



**Annual Report**  
of the  
**Independent Monitoring Board**  
at

**HMP Brixton**

for reporting Year  
(1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018)

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*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A Introductory Sections 1 – 3

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### 1. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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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.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) 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;
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has;
- (3) **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.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

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2.1 During the year under review, HMP Brixton used C wing for full-time workers and enhanced prisoners; sex offenders were accommodated on G wing; D wing remained a drug recovery unit until July, when it became a mixed drug recovery and wellbeing unit; B wing was used for induction; A wing accommodated general population and the London Pathways Unit (LPU), for up to 36 prisoners committing to psychological therapies. Brixton continued to be a resettlement prison. Certified accommodation was 528; operational capacity was reduced to 798.

A wing	232 prisoners	135 Cells
B wing	150 prisoners	88 Cells
C wing	133 prisoners	70 Cells
D wing	48 prisoners	26 Cells
G wing	235 prisoners	149 Cells

2.2 The Segregation Unit had seven cells, and one special cell (doubling as a holding cell). Material changes to other areas of the prison were largely cosmetic, apart from rewiring. Overall, the condition of the accommodation remained unacceptable.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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#### **Introduction**

- 3.1 This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Brixton for the period 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018. Our evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys, and prisoner applications.

#### **MAIN JUDGEMENTS**

##### **Are prisoners treated fairly?**

- 3.2 The prison was adequately staffed by January 2018. About 50% of staff were in their first year of service and inevitably there were variations in their handling of prisoners, but this did not result in significant unfairness. There were fewer unforeseen lock downs and men were more reliably out of their cells to access activities and have association. A new regime introduced in February increased time out of cell, and identified officers' duties in detail, including on escort. The regime and detailing duties were regularly reviewed in the light of experience and improved where possible. (7.4; 7.5)
- 3.3 The new IEP (incentives and earned privileges) guidance, introduced in November 2017, contributed to the improvement in fair treatment, for instance in more consistent reviews of IEP status. The proportion of prisoners in each IEP category is broadly in line with the prison's population, except that younger men are over-represented on basic IEP. However, the numbers on basic have been reduced, more in line with the national average. The proportion of men in each protected characteristic group subject to adjudication is not significantly out of line with the population of the prison as a whole. (5.1-5.2; 5.11-5.14)
- 3.4 There were too few vocational training places. The shortfall was particularly severe for G wing men, who were also disadvantaged by not being eligible for a number of contracted CRC (Community Rehabilitation Company) resettlement services, and in finding employment for release. Lack of wing-based private spaces for interviews, for instance with mental health workers and Forward Trust staff, was a continuing problem. The standard of recording interviews undertaken by OMIC key workers, from July onwards, was good. (4.14; 6.1; 8.7; 9.1; 9.4; A1.11)
- 3.5 The number of foreign national prisoners varied, around 12% of the prison population. They have the most significant variety of language needs: it can be difficult both for prison and Border Force staff to communicate with them, especially to explain the uncertainty about what will happen, and when, once their sentence has been completed. This has caused great distress in some cases. (5.5)

##### **Are prisoners treated humanely?**

- 3.6 Brixton's cramped cells cannot accommodate two men humanely, particularly if they are old or infirm. The majority of the men over 60 and all those over 70 were on G wing, sleeping in narrow bunk beds. There is only one cell on the ground floor and no lift. This made it difficult for men to get their meals, access social activities and exercise, and use the one mobility scooter on the ground floor. A number of them (21 in August) were assisted by prisoner 'buddies', who collected their meals and did other tasks like making the bed. The buddies were organised by the Learning & Skills team, but had received no social care training from the local authority. Only towards the end of the year did Lambeth (the local authority) begin to assess these men's care needs. Nevertheless, the central prisoner

management unit (PMU) continued to send such men to HMP Brixton. At the end of August 2018, two men in wheelchairs were sent from HMP Littlehey, had to be accommodated for the night, and then face the journey back the next day. (7.1-7.3)

- 3.7 Only some bids for capital improvements to the prison's infrastructure succeeded during the year. The electrical ring main was replaced, which allowed fans to be used during the hot summer. The Board regrets that funding was not available to install a lift on G wing; or to improve the fabric of the Segregation Unit, which is persistently damp, and increase interview and holding spaces there. Some other improvements, especially to the showers, where the flooring and the water pressure are substandard, were completed sequentially, but much remains to be done. A 'cell decency' programme meant that cells were better cleaned and equipped for men coming in. (5.17; 6.1; 7.1-7.3; 7.6; 10.2)

### **Are prisoners prepared well for release?**

- 3.8 The increased reliability and predictability of the regime removed one of the most significant barriers to successful education, work and training noted in last year's report – the inability of prisoners to attend regularly because staff shortages meant they were not unlocked. Men's absences for other reasons were followed up, and they were disciplined if appropriate. Efforts were made to get escorting officers to return men promptly to their activity, for instance after healthcare appointments. (7.4-7.5; 9.2)
- 3.9 Those men engaged in on-the-job learning and vocational training within the prison received support and encouragement that helped them to seek good jobs on release, although the restricted capacity meant that comparatively few men were able to take advantage of this vocational offer. No funding was made available to expand activity spaces. Men undertaking distance learning, including OU (Open University) courses, were well engaged, men on standard locally provided academic courses less so. This was due, in part, to the provisions of the national contract, now in its final year, which rewards providers on the basis of the number of men signed up to a course rather than the number attending or the progress that they make, and partly to the content and level of education offered, which men find unattractive. To overcome this, some basic skills were taught in vocational classes. (9.1-9.4; 10.2-10.3; 10.5)
- 3.10 The Board conducted a survey over a two-month period of men shortly to be released, with questions about support from the CRC and other agencies, job or training offers, and housing. The results (see Annex 1) are an improvement over last year but remain disappointing. 34% of men reported not receiving any advice or support about resettlement; 33% had either very temporary or no accommodation to go to; and 62% did not have employment or training in place. The shortage of accommodation is outside the control of the prison and the CRC, and a job is unlikely to be offered to a man who has nowhere to live. The prison has more ability to influence men's chance of a job to start on release, and the focus on preparation for work has increased this year. But more long-term investment in vocational training spaces will be needed to help more men get jobs. The work situation appears worst for G wing men, with only 15% of those interviewed having work or training arranged. This is a particularly intractable problem, which the prison has tried to address. (10.5; 10-6; 10.12; 10.13; A1.4-A1.18)
- 3.11 The continued shortfall in open prison places for Category D men was damaging to these men's resettlement chances. It was particularly problematic for G wing prisoners, given the national shortage of open prisons that accept sex offenders. The Governor intervened to set up reciprocal arrangements with other establishments so that some men could be

moved on, but there were no transfers for G wing Cat Ds in the first seven months of the year. (7.11; 10.18)

- 3.12 Another 60 or so G wing prisoners waited for most of the year for a transfer to a prison where they could do the offending behaviour programmes required in their sentence plan. Men released without accessing such a course would need to complete it in the community, delaying their potential progress towards rehabilitation and employment. (7.10; 10.19)
- 3.13 A small number of men with very high levels of need were placed on progression plans, and given patient and humane treatment. This prevented, or at the least arrested, the 'revolving door' of self-harm, disruptive behaviour, and transfer from one prison to another, which had been their experience over the course of their sentences. (4.17; 4.18; 6.3)

