



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

**HMP/YOI Rochester**

**for Reporting Year**

**1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019**

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*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A 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 or centre 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 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **Main judgements**

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*Are prisoners being treated fairly?* HMP Rochester continues to be a difficult and challenging prison environment, with drug abuse extensive among prisoners. However it has remained stable and performed its key role as a resettlement prison as effectively as resources allow. The Board's perception is that prisoners are being treated fairly. Lack of consistency of leadership has been an issue; with two Governing Governors appointed during the year and the Deputy Governor becoming Acting Governor for significant periods. The Board's view is that provisions for Equalities and Safer Custody are good and the prison is operating in an equitable way.

*Are the prisoners treated humanely?* The Board considers a humane and rehabilitative regime is being delivered within the prison in spite of the difficulties it faces, such as deteriorating buildings and the availability of drugs. Healthcare appointments are commensurate with those in normal NHS provision, arrangements for visitors have improved and there is good support from the Chaplaincy and other organisations at the prison. Evening association is being restored from May 2019, and is a welcome change.

*Are prisoners prepared well for their release?* The prison does aim to prepare prisoners for release, but staffing shortages of tutors and trainers impacts on what it can deliver for rehabilitation. Where it does happen, engagement with prisoners is good. The Board remains convinced that the inability to deliver sufficient occupation for the prisoners continues to be a contributory factor to the drugs problem at the prison.

### **Main Areas for Development**

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#### **TO THE MINISTER:**

- a) The response from the Minister to our IMB Annual Report is always disappointing. Very little appears to change – so a plea for the Minister (and the MOJ) to focus on the points we are raising, such as those relating to drugs, property loss, homelessness and rehabilitative activity, and to ask HMPSS to provide ideas and time-limited action plans about how these issues are being addressed.
- b) The Board retains the view that to enable a better outcome for prisoners and reduce re-offending, greater resources should be targeted across the entire prison estate at tackling drug-use by prisoners. This includes improvements in security technology and intervention programmes.
- c) Re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless there is suitable accommodation for all prisoners who have completed their sentence; too many prisoners are released from Rochester to become homeless rough sleepers (an average of 20%). The recent initiative for prisons to refer those at risk of homelessness to local authorities (as referred to by the Minister in last year's response to our report), does not seem to be producing any improvement.

#### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

The Board's view is that the number of prisoners from local prisons arriving at Rochester without a completed OASys assessment is unacceptable. At HMP Rochester it is averaging over 55% of new entrants. This is unfair to prisoners who are in theory attending a

“resettlement prison”, but are unable to attend programmes, or gain access to suitable work and training without a completed assessment. In the past, the lack of OASys was attributed to staff shortages. However, given the numbers of new prison officers being recruited across the prison estates, can the Prison Service please explain why this remains a continuing issue.

*Paragraph 11.2 refers*

Property losses on transfer: Once again, there appears to have been no progress in resolving the problems which occur when a prisoner and their property are transferred from other establishments. Frustratingly items are still going missing and unnecessary delays occurring. This is a transport issue, not one of volumetric control. *Paragraph 7.8.a refers*

The reply from HMPSS to last year’s report indicated that work on a new prisoner property framework would start once the new IEP scheme was in place. The Board notes this, and seeks reassurance this work is now in hand. *Paragraph 7.8.b refers*

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

1. Too often the Board has noted that adjudications going to the Independent Adjudicator do not have the correct supporting paperwork, such as the lack of a medical report requested at a previous hearing, or an officer requested to attend not turning up. Consequently these are dismissed by the Judge, which is unfair and a waste of public funds. We flagged this up as an issue last year, but there has been little improvement. *Paragraph 6.5 refers*

2. Cell clearance checks are still haphazard and many are not conducted properly, particularly when an individual is moved to the Seg from a double cell. Can this be addressed please?

*Paragraph 7.8.c refers*

3. The contractual arrangement with the Optician dates from when Rochester was a YOI. Given the number of older prisoners with eye related problems, could this be reviewed please.

