who have been long-term residents, are commenting to the Board that the prison feels more like a category B and not a category C prison as a consequence of a tightening up of movements in recent months.

Progression and resettlement

- As a general rule, less than 1% of prisoners are unemployed and classroom attendance levels are high. However, the Board continues to have concerns about the number of education and training sessions cancelled, even if the problem is in part mitigated by the employment of two non-specialist cover supervisors. Education and training were operating without a Head of Learning and Skills for approximately four months in the early part of 2023. However, the appointments of a new librarian and a new senior manager for education, training and employment have provided the opportunity for a long-overdue reassessment of what is offered and for a revitalisation of each area.
- Although not designated as a resettlement prison, Ashfield is itself funding the development of a range of resettlement services for the prisoners it directly releases.
- The interventions department and offender management unit (OMU) have worked closely to ensure that no prisoner during this reporting period was released directly from Ashfield who failed to get access to any offending behaviour programme (OBP) for which they had been assessed. However, the Board is concerned at the delays in the Secretary of State's decision-making process with regard to confirming or rejecting parole board recommendations for open conditions for Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) and life-sentenced prisoners. On average, it has taken eight months for a decision to be received. This is not acceptable.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Why, after parole boards have recommended that life sentenced and IPP prisoners convicted of sexual offences be transferred to open conditions, is it taking such a lengthy period of time for these to be confirmed or rejected by the Secretary of State for Justice?

- What assurances can the Minister give that this can be reduced in the near future?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Despite numerous assurances over a number of years that the loss of prisoner property during transfer from prison to prison will be addressed, no significant progress has been made, and it remains a serious issue.

- What additional practical actions to those already identified are being taken by HMPPS to address this?

With the large number of elderly prisoners in the custodial estate (particularly in prisons such as Ashfield), cases of dementia and terminal illness requiring 24-hour care are increasing. The specific needs of these prisoners cannot be adequately met in normal prison conditions.

- What plans does the Prison Service have for addressing this issue through the creation of specialist custodial centres?

TO THE DIRECTOR

The Board remains concerned at the inability of the prison to produce accurate income and expenditure accounts for the PTF, despite repeated requests for this information. The fund is designated solely for the improvement of prisoner facilities and services not covered by the Serco contract and is generated entirely from the surplus made from prisoner telephone calls and purchases from the prison shop. The prevailing prisoner view is that these charges are higher than in other prison establishments.

- The Board asks yet again, therefore, for transparency and accountability in the case of this fund and for accurate accounts to be produced.

With regard to the current local Incentives Policy (IP) system:

- Can the Director give an assurance that the implementation of the most recently revised IP scheme will be subject to rigorous, ongoing monitoring to ensure that it is closely aligned with the philosophy and practice of the national incentives scheme and it is applied consistently and that it will be subject to a further review in June 2024?

The Board acknowledges that recent changes to how prisoner movements are conducted have been necessary whilst dilapidation work has been undertaken, and to align HMP Ashfield more closely with security requirements. However, these changes have caused dismay amongst longer-stay prisoners who had earned their category C status some time ago by demonstrating a good level of behaviour and self-discipline and who now regularly comment that the establishment increasingly feels like a category B prison.

- In order to retain prisoner goodwill and compliance, can the Director provide reassurance that the rationale for any permanent changes is discussed with prisoners and their concerns are taken into consideration? Any changes need to be clearly communicated to all prisoners.

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
TO THE MINISTER 1. The continuing problem of 'last minute' securing of approved premises accommodation highlighted in the last two annual reports shows no signs of abating, despite the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. Can the Minister provide any tangible evidence of changes that will alleviate this ongoing situation?	The Minister's reply stated that capacity had been expanded by 167 places since 2019 and was on schedule to achieve its target of 200 by 2024. However, it failed to acknowledge that people convicted of committing sexual offences would not necessarily be eligible for these places. HMPPS	There has been no noticeable improvement in Ashfield prisoners securing approved premises accommodation. Some are still within days or hours of release without knowing where they will be residing from the day of release. One recent example saw the approved premises' bed space being confirmed just two days pre-release.

<p>2 In an environment where self-harm is increasing, mental health support, in particular, is critical. Can the Minister raise with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care the Board's concerns that healthcare resource shortages (both physical and mental health) in a prison environment are putting the wellbeing of prisoners at risk?</p>	<p>was also planning to trial in February and March 2023 a "new digitalised approach to referral, through a Central Referral Unit."</p> <p>In his response, the Minister stated that the new NHS contract from October 2022 had been awarded to Oxleas who were committed to recruiting and retaining staff. He also outlined the range of services Oxleas was providing in those prisons for which it was already contracted to deliver a healthcare service.</p>	<p>The new "digitalised approach" seems not to have yet made any demonstrable difference.</p> <p>Healthcare staffing shortages continued until April 2023 for primary care and longer for mental health (see sections 6.1 to 6.3.).</p>
<p>TO THE PRISON SERVICE</p> <p>The Board appreciates that Prison Escort and Custody Services (PECS) is a contracted-out service, but can HMPPS do anything to minimise/alleviate the disruptions being experienced?</p>	<p>HMPPS explained that they were managing this through rectification notices and improvement plans, and that contract delivery managers were working with offender management units to fill drafts and ensure the resource was not wasted. Prisons were being notified as early as possible about any cancellations.</p>	<p>There has been a gradual improvement over the course of the last 12 months, but the problem of delays and last-minute cancellations caused by the contracted PECS providers has remained, with 27% of all planned transfers to or from Ashfield cancelled or changed (see section 4.1 and Annex B).</p>
<p>TO THE DIRECTOR</p> <p>1 In the light of the continuing perceptions of black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners of discrimination (despite statistical evidence to the contrary), it would be helpful to all parties for</p>	<p>The prison did not share widely the findings of the original survey. There were only 20 responses to a revised survey sent out mid-way through the reporting year: it was concluded this was</p>	<p>At the end of the reporting year plans were under way to supplement a simpler questionnaire in 2023-4 with a much more comprehensive system of in-person forums to encompass all protected</p>

<p>the prison to investigate thoroughly the matters raised in the survey undertaken by the black, Asian and minority ethnic forum.</p> <p>Can the Director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share the survey's findings, as well as the official prison statistics, with prisoners for transparency? • organise general awareness training for prison staff on cultural sensitivities? <p>2 With regard to the library, can the Director consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the resumption of the Prisoner Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)? • literacy-related activities such as poetry reading, book club, etc? • reviving the prison magazine? • reviving the highly successful Ashfest? 	<p>probably due to the length and complexity of the survey and a lack of prisoner confidence in the likely efficacy of it in generating practical change.</p> <p>Encouragingly, some prison data has been shared with prisoners at Diversity & Equality Action Team (DEAT) meetings in 2022-3, though the value of much of it has been restricted by its irrelevance or lack of detailed analysis.</p> <p>There was no direct response from the prison to the Board on this matter.</p>	<p>characteristics and none, e.g., prisoners employed in various areas. These have yet to commence but it is hoped may yield much more useful information about prisoners' perception of life at Ashfield.</p> <p>The prison has recognised the need for improvement and the data shared with prisoners at the DEAT covering April-June 2023 was much more comprehensive and relevant. In the interests of transparency, the Board has been told there are plans to make further refinements in the course of 2023-4.</p> <p>The Board has not been made aware of any specific training sessions provided on cultural awareness for existing staff, though more emphasis has been placed on it on the Initial Training Course for new officers.</p> <p>PALS has been resumed, although on a more modest scale than prior to Covid-19 and with fewer prisoners employed.</p> <p>Since the employment of a new librarian in January 2023, the library has expanded the range of activities and opportunities provided to promote literacy. Various groups have begun to meet, the prison magazine has been revived and consideration is being given to revive the Ashfest cultural festival (see section 7.1).</p>
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<p>3 The PTF holds excess funds generated from prisoner-based retail activities and can be used to purchase items and support initiatives which benefit prisoners and their families. Routine information about the fund and its use has not been available throughout the reporting year.</p> <p>Can the Director ensure such information is available to the Board in accordance with the fund's local operating procedure?</p>	<p>The Board received various assurances from three successive Directors in the course of this reporting year that the necessary information was being assembled and would be provided.</p>	<p>At the end of this 2022-23 reporting year, the prison has still been unable to provide a set of accounts to explain income and expenditure on this account since the Board first raised concerns in 2019.</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception and induction processes at Ashfield have been observed by the Board to be professionally conducted and are both comprehensive and very supportive to newly arrived prisoners. Feedback to the Board from new arrivals, comparing their experience with that in their previous establishments, has been consistently positive.