## **BETTER OUTCOMES**

- 3.14 The organisation of the prison has improved significantly in the last year. Compared with autumn 2016, there has been a step change. The Governor and his management team have continued to identify and address problems, usually promptly as they arise, and to develop key areas through the production, implementation and monitoring of strategic and operational plans. The biggest change has been the full staffing complement, with regular training, and mentoring of new officers leading to much better retention rates than nationally (of the 90 recruited since 1 September 2017, 81 were still in post at the end of the reporting year). Towards the end of the year, a number of them were given special projects to further their development. (4.5-4.6; 4.17-4.18; 4.22; 4.33-4.34; 10.1; 10.15)
- 3.15 The detail (the changing daily deployment of officers) has been revised several times, to focus resources where needed, and to support decency, safety and rehabilitation. Discipline and morale have continued to improve. The most significant gains have been in safer custody, the introduction of the first phase of OMIC (the offender management in custody programme), and the improvement and regular monitoring of basic procedures – like cell bells, IEP reviews, and following up on security intelligence – on the wings. Especially in the area of safer custody, staff have been more proactive in identifying and heading off problems, as well as in supporting prisoners towards more settled behaviour. The OMIC programme has been working well since it began in July, with good reports on NOMIS from key worker officers. The food and gym provision continued to be excellent. (4.5-4.6; 4.17-4.19; 4.22; 4.25; 5.11; 5.14; 7.7; 7.17; 7.19; 9.10; 10.15)
- 3.16 The prison has worked hard to try to prevent contraband entering the prison. Intelligence has been better used to identify sources, whether prisoners, visitors, or staff. The reduction in MDT (mandatory drug test) failure rates reflects the progress made. There is still a significant amount of continuing effort required to reduce drug abuse, and the associated problems of debt and violence. A new approach is needed to control the availability of mobile phones within the prison. The Board recommended last year that national action to persuade phone companies to disable phones used exclusively from prison premises could be effective in helping to maintain control of all jails, and hopes that the Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill 2017-19 currently going through Parliament might provide the solution. (4.5-4.8; 4.10)
- 3.17 The use of closed visits was reduced so that, by the end of the year, they were used only, as they should be, for men known for or strongly suspected of illicit behaviour. There were

also improvements in the timing of visits, and more family involvement and events. (4.9; 5.17-5.20)

- 3.18 The prisoner information desks (PIDs) on the wings were better bedded in. Individual PIDs workers were enthusiastic and effective. Responses to general applications improved significantly in most areas, although not from OMU (Offender Management Unit) and Learning & Skills. (4.31; 7.16; 7.18)
- 3.19 There were improvements to the Reception area of the prison, making it brighter, more welcoming and with more information and support. The environment of the visits hall was also improved, and there were fewer prisoners per session, so the small hall felt less crowded. (4.1; 5.17-5.18)
- 3.20 The results of the national prisoner and staff surveys (MPQL and SQL) in May 2018 were clearly better than for the previous surveys in April 2015 (before conditions in Brixton deteriorated further). In the MQPL, 18 of the 20 dimension scores improved; the score for 'prisoner adaptation' (the extent to which it is possible to avoid debt or trading) was most markedly better than average for a resettlement prison; the score for 'living conditions' was amongst the lowest, bearing out the Board's view about the inadequacy of the accommodation. In the SQL Brixton was rated higher than 14 of its 19 comparator jails and similar to the remaining five. (7.1-7.3)
- 3.21 The Board commends the energy, commitment, determination, and humanity of the Governor and managers in Brixton, and of staff at all levels – experienced and new officers, civilians and agency staff. They have taken Brixton out of failure, and made it a much better place for safeguarding men and encouraging resettlement.
- 3.22 To make further progress, the Board considers that the following outcomes are desirable:

**THAT THE MINISTER:**

- 3.23 Note and support the Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill referred to above. While the Board welcomes the announcement that in-cell phones will be provided across the estate, it considers that this will take some time to roll out, and may be difficult in older establishments like Brixton. Disabling phones in illicit use now would be an immediate improvement. (3.16; 4.10)
- 3.24 Encourage urgent action by government departments, charities, local authorities and the London Mayor to increase the availability of good hostel accommodation for prisoners on their release, including approved premises where required. Accommodation on release is a vital factor in reducing reoffending. The Board welcomes the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; but where there is a shortage of affordable housing, as in London, local authorities may be unable to meet the duty without housing men out of area, potentially violating their licence conditions and reducing the chances of resettlement. (3.10; 10.6, A1.4-A1.7)
- 3.25 Ensure that the provision of additional funding for prisons which are failing does not disadvantage other prisons by preventing essential building works, refurbishment of safety-critical systems like cell bells, or provision of vocational training. (3.4; 3.7; 3.9; 3.10; 6.1; 7.19; 9.1; 9.4; 10.2; A1.8-A1.12)

**THAT HMPPS:**

- 3.26 Aim to ensure that there are normally places available in open prisons for those prisoners who are eligible for them. There has been no improvement since the Board raised this problem

in last year's report. (3.11; 7.11; 10.18)

- 3.27 Improve provision for men with learning disabilities and difficulties, and ensure that there is adequate provision for sexual offenders, the range of behavioural problems, and personality disorders. (3.12; 7.10; 8.7; 10.9; A1.14)
- 3.28 Reconsider the practice of certifying cells in Brixton as suitable for double occupancy unless they meet the minimum requirement of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture<sup>1</sup>, which is 4m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person not including sanitary facilities. The Board does not accept the response given to last year's report, that the deviation from this minimum standard at Brixton is minor. (3.6; 7.1; 7.3)
- 3.29 End the practice of allocating men aged over 65, or with chronic mobility problems, to prisons with minimal or limited ground floor accommodation, and where they may have to share cells with bunk beds, as at Brixton. The response given last year, that older men can spend longer out of their cells, does not remove the problems of access to bunks, meal service, fresh air, and activities. (3.6; 7.2; 7.12)
- 3.30 Co-ordinate with Border Force to provide immigration documents in a range of languages for prisoners, who are cut off from sources of help available in the community, and cannot themselves access prison translation services. (3.5; 5.5)
- 3.31 Provide a more effective system for recording prisoners' property so that loss, especially when prisoners are transferred, can be more quickly investigated, and compensation paid where appropriate. The property review promised in responses to previous years' reports is long overdue. (7.13; 7.14)
- 3.32 Consider introducing a standard rate of pay across public sector prisons, which are all subject to standard prices for canteen and phone calls. (5.15; 9.8; 10.3)

**THAT NHS ENGLAND:**

- 3.33 Take account of whether proposed pay levels for healthcare staff are comparable with those current in the area when awarding contracts for healthcare in individual prisons, with the aim of improving recruitment and especially retention of staff. (8.3; 8.7)
- 3.34 The Board is raising no issues with the Governor of Brixton in this year's report. It will continue to discuss matters of local concern with him monthly, or if necessary as they arise. The more strategic issues identified as areas for improvement have been discussed with the Governor, to confirm that they cannot be tackled locally.

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<sup>1</sup>The ECP operates under the provisions of OPCAT (Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture), to which the UK is a signatory.

## B Evidence Sections 4 – 10

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### 4. SAFETY

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#### **Reception and Induction**

- 4.1 The Reception area, and procedures there, were improved to make it more welcoming, and provide more information for new arrivals. Prisoner orderlies hand out 'decency packs', and Listeners speak to all new arrivals. A good induction programme, produced by Prison Radio, with a prisoner narrating a man's journey round key areas of the prison, is played in Reception and is available on the wings. A hepatitis C programme is also playing in Reception.
- 4.2 All men transferring into Brixton are given an initial health assessment on arrival, and a second health screen is required within 48 hours. This has sometimes been difficult to achieve within the time allocated for induction. Men who need a prescription after the pharmacy has closed, or over a weekend, may need to wait overnight or until Monday. This has not yet created a significant problem. All arrivals are offered a hepatitis C test and vaccinations for hepatitis B, flu, meningitis and MMR. Older men are offered a shingles vaccination.
- 4.3 Similar induction programmes operate on B wing (the general induction wing) and on G (sex offenders). On arrival to the wing, all men are seen briefly by the induction officer and any immediate issues addressed, with a longer meeting the next day. The rest of the programme is run by orderlies, although some prison and agency staff lead sessions over the next two weeks. The crucial process is the education assessment, which determines allocation to suitable training or work.
- 4.4 While the induction process has improved, it has taken much longer to embed than was initially planned, and it still needs improvement, especially on G wing. Consistent feedback from prisoners arriving in July and August was that the timetable for the programme was not clear, and that sessions sometimes disappeared or were delayed. However, feedback on quality was reasonably positive.

#### **Drugs and phones**

- 4.5 Monthly meetings discussed the prison-wide strategy for controlling the demand and supply of drugs, but there was too little buy-in from some departments, so the action plan was generally not fully updated. Outside the meetings, communication between Security and residential staff about current intelligence, and between Security and Forward Trust about MDT failures improved, to good effect. Liaison between Care UK and Forward Trust was less effective; for example, at the end of the reporting year joint discharge boards were still not in place, nor was joint reporting to the drug strategy committee.
- 4.6 Full staffing levels and better access to sniffer dogs and technology allowed the prison to collect and analyse more intelligence and to conduct more searches of cells, incoming post, visitors and staff, making contraband harder to obtain. Current intelligence was considered frequently at the morning meeting of residential staff.
- 4.7 The average failure rate for random mandatory drug tests was 10.2% compared with 19.1% last reporting year. These figures still excluded failures involving psychoactive substances (PS); average failures including PS dropped to 18.4% this year from 32.5% last

year. While this represented a significant improvement, the presence of illicit drugs remained a problem.