*Paragraph 8.9 refers*

## **Improvements**

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Spending £150k on improved security cameras is welcomed. Dividends on this will come in the next year. (see paragraph 4.8)

The initiative for an improvement in the standard of cleanliness across all areas of the prison has proved successful, with a good report on the HMPSS Clean and Decency Audit. However this is mitigated by the continuing problem with mice. (see paragraph 7.4)

## **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

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Rochester is a Category C Resettlement prison for both adult male and young offenders; it has an Operational Capacity of 695. Prisoners are held in seven residential units: one is a dedicated drug reduction unit, six are general accommodation. There is a separate Segregation Unit. One wing has been allocated for first night accommodation and induction into the prison. Throughout the reporting period serious remedial maintenance on all wings has been required.

As a Resettlement prison, the regime is intended to give prisoners training through a structured sentence plan. Rochester actively engages with prisoners to address their offending behaviour and offers opportunities to engage in training, education and work linked to employment where possible. Increasing the links to real employment vacancies is a continuing aim. Significant work has been taking place in re-educating offenders, in particular

highlighting the dangers of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). KSSCRC and Forward Trust provide services including drug-recovery programmes, housing, finance and mentoring. The physical well-being of prisoners is catered for through two well-run gymnasiums, offering competitive and recreational activities. Support for prisoners is available from the NHS/OXLEAS Healthcare team, In-reach and Chaplaincy, as well as community support from external organisations.

The prison has gone through major changes in recent years, but unfortunately has not made the progress hoped for. However in early 2018, the prison was taken out of the Special Measures process due to an improved report from the HMCIP. It is a prison not without advantages. For example, its open location gives plenty of opportunity for fresh air and outdoor activity. Importantly, there is a clear sense of purpose in serving as a resettlement prison to its local community.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 11**

### **4 SAFETY**

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#### **Safety**

4.1 The availability of drugs, especially NPS, at Rochester continues to be the main issue for safety and security management at the prison. Drug-related debt, bullying and intimidation remain significant elements of life at HMP Rochester. For example, 205 additional days were added to sentences in March 2019 for drug-related offences.

4.2 In spite of this, in the Board's view, Rochester continues to feel a safe environment for those living there. Due to some new initiatives, anti-social behaviour is being more robustly challenged than previously. Safer Custody Officers at the prison are performing well. Information across the prison is timely and co-ordinated, with an informative Safety Intervention Meeting held weekly, and a summarizing Safer Prisons report issued monthly. The Challenge, Support and Intervention Planning (CSIP) arrangements are working well. ACCT reviews are, in the main, completed properly. A VR (Violence Reduction) gym session is available for prisoners who are self-isolating, and also works as an effective way to re-integrate vulnerable prisoners. A recent initiative has identified that 25% of violence at Rochester is debt related, which compares adversely with the national average of 11%. Steps are being taken to provide education, guidance and support to those prisoners with debt issues and promote wider understanding amongst staff. The Board's conversations with prisoners enable us to conclude that the Safer Custody team is well-regarded and trusted.

4.3 The number of ACCTs being opened each month is about the same as last year: Jan – March 2018: 80, cf 2019: 89. Levels of self harming incidents have unfortunately increased, to about 20 -25 per month, but on checking this figure is not out of kilter with other prisons. The figures can be misleading as each incident is recorded separately, although it may be by the same individual. There is also evidence that some self-harming (over-doses) are used as means to avoid adjudications, or as protests and manipulation. Some use self-harming as a coping mechanism. There is some evidence that ligature incidents are increasing, and the Board will monitor this over the next year.

4.4 The Safety Team at Rochester received an excellent report from a Prison Service national audit of Incident Reporting which took place in August, commending the work it had done to improve its performance and was one of 34% in the prison estate to achieve a 100% accuracy score.

4.5 Samaritan-trained Listeners continue to do good work across the prison, especially with new entrants, There is currently a team of 8 Listeners.

4.6 Use of Force figures for the reporting period are 556. Board members are alerted when a forced removal is about to or has taken place and during those incidents which have been observed, the use of force has been proportionate. The HMPSS national tactical response team was called to the prison on 10 occasions this year compared with 5 last year – possibly indicative of the increasing number of incidents at height during the reporting period.

4.7 There was one death in custody during the reporting period; the inquest is yet to take place. The correct procedures were followed after the death, and liaison with the deceased family has been well managed. In addition, the Board would like it noted that commendable swift action by prison officers has on many occasions prevented attempts by prisoners at self-inflicted death.