The number of prisoners arriving at Ashfield with little experience of the prison system (often three months or less) has continued to increase, placing greater emphasis on initial assessments, first night observations and the days spent in the Early Days Centre (EDC). As a small unit (maximum 16, including a small number of orderlies), EDC is an excellent environment, particularly for those new to custody, for settling prisoners in and preparing them for integration onto the two main residential units (Avon and Severn). The number of prisoners arriving either on an open ACCT or post-closure ACCT has increased but, to the credit of Ashfield staff and the support they provide, the majority of these are closed within a short period.

Transfers in and out of Ashfield, a service provided by Prison Escort and Custody Services (PECS) and commented upon in last year's report, have improved gradually over this 12-month period (see table at Annex B), but there is still scope for further improvement.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The number of ACCTs has increased once again, with a total of 104 this reporting period compared with 93 in our last report. The highest number in a month was 12, in July 2022; the lowest, four, in February 2023. As identified in 4.1, newly arrived prisoners account for some of the increase (eight ACCTs were opened on arrival or within a short time of arrival or transfer on an open ACCT). The majority of ACCTs were opened following incidents of self-harm and were largely for prisoners with a history of self-harm. Board members monitor ACCT reviews when possible and consistently report on the professionalism of the meetings and the strong focus on best outcomes for the prisoner. Generally, reviews are well attended by relevant areas although, in the first half of the reporting period, physical healthcare was the one area not always able to field an attendee when required, but mental health attendees often stepped in to represent healthcare as a whole.

The incidents of self-harm, however, have remained virtually the same, at 159 compared with 157 during the last reporting period. Fortunately, the majority are of low severity, predominantly cutting or scratching. Only two incidents were classed as serious and requiring hospital visits, one to treat an overdose of medication and one for stitches. During the first half of the reporting period (July 2022 – December 2022) two prolific self-harmers (incidents of 20+ in a 12-month period) featured highly in the statistics, when there were 94 self-harm incidents compared with 79 during January – June 2022. One prolific self-harmer was released in December, and the other transferred in February 2023, the month Ashfield had its lowest number of self-harm incidents in this report (three). However, in April another prisoner accounted for 14 self-harm incidents in the month (23 in total for that month) and a further five incidents in May. It is very concerning that a prisoner at Ashfield should self-harm 14

times in a month but, through targeted interventions by staff, it was reassuring to note that the prisoner reduced his self-harm to five the following month and has now not self-harmed since May. Reasons for self-harm vary considerably, with no identifiable trends. The Board have observed that records are thorough, containing triggers for each prisoner (such as anniversaries of loss), to ensure additional monitoring and support at these key times.

Safer custody has continued to provide a wide range of activities for improving wellbeing. These include art sessions, “walks for life”, use of the safer custody gardens (until a restricted regime was introduced for scaffolding work in June 2023), ultimate gaming, film and board games and a special gym session specifically for safer custody. The activities are open to all prisoners, except the safer custody gym session, which has been restricted to those who don’t normally use the gym.

Peer support through safer custody coordinators, safer custody representatives, Insiders (prisoners who introduce new arrivals to prison life) and Here to Hear representatives (H2H; prisoners who provide confidential emotional support to their peers) is available to all prisoners. There were 96 call outs to H2H in the 12 month reporting period and 996 calls to the Samaritans. It should be noted that a small number of prisoners account for a significant number of Samaritan calls. For example, the highest number of calls to the Samaritans in a month was March, with 127, of which 88.9% were made by three prisoners.

Personal Intervention Plans (PIPs) were in place for those with complex needs. A number have been on extended period PIPs to provide the additional support necessary. The most in any month has been six. Those on PIPs are often already receiving support through ACCTs, together with their weekly key worker sessions. The appointment of a neurodivergent specialist within mental health has meant increased support for those with those conditions e.g., autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), etc.

The weekly safety and intervention meeting (SIM) has been observed to be a very effective multi-disciplinary meeting well attended by relevant departments. The focused review of vulnerable and at-risk individuals, together with an overview of intelligence reports and new arrivals, ensures a joined-up, proactive approach for the benefit of all prisoners.

Sadly, there have been four deaths in custody in the reporting period. Prison and Probation Ombudsman reports are awaited, but all deaths were, apparently, due to natural causes.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There has been a slight increase in violence in this reporting period, but it continues to be low in comparison with the male estate in general. Twenty-four assaults and one fight were recorded, in comparison with 18 assaults and four fights in the period covered by the annual report 2021-2022. The highest number in one month was five, in September 2022. Three of these were alleged sexual assaults, though two allegations were subsequently withdrawn. In this reporting period, six of the assaults were perpetrated against staff and 18 were prisoner-on-prisoner assaults.

Fortunately, the majority of assaults were of low severity, but the increasing trend is concerning, although in line with comparable establishments. Only one visit to hospital was required, when a member of staff was bitten by a prisoner.

Violence continues to be managed robustly, through the use of the challenge, support, and intervention plans (CSIP), with every violent act being investigated and relevant actions taken. The acts of violence are singular offences, with no further repeats of violence. CSIP referrals increased, with 71 being made in the period and 11 plans opened. The majority of referrals are created for assault perpetrators, followed by victims of assault. The reasons for assaults vary but the number of reported sexual assaults has notably increased in this reporting period. Even if a referral does not lead to a plan, reportedly work is undertaken with the prisoner to address the concerns that led to the referral.

4.4 Use of force

An observed strong emphasis on the use of de-escalation techniques, with use of force as a last resort, has meant in the reporting period that there were only 21 incidents where use of force was deployed, including being used to prevent self-harm. Of the 21 incidents, 10 required Control and Restraint measures (12 occasions in the last reporting period). Rigid bar handcuffs were deployed 12 times. Pelargonic Acid Vanillylamide (PAVA), a synthetic pepper spray, has not been used, but all operational officers have been trained in its use. Use of force is reviewed monthly, with a chaplaincy representative providing independent overview.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Ashfield has an enviable record for preventing illicit items entering the prison and it is pleasing to report there has been no evidence of psychoactive drugs on site in this reporting period. A total of 338 routine cell searches were conducted, plus 53 intelligence led/targeted cells searches.

The number of mandatory drug tests (MDTs) totalled 447 and there were 41 intelligence-led tests. The only positives have been for medication not prescribed, and only four of those exceeded the threshold that triggered an adjudication.

Reception houses a body scan machine, which is used both for prisoners when they first arrive at Ashfield and in cases where there are suspicions that a prisoner may have swallowed an item. In the reporting 12 months, there has only been one positive result. However, after applying the secreted items protocol, this was deemed to be negative.

Screening incoming mail by use of a Rapiscan X-ray machine is another defence deployed at Ashfield to prevent illegal drugs entering the prison. Only one positive result was recorded in this period, which is reassuring.

Another potential route for illicit items to enter the prison is via visitors, but thorough searches and the use of a sniffer dog has kept attempts to smuggle items into a minimum.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The very high standard of cleanliness and decorative order throughout the prison, particularly in the accommodation areas, has been observed to have been maintained throughout this period.

One notable exception, though, is the state of the in-cell wash basins. These often have black mould on the surrounding areas, grout missing, badly peeling paint, and are generally unhygienic. This is particularly concerning, as prisoners are also expected to wash their plastic cutlery and food plates in them. Attempts to rectify the mould by painting over it with emulsion have been mostly unsatisfactory, but the current programme of work addressing dilapidation issues is expected to address the problem. On a regular basis at least two showers on each house block have problems such that they cannot be used, or their use is problematical. Problems with temperature regulation are frequently quoted as well.

Laundry facilities at Ashfield comprise a main laundry for bedding and prison-issue clothing, and accommodation unit laundries for prisoners' personal clothing. Both facilities generally work well and provide a much-appreciated service. One issue, which was noted in our last report, was the temperature of the Severn house block laundry. Caused by condenser dryers, the room would get very warm and uncomfortable for the laundry workers, particularly during the summer and especially during a heatwave. It is pleasing to report that this issue was finally resolved in October and new machines were installed with ducting. Workers are also provided with fans for use in the laundries.

The overall temperature in the main residential units has, at times, been cause for a number of complaints. In the summer of 2022, the wings did get unpleasantly hot, with prisoners finding it very uncomfortable, particularly on the upper landings. The exercise yards were well used but there were no shaded areas to escape the sun. In contrast, a particularly cold spell in December 2022 resulted in a number of complaints and some prisoners resorting to wearing multiple layers of clothes day and night in an attempt to keep warm. The Board did raise the issue with the Director, who ordered checks of the heating system, which revealed thermostat problems that were quickly rectified.

With the contract due for renewal in 2024, a dilapidation survey was undertaken and work has been underway to address the findings of the survey. The most complex project has been the refurbishment of the roofs, including replacement of all the skylights. This work has necessitated scaffolding, which has presented security, health and safety risks so, in response, restricted movements were implemented (further information in 6.5). The project has been observed to be very well managed and in fact was completed ahead of schedule.