- 4.8 When dogs were present, they were successful in improving security, finding drugs in bogus Rule 39 (legal) post and residential areas, and leading to a number of prisoners being placed on closed visits or their visitors banned after indication by the dog. Mail was photocopied for a period to prevent delivery to prisoners of drug-impregnated paper. Towards the end of the reporting year, Brixton post was scanned for illicit substances at another prison, but this led to unacceptable delays in getting the mail delivered. Brixton commissioned its own scanner after August.
- 4.9 At the end of February, the prison was still putting men on closed visits following a failed drug test, contrary to HMIP recommendations, although the Board monitored decision making periodically to request that men for whom there was no intelligence of dealing or visits-related unlawful activity had normal visits restored after a month. By the summer, men were only placed on closed visits because there was evidence, or strong intelligence, that they were dealing, whether or not through visits. Numbers on closed visits fell from 30 at the start of the year to 12 in early August.
- 4.10 Mobile phones continued to be available. They are the essential facilitators for arranging drug and other contraband deliveries, collecting debts and maintaining control of criminal enterprises. Prisons would be safer places if they could be deactivated.
- 4.11 The smoking ban introduced on 5 March went smoothly. Smoking cessation help was provided but most men switched to vaping. Tobacco has, however, become another traded commodity, adding to debt issues within the prison.
- 4.12 The number of men on a long term 'maintenance' methadone dose continued to be high (35 men in November; 32 in July). Until the summer, all men on D wing were required to abstain but, across the rest of the prison, there was little incentive to detox, although numbers doing so increased slightly for a period following management concerns.
- 4.13 The number of mutual support groups (AA, NA etc.) across the prison did not increase as much as hoped with the introduction of a fuller regime, largely because of difficulties in security clearing group leaders. Regular sessions continued to be run on C and D wings, and an informal self-help group was run by a peer supporter on G wing.
- 4.14 Forward Trust maintained a caseload of about 200 men across the prison. The lack of space on the wings for private one-to-one meetings with clients caused them some difficulties. Most of their clients accepted and kept appointments with outside agencies on discharge, and about half were met at the gate and accompanied to rehabilitation or supported housing by members of the Trust's Recovery Support team.
- 4.15 For most of the year there were good reports from D wing, where Forward Trust ran a 12 step programme focusing on abstinence. Most men reached the end of the programme and continued drug free while they remained in Brixton. Graduates acted as peer mentors for men on other wings.
- 4.16 By August 2018, when the number of men on the abstinence programme was sometimes less than capacity on D wing, half the places (24) were reallocated to men with the highest needs in terms of the health and wellbeing resettlement pathway. The new cohort was not initially required to commit to abstaining from drugs and this led to some problems on the wing.

### **Safer Custody (SC)**

- 4.17 The year has seen a steady improvement in SC practices across the prison. The SC section has been adequately staffed for most of the year. Better record-keeping, implementation of more effective procedures and numerous initiatives changed the culture of safety amongst staff and prisoners. The Board commends this significant increase in proactive work.
- 4.18 Monthly meetings have been well attended, with regular input from senior management, Healthcare, and prisoner representatives. The weekly SIM (safety intervention meeting) now considers, and co-ordinates extra support for, all prisoners who need it, including men who are self-isolating because of debt or other fears of violence.
- 4.19 Incident Reporting System (IRS) figures covering self-harm, incidents and disorder were checked by an external audit in February, because they looked too low. However, they were found to be accurate. Over the past 18 months there has been a successful effort to ensure accurate reporting of incidents. The monthly average (Sep-Aug) was 68 incidents, although this includes successful searches. Almost all disorder incidents were resolved very quickly. Use of force has fluctuated around an average of 15 times per month.
- 4.20 Use of CS (constant supervision) averaged one or two cases a month, and was significantly reduced during the year, mainly because it was used only in cases of exceptional risk. All prisoners on CS were put in contact with a Listener. The number of prisoners self-isolating reduced to about half the level of the previous year.
- 4.21 On average, 18 new ACCTs (Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork, for men at risk of self-harm) were opened a month. By the end of the reporting year, the number on any one day was as low as eight. Although the standard of input varies, quality has improved as a result of staff training and management checks, except where officers are cross-deployed. There are now nine trained assessors. Day-night shift handovers of ACCTs proved harder to oversee, and ACCT documentation does not always accompany prisoners to work or education/training. Care maps still needed to focus more on putting the responsibility for improvement on the prisoner, to avoid bad behaviour being rewarded with inducements to stop it. Someone from primary care or from mental health now attends every ACCT review, and there have been useful contributions about men with behavioural problems from a healthcare psychologist.
- 4.22 SC became better equipped to analyse the character, criminal record, and offence type of arriving prisoners, with the aim of pre-empting self-harm by men most at risk. Assessments drew on sentence plans, cell-sharing risk assessment (CSRA), prison, police and health records, and reception interviews.
- 4.23 The average number of self-harm incidents was 18 a month from January to June 2018, compared with 12 for 2017. The pattern is erratic. In January, there was an increase in swallowing batteries, inevitably leading to a hospital visit, possibly with the aim of returning with contraband. Peaks in self-harm were attributed to the exceptionally hot weather, the March 2018 ban on smoking, and intermittently to multiple acts by a few individuals, several with a long history of self-harm in other prisons. One such prisoner self-harmed five times in June. In July, all but one instances of recorded self-harm were by prisoners recently transferred in.
- 4.24 Listeners, with whom self-harm is routinely discussed, have reported that much is unrecorded: self-harm as a private coping mechanism to deal with stress can remain undetected by officers. Distraction packs, intended to alleviate some causes of self-harm, have been popular. About 100 have been distributed, and Brixton has produced these for

other prisons too.

- 4.25 From June, a new violence prediction tool (ANVIL) was available to identify prisoners with potential for violence. The national Challenge, Support & Intervention Plans (CSIP) framework was introduced in July. This is a case management system for people presenting a risk of violence and, operating on the same basis as an ACCT, manages those likely to behave aggressively. Early indications are encouraging: in August about a dozen prisoners were co-operating with a CSIP.
- 4.26 Brixton continued to receive prisoners unsuitable for resettlement. In July, a prisoner was received who could be unlocked only in the presence of four officers in full protection gear. He remained on the wing under a management plan and with intensive keyworker oversight. Another man had to be put on CS on arrival.
- 4.27 Listener numbers this year were at a five-year high, averaging 16 (having averaged six over the previous six years). But of the 17 in August 2018, 13 were on G wing and none on A or D, where it was difficult to recruit them. B, the induction wing, was in urgent need of more, as was D after its change of remit. C wing Listeners are, however, allowed to operate on A and B, and in general there were no problems with face to face contact or access.
- 4.28 The number of contacts with Listeners reflects availability, as is particularly evident for G wing. Contacts totalled 551 for the twelve months of 2017, more than double any of the previous four years, and this continued over 2018 to August. The rooms used for Listener contacts were refurbished.
- 4.29 Following a suggestion from Listeners, they and their contacts were searched before and after meetings. Since the Listener rooms are used for other purposes and some of their contacts may carry drugs or weapons, this was to ensure that Listeners themselves were not put at risk of harm, or of falling under suspicion.
- 4.30 Maintaining a few cordless phones for prisoners to contact the Samaritans is a perennial problem, despite the Safer Custody team's continuing efforts. IMB members often found they were damaged, uncharged, unlogged or lost, except on G wing, where the phone was used almost every night.
- 4.31 IMB members have been impressed with the commitment shown by Listeners and other peer-support prisoners like violence reduction and PID orderlies. They play an important role in defusing potential incidents, reducing self-harm and mitigating frustration at prison paperwork, and take justifiable pride in it. Maintaining their numbers requires continual work by SC section: eligibility to be a violence reduction (VR) rep requires sustained levels of good behaviour that allow a prisoner to progress to D Category (and eventual transfer out). At the end of the reporting year, there were 12 VR reps – at least one on every wing.
- 4.32 The Board regrets that there was one death in custody; the Coroner had not yet reported at the end of the reporting year. Wing staff reacted quickly in two near misses: notably, night staff saved the life of a prisoner who had cut his throat and resisted help.
- 4.33 Body-worn video cameras (BWVC) were introduced in May 2017 and all front-line staff are now trained in them. Daily take-up averages 35-45; recordings are being used frequently for analysis of incidents, police investigations and development of staff. It is available, but has not yet been requested, for adjudications.