### **Security**

4.8 The openness of the Rochester site presents the greatest challenge for the security team in its effort to stop drugs and mobile phones coming into the prison. Security is intelligence led and over the year has achieved some notable successes. There was a spend of £150k for a camera upgrade across the prison. This gives greater coverage with improved imagery. In addition, cameras have been made “future ready” so they can integrate with incoming systems. There are three mobile phone detector poles operating within the prison, with continuing success.

4.9 The Security Department estimates they are intercepting about a third of all contraband coming into the prison. While there are not so many parcels coming “over the walls”, those that do arrive are larger with more items. The number of finds for mobile phones remains steady: 216 cf 211 last year. The finds for illicit substances has risen by a third: 211 cf 159 last year. There is a significant increase in the number of weapons found: 135 cf 85 last year. In addition, Hooch finds are 78 and Tobacco: 93. All these figures are an increase over previous years, and give an indication of the continuing and increasing problem of contraband entering the prison, and the challenge the prison faces in dealing with this issue.

4.10 Another entry for drugs into the prison is through the post, for example paper impregnated with NPS or contained within children’s paintings and cards. But it is especially a problem with the use of fake Rule 39 letters (those addressed to a prisoner from a solicitor, and cannot be opened by the Post Room staff.) Unlike some other prisons, Rochester does not have a Rapiscan machine to detect drugs in envelopes, and a system of taking suspicious letters to Maidstone for checking has been in place. This in turn has created frustration by the prisoners over the delay in delivery of genuine Rule 39 letters. Despite promises to provide a permanent scanner during the year, it did not materialize. However in recent months Rochester has been “loaned” a Rapiscan itemizer machine until a permanent scanner is procured, and delays to mail is improving. The Board has noted the improvement and encourages the procurement of a permanent solution as soon as possible. All letters are being checked by security dogs. The Board would like to commend the Post Room staff at Rochester for their alertness in this area.

4.11 **Security Audit:** Unfortunately the results for an unannounced HMPSS Security Audit which took place in the New Year were poor, with an overall score of 1 (the lowest) and a rating of Red with significant critical findings. There was evidence from across all areas of the prison that security had become lax. Following the Audit, the Governor took swift action on all the points raised in the Audit and significant improvements have been made. The Board is confident that HMP Rochester remains a secure environment, and fully supports the Governor in his strategy to respond to the adverse criticism in the Audit.

4.12 Mandatory drug testing is conducted correctly and in a considerate way. Results for the reporting period are as follows: random tests – 411 with 151 positive (cf last year 433 with 84 positive), suspicion tests – 311 with 217 positive (cf last year 269 with 168 positive). The increase is explained by how Psychoactive Substances (NPS or Spice) were recorded last year. These are now within the results given above. The numbers are an indication of the drug problem at the prison but also how productive intelligence led testing has become.

4.13 Once again, it is the Board's view that too many prisoners appear to be wandering around the prison unchallenged during times when they should be either at activity or returning to a wing following a healthcare visit, etc. The prison's layout enables this to happen, but the Board believes more effective challenge is required. The Board notes however that following the staff re-profiling in Spring the Security department now has a staffing resource that can be utilized for searching, and an increase in the number of stop and searches during May and June have produced good finds of contraband. The Board commends this change – and will monitor the position during 2019-20.

## **5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

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5.1 The Equality Action Team (EAT) has regular meetings, and effective partnerships between governors, officers and prisoners with open and constructive discussions. The Board tries to attend all equality meetings and maintains an effective relationship with this team.

5.2 Across the prison's population, at time of writing, white prisoners remain in the majority at approximately 66% with black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) at 34%. For YO's the mix is slightly different with approximately 55% White and 45% BAME. Both these figures represent change from a comparative period last year – with an increase in the number of BAME of 5% for adults at 15% for YOI. Adult prisoners comprise approximately 66% of the prison's population, once again a significant change from last year, when adults made up 90% of the population. The Board has monitored whether a higher proportion of BAME prisoners appear at adjudication hearings, and from the prison statistics and our own observations, they do not.

5.3 The number of Discrimination Incident Reports (DIRF) this year, 96 is a significant increase over 73 for the previous year. The Board has been unable to establish if prisoners and staff are less or more inclined to categorize an incident as racist, however it notes that data collection and analysis is good, and that concerns are investigated thoroughly and many resolved. The Board received 6 applications about equality this year.