A recent fire survey identified the need for further work to increase the number of smoke alarms on the wings and the replacement of fire hoses to bring Ashfield up to the required standard.

The catering department has once again faced a very challenging period, with significant increases in food prices and major supplier shortages. With no increase in budgets for food and the continuously changing product availability, the catering department must be congratulated on providing a high standard of food throughout the 12 months, particularly during the Covid-19 outbreak early in 2023, which restricted the number of workers able to work in the kitchen. Of the comments submitted to the catering department via the digital prison kiosks on the wings, 70 concerned missing items from orders (many due to supplier shortages) and only 40 were negative about the food, whereas 77 were complimentary. Positive comments included 'near to home-cooked food', 'best beef jerky I have tasted in 11 years, in nine different prisons'. A total of 109 comments related to incorrect menu selections/descriptions which arose from problems with a new electronic menu system which have now been resolved.

In last year's report, the Board reported concerns that, for the entire reporting year, routine information concerning the PTF balances and expenditure had not been available despite monthly requests. Requests for this information have continued to be made at the monthly meetings with the Director, but it still has not been made available. The PTF at Ashfield holds any excess of funds generated from prisoner-based retail activities such as shop sales or PIN phone charges. Funds held can be used to purchase items and support initiatives that benefit prisoners and their families, providing such funding has not been allocated and is unavailable from other sources. Figures have not been made available to the Board for over four years now. The Board considers the situation unacceptable.

5.2 Segregation

Prisoners who need to be segregated at Ashfield are either confined to their own cell or, in exceptional circumstances, transferred to the EDC. On the occasions where constant supervision is necessary, prisoners are transferred to a gated cell of which there are two. There is no separate segregation unit.

Encouragingly, the number of segregations this year has reduced compared with the last reporting year. There have been four occasions when prisoners have been placed on good order or discipline (GOoD) in this reporting period, compared with seven in the 2021-2022 report. Twelve prisoners have been placed on cellular confinement (CC), whereas 18 were segregated under CC during the last reporting period.

As part of rota visits, Board members have visited prisoners placed on GOoD or CC and have consistently reported that prisoners have been receiving their entitlements and have been treated fairly. Board members endeavour to monitor GOoD reviews and, of those monitored, again members reported the process was fair and outcomes appropriate.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Compared with many establishments, staffing levels at Ashfield have been very good. For the prison custodial officer (PCO) grade, staffing levels have mostly equalled or exceeded the complement. Only for four months did PCO staffing fall below complement (at its worst, it was nine below complement), but for seven

months it was exceeded, as Ashfield had permission to over-recruit to allow for staff secondments to support the opening of HMP Fosse Way. Over the reporting period, six staff were seconded to HMP Fosse Way, including custodial operations managers (COMs), a training support officer and a physical education instructor. Additionally, two Ashfield PCOs were seconded to PECS for five weeks in May. At times, staffing has been stretched, particularly when there are a number of bed watches (where a prisoner requires hospital admission for at least one night and needs to be constantly observed by a prison officer for security reasons), and occasionally this has affected the regime (see section 6.5).

The challenge, though, as for many establishments, is the level of experience of PCOs. Around 46.25% of PCOs have three years or less experience, with 36.25% having two years or less experience. During the reporting period, 42 new officers were recruited, of whom 13 had previous PCO experience. Inexperience can lead to inconsistency in approach, particularly in relation to responding to behaviour, and this makes the role of the COMs in managing this aspect more important. Interestingly, in the violence reduction and safety survey conducted by the Safer Custody department in March 2023, of the 178 respondents, 74.7% agreed or strongly agreed that staff treated them fairly. But opinion was equally divided on staff challenging inappropriate behaviour, with 40.45% agreeing or strongly agreeing but 40.45% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. For questions on feeling able to confide in staff or be listened to by staff, both scored more positives (47.7%/49.4%) than negatives (32.6%/33.1%). In the Board's last report, however, the negative scoring for feeling able to confide in staff was lower, at 20.4%, although there were only 148 respondents. Notably, only 39% in the latest survey recorded that they found it easy to speak to a COM.

Keyword at Ashfield has been observed to be well managed and robustly assured. For all of the reporting period, other than during the Covid outbreak when special arrangements were put in place and vulnerable prisoners were prioritised, the current target of 74% for all prisoners to receive a weekly keyword session has been consistently exceeded, other than for two or three weeks. Quality assurance is achieved through random sampling of keyword entries and routine checks on keyword entries for vulnerable prisoners. The influx of new officers, together with secondments, has resulted in more experienced officers having a greater number of cases (on average seven, one more than normally), as newly recruited officers would only be allocated two or three cases. Generally, prisoners report to the Board positive comments about their keyworkers.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The eight forums (one for each protected characteristic) and the diversity and equality action team (DEAT) play a critical role in facilitating effective monitoring and management, along with the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) process and the general day-to-day oversight of equality and diversity matters, ably undertaken with real commitment and hard work by a solitary prison officer. It is unfortunate, however, that the latter has often to cope with less practical support from colleagues than she needs, and this can sometimes result in delays before key action points can be delivered and issues resolved. A clear example of this is the disappointingly poor level of attendance by officer "champions" at the scheduled monthly forums' meetings (as evidenced by attendance statistics shared at DEAT meetings. Despite repeated assurances over the last couple of years that this matter would be

addressed, it remains ongoing. Encouragingly though, Ashfield is planning to second another PCO to support the Equalities PCO.

An additional problem is a degree of confusion among prisoners as to whether any concerns they have (e.g., about black hair and skin grooming products) should be raised via the forums, the DEAT or the various prisoner information and advice councils (PIACs), owing to a lack of clarity about the functions of each of these. Often, prisoners are diverted from one to the other, resulting in further delays and frustration. Prisoners would benefit from clearer guidance on the appropriate channels for initially raising and, if necessary, escalating any concerns.

During Covid-19, DEATs had continued but without prisoner representation, which was not restored until part way through this reporting year. It was encouraging that, in the interests of transparency, the plan was to share diversity and equality data with prisoner representatives on matters such as complaints, adjudications, the implementation of the IP scheme, re-categorisation rates, and various other pertinent issues. In practice, however, and with just a handful of notable exceptions, the data was not as comprehensive as this and much of it was of questionable relevance as there had been only minimal attempt in most cases to analyse it in terms of the impact of various policies and procedures on the different protected characteristic groups. Moreover, the rapidity with which data had been presented at meetings had given prisoner representatives insufficient time to digest it or raise any pertinent questions.

It is very encouraging that the need to revamp this meeting to make it a much more effective vehicle for two-way communication was recognised towards the end of this reporting period at senior management level. The data presented at the DEAT meeting, which covered the period April to June 2023, was much more informative and a more informal atmosphere enabled genuinely open two-way discussion to take place.

In practice, whilst there is still scope for further development in data collection and analysis, what does currently exist, such as data for adjudications, IP reviews and levels, re-categorisation, parole figures and appointments to orderly posts, strongly indicates to the Board that prisoners, at any rate in terms of ethnicity, are not adversely affected by how the prison implements its key policies and procedures. Further data-sharing with prisoners would actually be in the interests of prison and prisoners alike, as it would help to dispel the perception of discrimination in areas where the data does not support the claim.

Over this reporting period, 36 DIRFs were submitted, double the number in the previous reporting year, but in a few cases multiple DIRFs had been submitted by different prisoners who had witnessed an individual incident. Two DIRFS related to disability issues, one of which was diverted into the Healthcare complaints process, but there were none directly about faith or age. One did not meet the criteria and was diverted into the main complaints system, and one was withdrawn. All others were thoroughly investigated and, where proven, appropriate action was taken, ranging from restorative justice sessions to further work with prisoners being undertaken by their keyworker, a Cell Sharing Risk Assessment review, relocation to another wing or an IP warning. Only two complaints were about physically threatening behaviour of a racist nature, one of which resulted in an adjudication. The most common complaint (22) made by prisoners or staff was that of homophobic (six), transphobic

(one) or racist (15) verbal abuse by one prisoner towards another prisoner or occasionally towards a member of staff. There were five complaints by minority ethnic prisoners about how they had been treated by staff: one was dismissed, one was proven but resolved amicably, and the remaining three cases were quickly rectified to the satisfaction of the complainants concerned. There were three DIRFs about the limited range and cost of black hair products and action was also taken to resolve this. None of the incidents, either individually or collectively, suggested to the Board there was any culture of systemic discrimination or intolerance in the prison.