### **Staff training**

- 4.34 Throughout the year, the prison has been well ahead of targets for staff training. Four courses relevant to safer custody are now more risk-focused. Eight staff have had mediation training, and are accredited to train colleagues and prisoners. The prison has three Family Liaison officers, with plans to train more.

## **5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

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- 5.1 This year saw the development and updating of local datasets on prisoner age, disability, ethnicity and religion. For example, an analysis was prepared quarterly of the rates of reports of conduct that led to an adjudication, by age and by ethnicity compared to the total population.
- 5.2 The diversity team developed an action plan which addresses identified inequalities – for example, young black prisoners who are less likely to engage with the regime generally, and for older prisoners. It was updated and reviewed regularly.
- 5.3 PEEPs (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans) were efficiently completed, and a recent evacuation exercise concluded that even with the number of prisoners with a PEEP located above the ground floor, particularly on G wing, an emergency would be manageable.
- 5.4 There was continuing concern that the DIRF (discrimination incident report form) process was not known or not thought credible. The low numbers submitted got slow responses. Another process for external evaluation of responses was put in place, and at the end of the year, publicity resulted in an increase in DIRFs.
- 5.5 The Board received six applications this year from men at risk of deportation, and spoke to several more on the wings. These men appeared to need more information than they were receiving about their rights to contest deportation orders. At least two men claimed to be unaware that they would be detained beyond the end of their sentence, causing distress to them and their families. One man had lived in the UK since childhood and had no memory of the country he was to be deported to. Another could not read the material provided to him (immigration paperwork is exclusively in English).

### **Chaplaincy**

- 5.6 The longstanding vacancy for an Anglican chaplain was filled in January. The chaplaincy team could therefore engage more in other areas of the prison, notably in safer custody work. For instance, IMB observed more NOMIS entries from full-time and sessional chaplains, although there was another vacancy in the team for the second half of the reporting year.
- 5.7 In August, around 270 prisoners identified as Anglican or Roman Catholic: about a third of these attended one of the two Sunday services. The Anglican chaplain started a choir, and victim awareness classes began shortly after the end of the reporting year. About 180 men identified as Muslim, and a hundred or more attended Friday prayers. Faith classes were provided, and Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh chaplains visited regularly. Pastoral support was strong.
- 5.8 There was an increase in the number of men identifying as Rastafarian and as Jehovah's Witnesses. There were continuing difficulties in getting security clearance for a Rastafarian sessional chaplain: the Anglican chaplain facilitated fortnightly services, and Haile

Selassie's birthday was celebrated as a feast. A sessional chaplain for the Jehovah's Witnesses started work in August.

- 5.9 After the smoking ban was introduced, there were some initial problems getting incense and a means to light it for those men whose faith practices included its use.
- 5.10 There were security delays in clearing candidates to be prison visitors, but three were in prospect at the end of the reporting year.

### **IEP**

- 5.11 A new local IEP policy was introduced in November after thorough consultation with staff, prisoners and IMB. There were some teething troubles with ensuring men could attend basic reviews, and with delays in achieving enhanced status (because more staff were consulted) but these were soon resolved. One legitimate appeal against loss of enhanced IEP took over three months to be upheld, but the prison then responded very fairly to the prisoner's complaints.
- 5.12 The visit time for men on basic was doubled to an hour and their access to showers and telephones improved under the new policy.
- 5.13 At the end of July 5% (38 men) were on basic IEP, 44% (329 men) were on enhanced and 51% (374 men) on standard. These proportions have been fairly steady since the introduction of the new policy and are more in line with national averages than last year.
- 5.14 The Board monitored IEP against age and ethnicity. Unsurprisingly older men were more likely to be enhanced than young men: on 12 December 46% of the population (355 men) was enhanced: only 22% (28) of the 127 men under 25 years old was enhanced, compared to 51% (42) of the 82 men aged 55 or over. A spot check in June suggested that the IEP scheme was operated fairly across all ethnicities considering the preponderance of older white men on enhanced on G wing. The prison introduced focus groups in July to examine IEP in response to the Lammy report.
- 5.15 Pay at Brixton was too low to give much of an incentive to gain enhanced or to move up from basic. While Governors can set the rates of pay for their own establishment, these are subject to the prison's overall budget. The Board considers it is not consistent with equality of treatment across the estate that rates of pay vary according to the other demands on each prison's budget.

### **Visits**

- 5.16 The regular monthly children and family meeting helped to ensure the success of this resettlement pathway, with effective commitment from prison and agency stakeholders and prisoner representatives. Attendance at and feedback from family days, courses and interventions was analysed, and programmes revised as a result. Several actions from a comprehensive strategy were completed during the reporting year.
- 5.17 One of these was a refurbishment of the visits hall, and the search and waiting area, which were painted more cheerfully, with murals that would appeal to children. The furniture and lighting were also improved. There are fewer prisoners per session, so the small hall is less crowded and families have more privacy. The hut where visitors log in remained unfit for purpose; it is cramped and shabby. More new lockers were provided, however. A pathway booklet has been produced for visitors, with information about family events and why they are important, and a description of available courses and interventions.

- 5.18 A new visits schedule was introduced in February and revised again during the year in line with demand. There is now more frequent access to visits and longer visits are available. Men on basic get two hour-long visits a month, men on enhanced get extra and longer visits at the weekends. G wing prisoners have equal access in principle for family days: where these are not possible because of sentence-related restrictions, alternatives are available.
- 5.19 The way that visits are booked has also improved, so that the process is clearer. If visits start late, officers try to ensure that they run the full time.
- 5.20 Although there is not always a play worker available in routine visits, more family and teen days have been put on this year, with a play specialist providing stimulating and creative activities. In June, Father's Day was put on for all wings. Storybook Dads continued as a good opportunity for sustaining relationships between fathers and children. A new homework club started. Attendances could be higher, and staff are trying to increase interest and awareness generally with improved advertising via the prison radio, the family engagement representatives, OMIC key workers, and posters, especially for prisoners who do not usually participate. The plans for a new teen room are ongoing. A new family link room has been created for families who may need extra help, to engage with the PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) family support worker, subject to appropriate risk assessments for the prisoner.
- 5.21 Other new family relationship courses and interventions have been put on by PACT, Forward Trust and Novus, the education provider. The safer custody team aims to involve families in ACCT reviews, if the prisoner gives consent.
- 5.22 One recognised shortfall is training for officers who work in visits. The Board considers this should be a priority, particularly for safeguarding.

## **6. SEGREGATION**

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- 6.1 The Segregation Unit is small for the size of the prison and was usually full or almost full. It is persistently damp and therefore cold. It would benefit enormously from additional space to allow for more privacy in adjudications, ACCT reviews and one-to-one interventions (for instance with the mental health team), and to provide holding facilities separate from the special cell. Plans for expansion and remediation of the building fabric have not been funded to date.
- 6.2 Men on the unit had a good level of care from and engagement with regular staff. Prisoners often acknowledged this to IMB. On one or two occasions, staff lacked the necessary experience, and this quickly affected the smooth running of the unit.
- 6.3 One man was on the unit for more than nine months, much longer than is generally advised. IMB was consulted. He was transferred from Brixton to a therapeutic environment. The Board commends the work of the governor and staff responsible for enabling this man to break a longstanding cycle of segregation at a succession of prisons.
- 6.4 Early in the year there was a lack of consistency in the timing of Rule 45 reviews, leading to poorer IMB attendance than was desirable. By the spring, IMB attendance was facilitated by a regular slot for these reviews. Healthcare attendance at reviews was patchy.