5.4 While the majority of prisoners are below the age of 39, at the end of February there were 167 over 40 (cf 153 in March last year), with 4 over 70. These figures are indicative for the year. At present, 32% of prisoners have a self-declared disability, including 104 with mental illness (a significant increase from last year's figure of 55) and 59 with learning difficulties including dyslexia (a significant drop from 122 last year). The IMB regularly speaks to prisoners with a disability and checks on their welfare.

5.5 During the year the number of prisoners designated as foreign nationals (FN) as at February 2019 is 30 (cf 31 last year) from 17 different countries. The Equalities Department has made contact with Kent Refugee Help, and arranged a series of surgeries for FN prisoners.

## **6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT**

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6.1 Increasingly the Segregation Unit is being regarded by some prisoners as an opportunity to escape from the drug and debt culture of the prison; some prisoners commit



an offence in order to gain access to segregation and then refuse to leave. This is not what the Segregation Unit is for – and is rather disturbing. The Board continues to monitor this closely.

6.2 The standard of management of the Unit, as reported last year, is extremely good. Communication between the Unit and the IMB is good, with the Board being informed within 24 hours of new arrivals. As with previous years, several prisoners in the Segregation Unit have proved exceptionally difficult to manage. Having a more settled cadre of officers working in the Unit has enabled a skilled and experienced approach in dealing with them. The Board commends their professionalism and patience.

6.3 **Accommodation:** There was a refit of some cells during the year with greater resilience to damage. However, damage by prisoners continues to put Segregation cells out of action for significant periods.

6.4 The Board visits the Unit several times a week, regularly attending Governors' and Independent Adjudications, and Good Order and Discipline reviews. With few exceptions, all reviews and adjudications attended are conducted carefully, fairly and appropriately. The Board noted that correct procedures were when the 42 days time limit was exceeded. All cases were considered regularly by the Board and we are content that the retention of these prisoners in the Unit was appropriate.

6.5 The Board has a specific concern about adjudications:

- Too often the Board has noted that adjudications going to the Independent Adjudicator do not have the correct supporting paperwork – ie such as the lack of a medical report requested at a previous hearing, or an officer requested to attend not turning up. Consequently these are dismissed by the Judge – which is unfair and a waste of public funds. We did flag this up as an issue last year – but there has been little improvement.

## **7. ACCOMMODATION (including communication)**

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7.1 The improvements to accommodation which started from February 2018 have continued into 2018/19. In general, the Board is satisfied that prison accommodation is generally clean and safe. GSFL which replaced Carillion are more responsive to requests and timescales for repairs has improved. There has been refurbishment of flooring in cells and improvements to showers on B, D and E wings. However, problems relating to ventilation, heating and water supply across all the wings remain. At the end of the reporting year 21 cells were classed as “out of action”, compared with 31 last year.

7.2 **Mice:** Throughout the year, there have been infestations of Mice on many wings (particularly B Wing), in the Chapel and worryingly, the Kitchen. The Kitchen Manager reports it is the worse she has known, and is due to renovation work happening there. Unfortunately, the contact arrangements between GFSL and Rentokil were not working correctly, but this appears to have been resolved, and some improvement made.

7.3 The Board notes that given the age of the buildings and their general poor state of repair, maintenance at Rochester continues to be a never-ending task. It is still recovering from the lack of maintenance during the period when closure was proposed and then abandoned. The IMB is receiving regular updates on each wing's repair list, and monitors outcomes.

7.4 The initiative to improve the standard of cleanliness of the prison – Clean and Decency Audit – is being successful. The extensive grounds on the actual site are well maintained and cared for.

7.5 **Catering:** At last there has been an upgrade of kitchen equipment that was badly needed. Balanced nutritional meals are produced, with special dietary needs being met, within the restricted budget available (£2.30 per day). Meals are served on time, although appropriate portion control is not always in place at wing severies. Although the quality of the food is criticised by prisoners, in the Board's view it is perfectly adequate. Notably the Board has not received any applications about prison food this year.

