



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

**HM YOI Aylesbury**

**For the Reporting Year**  
**1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Published August 2019**



*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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**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.

This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board at HM YOI Aylesbury for the period 01/07/2018 – 18/03/2019. IMB evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and of data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys and prisoner applications.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Ministry of Justice announced in February 2019 that HM YOI Aylesbury was being placed in Special Measures for performance reasons. In parallel with that decision, a strategy was devised to reduce the roll by approximately 50% and close two to three of the seven wings, to enable improvements to be made from both a staffing and estate perspective. This downsizing is understood to last twelve months or so and a rapid decant of prisoners was completed in March and April 2019.

It is the view of this Board that the decant has the ability to skew any analysis of the prison for the remaining three months of the normal reporting period and it is for this reason we have decided to make this year's report an eight-month report, with a plan to pick up the additional months next year.

In order to maintain comparisons and trends with other years, the statistics from other years have been scaled down by a factor of one third.

### **Main judgements**

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The following issues have been identified by the Board as having a significant detrimental effect on the safety, fair treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners at HM YOI Aylesbury:

- 1 The recruitment and retention of staff employed at the prison, which is linked to pay and conditions and further exacerbated by long security clearance waits prior to starting employment. (pages 8, 10, 15, 17 & 18).
- 2 The amount of purposeful activity provided. The total number of sessions provided by the prison is a disappointing 69% of the total required for full prisoner engagement in activity. (pages 15, 16 & 17).
- 3 The poor maintenance and degradation of the structure and fabric of the prison (page 12).
- 4 The length of time prisoners spend in segregation when transfer to other prisons is required, given the lack of any formal arrangement between prisons (page 11)

## **Main Areas for Development**

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### **TO THE MINISTER**

Will the Minister:

- Provide an improvement to pay and conditions of staff sufficient to enable the prison to recruit and retain enough staff?
- Provide the resources to enable the Governor and senior management team to manage the prison effectively and to enable each prisoner to have a more appropriate level of purposeful activity including employment?

### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

Will the Prison Service:

- Allow the prison (where appropriate) to choose its own providers for maintenance of the fabric, to ensure better value for money and a more timely service?
- Allocate resources urgently to ensure critical maintenance is completed properly and in a timely manner?
- Centralise the arrangements for transfer of prisoners out of the segregation unit into other prisons, so that prisoners who need a fresh start elsewhere are not left waiting longer than necessary whilst staff spend time attempting to negotiate ad hoc moves?
- Speed up the vetting process so that new employees can start work sooner?

### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

What actions will the Governor take to:

- Retain the more experienced staff on the wings?
- Employ a dedicated team of officers to escort duties for healthcare, library and other services?
- Reduce the exposure of wing staff to violent assault by prisoners and reduce prisoner violence overall?
- Improve the retention of wing staff who are new to the Prison Service?
- Increase the use of body worn video cameras by officers in the prison? We are conscious that officers wear the equipment, but equally conscious that all too often the cameras are not active at critical times.

## IMPROVEMENTS

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While the number of assaults on staff is up, the number of serious assaults on staff has dropped dramatically. There were only two in the eight months of our reporting year, compared with 22 in the previous year.

The number of basic grade prison officers on the wings has improved slightly compared with the previous year, from 110 to 116. However, there were still, on average, eight members of detached duty staff on loan every day from other prisons, during our reporting period.

The amount of purposeful activity which gets prisoners out of their cells during the day has improved; there are now 180 prisoners in full-time employment, against last year's figure of 150.

The amount of time that a prisoner has to spend in the segregation unit awaiting a transfer to another prison for their own safety has dropped considerably, now that Aylesbury is part of the long term and high security estate, but, we believe, is still too long for prisoners in this age group.

The number of prisoners in the segregation unit has also dropped considerably. In previous years, the segregation unit was full most of the time i.e. with about 20 residents. In this last year it was half-full on average.

Each cell (other than those in the segregation unit) now has its own telephone. This means that prisoners no longer have to compete for the few telephones on the wing landings and exercise yards and are able to contact friends and family at times which may be more convenient to them.

The showers in two older wings were completely refurbished, providing about one shower per four prisoners; this is a considerable improvement.

A dedicated search team of six full time officers was introduced in the autumn, making it much harder for contraband items such as mobile phones and tobacco to get into the prison or remain undetected.

There are now curtains in every cell.

The brickwork of the outside perimeter wall has been repointed; the gutters and drains have been cleared and the debris behind the cell window mesh cleared. At the time this report was compiled, scaffolding had been erected to repair the parapet to the main building, which had been in a dangerous state for several years.