- 6.5 The special cell was used 18 times during the reporting year, seven times for the same man. Record keeping improved, but the use of the special cell was not reviewed in safer custody or segregation monitoring meetings.
- 6.6 The Board considered the internal and external adjudications they observed to be fair and open. On some occasions, governors used the adjudication creatively to discuss underlying problems and deferred sentencing to allow the prisoner the opportunity to follow through on agreed resolutions. In June, Board members commented on the number of independent adjudications dismissed because of the repeated absence of a reporting officer or the lack of CCTV evidence.
- 6.7 The number of days added to sentences by the district judge was high in relation to comparator prisons<sup>2</sup>. The Board considered, on balance, that this reflected an appropriate reaction by the prison to serious breaches of discipline. Board members have, however, heard from district judges that prisons outside London are more able to depend on the police to follow up serious offences and obtain new prosecutions. This approach seems more appropriate if the offence is serious.

## **7. ACCOMODATION**

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- 7.1 Most men in Brixton continued to be housed in extremely cramped double cells with bunk beds, insufficient space for two chairs, and a flimsily screened WC. These conditions were a particular problem for older and less mobile men.
- 7.2 At the end of July, 29 of the 31 men aged over 65 in Brixton were on G wing, where there is only one ground floor cell and no lift. Most of the older men lived on the first floor landing. In January 12 men were having their meals delivered by prisoner buddies, although all could, with some difficulty, negotiate the stairs to get outside to the fresh air. In mid-August the number had increased to 21, and the Board was concerned about the safety and decency of housing so many infirm men upstairs.
- 7.3 The cramped conditions were particularly problematic during the very hot summer weather in July and August. The Board was pleased that, after some remedial electrical works, the prison was able to identify fans that men could purchase that would not overload the power supply.
- 7.4 By January 2018 the prison was fully staffed for the first time in years, though with a very high proportion of newly trained officers – more than 50% in their first year of service. While this enabled the prison to run a more varied and more predictable regime, IMB members observed that some new officers were still learning how to maintain discipline.
- 7.5 A new core day, introduced in February after consultation with prisoners, offered significant improvements in regime, giving most men more time out of cell – nine to ten hours a day for full-time workers – and increasing the weekend and evening association for enhanced prisoners from the previous two hours a week. It also ensured that all men got some access to exercise in the open air (including full-time workers and men on basic IEP), although the time allowed to men on basic still did not meet the HMIP recommendation of one hour.

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<sup>2</sup>See <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/The-rising-tide-Addtional-days-for-rule-breaking-in-prison.pdf> [sic]

### **Food, clothing and equipment**

- 7.6 The prison did what it could to ameliorate the inadequate accommodation. Weekly decency checks, introduced in the autumn of 2017, helped ensure that privacy curtains and equipment in cells were renewed as necessary, and complaints to IMB of thefts of valuables from cells with no lockable cupboards largely ceased later in the year. The in-cell WCs were deep-cleaned more regularly and had seats and lids installed. A recent 'room ready' initiative helped to ensure that cells for new arrivals had all the necessary basic equipment. Wings were painted, and kitchenettes installed so that men could prepare their own food to some extent. A programme of shower refurbishment is underway to improve cleanliness and privacy, though the condition of some showers is still poor and there are ongoing issues with water pressure and temperature control.
- 7.7 The Board continued to hear compliments about the food at Brixton and found it tasty and portions sufficient. More hot meals were introduced in place of sandwiches. Food comment books were available but received very few entries on most wings. Folding tables were provided so that men had the opportunity to eat out-of-cell, but these were not much used. Servery workers did not always wear the required protective clothing, hats and boots.
- 7.8 Canteen, (goods purchased by prisoners from a catalogue) continued to be distributed door to door on A and B wings to prevent items being diverted immediately to pay debts. A new supplier for fresh fruit and vegetables proved very popular.
- 7.9 There were fewer complaints about shortage of prison clothing, although availability of large size items remained a problem. There were also fewer problems with other prison supplies, although men on C and D wings received no sheets and towels for three weeks towards the end of the reporting year because of laundry problems, and shortages were noted on other wings.

### **Progression**

- 7.10 For much of the year, there was a backlog of up to 60 men on G wing waiting to be transferred to complete an offending behaviour programme. The Board understood that priority nationally was being given to moving sex offenders out of overcrowded local prisons. Improvements were only evident in July, after intervention from the Governor.
- 7.11 It continued to be difficult to move men who had achieved Category D status at Brixton to open prisons. On 30 July, there were 33 men waiting, 12 of them on G wing. There are only two category D prisons which accept sex offenders, and men on G wing typically waited many months for a place. In July, seven of the G wing men had been waiting four months, one man seven months and one man for more than a year. Men on the other wings typically waited less time for a move, but on 30 July, three had been waiting for four to six months. In the Board's view these delays undermine the incentive value of re-categorisation and could delay rehabilitation.
- 7.12 It was also difficult to transfer men whose social care needs were beyond Brixton's capacity to deliver. One man remained in hospital, taking two prison officers away from prison duties 24/7 for many weeks, while the prison's management tried to negotiate a suitable prison place for him.

### **Property**

- 7.13 Problems with property not following men on transfer from other prisons continued to be an issue, constituting over 12 % (63 of 504) of applications to IMB. Responses in the prison complaint system about such property were frequently very late and unresolved, and too often ended up with the Ombudsman.
- 7.14 Cell clearance property recording for men transferred to Segregation improved, but paperwork was not always completed properly, leading to disputes about allegedly missing or broken items.
- 7.15 A civilian post was created to manage prisoners' property in Reception, allowing more consistent attention to be paid to this important activity.

### **Complaints**

- 7.16 PID workers tracked all general applications and told IMB that the response rate had improved significantly (from about 20% to 80% on G wing), although lack of response from OMU and Learning & Skills remained a problem at the end of the reporting year.

### **Communications**

- 7.17 The number and quality of case notes showing good interaction between staff and men increased markedly in the summer following the introduction of key workers as part of the OMIC initiative.
- 7.18 The quality of information on the wings improved as PIDs became more embedded. Regular prisoner council meetings and meetings of PID workers also improved consultation and communication.
- 7.19 The prison put more emphasis on prompt responses to cell bells, reviewing the previous day's responses across the wings regularly. The Board was aware that not all were answered within the required five minutes (for example, a bell was observed unanswered in June for 20 minutes). However, the cell bell system was not reliable, and needs replacing.
- 7.20 Before Christmas, the prison collected money and donations for a Brixton food bank. Many prisoners who had very little money gave a significant proportion of it to people they could see were less fortunate than themselves.

## **8. HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT**

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- 8.1 Healthcare services on the wings and in consultations have been at a good standard generally. Nevertheless, there have been challenges.
- 8.2 The absence of the head of Healthcare during a long period of illness increased pressure on the team, although there was some cover. Too many Healthcare meetings were cancelled or poorly attended. The Board hopes that this will improve in the coming year.
- 8.3 Attendance at ACCT and other reviews has improved. Wing nurses or mental health team members now attend the first ACCT review. At the end of the reporting year, permanent staff numbers were low: there were three nurses out of ten; three healthcare assistants out of four; two administrative staff out of four; and the health trainer had left. Although agency nurses effectively filled in some of the gaps, lack of staff and the consequent lack of continuity was an evident strain.