7.6 **Communication:** Information is passed onto the prisoners in a timely way, although the prisoners lose or misplace documents. The Board regularly sits in on the Induction briefings to new-entrant prisoners, which are effective and given in a positive way.

7.7 **IMB Communication with new prison officers:** This year the Board has briefed all new prison officers about our role, explaining how we are organized and where they are likely to encounter us. This has been well received by the new joiners and is seen generally as a good initiative.

7.8 **Property:** The Board is pleased to note the improvement in the consistency of the manning of the Rochester Property Office has been maintained. There are three key issues to be addressed:

- a) Yet again we are raising the fact that many transferring prisoners arrive without their clothing, shoes and family photographs (the loss of which are detrimental to their well-being) and it takes an unacceptable length of time for these to arrive and often items go missing. It is a source of needless frustration for prisoners and hard-pressed wing staff are left to deal with the consequences. This is a transport issue rather than one of volumetric control.
- b) The reply from HMPSS to last year's report indicated that work on a new prisoner property framework would start once the new IEP scheme was in place. The Board notes this, and seeks reassurance this work is now in hand.
- c) The loss of property within the prison usually arises from the lack of a cell check following a disciplinary incident, and the individual's removal to the Segregation Unit. The possessions belonging to the prisoner who is being removed become 'available' to other prisoners, especially when a prisoner is removed instantly from a double cell, and the cell is not closed down. There is some evidence of a lack of care around securing personal items in these circumstances. The Board has raised this as an issue on two previous reports, and is doing so for a third time. There is no evidence of any improvement. The Board strongly recommends more effective control is required over cell checks on all wings.

7.9 **Complaints:** There were 1953 complaints handled by the Complaints Unit this year (cf 1250 last year). Of these 90% were replied to within the required time period (cf 84% last year) – a notable achievement given the increase in complaints, and credit to the Complaints Clerk in ensuring timescales are met. Frustratingly for prisoners and the Clerk, most delays arise from slow responses from other prisons. Once again, most complaints were generated by property going missing following cell removal or during transfer (see paragraph 7.8 above). In addition many complaints relate to delayed canteen refunds both at Rochester and other establishments. The Board notes that the Complaints system is works efficiently, and that there have been some “serial complainers” at Rochester over the past 12 months. NB: Complaints about healthcare are not included in these figures.

## **8. HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)**

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8.1 Primary Healthcare is provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. Once again there have been staff shortages throughout the year. The Board notes there is a team of dedicated nurses at the prison, often working additional hours and exceeding what is expected of them.

8.2 Relations between the healthcare provider and the prison have at times been strained, but seem to have improved more recently. Prison officers are now in attendance at all clinic sessions. The Board welcomes the initiative taken forward by the Governor to extend the hours of healthcare coverage, and will monitor how successful this is.

8.3 Screening of prisoners on arrival is working within prescribed timescales – although there have been a few occasions when the Board has received an application on an issue which should be identified during arrival screening, either by Healthcare or Reception.

8.4 The waiting time to see the GP is commensurate with that in the community, with additional time being allocated for emergency appointments. The GP believes the appointment system is being managed satisfactorily – a view shared by the Board. Unfortunately there are still occasions when wing officers fail to deliver appointment slips to prisoners until it is too late to attend, and in addition there are still prisoners who fail to attend for an appointment. A GP visits prisoners in Segregation three times a week, and there is a daily visit by a member of the Healthcare team.

8.5 There is a continuing problem of prisoners found to be concealing medication (and, in turn, selling it on). When identified, (as well being placed on report) such prisoners are referred to the GP for review; as too are those who fail to collect medication regularly or are found to be non-compliant as a result of wing-based medication checks.

8.6 During March this year, ambulances were called to the prison 21 times of which 14 were then cancelled and 7 were fulfilled. This figure is typical for the year. The Board is pleased to see there is an improved understanding about when and how to call an ambulance by prison staff. There are still some delays in outpatient appointments due to a lack of officers being available for escort duty; however the Board notes this too has improved during the year. As the availability of NPS remains significant in the prison, its effects are the cause of a significant proportion of the emergency A & E call-outs.

8.7 There were 176 complaints to Healthcare – primarily about medication and external hospital appointments, which is the same position as last year. There were 40 complaints about Healthcare received by the IMB. These usually relate to perceived delays in appointments to see GPs or a hospital visit and are generally resolved.