The forums resumed in May 2022, after Covid-19, and were beginning to establish some momentum before having to be suspended briefly halfway through this reporting period because of another Covid-19 outbreak. When they eventually resumed, releases and transfers out meant that much of the membership had to be refreshed. Despite these difficulties, the forums have been very active and have set about enthusiastically assisting in planning various faith celebrations and organising events to promote understanding and tolerance and break down misunderstanding and prejudice. In the latter part of this reporting year, they have benefited from a greater allocation of meeting time.

Highly successful events have included, amongst others, an Appleby Fair event in August 2022 organised by the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) forum, Black History Month in October 2022, organised by the race forum, and Remembrance Day in November 2022 and an Armed Forces Day session in summer 2023, including a “naval gun run” event, both organised by VIPA (Veterans in Prison Association). The disabilities forum organised a visit by a disabled pianist. They also organised a “Winter Olympics” event in the gym, enabled and supported by the gym staff, which highlighted activities that required participants to experience a physical disability of one sort or another.

The ages forum was responsible for a successful bingo session to get older and younger prisoners mixing together, whilst the foreign nationals forum organised an event offering the opportunity to try out board games from different cultures, which seems to have sparked an interest in chess on various wings. In January, the faith forum ran a multi-faith session in connection with World Faith Day entitled “What does God look like to me?” These were in addition to numerous other, smaller-scale events and drop-in sessions, all of which help to promote the generally harmonious atmosphere in the prison.

Remarkably few issues of any substance have been raised by the forums over the course of this year, other than ongoing concerns about the cost of telephoning family living abroad or with only mobile connectivity, the cost and range of black hair and skin products that can be purchased in the prison shop (now largely resolved) or availability of international food items (only partially resolved), the lack of a hair-braiding service in the barber’s shop (now resolved) the seeming impossibility of obtaining orthopaedic mattresses for those prisoners who require them (still ongoing) and concerns about inadequate heating in the winter months for some elderly prisoners on the wings (largely resolved by the provision of additional duvets and a redistribution of supplementary heating devices). It is the Board’s view that issues raised are taken seriously by the prison and resolved wherever this is feasible (albeit sometimes slowly), and clear explanations given when it genuinely is not.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Chaplaincy remains at the heart of the prison, offering care to prisoners and staff, whether or not they follow a religion. It is the Board's view that it has continued to provide a commendably high level of service during this reporting period.

Religion records kept throughout the year show that, on average, about 35% of prisoners declared they had 'nil religion'. At the end of the year, however, the total number of Christians, grouped under various denominations, had become higher, at about 41% (164). This was followed by Muslims (44), Pagans (23) and Buddhists (18). Smaller groups included Rastafarians (5), Hindus (5), Sikhs (4) and Jews (2).

At the end of the reporting period, the only full-time members of staff were the Muslim managing chaplain and an Anglican chaplain, but for part of the year there was also a full-time Pagan chaplain. The chaplaincy has strived throughout the year to recruit more visiting chaplains of different faiths and, though this proved difficult with some, especially Rastafarianism, it has ultimately yielded noticeable success. By June 2023 there were visiting chaplains in post to look after nearly all religions. Smaller Christian denominations, such as Quaker, Free Church and Jehovah's Witness, were also covered. Two orderlies, one Muslim and one Christian, help look after all the faiths and all chaplaincy-run services.

The chaplains provide emotional support to any prisoner or member of staff requiring it, irrespective of faith. In time of need or an emergency, whoever is available will try to respond. Anyone on an ACCT or subject to segregation is seen regularly. Keyworkers sometimes make referrals, and a small number of men receive regular one-to-one support. When, in January 2023, an outbreak of Covid-19 forced the prison into lockdown for three weeks, the chaplaincy had to suspend all activities but immediately set up a camera to broadcast live services to prisoners in their cells. A group-bereavement course, called Living with Loss, was run this year. The chaplaincy team has also continued to facilitate Storybook Dads, enabling prisoners to read a book and record it onto a CD for their child or children in their family.

Chaplains representing all Serco prisons worked together this year to produce the Serco Chaplaincy Strategic and Operational Delivery Plan 2023-2025. The plan's mission statement is 'to provide hope, excellent spiritual and pastoral care to those in the custodial estate and communities beyond'. Plans under the 'connected community' include recruiting a resettlement chaplain and giving everyone on release access to practical community-based sources for help.

As part of this, more links are being formed with the wider community to support prisoners both inside and on release. These include The New Bridge Foundation, which organises letters and visits for prisoners who would not have any otherwise, and Prison Fellowship, a Christian charity that sets up letter writing and other support. During Christmas 2022, its Angel Tree project enabled 22 Ashfield prisoners to send Christmas presents to their children, up to a value of £30 each.

Other connections with the wider community include groups from local churches often coming in to lead and support the Sunday service under supervision of the

chaplain, as well as a Catholic priest and two volunteers attending weekly mass. There is a weekly visit by a Muslim volunteer for prisoners needing special one-to-one support. There are also regular visits from a volunteer Quaker chaplain and volunteer who assist with group and one-to-one sessions and support prisoners on release by introducing them to a community. In addition, the chaplaincy works with 'the welcome directory' regularly to get local support for prisoners who wish to be connected to a faith community in their area of release.

Musical activities and band practice are led by an external organisation called Changing Tunes. The chaplaincy has loaned out keyboards and guitars to over 70 prisoners at an affordable rate this reporting year. A gospel choir, which is open to all faiths, is run by a volunteer from the outside community. The chaplaincy has organised a visit from the Journeyman Theatre, who gave a performance on the theme of climate change. Meditation now takes place weekly and is open to everyone.

An extra number of festivals have been observed throughout the year for different religions. While Christmas remains the major one, chaplaincy and the catering department have continued to work together to enable celebrations and provide prisoners with special dietary needs such as during Ramadan.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Throughout the 12 months covered by this annual report, the overwhelming majority of prisoners (typically between about 87% and just under 90%) enjoyed the benefits of Enhanced status, with around 10% to 12% on Standard and rarely more than one or two prisoners on Basic at any one time. (Each status is based on behaviour and dictates the privileges the prisoner can earn.) Moreover, this was regardless of ethnicity, as the figures for white and all other ethnic groups prisoners combined at each level consistently differed from one another by no more than about 1%. On the basis of these raw statistics, Ashfield prisoners would appear to fare better than might be the norm elsewhere.

Ashfield prison had launched its own local Incentives Policy, based on the new national incentives scheme framework, but Covid-19 inevitably affected its launch and implementation. By 2022, as Covid restrictions had eased, it was possible to relaunch it, but prisoner comments to the Board over this last 12 months have indicated that, despite the high percentages of those on Enhanced status, there has been a perception among prisoners that it has not been implemented consistently, with some staff too readily resorting to behaviour warnings for what prisoners perceive to be petty or minor breaches of rules and regulations whilst being less diligent in acknowledging particularly good behaviour by recording it in prisoners' case history notes on the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS).

This was despite the fact that the philosophy underpinning both the national and Ashfield's own policies was supposedly to shift the emphasis away from addressing poor behaviour by removal of privileges towards acknowledging and reinforcing good behaviour. Both HMPPS guidance notes and Ashfield's own policy state, for example, that there should generally be four times as many positives as negatives recorded.

Ashfield's local policy has also included a separate rewards system (usually in the form of £2 PIN phone credit) for exceptional contributions. This was to be implemented supposedly without discrimination, yet prisoners were told on a number of occasions that those already on Enhanced were highly unlikely to qualify for this as, in order to maintain their Enhanced status, they had already to demonstrate consistently that they were going "above and beyond". Between July 2022 and March of 2023, published figures shared at DEAT meetings would suggest that a total of only 12 such rewards were made. But, in the same period, there were 117 behaviour warnings issued (39 between July and September 2022; 38 between October and December; and 40 between January and March 2023). Some of these would also have triggered an IP status review.

Contrary to prisoner perceptions, however, the majority of these were for serious offences, such as threatening or abusive behaviour towards staff or other prisoners (29), refusal to attend work or other scheduled activities (18), breaking various rules and regulations (26), possessing unauthorised articles (10) and breaches of contact bans (7).

The complex issues raised here of mismatches between philosophy, practice and prisoner perceptions suggest strongly to the Board that Ashfield needs to ensure robust quality assurance systems for monitoring the IP policy implementation on a day-to-day basis to ensure greater consistency amongst staff and to restore prisoner confidence. As it stands, Ashfield's current policy seems little different in its application from the policy which preceded it pre-2020, despite being reviewed annually.

5.7 Complaints

A total of 606 formal complaints (Comp 1 is a complaint; Comp 1a is an appeal; and Comp 2 is a complaint about a sensitive issue directly to the Director or other senior stakeholder) was received in this reporting period, compared to 822 in the last one – a significant reduction of 26%.