- 8.4 Waiting times for appointments generally echoed those in the community. The exceptions were dentistry, when on occasion 45.5% of men have waited more than six weeks for an appointment; and optometry, which in June had 90 men on the waiting list – a three-month wait time. The prison has committed to providing over-the-counter spectacles.
- 8.5 Pharmacy: most prescriptions for medications that could be abused had not been initiated at Brixton. They were reviewed, and alternatives offered. The pain clinic was also useful in diminishing the use of some medicines. There are too few officers attending wing dispensaries to guarantee good order and safety, particularly on B wing.
- 8.6 Hospital escorts: cancelled escorts are costly and wasteful. Over seven months, 2.7% of escorts were cancelled by the prison, while 34% were cancelled for other, unspecified reasons.
- 8.7 The mental health team needed more space and more time with the men under their care. The caseload was heavy, and there was a succession of agency staff in one post. A psychologist provided useful support for men with behavioural disorders, including learning disabilities, and contributed to Safer Custody assessments. Men with a personality disorder received a good level of support if they met the strict criteria of the LPU (see below) but were otherwise competing for mental health team resources.
- 8.8 In June, when funding was suddenly withdrawn for a team that provided counselling support, patients were transferred to the mental health team, which overloaded them. Another source of counselling was provided, and NHS England put in extra funding for an additional psychologist and mental health nurse, although they were not in place in August. There was also a new part time administrator.
- 8.9 A new health and wellbeing model aimed at closer collaboration between Forward Trust, mental health, counselling and primary care, and a more coordinated approach to meeting prisoners' needs in custody and after release, was implemented in summer 2018. The number of men on the 12-step abstinence programme on D wing was halved (to 24) to make room for men on the new programme. At the end of the reporting year, this population change was still bedding in, and the wing was disrupted as a result. Keeping a regular team of officers on the wing would have helped men to settle better. Forward Trust introduced a comprehensive range of courses to fit in with the new model during July. These will be available across the prison for groups or one-to-one, depending on demand.
- 8.10 Prison discharge meetings were restarted in May, but without representation or reports from Healthcare (primary care or mental health) or Forward Trust. This seems a missed opportunity. Healthcare ran its own pre-release clinic two weeks before release, and men saw a nurse on the day of release if required. Healthcare also helped the CRC (whose responsibility it is) to get men a GP, if necessary.

### **The London Pathways Unit (LPU)**

- 8.11 The LPU provides psychological programmes designed to help men with diagnosed personality disorders, who have got 'stuck' in their sentences, to progress to a more open environment or release. It is funded jointly by the NHS and HMPPS and has 36 single cells located on two levels on A wing. It rarely reached more than two thirds of complement (36 men). At the end of August there were 28 men, and the target was to fill it by November. The prisoners who were interviewed by the Board felt that they had greatly benefitted from their time in the unit.
- 8.12 In the financial year April 2017 to March 2018, 24 men left the LPU. Of the 24, 13

completed their intended time and 11 did not. Of the 13 who completed, seven were released into the community (on parole, on extended executive release or at the end of their sentence), four were transferred to open conditions, and two to a prison PIPE (psychologically influenced planned environment). The 11 men who did not complete their time were moved back to the sending establishment. In all but two cases, where the transfer took place for security reasons, the moves were planned following discussions with the men.

8.13 There is more information on the LPU in Annex 2.

## **9. EDUCATION, WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT**

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- 9.1 There are still not enough activity places to occupy all prisoners full-time. The situation is most acute for men on G wing, who need, in particular, more activities tailored to improving employment chances on release.
- 9.2 Prisoners (except older men) were required to attend education or training if it was available, or face loss of privileges. The prison focussed on ensuring attendance: a custody manager chased up non-attenders individually for some of the year, and escort officers were required to return men to classes more promptly. There was, however, no significant impact until after the end of the reporting year. For the previous reporting year, 2016-17, average attendance was 44%: by August 2018, it had reached only 50%, although recruitment rose to 70%. As attendance at vocational training ran at almost 80%, it was clear that men were not attracted by the educational offer.
- 9.3 Novus provided courses over a reasonable range of subjects, to a set curriculum in regular classes. There was also access to OU and distance learning, although a wider range of higher-level qualifications is needed. Although entry level courses in English and Maths were well attended, recruitment was difficult for classes on the next two levels. To offset this, more basic skill work was incorporated into vocational training classes.
- 9.4 A good range of vocational training was available, and recruitment was good, but there were not enough spaces for all eligible men. The prison tried to simplify the security clearance procedure – for instance, the highest level of clearance is needed for work in kitchens, with sharp tools – so that more opportunities were open. Most of these courses also provide certificated qualifications. During the reporting year 42 men obtained a CSCS card (Construction Skills Certificate Scheme), which made them eligible for construction jobs outside; and a further 56 obtained a scaffolding qualification.
- 9.5 Approximately 350 prisoners were employed, mainly part-time. There was an expanding number of roles for advice and peer support, like PIDs, some of it accredited. Some of the wing work continued to be unchallenging, and not allocated according to a man's capacity or developmental needs. For some men, however, work on the wings may be a first step to developing a work habit, and the confidence that they can actually do something.
- 9.6 National Prison Radio employed 24 men in the financial year 2017-18. As well as music programmes, it features the work of over 180 organisations working in prison, with key campaigns on Books Unlocked, a partnership with the National Literacy Trust; Safe, a series of programmes made with Ministry of Justice support, aimed at the almost 25% of prisoners who have spent time in care; and a National Probation Service (NPS) programme aimed at improving prisoners' interaction with NPS workers. Over 86% of people in prison listen to prison radio every week.

- 9.7 The Clink restaurant trained 33 men over the year, and supported them after release. In one case, this meant travelling to Portsmouth, where a man had been sent to approved premises because there was no available place in London. They take men from the LPU, but not sex offenders. After the security clearance was speeded up, they took men straight from Induction.
- 9.8 On Thursday evenings and Sundays, when a wider selection of customers attended than at weekday lunches, men got a more realistic experience of restaurant work, and gained more confidence. Pay is lower in Brixton compared with other prisons, but there is a £5 bonus for Thursday and Sunday work.
- 9.9 The library, run by the London Borough of Lambeth, has continued to improve its services. Initiatives this year include a surgery by Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) twice a month, and work on a Brixton magazine. The librarian is making efforts to reduce book loss, particularly when men leave, but there is a trade off with availability on the wings, to encourage more reading. The IMB has observed more men reading in the Segregation Unit.
- 9.10 There are two gym facilities, and around 50% of the population attend at least twice a week. All prisoners receive a gym induction including advice on healthy living, diet and nutrition. Older or less mobile men are well catered for with separate and dedicated sessions that include bowls and a popular walking football session.

## **10. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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### **The resettlement pathways**

- 10.1 The year started well with production of a strategy to co-ordinate prison and agency staff efforts across the seven resettlement pathways. Targets were set and regular meetings held. Despite hard work by the prison team, outcomes were patchy.
- 10.2 The team's own work for expanding activity spaces did not succeed. Partnerships with potential employers, on building a workspace in a car park adjacent to the prison wall, and on converting some unused space inside the compound, failed for lack of matching HMPPS funding. The Board regrets that the relatively small amount of funding could not be found, considering the opportunities that more activity spaces would have offered.
- 10.3 A review aimed at increasing prisoners' pay as an incentive also failed because of budget constraints. Finding employers for men with sex offender convictions continued to be difficult. Towards the end of the year, discussions were opened with an employment agency which has had some success elsewhere. The prison will meet the costs for men signing up.
- 10.4 As noted earlier, the most successful pathway was Children and Families.
- 10.5 For Education, Training and Employment, few targets were met. Progression pathways for the curriculum were in place by August, and success rates on basic functional skills were improving. The Out for Good project continued to deliver. In August, 36 men were referred; 24 engaged with the programme, and 18 of those got interviews, with two going into training. Some months had higher success rates. Some activity suppliers, notably Bounce Back and The Clink, helped graduates into work on release.
- 10.6 The Accommodation pathway, not surprisingly, was even more challenging. Some internal initiatives were put in place: improving co-ordination among stakeholders, information for key workers and signposting for prisoners; and homelessness for men on release was shortly to be monitored.

- 10.7 On Finance, Debt and Benefit, similarly, there was an improvement in co-ordination and information for prisoners. Changes in personnel in other agencies, notably the CRC, contributed to lack of real progress on this and the accommodation pathway. The Shaw Trust, a small agency, provided some debt advice.
- 10.8 Changes to NHS programmes for drug funding were among the challenges on the Substance Misuse pathway. Joint working between Forward Trust and Care UK proceeded very slowly. These changes also delayed progress on the Mental and Physical Health pathway, as did illness and loss of experienced staff. The prison gym team increased its provision, but was not able to engage other participants in collaborative work on wellbeing.
- 10.9 Useful assessments of prisoner needs were produced by the prison psychologists for the Offending Behaviour pathway. Several of their targets were met, two behavioural programmes were run in the reporting year, and another started shortly after. Sex offending treatment programmes were not offered.
- 10.10 Several innovative wing-based programmes have been run, involving staff as well as prisoners. For instance, Spark Inside put on two coaching courses encouraging rehabilitation and violence reduction, with the aim of reducing reoffending.
- 10.11 47 men were referred to a restorative justice programme via an offender manager in OMU, the highest number for a London establishment. By the end of the year, the Why Me charity was concluding its interviews with prisoners: among those recruited earlier, two victims had engaged.
- 10.12 A representative of SSAFA, the support organisation for armed forces veterans, visited the prison most weeks, with an average of 15-20 men on the caseload, and about two referred monthly by various prison and agency teams, including mental health, although funding for the NHS mental health worker for veterans was withdrawn this year. There is a monthly support group on G wing, and funding is provided for OU text books, and some art equipment. The SSAFA worker also helps men to get accommodation and employment, with some success even for G wing men this year. On release, all veterans are transferred to another SSAFA case worker, who provides travel cards and basic phones as necessary, and support for the crucial weeks after release.
- 10.13 Resettlement advice for G wing men was provided by Unlock, a charity providing support for people facing stigma because of their criminal record, often long after their sentence.