The physical education (PE) department now has seven instructors, an improvement of one over last year. They also have a training budget, allowing them to deliver new short PE-related education courses, such as first aid, diet and nutrition and manual handling. The number of weekend PE sessions which had to be cancelled due to redeployment of staff onto the wings has dropped considerably from 43% to 19%.

Fire alarm systems are now tested on a weekly basis.

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## DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

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3.1 Aylesbury Young Offender Institution (YOI) is housed in a mixture of buildings, whose ages range from Victorian to early twenty-first century. It holds the longest sentenced young adult males in the English prison system. For our reporting period, sentence length ranged between four years and 26 years, with about 15% serving at least 10 years and approximately 8% serving life sentences. Prisoners are aged between 18 and 21. Fewer than half of the prisoners are of white ethnic origin, lower than in most other prison establishments. The institution has a capacity of about 440 and has been almost full for most of the reporting period.

3.2 Prisoner intake covers most of England and Wales. Prisoners do not come directly from court, having begun their sentences at other YOIs or the juvenile estate. The prisoners are some of the most disruptive and challenging young men in the prison system. Halfway through the reporting year, Aylesbury YOI became part of the long term and high security estate (LTHSE), recognising the challenging nature of its occupants.

3.3 In February 2019, the decision was made to put Aylesbury YOI into special measures **(HM Prison and Probation Service can give a prison special measures status when it has been assessed to need additional specialist support to improve to an acceptable level)** to enable it to eventually reach the same standards of prisoner care and security as other prisons in the LTHSE. This welcome investment required a halving of the prison population during March and April without changing the staffing levels. The intention is to allow the population to expand up to full numbers again once the staffing situation (numbers, training and experience) and overall performance allows it. For this reason, this report only discusses the situation up to March 18<sup>th</sup> while the prison was still full. As noted in section 1, the Board believes the three months from the commencement of the decant to June 2019 would skew the statistics in this report and dilute the findings of the Board.

3.4 The day to day regime at Aylesbury was changed in March 2018, to bring it into line with that operating in other similar prisons. Mondays to Thursdays are divided into morning and afternoon work sessions, each lasting for three hours, separated by lunch. Friday has only a morning work session, a change put in place last year to save on staffing. Showers, recreation and exercise happen outside these work sessions and at weekends.

3.5 Numbers of uniformed, learning and skills, workshops and probationary staff have continued to be below required levels. Recruitment has been ongoing but has proven to be difficult. The prison has been helped by the deployment of 46 different uniformed staff from other establishments on detached duty during the reporting period; on average, there were eight of these detached staff on the wings at any one time.

3.6 The prison has seven residential units of differing sizes and ages. The majority of cells are for single occupancy. The three oldest wings are of traditional Victorian pattern but have been modernised over the years. The two which are the next oldest are showing signs of ageing, although they too were modernised over 20 years ago. The two newest units all date from the last quarter of the twentieth century. The segregation unit is six years old. The reception unit is housed in the modern healthcare building. There is a modern well-equipped PE suite

3.7 The learning and skills provider under the extended OLASS 4 contract remains Milton Keynes College. The contract for maintenance of the prison fabric is held by Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) and healthcare is provided by CARE UK.

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## B Evidence sections 4 – 11

### SAFETY

4.1 The table below shows evidence in respect of safety in the prison. Data for the previous reporting year have been included for comparison, scaled down by 2/3 to take account of our eight-month reporting period.

Violence indicator	Reporting period	
	2018-2019	2017-2018
Incidents of self-harm	258	170
ACCT plans opened for prisoners at danger to themselves	214	145
Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults	372	161
Prisoner-on-staff assaults	105	61
Serious assaults on staff	2	22
Sexual assaults	2	0

4.2 Apart from the welcome dramatic drop in the number of serious assaults on staff, all of the other figures in the table suggest that the prison has become a more violent place. Assaults by prisoners on staff have increased by 70% and on other prisoners have more than doubled. We note a worrying increase in self-harm by 50%. The majority of these cases relate to a small number of prisoners. It is understood that a proportion relate to the increase in overall violence.

4.3 The IMB is firmly of the opinion that this increase of violence is a direct result of the poor staffing situation at Aylesbury. The Prison Service allows Aylesbury to employ 116 basic grade prison officers who manage the prisoners on the wings. At the end of June 2018, there were 92 of these officers employed at Aylesbury. By the end of February 2019, thanks to an effective recruitment drive, this had risen to 108, allowing the return of some staff on loan from other prisons.

4.4 The table shows that of the 108 basic grade officers in post at the end of February 2019, a worrying 43% had been there for less than a year and 65% less than two years.