'Residential and safety' was the category with the most complaints, at 248 or 41%. The complaints varied considerably. A trend is noted if there are more than two complaints about the same matter: the trends listed were about mattresses, laundry, noise on the wing, incentives, single cell request or cell move, and late arrival of newspapers or magazines, but no trend was consistent over the year.

The second highest category of complaint, at 95 or 16%, was 'external', involving other prisons (usually about property). This was followed closely by 'reducing reoffending', at 88 or 15%.

The highest number of complaints received in any month was 64 and the lowest 37, with a monthly average of about 50. The most complaints received from a single prisoner in a month was 10. Most complaints were Comp 1, with usually five or fewer Comp 1a each month, but in June there were 13 Comp 1a. Over the year there were 31 complaints about staff, only one of which was substantiated.

In four separate months, all complaints were responded to within the stipulated timescale. Only in April 2023 was the monthly target (95%) not met, at 88.2%. The

monthly average achieved was 97.6%. There were 70 interim responses (a holding response until a full response could be sent).

While the Board appreciates that the prison has been successful in reducing complaints, the Board would value more recorded detail about all the complaints, in terms of who they are from and what has been done about them. Further breakdown would also help to uncover and hopefully rule out any deeper equality and diversity issues with regard to different protected characteristics. As they stand, the focus in responding to complaints can seem over-quantitative rather than qualitative.

The Board would hope, too, that, in the prison's recent drive to reduce formal complaints, prisoners have not become wary of making them. Other sources of verbal and written communication, such as the keyworker system, should continue to record individual prisoners' concerns and issues. When possible, they should also note that a formal complaint has been diverted.

Written responses to formal complaints seen by the Board vary considerably in quality. Many are done well but some miss the point, are unclear or over-abrupt in tone and can undermine prisoners' confidence in the system.

5.8 Property

Property at Ashfield has been observed to be organised efficiently by a very experienced officer and an orderly, with plenty of storage space. The electronic property recording system is proving to be more accurate and reliable than many of the paper versions on which prisoners' property has been recorded at previous prisons.

Prisoners use an app on the internal digital prison kiosks to request storage changes and can expect a reply within 10 days. Rather than going to the store to collect items, these are delivered to the eight wings once a fortnight using a daily rotational system.

Property lost in transfer from other prisons, including legal paperwork and other valuable or sentimental items, continues to be a regular issue. The Board received fewer applications this reporting year about property (10 compared to 13 the previous year), but it still remains one of the most frequent approaches to the Board. As mentioned in 5.7 above, of the 95 complaints the prison received about other prisons, the majority were about property issues.

Another initiative this year has been the creation of a charity shop. This enables prisoners, when released or transferring, to donate items they don't want to take with them. Such former property is re-sold to other prisoners and the proceeds donated to charity.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Last year's report detailed the Board's concerns about the number of nursing vacancies, which were particularly acute in the final quarter of the reporting period, with four positions unfilled in the physical health team and one in the mental health team. The staffing situation continued to worsen, such that by the time the new contract was awarded, the number of mental health vacancies (full time posts but shared with HMP Leyhill) had increased to four. The new contract was awarded to Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, which commenced services on 1 October 2022. Once the contract commenced, the situation was exacerbated by the service model not being implemented until February 2023. The situation was so serious that, in January, the Director was holding weekly meetings with NHS England and Oxleas. In order to deliver an acceptable level of service, Oxleas was, in the latter part of 2022 and early part of 2023, having to use staff on loan from other prisons and, to a lesser degree, bank and agency staff. The challenge is the protracted time it can take to get such staff vetted by both Oxleas and HMPPS.

However, the Board was very pleased to note that gradually the staffing situation improved and by April 2023 Oxleas was able to report that the primary care service at Ashfield was fully resourced. The mental health service, by June 2023, was only one mental health nurse short, a vast improvement from the commencement of the new contract.

Aside from the staffing problems, the 12 months has had its challenges for healthcare, with a particularly hot month in July 2022 necessitating advice to prisoners on avoiding both dehydration and sunburn; a flu outbreak in December; and then in January 2023 a Covid-19 outbreak. At its peak, 55 prisoners were confirmed as positive and a full lockdown of the prison was implemented. It is to the credit of both healthcare professionals and prison staff that the outbreak was reported to the Board to be contained and extremely well managed.

Under the previous contract, the head of healthcare was shared between two sites, to Ashfield's disadvantage. A significant benefit of the new contract has been the appointment of a full-time head of healthcare permanently based at Ashfield. It has been noted how the healthcare staff have become more integrated with prison staff (which benefits prisoners and prison staff alike). In addition, joint initiatives and greater healthcare presence at meetings have all contributed to a more joined-up approach to the wellbeing of prisoners.

As the healthcare complaints system changed with the new contract and only became fully operational in February, there is limited data for the reporting period. Prisoners are required to submit a query first, and only after a query has been submitted can a complaint be sent, following a response to the query. From February to June, there have been 23 queries and three complaints. One complaint for mental health has been upheld and one query for primary care has been partially upheld.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Under the new contract the GP service is now provided by DrPA Secure with a pool of GPs assigned to Ashfield, with three sessions in a week face-to-face and the rest via remote support. In January the waiting time had increased to four weeks but more usually is one to two weeks, which is better than in the community for seeing the GP. Patient triage continues to be undertaken both in-person and via the in-cell telephone system. For urgent cases, on-the-day appointments with nursing staff are available.

The new contract, however, does not provide the same level of provision for a number of services:

- Optician - has gone down from visiting once a month for two sessions (one day) to one session a month (8.30am – 11.40am).
- Physiotherapist - was, under the previous contract, coming in every week for one session but under the new contract only comes in for a half-day session every week. The physiotherapist left in January 2023 and was not replaced until May 2023.
- Podiatrist used to come in for two sessions every other week, but now only a half-day session once a month.
- Audiology, now a half-day session once a month.
- Musculoskeletal services have been halted and patients are referred externally.

The changes to services listed previously have not, from what the Board can ascertain, had a major impact on the prisoners other than some increase in waiting times for appointments, but these are not outside what can be expected in the community. The exception to this, though, is the optician service, which has resulted in a significant backlog, reported as 92 in June 2023, with 68 overdue an appointment and the remaining booked in as their two-year appointment was due. This is very concerning. Under the previous contract there was provision for the services of a dispenser, which meant that routine issues such as fixing broken glasses or helping prisoners select new ones could be undertaken by the dispenser, leaving the optician free to concentrate on eye problems, check-ups following cataract operations, regular reviews, etc. The new contract only allows for the services of an optician. The backlog has been exacerbated by the number of follow-on appointments from cataract operations as the NHS catch up on operations outstanding from the pandemic. This situation has been flagged as a significant risk and escalated to senior management within Oxleas and a case is being made to NHSE for additional funding to address the problem.

Dentistry for the first half of the reporting period did have a significant waiting list due to a backlog, caused by the limited service that could be offered during and immediately post pandemic. Additional clinics were commissioned, and the Board can report that the waiting lists have reduced to more manageable levels. The new contract also provides for the services of a dental therapist who is qualified to undertake minor fillings, as well as cover general dental hygienist work, which is a significant improvement on the previous service. The dentist now visits twice a week, both all-day sessions, and the dental therapist once a week for an all-day session.

The “Health Bar”, which offers prisoners the opportunity to purchase non-prescription items (e.g., sticking plasters), only restarted in May 2023. There have been some technical problems with the ordering system (provided by the prison, not healthcare), whereby prisoners sharing a cell and both submitting an order find that only one of them receives any items, but their order includes their cellmate’s and it has all come out of the one prisoner’s money.

6.3 Mental health

Prior to transfer to Oxleas, mental health services were provided by the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP).

Group sessions or ‘well man’ clinics addressing alcohol awareness, anxiety, emotional wellbeing, low mood, relapse prevention, relaxation, self-esteem, sleep, Spice awareness and stress continued up until the change of contract. All of the AWP staff were qualified to deliver all of them, so it was possible at any time to stop one course and run two groups of another instead. Attendance at group sessions was reported to be good and post-group feedback was recorded as very positive. The aspect of service that prisoners did complain about was the lack of one-to-one consultations.

On change of contract there were four vacancies, so that there were only two staff remaining to transfer across to Oxleas: one neurodevelopmental lead and one mental health nurse. Some cover was, in the interim, provided from HMP Leyhill.