### **Offender management**

- 10.14 Men continued to arrive at Brixton without a completed sentence plan (OASys) throughout the year. 125 of the 290 men arriving at Brixton between July and October 2017 had no sentence plan, or an incomplete one. At the same time, the Offender Management Unit (OMU) had only five probation officers (dealing with the highest risk prisoners) out of a complement of seven. This shortfall continued throughout the year. Uniformed offender supervisors, who were responsible for lower risk men, continued to be cross-deployed to help manage the residential wings. OMU staff worked hard to reduce backlogs, but this is a national problem and could not be solved at Brixton. The Board has been highlighting this deficit for at least the last three years. It regrets that, for yet another year, the national shortfall in sentence plans and staff resources will have affected the rehabilitation of many hundreds of men.
- 10.15 The backlog in sentence plans should be reduced with the full implementation of the new

OMIC model. The first phase, which allocated each prison officer as key worker to five or six prisoners, was implemented smoothly this summer, ahead of other establishments. Early case notes suggested that this significantly improved interaction with prisoners about reducing reoffending, providing valuable information to OMU staff.

- 10.16 It was too early to assess the impact on offender management of phase 2 of OMIC, in which ten new civilian prison offender managers (POMs) will replace the eight uniformed offender supervisors (with the advantage that they cannot be cross-deployed to manage the wings). Only half had been appointed by the end of the reporting year, while the number of uniformed staff had dropped to four. Inevitably there was less resource for offender management during the transition, and a number of men had no allocated offender supervisor. Probation held weekly surgeries.
- 10.17 The assessment of eligibility for Home Detention Curfew (HDC), under which men are released early and electronically monitored, was simplified in January 2018 and more men became eligible. The prison put measures in place to ensure that assessments were up to date, the main delays (25 in June) being attributable to waiting for police checks on accommodation or for an available hostel place.
- 10.18 Decisions on re-categorisation were generally made on time, but many men who achieved Category D were unable to progress because of the shortage of open prison places. The Brixton Governor managed to arrange some ad hoc moves in the absence of a full allocation to the open estate.
- 10.19 The Board welcomed plans announced in September 2017 to transfer men serving IPP or life sentences out of Brixton unless they were on the London Pathways Unit (where they receive help and support). In the event, problems achieving transfers meant that there were still 13 such men in Brixton's general population in October 2018 – about the same number as in September 2017. There were also significant problems with transferring men from G wing to prisons that deliver the offending behaviour programmes the men were required to complete.
- 10.20 Applications to the Board on sentence management (16% of the total) continued to be high (though reduced from previous years) reflecting the problems described above and the lack of prompt responses to prison applications to the OMU.

## C The work of the Board

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At the beginning of the reporting year, the Board had 12 members, two of them on sabbatical because of work pressures, plus one probationer whose training had been delayed by illness. The two sabbatical members and three others have since resigned. Interviews in October appointed ten new members; three pulled out and two have yet to start. One probationer transferred to the Board from another prison. So, by the end of the reporting year, the Board had 14 members, six of them probationers and one on sabbatical. The complement is 20.

Board members have worked well together to cover rota duties, training visits for new members, and special interest meetings. Review boards, and ACCT reviews in the segregation unit have been attended where possible. One serious incident was observed.

Monthly meetings have been attended by the governing governor or his deputy. The Board thanks them for their continuing open and constructive approach.

The Board also thanks members of the prison management team, officers and staff from agencies working in the prison. Co-operation with the Board's work has been willing and helpful.

The number of applications decreased slightly. The annual total was 504.

### BOARD STATISTICS

Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Total number of visits to the Establishment	575
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not recorded

## D Applications

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Code	Subject	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothes	13	15	27	27
B	Discipline, including adjudication, IEP, sanctions	44	29	33	49
C	Equality & Diversity (including religion)	20	26	12	35
D	Purposeful activity including education, work, training, library, regime	24	13	25	32
E1	Family/visits including mail & phone	38	26	20	29
E2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	37	6	6	14
F	Food and kitchens	11	13	4	8
G	Health including physical, mental and social care	68	91	47	35
H1	Property (within this establishment)	45	94	27	29
H2	Property during transfer/in another establishment)	86	67	52	63
H3	Canteen, facilities list, catalogues	23	22	13	17
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	184	178	101	82
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	87	102	56	65
K	Transfers	43	58	41	29
L	Not specified	36	104	49	0
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>504</b>

## E Annexes

### ANNEX 1: IMB SURVEY OF RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

A1.1 Between 28 May and 26 July 2018, IMB members conducted a monitoring exercise of prisoners scheduled for release in the next few weeks. The monitoring covered approximately the same period as similar exercises in 2016 and 2017 and asked the same questions. 79 men were interviewed, about half of those released in the period. All interviewees were Category C prisoners.

A1.2 Board members asked three questions:

Do you have accommodation on release?

Do you have work/training on release?

Have you seen someone about your resettlement needs?

A1.3 The table below gives the percentage response to these questions, followed in square brackets by the 2017 response. Brixton now has two quite distinct populations, so responses from G wing men (20) and men on the main wings (59) are also shown separately. Of the 79 men interviewed, two were being deported, so do not appear in the totals for accommodation or work.

Accommodation on release?		Work or training on release?		Seen about resettlement needs?	
Secure – own or with family or friends	52% [40%] mains 51% G wing 55%	Arranged	33% [29%] mains 39% G wing 15%	Yes	63% [69%] mains 66% G wing 55%
Insecure – less than a week or sofa-surfing	12% [10%] mains 16% G wing 0%	Leads	25% [22%] mains 28%, G wing 15%	No	34% [29%] mains 31% G wing 45%
Hostel, approved premises or rehab	16% [19%] mains 11% G wing 30%	infirm/ retired/ in rehab	5% [7%] mains 3% G wing 10%	Did not say	3% [2%]

None	21% [26%]  mains 23% G wing 15%	None	38% [32%]  mains 30% G wing 60%		
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### Accommodation

- A1.4 Although significantly more men than last year (52% as against 40%) had accommodation on release, the number who had insecure accommodation or nothing only improved slightly (33% as against 36%).
- A1.5 Only one man said he had accommodation through St Mungo (a hostel place) but he was concerned about whether it would actually be suitable for a sex offender; a further seven men were waiting for St Mungo to come back to them, possibly with temporary accommodation. There is very little accommodation available for men leaving prison unless they have significant additional needs, so St Mungo workers are often only able to provide a form or phone number for the relevant local authority. Two men did not feel safe being released to the area required by the probation service, and were having trouble negotiating a move.
- A1.6 16% of men had a hostel, rehabilitation or approved premises place on release. A higher proportion was from G wing (30% against 11% on the mains). One man who was due for release the following week still had not heard whether an approved premises place had been found for him. Another who had a job to go to said it would not be possible because he had been allocated approved premises too far away. There is a shortage of approved premises in London, so some men may not get a place (and be detained in prison if it is a parole condition) or be offered one outside London.
- A1.7 Only three (15%) of G wing men reported having no accommodation on release: of these one was hoping for help from his social worker; one had made arrangements that fell through late on because of a family death, and was now seeking help; one, who was due for release in four days, would have accommodation arranged on the day of release if necessary. None had insecure accommodation. 23% of men on other wings had nowhere to go on release, and a further 16% had only insecure accommodation.