Years of experience at Aylesbury	Number of basic grade officers
less than one	46
between one and two	19
between two and three	8
between three and four	7

The average experience for basic grade officers is just over five months, and more than half of them have in post for less than two years. This lack of collective experience in the people on the ground in the wings cannot make it easy for them to always deal with the prisoners effectively.

4.5 The dropout rate for new basic grade officers appointed since June 2018 is 15%. This is after full training; the service clearly has a problem retaining new staff. It does not help that

once a person has been appointed, it can take a few months for the vetting process to clear them for starting work.

4.6 In light of the above statistics, it was not surprising that the Board saw a doubling in the number of applications from prisoners to meet IMB members on matters which fall under the category of "staff /prisoner concerns including bullying". Prisoners expressed increased concern about their safety.

## **EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

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5.1 During the reporting period, the Board received no applications or complaints from residents in respect of equality. However, we did receive a number of complaints about matters of bullying by staff. These were unproven. In some cases, the video evidence refuted the claims, but in others the Board was disappointed to discover that body worn video cameras were not operating. We recognise that incidents can flare up quickly and before this equipment can be turned on, but in some cases we felt the situation could have been anticipated and a video record would have been helpful. Overall, we believe the prison operates on a fair basis.

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

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6.1 A prisoner can spend up to three months in the segregation unit awaiting transfer to another prison. Although this is the same as the previous year, it is still much longer than is appropriate for prisoners in this age group and raises significant concerns for their mental and physical wellbeing.

6.2 The senior management team and segregation staff have concentrated their efforts on moving residents out of the unit as soon as feasible, bearing in mind their safety and the safety of staff and residents in the wings to which they are intended to transfer. While in previous years the unit suffered from regular refusals to return to normal accommodation, this tactic has been less in evidence this year. As a consequence, the number of cells in occupancy in the unit is down to 50% or less most of the time.

6.3 We note that management in the LTHSE have assisted in moving residents to other prisons where this has been required, but are still disappointed to observe the number of prisons that have declined to take Aylesbury's most disruptive residents, lengthening their stay in the unit. We note there seems to be no requirement as such for such establishments to accept a transfer.

6.4 Once a transfer has been agreed, there is often a further delay before transport happens. The transport provider, Geo Amey, was charged with the transfer of prisoners from the segregation unit; they postponed arrangements on too many occasions. In a number of cases, the prison, in the interest of decency, had to make its own (expensive) arrangements to transfer a prisoner to his new establishment.

## **ACCOMMODATION (including communication)**

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7.1 A key area of concern for this Board over many years has been the increasingly poor state of the prison. Ordinary maintenance appeared to have had a low priority, resulting in the very fabric of the prison visibly decaying. That changed in January 2018, when a number of factors came together to enable improvements.

7.2 It is apparent in retrospect (as at some level it was already becoming increasing apparent before the event) that Carillion's (facilities and constructions management company) performance in the public sector was unchallenged and unacceptable. Their tactic of delay and obfuscation affected Aylesbury badly. But that was not the only reason and the government cuts in prior years had added fuel to the fire.

7.3 The collapse of Carillion and the formation of Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) has, it would seem, changed the attitude towards repair and maintenance. In parallel, political pressure to improve budgets and begin a programme of sorting out the estate has enabled action. Add to this, Aylesbury prison became part of the LTHSE in March 2018, and we have witnessed welcome if belated changes at Aylesbury.

7.4 This report covers the eight-and-a-half month period to mid-March 2019. While much has been achieved, there is considerable catch-up work still to do. Some of that may be achieved after mid-March when the benefits of the decant and the programmed improvements after the closing of three wings are felt. As at mid-March, there were no contracts in place to refurbish the vacated wings and we hope this does not delay the programme too significantly.

7.5 We should record that the repairs and maintenance to areas like the dangerous main prison parapet, the loose brickwork around the prison, the considerable debris which had accumulated (and was a potential fire risk) behind the cell window mesh, the blocked storm water drains and gutters, the unserviceable kitchen equipment and F&G wing showers and communal areas, to name but a few, as examples of what has been achieved post Carillion. We welcome this.

7.6 As of mid-March, the showers and the majority of the toilet facilities in the cells on the main prison wings (A, B and C wings) are in a poor state and the showers have inadequate ventilation. The same facilities on E wing are also inadequate. We note these are amongst the priorities post-decant.

7.7 While the cell call systems on some wings have been upgraded in recent years, those on others remain outdated, making it difficult to monitor the performance of wing staff in this critical area.