The vacant posts under the new contract were:

- 1 x deputy mental health lead
- 1 x psychologist (covering multiple prisons)
- 1 x assistant psychologist
- 1 x psychiatrist (covering HMP Leyhill, HMP Erlestoke & Ashfield), also supporting Interventions with the prescription and maintenance of Medication to Manage Sexual Arousal (MMSA)
- 1 x mental health practitioner

The aim was to have a full complement by April 2023 and, by June 2023, all but one post (mental health practitioner) was filled. As new staff were recruited, they appeared to quickly settle in, and it has been noticeable that complaints from prisoners about mental health have reduced. Regular visits from a psychologist and psychiatrist have been very beneficial, particularly in supporting regular self-harmers and more recently a case of suspected psychotic behaviour.

Substance misuse programmes for both drugs and alcohol have been subcontracted to Change, Grow, Live (CGL) and are underway. Oxleas psychologists now run groups sessions formerly provided by AWP, including anxiety, anger management, trauma, etc.

6.4 Social care

A social care contract is in place with South Gloucestershire Council, with weekly meetings held with the officer in charge of diversity and equality to assess any needs. With a significant number of elderly prisoners, access to occupational health

assessments is important and the provision of appropriate equipment vital for facilitating life in the prison.

Ashfield's 'buddy' system, by which able prisoners support those who require help in various non-personal situations (e.g., wheelchair pushing, cell cleaning, meal collection) continues to provide invaluable support for those requiring assistance. It was the buddies who, part way through the reporting year, alerted the Board to the fact that wheelchairs purchased out of the PTF and used in part to transport some prisoners to hospital appointments were not being brought back to Ashfield by escorting officers and this was resulting in a reduction in the overall number of wheelchairs available on the wings. Replacements were eventually purchased, but out of the PTF again and not out of Serco's own funds.

At any one time there are typically around 45 or more prisoners requiring Prisoner Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) in case of emergency evacuations, and these are regularly reviewed and updated. In order to resolve the concerns expressed by prisoners with mobility issues about their ability to reach the in-cell alarm in case of medical emergency, the prison has made progress since the last annual report in issuing portable alert buzzers to some prisoners. Furthermore, in response to concerns raised by the more elderly population in the light of four deaths in custody over this last 12 months, the prison is also investigating other alternative methods of alerting staff.

End-of-life prisoners don't usually remain for any longer than necessary in Ashfield, as there are no palliative care facilities but, this year, one prisoner requested to remain in Ashfield despite the lack of facilities. It was agreed that the prisoner would remain for as long as care could be provided, and both the healthcare staff and prison staff must be commended for enabling the prisoner to be accommodated comfortably. Healthcare liaised with St. Peter's Hospice and HMP Littlehey's palliative care unit for advice and guidance. Agincare (South Gloucestershire Council's sub-contracted provider) visited three times daily and prisoner buddies gave support where they could. The individual was very appreciative both of staff and prisoner support, which meant he was able to remain in Ashfield until such time that he needed specialised treatment in hospital.

In this reporting period Ashfield, for a number of months, housed a prisoner suffering with worsening dementia. This was a very challenging situation for both staff and healthcare professionals. The prisoner did receive social care visits from Agincare, at one point four times a day which, subsequently, reduced to twice a day. The prisoner was housed on the EDC which, as a small house block, provided a better environment in which to monitor him. Prison staff, in particular, went out of their way to help him, as did prisoners on that house block. Again, as with the terminally ill prisoner, Ashfield healthcare and prison staff must be commended on the level of care they provided in difficult circumstances. However, Ashfield does not have 24-hour social care cover and, as the prisoner's night-time behaviour deteriorated, so it became necessary to find an alternative prison with 24-hour healthcare. This case, and that of the terminally ill prisoner, do highlight the need for more specialised custodial centres providing 24-hour social and palliative care.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Only exceptional circumstances, such as a Covid-19 outbreak in January, impacted adversely upon Ashfield's otherwise good record for time out of cell in comparison with many other establishments.

For the Covid-19 outbreak restrictions were implemented on a wing-by-wing basis initially, dictated by the number of cases identified. However, as the numbers increased, the decision was taken with the UK Health Security Agency on 25 January 2023 to lock down the whole prison in the light of 40 cases being confirmed. This resulted in prisoners only having an hour out of cell other than to collect meals. However, fortunately, the outbreak was contained, and a normal regime was reinstated on 6 February. Prisoners reported that, although they disliked being locked up for such long periods, they fully understood the need for it.

Two other occasions, when time out of cell has been restricted, have been down to staff shortages, one over the New Year weekend and the other over the last weekend in April 2023, when a number of staff were diverted to Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre to support Serco staff dealing with a case of concerted indiscipline.

Whilst prisoners accept regime change in response to unforeseen circumstances, the recent restrictions on movements outside scheduled movement times have created much discontent among prisoners. Initially brought in during May 2023, whilst scaffolding was up around the residential units for security reasons and then retained for the duration of the artificial turf replacement, there are concerns that this change will become permanent. Whereas, before this, prisoners with an approved movement slip could move between areas (e.g., to attend a healthcare appointment) outside of mass movement times, this has now changed. Now, any movement outside of mass movement is not permitted unless accompanied by an officer, or the prisoner is kept within the line of sight of officers. This initially caused major headaches for healthcare appointments, with prisoners held for potentially an hour and a half in a full waiting room. However, the problem has recently largely been resolved by an escorting officer being assigned to healthcare.

The restrictions have led to a marked increase in the numbers of prisoners expressing the view that Ashfield has become more like a category B prison.

Orderlies are particularly aggrieved, as they feel that they have worked hard to attain the position and see restricted movements as a lack of trust. As many prisoners go on from Ashfield to release or open conditions, it is perceived as a retrograde step in terms of preparing prisoners for their next stage. The Director informed the Board that a change to movements was required for security reasons following an HMPPS inspection in order to align Ashfield more closely with other category C prisons, as well as for the dilapidation work. Unfortunately, the reasons for the changes have not been adequately communicated to prisoners and are causing consternation and upset. In order to retain prisoner goodwill, more effective communication is needed. The Board hopes that concerns voiced by prisoners will be taken into consideration when permanent arrangements are proposed. It is encouraging that already there are plans to establish 'red band' orderlies (trusted prisoners), who will be permitted to move around more freely dependent on their roles.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Ashfield does not provide a comprehensive drug rehabilitation service as there is no evidenced requirement for one. Nevertheless, as part of the initial health care screening on arrival, any evidence of substance abuse in a prisoner's past history will be highlighted and the prisoner will be referred to CGL for assessment and potentially psychosocial support and also considered for the substance abuse course to try and counteract any relapse on release.

6.7 Soft skills

The Board is very pleased to report a number of initiatives in support of prisoners' wellbeing have taken place or are planned:

- An occupational therapist was contracted to support a six-week course for health and wellbeing. This took place in spring 2023.
- The head of healthcare has secured funding from Oxleas for, inter alia, a 10-week yoga course and working with safer custody to revamp the 'Snoezelen' room (multi-sensory environment) and provide arts and crafts.
- The establishment of a health improvement group (HIG) in February 2023 with prisoners, which meets regularly to discuss topical issues.
- The appointment of two healthcare orderlies trained to perform straightforward checks, e.g., blood pressure, but primarily to act as liaison between prisoners and healthcare.
- Active liaison with The Hepatitis C Trust charity, from which the head of healthcare has recently secured a grant.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The manager in charge of education and purposeful activity at the start of this reporting period left at the end of January 2023 and, for a few months, the department was run by one of the tutors whilst a recruitment process was underway.

It is relevant that the department, although rated as “Good” overall in the 2019 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and OFSTED inspection, has been subject since to regular OFSTED monitoring to determine how far they have made progress in resolving weaknesses that had been identified. OFSTED determined on their final monitoring visit in September 2022 that the department had made “reasonable progress”, and that there was now closer working with colleagues from mental health and interventions to assess prisoners’ neurodiversity needs on arrival. Target-setting for students was now happening, though the Individual Learning Plans were not being used as intended. Prisoners were also receiving IAG (information, advice and guidance) to assist them in choosing their courses though, unfortunately, in 2023 the IAG tutor resigned.

During the first part of this reporting period the department was collecting data to be presented at Quality Improvement Group meetings, though it was not rigorously interrogated, analysed or explored in any depth in order to be meaningful and there was very little discussion of, or ideas for, curriculum improvements. For example, data about accreditations achieved was presented as a total, without specifying which were full qualifications and which were only individual unit qualifications. It is unfortunate that the last Quality Improvement Meeting took place in March 2023 to review the statistics for October to December 2022 and no further meeting has subsequently taken place. There is, therefore, an urgent need for more rigorous quality assurance processes to be implemented.

With another full HMIP and OFSTED inspection expected very soon, it is refreshing that the newly appointed head of this department, who took up post in May 2023, has a wide breadth of educational experience and has ambitious ideas for curriculum change and development. The Board hopes that this will enable a department, which has become rather set in its ways in recent years, to move forward and become more vibrant. Until recently, it has often provided insufficient challenge for its students, not least because all except a handful of the classroom-based and vocational areas have only offered taught courses to Levels 1 and 2, despite this being a training prison.