### Work or training

- A1.8 Most of the 33% (25) with work already arranged were going back to their old jobs. Five men (all on the mains) had found jobs through the prison: one through Bounce Back, one through The Clink (who were also helping him with accommodation), one through Fine Cell Work (for whom he was full of praise), one through Key4Life; the fifth, offered an apprenticeship with TfL (Transport for London) following an in-prison interview through Out for Good, felt he had 'won the lottery'.
- A1.9 A further 25% (19) had leads, some firmer than others. Seven of these said they were as a result of qualifications obtained in Brixton. These were one through Bounce Back painting and decorating/CSCS; two through scaffolding; one through BlueSky (a social enterprise that trains and employs ex-offenders); one following a self-employment course; two through horticulture (these last three were from G wing).
- A1.10 Only 15% of the men with work arranged were on G wing. A number commented that

their old job was no longer open to them.

A1.11 38% (29 men) had no job or training prospects at all. Men on G wing were particularly badly off, with 60% (8 men) having no work or training in sight.

A1.12 Eight of the men who had no job prospects had no housing either.

### **Resettlement help**

A1.13 63% said they had seen someone about resettlement. A number of men were unclear about who had visited them, or did not count some agencies (eg Forward Trust) as being to do with resettlement, so the actual number seen was probably higher. Rather fewer men on G wing said they had been seen (55%). This may be because G wing are not eligible for all the CRC services, either because they are not being released in London or because their housing is often dealt with through the probation service. All sex offenders would have been seen by probation.

A1.14 50% of G wing men said they had received no resettlement help at Brixton. Six (30%) felt strongly that their time in Brixton had been wasted – either because they were not able to complete the necessary offending related courses before release, or because they felt Brixton offered them nothing to help them towards employment, or promised them help that had not materialised. By contrast as many or more men from other wings said they had significant help while in Brixton.

### **Summary**

A1.15 At least 33% of men were being released to NFA (no fixed address) or insecure accommodation – little better than last year (36%).

A1.16 62% of men had no work arranged. Of these 36% had no leads either, compared with 41% last year, a slight improvement.

A1.17 34% of men said they had not been seen about resettlement needs – slightly more than last year (29%).

A1.18 Overall the resettlement prospects of the men interviewed were poor for too many men leaving a resettlement prison.

## **ANNEX 2 THE LONDON PATHWAYS UNIT (LPU)**

### **Introduction**

- A2.1 Formerly at HMP Belmarsh, the LPU moved to Brixton just over two years ago. It provides psychological programmes for men to help them progress to a more open environment or release.
- A2.2 The LPU is part of the London Pathways Partnership (LPP), a group of four London-based NHS mental health trusts, and is linked to the national offender personality disorder (OPD) programme. Men who come to the LPU have been diagnosed as having a personality disorder, and must come from a psychology influenced planned environment (PIPE) and be on a strategy pathway (OPSP). The criteria for admission are strict.

### **Funding**

- A2.3 Funding is provided jointly by the NHS and HMPPS, each with a commissioner. Commissioners' meetings with the prison are held quarterly and involve men as well as staff.

### **Capacity and occupancy**

- A2.4 There are has 36 single cells over two landings on the top corner of A wing, with which it shares an exercise yard, laundry and some association time.
- A2.5 Two IMB members began the survey in late May 2018. For several weeks, occupancy stood at an average of 24 men. However, at the Commissioners' meeting in June 2018, under-occupancy was re-identified as an issue – it has been a persistent problem. A target of filling the unit by November 2018 was set, and clinical staff began identifying potential candidates. The number of men in the unit rose to 30 in the week beginning 20 August and, although it fell to 28 in the following week, this was a result of the planned moves of two men whose time at the unit had ended.
- A2.6 In the past, the prison's use of the spare cells for 'lodgers' (that is, men temporarily placed in the LPU for safety or other reasons) had been quite common and the clinical staff told us that they thought it had had a destabilising impact. It is no longer seen as a significant problem, although it remains a risk when the unit is under-occupied. The creation of 24 'wellbeing' places on D wing may have reduced the risk.

### **Admission**

- A2.7 Men apply for a place from their current establishment, through their probation officer or offender supervisor. There is an average of 12 referrals a quarter. Currently, the clinical staff are actively trying to identify more potential candidates from among the 4,000 or so men in the London area who are in a PIPE and on an OPSP.
- A2.8 In addition to having been diagnosed with a personality disorder with a probable link to a risk of offending, the men must satisfy the following criteria:
- be Category C
  - be supervised by the London probation service (a restriction arising from the funding mechanism)
  - have an expectation of release into the London area
  - be assessed as 'high harm/high risk' at some point during their sentence
  - have between nine months and two years left to serve (and not be within a parole window)
  - be failing to make progress through their sentence, and

- commit to staying a minimum of nine months (with a maximum of two years).

A2.9 Drug and alcohol issues, poor custodial behaviour and symptoms of active mental illness are generally disqualifications to entry.

A2.10 Before being accepted, the man's current establishment must agree to take him back if the LPU turns out to be unsuitable for him. This is referred to by staff in the unit as the 'return to sender' policy. If the man is on a determinate sentence, the establishment must take him back if required to do so within the first six months. For men on an indeterminate sentence, the 'return to sender' policy is open-ended.

A2.11 Over the past year, men have come from a wide range of prisons - Highpoint, Grendon, Wandsworth, Pentonville, Thameside, Swaleside. Most of the men are either serving life sentences or public protection sentences (indeterminate sentences for public protection or extended sentences) or have been recalled to prison following release on licence.

### **Staffing**

A2.12 The unit's staff is made up of eight prison officers, two senior prison officers and a CM, all of whom were recruited from within Brixton. It is currently fully staffed. Most officers are expected to stay working on the unit for about two years. Now that the prison as a whole is fully staffed, the movement of officers on and off the unit at short notice should stop. This was particularly disruptive, because the support work depends on stability for the development of trust amongst LPU members. Officers have always worked in a key-worker model.

A2.13 The clinical staff comprises three psychologists (two clinical and one forensic), two of whom came with the transfer from Belmarsh. An additional psychologist is currently being sought. All spend about two-thirds of their time in Brixton and the remaining time in the community, mostly working with the people who will be significant support to the men as they move towards and after release. The staff maintain contact with and provide support for the men for up to three months after they have left, including those for whom and for whatever reason it did not work out. The lead psychologist also visits and interviews men identified as potential candidates at their current establishments.

A2.14 The prison Governor takes no part in decisions about allocation, which are a matter for probation and clinical staff.

### **How the unit works to achieve its goals**

A2.15 The unit follows the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway.

A2.16 All men are assigned a personal psychologist and prison officer (key-worker).

A2.17 There are three strands to the work (all of which involve both clinical and prison staff).

- Key-work. This involves an exploration of family history and ties and release planning.
- Group work. All group work is evidence-based. There are currently two long-term group courses running, one based on life patterns and another on mentalisation-based therapies.
- Individual psychology work. The availability of individual psychological work is based on need. It can involve family where appropriate.

A2.18 The men generally have jobs and/or take courses in the wider prison. If there is a clash with attendance at a course or something else specific to the LPU, priority is given to the LPU but the man will still get paid. Men work in The Clink and Prison Radio. Others are doing Bounce Back courses. Some occasionally serve in other roles (for example, as VRs or

PIDs on A wing).

A2.19 The ethos is very much one of community as well as progress. Men are encouraged to be out of their cells, with staff always available to talk. Community meetings with men and staff are held fortnightly. Men who have left are encouraged to come back to discuss their experiences. Having no private exercise yard or garden space, the men have made use of a very small area at the top of an outside staircase to grow sweet peas, and tomatoes and herbs which they use for cooking.

A2.20 IMB spoke to just over half the men, including one man who had been there nearly two years and one who had just arrived. All said they had had some very challenging times, but all were positive about their overall experience with many commenting that it had given them a better understanding of themselves and their behaviour. "It's the toughest thing I've ever done but it's been worth it." "I thought I wasn't going to make it, but I am [making it]."

### **Outcomes**

A2.21 In the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, 24 men left the unit. The average length of stay in the unit of the 24 men who left was 117 days. Of the 24, 13 completed their intended time at the unit and 11 did not. Of the group of 13 who completed their time, seven were released into the community (on parole, on extended executive release or at the end of their sentence), four were transferred to open conditions and two to a prison PIPE. The 11 men who did not complete their time were moved back to the sending establishment. In all but two cases where the transfer took place for security reasons, the moves were planned following discussions with the men.