7.8 We are aware that higher levels of performance and overall service are expected from prisons which make up the LTHS estate. In that connection, it has always surprised us that the prison's control room has access to all external CCTV live feed but not to that on the wings where much of the activity and disturbance occurs. The latter is usually monitored from the wing offices, though wing staff are often on the wings and therefore not in a position to monitor wing CCTV feed.

7.9 We noted on our rounds that although some critical work has been done, some brickwork remains in a poor state, that there is still a bush growing out of the brickwork on the main prison chimney stack, and that some of the storm water drains are beginning to get clogged again. The latter were cleared earlier in the year, but on-going maintenance of a number of these may have been missed.

7.10 With work now in hand to repair the boilers in each of the wings and other areas, we understand that the many temporary boilers which have been a visible factor in Aylesbury for

almost a decade are at last scheduled to be removed. We look forward to reporting this significant change in next year's report. In addition, we note the laundry has two boilers which are problematic. At the time of this report, one is old and malfunctions periodically, the other is brand new but has yet to be commissioned.

7.11 During the course of the year, the prison has improved staff numbers, which is to be welcomed. That improvement has had a knock-on effect on the availability (or more specifically the lack of availability) of keys. This was to be corrected with the relocation of the traka key cabinets and the addition of a further cabinet in February, but we have from time to time found there remains a shortage of keys. This is particularly inconvenient. To a large extent this is because of the number of keys which have been "yellow banded" to signify their non-availability due to breakages of keys or the attached security devices.

7.12 We note in section 10 that there was a shortage of employment and vocational training across the prison. Aylesbury has available workshop space, though much of this is in a poor state and needs investment if the planned activities are to be realised. In addition, the workshop doors are in a very poor state and give an immediate impression of lack of general maintenance. Our experience is that creating new workshops has all taken much too long.

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

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8.1 Healthcare services are provided from a custom-built block, housing surgeries and dental facilities. Prisoners who have applied to receive healthcare are let into the waiting room at the start of each session, but need to be escorted back to their wings by staff from the healthcare unit. Sometimes, such staff are not available, so prisoners can routinely spend a whole morning or afternoon in the healthcare waiting room. This may be the reason why there are a number of prisoners who, having applied for an appointment, change their mind and decline to visit healthcare.

8.2 Healthcare is possibly the only area of the prison where recruitment of new staff is not an issue, although they do suffer the common problem of long delays in the vetting of new personnel; six months for clearance to work in the prison is still not unusual.

8.3 Pathways provides intensive rehabilitative therapy for 40 high-risk prisoners. This involves one-to-one sessions as well as group meetings, on average about three sessions per week altogether. There is a waiting list of prisoners who wish to take part. Since there is no problem recruiting staff to deliver these sessions (apart from the usual long hold-ups for security clearance), financial constraints mean that only 40 prisoners can be treated at any one time. The IMB considers Pathways to be an important rehabilitative tool and is disappointed that its application is restricted by cost.

## EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

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9.1 The table below summarises the classroom-based courses that Milton Keynes College provides for prisoners in a typical week. A session lasts for three hours.

<b>Course Description</b>	<b>Sessions per week</b>	<b>Students per session</b>
Functional Skills Maths	2.25	8
Functional Skills English	2.25	8
Level 2 Business Venture	4.5	10
Level 1/2 Barbering	9	6
Art	4	8
Music and Radio	9	10
Painting and Decorating	7	10
Horticulture	7	8
Level 2 Peer Mentoring	4	8
Education and Training L3	0.25	10
Believe and Achieve	0.85	8

9.2 In addition, Milton Keynes supports a number of distance-learning and cell-based courses, as shown in the table below.

<b>Course Description</b>	<b>Course Duration (h)</b>	<b>Students per year</b>
Money Management	20	130
Positive Parenting	28	47
Open University	750	11
A-level courses	450	13
AS-level	450	5
GCSE	250	5
Miscellaneous L2 courses	250	18

9.3 Milton Keynes College has struggled to find teaching staff for some classes. The bricklaying course has not run for over a year due to staff recruitment difficulties.

9.4 The prison ran a number of morning programmes during the reporting period to help prisoners address their behaviour as shown in the table below.

<b>Programme Description</b>	<b>Sessions per week</b>	<b>Prisoners per session</b>
Thinking Skills	0.84	8
New Me Strengths	1.44	8
Resolving Violent Behaviour	2.4	8
High Risk Sexual Offenders	3	8
Medium Risk Sexual Offenders	0.4	8
Choice (to encourage participation)	1	12

9.5 The use of the library has dropped significantly. In our last report, an average of 20 prisoners visited the library every day from both the wings, workshops and education. For our reporting period the average daily has dropped to 16. This means that only one fifth of the prison population visit the library per week (it was one quarter last year). Analysis of the attendance records kept by the librarian show that wing staff frequently complain that they are too busy to escort prisoners to the library. However, prisoners can, and do apply in writing to request books for delivery to the wing.

## WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

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10.1 There are not enough activities, whether education, programmes, work, PE or training to keep prisoners out of their cells for more than about two-thirds of the working week. The working week is 4.5 days (9 sessions). Assuming an average prison population of about 420 this means that there needs to be about  $9 \times 420 = 3780$  prisoner sessions per week available for full employment of all prisoners.

10.2 The table shows the approximate impact of the various weekday activities offered by the prison.

<b>Weekday activity</b>	<b>Prisoner-sessions per week</b>
Programmes	77
Industrial work	952
Class education	418
Cell education	173
Cleaning	695
PE	187
Pathways	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>2496</b>

The total number of prisoner sessions provided by the prison is therefore a disappointing 69% of the total number needed for full employment (a mixture of education, programmes, work, PE or training). Only 40% of the prisoners are in full-time employment.

10.3 In practice, the number of sessions which actually take place is often considerably less than this. Interviews with various agencies, external visits, healthcare needs, lack of staff to run workshops, refusal to attend and the suspensions of normal activity due to the alarms which are inevitable in a prison, all reduce the number of sessions which prisoners attend for scheduled activities.

10.4 Weekend PE sessions have been curtailed too often by the redeployment of PE staff to allow the regime to run on the wings. During our reporting year, 14 of the scheduled 72 weekend PE sessions had to be cancelled for this reason. However, the 81% of planned weekend sessions taking place is a considerable improvement on last year's figure of 57%. IMB believe that these sessions proactively reduce violence and should be prioritised.

## **RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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11.1 The prison is part of the LTHSE and does not ordinarily cater for prisoners who are due for release.

11.2 The unit which manages prisoners' sentence plans has one vacancy in a team of six. This makes for frustration when the increased workload means that prisoners have to wait a long time for their plan to be determined.

11.3 The prison has been allocated the equivalent of 5.0 full-time probation officers, but the actual number was only 2.1 during the reporting year. This is despite constant active recruitment by the Probation Service. The consequence is that each member of the probation team has many more prisoners to deal with than they should, resulting in considerable delays to discussions with prisoners about parole, release dates and other matters to do with resettlement.

## **WORK OF THE BOARD**

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12.1 In this reporting period we lost three and gained six members. All three members lost were probationers. At the end of the year there were nine members, of which five were probationers. The board continued to recruit throughout the year with mixed success.

12.2 There were seven board meetings during this eight-month period. On one occasion there were only two board members present.

12.3 The work of the board was supported by a clerk.

12.4 The IMB visited the establishment on 206 occasions during the reporting period. This compares with the 161 visits for the same period last year when the board had significantly fewer members.

12.5 Although the Board operated with depleted numbers as the reporting period began, coverage was maintained to a large degree and improved further as new members joined and a new member completed his probationary period. We anticipate the number of visits will continue to increase as our new round of probationary members are appointed as full members.

12.6 The Appendix shows the number of applications handled by the Board were broadly in line with previous years. We saw a significant increase in the number of complaints relating to the mishandling of property, particularly where this involved a prisoner transfer. We get the impression that in certain prisons processing and handling of prisoner property is not accorded the priority it should be. In response to one query we oversaw, staff at a previous prison washed their hands of the issues without much investigation and suggested the prisoner contact the Ombudsman.

12.7 We also saw a doubling in the number of accusations against staff in respect of bullying and mishandling of prisoners (now 15 percent of complaints to the Board), though these were largely unproven and may have reflected the increase in violence generally within the prison.

## A APPLICATIONS

Figures for the previous reporting year have been scaled by 2/3 to take account of our eight month reporting period.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Current reporting period</b>	<b>Previous reporting year</b>
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	6
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	0	2
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	5	4
E-1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	11	4
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	4	1
F	Food and kitchens	1	3
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	4	2
H 1	Property within this establishment	35	18
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	15	19
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	5	6
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	13	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	33	15
K	Transfers	8	13
	Confidential Access	0	2
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>102</b>

**BOARD STATISTICS**

Recommended complement of Board members	<b>15</b>
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting year	<b>6</b>
Number of Board members joining during the year	<b>6</b>
Number of Board members leaving during the year	<b>3</b>
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting year	<b>9</b>
Total number of visits to the prison	<b>206</b>
Total number of segregation reviews attended	<b>114</b>