The classroom-based education curriculum remained unchanged throughout the reporting period, with a standard offering of literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital arts, life skills and business skills. The latter is of particular note, as it is the only course in the education department taught by a fully qualified teacher and students have the potential to progress up to Level 4 by developing business plans to implement on release. Most of the teaching staff are “badged” prison officers appointed without formal teaching qualifications but are enthusiastic about their subjects. The risk inherent in this system is, of course, that when there are occasional staffing shortages, lessons can be cancelled and staff are reallocated to normal wing officer work.

Literacy and numeracy are both currently treated as separate subjects and, so far, there has been no evident systematic and planned attempt to embed literacy and numeracy into vocational courses, though some of it inevitably occurs in a less structured and more informal way on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, some prisoners do not necessarily see the relevance of literacy and numeracy to their future employment prospects. Some also resent being required to study to Level 1 or 2 in functional skills before being able to opt for vocational training courses. A small number, however, have been entered for GCSE examinations in English or mathematics upon completing Level 2 and have generally achieved modest grades.

Help for prisoners identified as dyslexic seems to have been limited to the provision of coloured acetates (pieces of coloured plastic that are placed over written words to help reading and writing) and little else. There is a significant way to go in terms of the department making provision for those with ADHD and other forms of neurodivergence. However, the education department is due to have a neurodiversity support manager appointed in the coming months who will be addressing these concerns.

As in previous years, the Board has continued to have concerns about the number of classes cancelled or, alternatively, supervised by non-specialists when the designated subject staff were not on site and, increasingly, about the methodology applied in calculating classroom attendance percentages. Literacy sessions (and initial literacy assessments) were cancelled throughout much of the autumn, only being fully reinstated in January 2023, and life skills has had numerous cancelled sessions owing to staff absence. It is also disappointing that there is no tradition of providing subject-specific in-cell work to enable men to consolidate their understanding or to extend it, especially when classes are cancelled or suspended.

Despite all of the above, as a general rule less than 1% of prisoners are unemployed, classroom behaviour is generally very good, attendance levels are high, classes start on time, and the majority of prisoners are engaged and complimentary and enthusiastic about the teaching they receive. There is relatively little traditional group teaching and prisoners in mixed ability groups are given individual exercises or assignments to work on appropriate to their levels as ascertained on arrival. Most classes also benefit from the presence of an orderly who can act as a classroom assistant and support prisoners with their work. In numeracy, for example, in the course of this year, they have been supported by a former mathematics teacher and subsequently by an orderly who has an A Level in mathematics.

At any one time, up to around 30 students are enrolled in the Open University (OU) and on other Level 3 and 4 courses of a more individual nature, and they have a dedicated room in the education department, complete with computers linked to the OU's Virtual Campus.

The question remains, however, as to how far prisoners are really stretched and challenged in the department as a whole. There is undoubtedly scope for it being more ambitious under its new leadership.

The library remains a welcoming environment, though some prisoners have continued to complain that movement restrictions require them to spend a full session of an-hour-and-a-half in there, which is far longer than they need to select books.

An enterprising new librarian was appointed in January 2023, and she has already introduced a number of innovations, including a reading group, a creative writing group, a weekly over 60s coffee morning, a Scrabble group, and a weekly session for the Shannon Trust (a charity that helps disadvantaged people to read). She is in the process of putting together an editorial team for the in-house magazine and there are also plans for a board games club. In addition, a monthly theme is chosen for the library, such as the Coronation, great journeys and “Marvel” vs “DC” to encourage prisoners to explore and interpret aspects of each theme through reading and creative writing. Since her arrival there has been an upward trend in library attendance and a very significant increase in black, Asian and other minority ethnic users (from 45 attendances in January to 149 in May). The library also provides a loan system for DVDs, which again has shown a marked increase in demand (from 1331 loans in January to 1531 in May). There is a generous monthly budget for the purchase of new books and DVDs.

In addition, the library hosts the PALS system which enables prisoners to ask for information from a trained orderly about various matters related to prison rules and policies and the wider criminal justice system.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Accredited courses (predominantly at Levels 1 and 2 but occasionally at Level 3) have continued to be offered in horticulture, bakery, industrial cleaning, carpentry, painting and decorating, electrics, plumbing, and tiling and plastering. Prisoners are invariably very complimentary about their experience and evidently enjoy acquiring and practising practical skills that may lead to meaningful employment on release. There were plans prior to the Covid-19 pandemic for Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM) qualifications to be offered in the waste management unit, but these have not yet commenced because of the slow progress in completing all the necessary facilities and now look increasingly doubtful. Those completing the digital art courses have the opportunity, should they wish, to acquire useful practical experience in the design and print workshop.

One frustration often expressed by prisoners to the Board is, however, the length of the waiting lists for some of these popular vocational courses and what can seem to them a fairly arbitrary system for determining who is able to access them and when. It would be in the interests of the education and training department to share more clearly with prisoners how the labour and courses allocation system works and the factors that govern its application in practice.

Work opportunities are also provided in industrial packaging and breakfast packing (both of which provide useful paid employment for the elderly or those with disabilities, as well as able-bodied, younger men), and also in the main laundry and wing laundries, barber’s shop, stores, prison shop, library, and property department. Very little accredited training, however, has been offered in these areas and this seems a wasted opportunity. This is an area ripe for development. It is encouraging that at the very end of this reporting period some new courses are being offered in the gym, in addition to the courses already offered to gym orderlies looking to work in this area on release.

7.3 Offender management, progression

During this reporting period, Ashfield has exceeded its target delivery of the Horizon (for medium-risk prisoners) and Kaizen (for high-risk prisoners) offender behaviour programmes (OBPs.) A total of 84 completions were achieved, compared with a target of 76. Ashfield continued to run the Healthy Sex Programme (HSP), delivered on a one-to-one basis, and achieved the target of running sessions for eight prisoners.

Ashfield also continued to provide the Medication to Manage Sexual Arousal (MMSA) programme. Although this service had been initially made available to those considered and professionally assessed as needing support during the Healthy Sex Programme (HSP), it is now being offered, where appropriate, to those also undertaking other offending behaviour programmes. It was prescribed to a total of 10 prisoners, compared with eight during the previous reporting period. One welcome improvement is that it is now being delivered by a consultant forensic psychiatrist. The use of MMSA is being reviewed to assess whether the programme could also benefit those not attending an OBP.

At the end of each OBP, a review takes place of the progress that a participant has achieved. At this review he can request the support of someone from outside the interventions team, such as chaplaincy or other prison staff. A welcome development is that, for the first time, following the setting up of a post-programme review suite to hold virtual reviews with family members using conferencing software, a total of six men had a family member attend their review during this reporting period. Ashfield also continues to arrange a post-programmes ceremony to acknowledge and celebrate those who have successfully completed their programme, also attended by some families. The involvement of family members in these ways can be key in contributing towards the achievement of effective resettlement.

In spite of the high demand for OBPs, it is to the credit of the prison that no prisoner during this reporting period was released from Ashfield who failed to get access to the OBP for which they had been assessed. Priority for attendance continues to be assessed by a multi-disciplinary team, comprising a programme and treatment manager from interventions, the OMU manager and a senior probation officer. The criteria used are set out in HMPPS's exceptional delivery model and the principles contained in advice issued by the HMPPS OBP recovery team.

Where there is a potential delay in attending an OBP, Ashfield will also explore the possibility of arranging a transfer to another category C training prison. However, because of the general national shortfall in the capacity for prisons to meet the existing demand for such OBPs, any significant delay in attending a suitable OBP could adversely affect the re-categorising of a prisoner that might otherwise have enabled him to transfer to a category D prison and help him to prepare more effectively for release. It is anticipated that there will be greater pressure at Ashfield for the delivery of Kaizen programmes, as the demand is likely to exceed availability of spaces. This will be monitored by the Board.

There have been a few instances of Ashfield receiving prisoners with learning difficulties for whom Becoming New Me (a behavioural programme run by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation charity) would be a more suitable OBP. This is not a programme that Ashfield is contracted to provide, and it is therefore necessary to transfer such prisoners to another more suitable prison. This situation has arisen because the exporting prison did not have the expertise to carry out the detailed assessment that would have identified the prisoner's learning difficulties.

In last year's report the Board expressed concerns about the potential impact of HMPPS's proposals to significantly reduce staffing levels within the Offender Management Unit. However, we are pleased to note that staffing levels were revised upwards and that this is, therefore, no longer an issue of concern.