8.8 There are a range of good Nurse-led clinics which are run regularly. For example the smoking cessation clinics have been particularly successful.

8.9 An Optician visits the prison every fortnight, and there is a long waiting list. This is unfortunate because of the growing profile of elderly prisoners with deteriorating eye sight. The Board recommends that the Optician's contract is reviewed – as it was based on a time when HMP Rochester was only a YOI. There are also delays in seeing the Dentist; however those with urgent dental requirements are given priority.

## **DRUG RECOVERY**

8.10 Drug recovery services are provided by Forward Trust (FT). The Board notes the improvements made in the reporting year by appointing a specific Governor as Head of Drug Strategy and Substance Misuse, who has a co-ordinating role across the prison together with the Custodial Manager of A Wing and the Forward Trust. One initiative was the Diversionary

Scheme, offered to offenders with a positive MDT if this was a first offence in 6 months. Basically this is group therapy – lasting around 4 weeks. Figures show that 138 offenders accepted the scheme, with a completion rate of 30%. Its continuance is currently under review. While not entirely successful, those who engaged did go onto complete other programmes.

8.11 A Wing now has a specific identity as a drug recovery wing, and during the year a peripatetic team based there enhanced the “drug recovery” profile on the wing (rather than just one of drug dependency). The Board notes there is a positive overall relationship between the prison and FT staff, which worked well for the benefit of the prisoners during the year. There are some personnel changes from May 2019 onwards, and there will be a new action plan for A wing, including implementation of a range of specific interventions to help foster a continuing recovery culture.

8.12 At time of writing, the FT are supporting 179 prisoners in structured treatment, a further 40 are given unstructured treatment, and 85 are on Opiate Substitution Therapy. The 12 Step Bridge Programme being run on A Wing has a completion rate of 64%. Also continuing at the prison is the wide-ranging See Life More Clearly (SLMC) programme, which is run on a 6 week rolling basis. Its remit is to improve physical and mental health and it involves contributions from external tutors and sessions such as gym and yoga. Recent analysis of the feedback on SLMC is good, with prisoners saying it is a positive way to assist with managing feelings relating to both physical and mental health. Of 109 starters on SLMC, there was a completion rate of 79%. In addition, this year the Forward Trust have supported 10 other interventions of varying length, ranging from NPS awareness, Acupuncture, Preparing for work, etc.

### **Mental Health**

8.13 Support for mental health needs are provided by In Reach (the provider again being Oxleas), which is staffed with 5 full-time and two half-time professionals. The Board is noting that with the focus on opening up about mental health issues, the team at Rochester are spending more time and energy is helping with prisoners with their mental health issues. The current case load is 77 with 43 referrals. If necessary, prisoners are referred to the inpatient service at Elmley. There was a very successful World Mental Health Day initiative in May 2018, which promoted the profile of mental health within the prison – including films, Carpool Karoke, the Prince’s Trust (who came to the prison), a range of speakers during the day and some excellent interaction with Governors, Staff and Prisoners. The Board’s view is that In Reach staff deal ably with a challenging and heavy workload and add significantly to the well-being and stability of the prisoners within their care.

8.14 In Reach can also refer prisoners to the Bradley Therapy Centre, which supports a significant number of prisoners with specific mental health problems. The Centre runs workshops and longer courses on issues such as sleep difficulties, mindfulness, managing and dealing with trauma, and coping with bereavement. It also provides one-to-one support, including counselling. Attendance by those referred to the unit has improved this year.

## **9. EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

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9.1 Education services were provided by NOVUS during the reporting period, with the contract changing to Western as of 1 April 2019. While there is an opportunity to provide a range of classroom-based activity, the lack of tutors and accommodation issues has impacted on delivery. For example, there were ongoing issues with the removal of asbestos from the education building combined with a leaking roof. Because of previous unsatisfactory Ofsted inspections, lessons are continuing to be monitored. However the lessons the Board has recently monitored were carried out well, with engagement from prisoners. All new entrants

to the prison are given a tour of the education building and an explanation of the courses on offer. There are 'Celebration of Success' sessions, whereby prisoners are presented with certificates of achievement. The Board is hopeful that the new provider will exceed the performance of NOVUS, which started well, but failed to deliver its proposed plans for improving the standard of education at Rochester.