Ashfield continues to have only a minimal number of Offender Assessment System (OASys) records out of time. There has been an increasing number of prisoners who transfer from reception prisons where the guidelines require that they are completed within 10 weeks of sentence. In terms of reviews for existing prisoners, Ashfield also has a robust monitoring system in place. Whilst at any point in time the number of outstanding cases will fluctuate, there are only a very small number overdue at any one point of time.

The prison has taken the initiative to embrace the concept of "Rehabilitative Culture" and is actively working on embedding a culture of care for both staff and prisoners alike in order to promote an atmosphere of hope, positivity and the possibility of changing lives for the better and reduce reoffending. The strategy is managed through bi-monthly multi-disciplinary meetings and the committee has been developing imaginative ideas and events. For example, at the end of this reporting period, planning was already well underway for the latter part of 2023 and into 2024, including the revival of the "Ashfest" cultural festival. There were also proposals for the repurposing of a TV channel to improve communication with prisoners who have literacy difficulties or for whom English is a second language.

7.4 Family contact

As mentioned in our last report, HMPPS was introducing key performance targets to measure performance in the area of family support, which can be an important element for a prisoner in achieving or working towards rehabilitation and ensuring effective resettlement on release. Ashfield is to be congratulated on coming first out of a group of comparator prisons for their Family and Significant Other (FASO) initiatives.

In order to develop strategies, monitor progress on issues relating to prisoners' families and ensure a coordinated approach across all relevant services, Ashfield is very proactive and holds regular FASO meetings. In addition, five staff, who have been trained to deliver a training awareness programme on the importance of prisoner-family contact, have started to deliver a series of training programmes at Ashfield. This topic is also included as part of the training and induction programme for new PCOs.

During this reporting period Ashfield's innovative scheme of Family/Friends at the Centre of Throughcare (FACT) has been able to function fully again, following the

lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. Ashfield has been promoting the scheme with prisoners, including advising all new prisoners about it as part of the induction process. Ashfield should be congratulated on having 58 prisoners signed up to the scheme, with a further 23 expressions of interest being processed. A key part of this scheme is the holding of 10 FACT days to enable up to seven families each time to meet relevant staff. In addition, the families can receive regular updates and have a point of contact (the keyworker hub) if they have any queries or concerns.

Social video calls have been a popular form of contact during periods of lockdown, and they are still available following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. Ashfield has continued to subsidise the cost of an additional half hour on the standard half hour, funded by the Prisoners' Trust Fund, and at the end of this reporting period it is looking to increase the number of terminals in the visits hall.

Maintaining links between prisoners and their families can also help tackle intergenerational offending by addressing the poor outcomes faced by children of prisoners. To support this, Ashfield continues to be actively involved in the initiative Children Affected by Parental Offending (CAPO) service. Ashfield works in partnership with Bristol City and South Gloucestershire councils. Families, as well as any members of the partnership group, can now contact a trained champion at Ashfield, who can either offer advice or signpost them to an appropriate local service. The proceeds from the recently opened prison charity shop, which enables prisoners to purchase second-hand clothing and other items left by prisoners on release or transfer, are also donated to CAPO.

During this reporting period, a total of six family days took place. On each occasion Ashfield arranges a number of different family activities. Ashfield is currently planning to arrange a separate "Adult Family" day for prisoners specifically with adult children or those with children who formerly visited but have now reached the age of 18. This would help to overcome the potential issue of discriminating against prisoners having only adult children and addresses issues of security. Further details will be contained in next year's report.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As a category C specialist training prison, the number of prisoners released directly from Ashfield should be relatively low, and last year the Board reported that the numbers were expected to decrease as part of the implementation of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) flow model. However, during this reporting period there were 42 prisoners released from Ashfield, compared with 43 in the previous year. One reason why the greater reduction in releases from Ashfield did not materialise is a consequence of the pressure on prison places, and because all moves from Ashfield to resettlement prisons were suspended at the end of 2022.

Although not specifically resourced to help prisoners prepare for release, Ashfield takes a number of steps to facilitate the transition process. Citizens Advice come in half a day per week to support prisoners, providing advice on a range of matters, including debt, bank accounts, becoming self-employed or running their own business. Arrangements are made for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to speak to those being released, setting up DWP appointments so that benefits

aren't delayed on release. During this reporting period OMU arranged workshops covering topics including approved premises, supervision and licence conditions and preparation for open conditions. They also arranged a "Teams" meeting with HMP Haverigg (resettlement prison), and a workshop specifically for IPP prisoners. Additionally, Ashfield's prisoners' advice centre offers a peer-led range of support and signposting services for prisoners. For example, they help them fill out referral forms, provide information on bank accounts, open prisons and approved premises, and help them write a curriculum vitae.

About 10 months prior to release, the relevant probation officer Community Offender Manager (COM) is identified. Ashfield supports them in becoming familiar with the case, including meeting their prisoner either via face to face social visit or via video link. The COM is responsible for securing accommodation, which is usually an approved premises bed space, but there have continued to be instances of accommodation only being secured at a very late stage.

Once re-categorised, transferring prisoners to open conditions (category D) can be considered to be an important step in preparing them for release. Sixty-two (compared to 54 during the last reporting period) transferred to category D prisons: 47 to HMP Leyhill, 13 to HMP Haverigg, and two to HMP Hollesley Bay. Although it was expected that the waiting list for transfers to category D prisons would increase, this did not happen, primarily as a result of the pressure on prison places, referred to above. The aim now is to transfer re-categorised prisoners at the earliest possible moment to enable Ashfield to have the space to receive prisoners from reception prisons. As a result, the average wait for a transfer at the end of this reporting period is only about two weeks.

As reported last year, changes to the parole process had started to impact adversely on prisoners' progression/release decisions, because higher thresholds were being applied. Report writers were no longer allowed to provide a recommendation and, in a couple of cases where report writers would have previously anticipated a progression or release, the decision had resulted in prisoners staying in closed conditions. This rule, preventing officers making a recommendation for release, was overturned by the High Court in March 2023, but it has not been possible to determine the impact on releases during the remaining reporting period.

In terms of IPP prisoners and those serving life sentences, any decision by the Parole Board for transfer to open conditions has to be approved by the Secretary of State for Justice. The criteria that could be used by the Secretary of State in the decision-making process were changed in June 2022. The announcement of this inevitably caused some consternation and distress among prisoners but, to its credit, Ashfield ensured they were each seen individually and the situation explained. In the case of several prisoners, the Secretary of State did not accept the Parole Board's recommendation, and this delayed possible transfer to open conditions to help prepare them for their eventual release. The Board welcomes the fact that, in July 2023, just after the end of this reporting period, the additional conditions, introduced in 2022, were withdrawn.

The Board also notes, with concern, the delay during this reporting period, in the decision-making process with regard to IPP and life-sentenced prisoners. On

average it has taken eight months for a decision to be received. This is not acceptable.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8 (including 1 on sabbatical and 3 appointed only shortly before the end of the reporting year)
Total number of visits to the establishment	283

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

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year/12 mths	Current reporting year/12 mths
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	10	19
C	Equality	3	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	8	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	3
F	Food and kitchens	3	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	5	16
H1	Property within this establishment	1	4
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	13	10
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	2	
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorization	15	17
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10	5
K	Transfers	1	3
L/M	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	4	5
	Total number of applications	86 (Including 3 confidential apps)	104

Annex A – List of Service Providers

Services run by organisations other than Serco:

- Healthcare is commissioned by NHS England. The primary contract covers both HMP Ashfield and HMP Leyhill. The lead contractor until the end of September 2022 was Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), which provided mental health services. Physical healthcare was run by Hanham Secure Health Limited (HSH), while a dedicated team dispensed medications that were primarily sourced from the pharmacy at HMP Bristol.
- At the start of October 2022, the main contract for both physical and mental healthcare transferred to Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, but they sub-contracted the substance misuse and mental health groupwork to CGL (Change, Grow, Live) and the GP service to DrPA Secure. Throughout this period, specialist contractors have provided further services, including dentistry, optometry, podiatry, audiology and physiotherapy.
- Social care is organised through South Gloucestershire Council, in conjunction with Agincare, a social care provider.
- Voluntary services: Changing Tunes, Citizens Advice, faith volunteers, Peace Education Programme (from The Prem Rawat Foundation), prison visitors, Shannon Trust.

Annex B – Tables and Graphs

Prison Escort and Custody Services (PECS): data, July 2022 to June 2023

Month	Planned Transfers	Cancellations/ schedule change
July 2022	46	22
Aug	58	18
Sept	30	2
Oct	71	30
Nov	63	12
Dec	29	8
Jan 2023	Figures not available	Figures not available
Feb	18	4
Mar	29	7
Apr	14	-
May	24	5
June	33	5



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