9.2 The Library is well-used and offers books for all levels of literacy. It is run with Medway Library Services. There are computing opportunities which are taken up especially by those working on Open University studies. During 2019, if staffing profiles allow, it is hoped the Library may remain open during evening association for 3 days a week.

9.3 There are opportunities for prisoners to be involved in creative activities including music, media and film.

9.4 The provision of physical activity at Rochester is extremely good and well used. The two gymnasiums are well-equipped, and run efficiently. There is facility for indoor sports, such as badminton, indoor tennis, etc. Football sessions are popular. Two representatives from The Twining Football project, David Dean (ex Premier League manager and founder) and Alan Smith (ex Arsenal player) visited the prison to give a motivational talk, which included the possibility of teaming up football teams with prisons. This was very well received by the prisoners, however, so far, it has not developed as envisaged.

9.5 In addition, the open and large estate at Rochester means there is plenty of opportunity for fresh air exercise when walking between wings and activity (which in turn has its downside in providing opportunities for the passing of contraband).

## **10. WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT**

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10.1 As with Education, vocational training has again suffered from lack of tutors to deliver training. Training is provided in construction skills (including plumbing, bricklaying, and painting and decorating), industrial cleaning, rail track and catering, subject to trainer availability. Hopefully, the new provider, Western College will produce more opportunities. City and Guilds qualifications are available in most workshops.

10.2 Stonemasonry has continued throughout the year, with a talented tutor. The tutor is currently provided through Construct a Future – but is moving onto a contract from the MOJ in the next year. The work produced within the stonemasonry workshop is excellent and commended by all who visit.

10.3 Work provision (outside of working on wings and in the kitchen, etc) is limited to Floplast plastic workshop, the production of MOD camouflage netting, Waste Management, the Cycle Workshop and Horticulture. More work opportunities for prisoners is actively being sought.

10.4 Attendance levels at Education, Training and Employment tend to fluctuate – in January it was around 87%, but in March it decreased to 66.3 %. The latter is in line with the national average. More encouraging is the recent rate for May 2019 has been around 90% - following a recent initiative to get prisoners into activity. The Board continues to hold the view that the lack of occupation for prisoners, either through education, vocational training, or work, remains a contributory factor to the drugs problem at the prison.

## **11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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11.1 As a Resettlement Prison, this is an important aspect to the regime at Rochester.

11.2 **Offender Management:** As reported previously, the Offender Management Unit at Rochester continues to work efficiently and effectively. However it is hampered by over 55% of prisoners arriving from local prisons with incomplete OASys assessments. This is in excess of the numbers which should arrive without an OASys assessment, and causes unnecessary delay, In turn this creates a backlog which has to be cleared before the OMU team can actually start undertaking their proper duties. Given that resources are available at local prisons; this is wrong, and unfair on prisoners, most of whom are attending Rochester to undertake training and courses as identified within their OASys.

11.3 The changes in the management of HDC introduced wef March 2018 caused extra work for the team; however all targets were met for those prisoners who became eligible. The Board notes that it was a demanding period of the OMU team, and they responded creditably. The system continues to work well, the only hold ups being waiting for reports from other agencies.

11.4 Cat D and ROTL processes are good, and it is progressing to overnight release for those men who have completed successful day release. All appeals are met within timescales and as too are Parole targets.

11.5 The Board is indebted to OMU for the assistance they give us in addressing prisoner's questions and for showing a willingness to re-address queries when new information comes to light

11.6 **Probation:** There should be 5 full time probation officers plus a Senior Probation Officer. At time of writing, there is only the equivalent of 2 full time and 1 senior officers in place. This reflects the lack of Probation Officers within the community and other establishments. To overcome the shortfall, the plan is to temporary promote some prison staff and allocate some probation cases to experienced Offender Supervisors.

11.7 **Offending Behaviour Programmes:** Unfortunately Thinking Skills and Resolve courses were again affected by staff shortages, most notably the departure of a key experienced trainer. The unit plans to carry out 4 Thinking Skills programmes and 2 Resolve each year. Both courses have waiting lists, but as an up to date OASys is required, the delay in completing these within OMU (see paragraph 11.2 above) impacts on this. The Board attends as many of the completion ceremonies as it can, and commends the level of care and achievement by those involved in delivering this training.

11.8 **Chaplaincy:** There have been staffing changes within the Chaplaincy team, but it continues to deliver a high level of pastoral and spiritual care. All men are seen on induction, and we have good reports of the support being given following any event in their lives. There has been a delay in the appointment of a Roman Catholic chaplain, who is still awaiting security clearance. The Sycamore Tree restorative justice programme has resumed.

11.9 **Preparation for Release:** All men at Rochester receive Through the Gate support via Kent Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) which includes help with housing, employment, finances and mentoring. Appointments to see CRC are mandatory. The initial session is used to allocate men to particular training and work opportunities available at the prison.

11.10. During the year 3 employment fairs were held with stands from a variety of employers – including Timpsons. These proved extremely successful, with a significant number of prisoners getting jobs on release. The Gateway to Employment Course offers the development of soft skills in typing, maths and English, to improve employment prospects for prisoners on release.

11.11 **Comment:** The key difficulty remains that too many prisoners are leaving prison without anywhere to live. Finding suitable accommodation is a very difficult task, especially when trying to link this up to a job opportunity. The prison and CRC work with NACRO over accommodation, but given accommodation in the South East is at a premium, the frustrations felt by the Rehabilitation Team are considerable. In recent months an average of 20% of men

are being released from Rochester with no fixed abode, ie homeless. The Board retains the view that re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless suitable accommodation and support for all prisoners who have finished their sentence is in place.

### **VISITS AND VISITOR CENTRE**

12.1 The Family Days which are held in the Gym during school holidays and some weekends are excellent. They allow prisoners to interact with their children with games and physical activities, in an informal atmosphere. They are divided by children’s ages to enable suitable activities to be available. A move away from eligibility criteria of period of time free from adjudications and negative entries came into effect in the Spring. All prisoners can now apply for a Family Day Visit – subject to security assessment and OMU safeguarding checks. This is to encourage family ties to be maintained by all prisoners. So far the new process is working well. Family Days were managed by the Spurgeons Charity.

12.2 The renovated Visitor Centre provides a relaxed area in which visits can take place. Management by prison staff is good and the searching of visitors (including children) is undertaken in a considerate but effective way. A visitor recently made an unprompted comment to a Board member that visits at Rochester are the best experience compared with other prisons she had visited; praising the booking system, the environment and how the visitors were treated. The Board notes this is a considerable improvement on the situation of a few years ago.

## **B Section – Work of Board**

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The Board continues to enjoy a constructive working relationship with the management of Rochester prison. During this year we have mentored three new Board members, who are about to complete their training. One long-standing and experienced member retired. A new member started in March and two others are due to start training in May 2019. .

The former Governor, the Acting Governor and the current Governor or his Deputy, have attended all Board meetings this year. Action points are regularly followed up. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the SMT team and all the Staff at Rochester for their openness and willing support to the Board during the year.

All statutory visits and visits relating to individual members’ Areas of Special Interest have been undertaken. The Board regularly attends adjudications and has a close working relationship with the Segregation Unit staff. There is a regular training session held before our monthly meeting, with speakers from all areas of the prison. The Monitoring Framework is used as the basis for how the Board conducts its work.

<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13

Total number of visits to the Establishment	515
Total number of segregation reviews attended	260

## C Section – Applications

Applications to the Board have risen by 6.2% this year. As with last year, many are complex and often require detailed investigation. The rise in the increase of those classified as Miscellaneous is due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the complaint. The Board does try to classify according to the categories. There is a significant increase in the number of applications related to Purposeful Activity; 21 compared with 9 last year. This reflects the position of the prison as it recovers from the disruption to Training caused by the proposed closure, and the “run down” of training opportunities by the current provider between January to March. In addition a couple of prisoners sent in multiple applications.

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	9
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	8
C	Equality	6	5
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	21	9
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	17	22
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	Included in above	Included in above
F	Food and kitchens	0	1
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	42	40
H 1	Property within this establishment	67	51
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	Included in H1	Included in H1
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	Included in H1	Included in H1



I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	48	51
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	12	10
K	Transfers	17	12
L	Miscellaneous	27	24
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>257</b>