



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

**for reporting Year
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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison 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.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?

On the whole, the Board finds that prisoners at HMP Stocken are treated fairly. We have some concerns about equalities outcomes, but the appointment of an equalities manager shows that the establishment is aware that it needs to do more in this area.

Are prisoners treated humanely?

Prisoners are in general treated humanely. As the year went on, living conditions on the larger wings improved after a disappointing beginning. The quality and quantity of food gives rise to very few complaints. The gym, library and education centre all offer very impressive opportunities, and provision for religious faiths is good. The general atmosphere in the common areas and on the wings is usually cheerful and co-operative.

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

We do not think that preparation for release is as good as it should be. The quality of training and education is generally good, and prisoners can achieve qualifications which should enable them to find steady employment on release. We also praise the work of the Lincolnshire Action Trust in helping prisoners with complex issues. However, we are not convinced that every man released has accommodation to go to, nor that those who have served long sentences are adequately prepared for the rapidly changing world outside.

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

Resettlement. Stocken is not a resettlement prison but is increasingly being expected to perform the functions of one. Given that about one in eight of its population is released from Stocken each year, it is vital that HMP Stocken has the resources needed to make this role successful. Hence, we feel that there needs to be a significant increase in funding for this particular purpose. (See 11.5, 11.6)

Staffing. The large gap between the planned completion date of the new wing and its actual opening had at least one beneficial side-effect, namely that staffing pressures were significantly eased compared with the previous reporting year. However, it now seems that the prison is about to return to a condition of being understaffed. We urge the Minister to continue to expand recruitment, and to make greater efforts to retain experienced staff.

Maintenance. As we reported last year, the contract with Amey prison service projects is very unsatisfactory, in that repair and replacement jobs take far too long and result in inferior living conditions for prisoners. The fact that the company generally hits its performance targets suggests that the contract should be radically re-thought when it comes up for renewal. (See 7.9)

Mentally ill prisoners and those with severe personality disorders. While the former can sometimes be transferred to secure units, the latter can only be transferred to other prisons, and yet their problems are often no less serious. We urge the Minister to consider the possibility that both categories should be afforded increased resources. (See 8.6)

Careers Advice. In short, there is virtually none. This needs adequate funding, otherwise much of the good work done by purposeful Activity will go to waste.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Far from home. More and more prisoners from London and the south-east are being transferred to Stocken. Stocken is a prison with poor transport links. This combination has severe impacts on their families' ability to visit them, and undermines attempts to provide stability and continuity for both prisoners and their partners and children, which the Farmer Review felt to be of great importance. More than 20% of prisoners receive no visits. (See 5.6 to 5.8)

Transfers of re-categorised prisoners. There is too much delay between the award of category D or category B status and the resultant transfer between establishments. The category B prisoners in particular have to remain in the segregation unit until transfer, and too often receiving prisons decline to accept individuals, causing overcrowding and the opportunity for violence and vandalism. We feel strongly that the Prison Service should take a much more active and compelling role in ensuring the swift transfer of such men. Furthermore, the general shortage of places at category D prisons frequently leaves prisoners here frustrated and depressed. (See 4.4 and 11.4)

Purposeful activity. While there has been some expansion of genuinely useful vocational training, the best workshops are able to take only a fraction of the numbers who could benefit. HMP Stocken needs to be able to expand successful activities placements and introduce additional ones to enable more rewarding and useful training and eventual employment.

Video suite. Pressure on staff escort and court resources should be reduced by installing a video suite to obviate the need for prisoners to appear in person at court.

TO THE GOVERNOR

Adjudications. We think the number of adjudications has reached a point where the system is falling into disrepute. There is constantly a backlog in three figures, and partly as a result far too many are dismissed as they are out of time, missing evidence, lack of a reporting officer, etc. We urge the prison to find alternative ways to address misbehaviour that falls short of police involvement. (See 6.8)

Purposeful activity. Although we understand the difficulties in securing an improvement in prisoners' punctuality, the training and education sections of the prison would benefit greatly if men arrived promptly at their place of work, instead of wandering the corridors. (See 10.2)

Equalities. There is some evidence that the prison has not given sufficient attention to the needs of prisoners who fall into protected categories, despite worthwhile projects such as the LGBT awareness month. We welcome the appointment of an equalities manager and would encourage the prison to support her work over the coming year.

Improvements

Relationships between prisoners and staff have shown a distinct improvement over the reporting year. We have observed that dealings between men and officers are usually respectful and constructive.

Offender management in custody (OMiC): the introduction of this has gone well so far, though it is still early days. The prison has tackled it with enthusiasm and a determination to make it work. We anticipate that the new key worker role and the establishment of a dedicated team of prisoner offender managers will mark a turning-point between prisoners and staff.

Cleanliness. The recent improvements in cleanliness on the bigger wings in particular is very welcome. The introduction of a regular decency audit is an excellent idea.

Access to drugs. Although there have been some side-effects, the concerted effort to reduce the availability of drugs of all kinds, but psychoactive substances (PS) in particular, has been largely successful. In the long run this should benefit the physical and mental health of the prisoners, and the safety of staff.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

HMP Stocken Is a category C male training prison, in a rural situation, close to the A1 in Rutland. Access to public transport is very limited: the nearest trains and buses are in Oakham, the county town (nine miles away).

Built in 1985 as a Young Offenders Institution, Stocken now holds some 820 – 830 adult men, serving medium to long-term sentences. Operating capacity is 853, and certified normal accommodation is 753. A new wing is due to open in June 2019, more than six months overdue. This will bring the population up to 1052, and preparations for this were largely in place by December 2018. During the reporting period, there are six wings – four “small”, holding c. 95-120 men, and two “large”, holding nearly 200 each. There are 12 workshops and a substantial education section (“college”). The large and well-equipped gymnasium is very popular with men and staff alike, and the chapel, multi-faith rooms and library are also well supplied and well attended.

Education for much of the year was provided by Milton Keynes College, with the contract moving to People Plus in April 2019; healthcare is provided by Care UK, with mental health services subcontracted to Northamptonshire Foundation NHS Trust. Library services are provided by Rutland County Council. Voluntary services include the IMB, the Samaritans, Lincolnshire Action Trust, the Prison Fellowship, the Shannon Trust and the Sycamore Trust. In addition to the construction of a new wing, there are concurrent plans to create a new and extended kitchen block (also severely behind schedule). During the year, the healthcare department has occupied additional spaces, and MDT has a new suite. There are no plans to expand the segregation unit, the visitors’ reception and the visits hall, nor the gymnasium. Instead, the number of visit sessions will need to be increased proportionately. The space freed up by the new kitchen may become a multi-use space, perhaps offering gym facilities on a Friday afternoon while Muslim prayers are held in the gymnasium, for reasons of inadequate space in the chaplaincy. [Although these expansions will properly fall into the next reporting period, they are included here because they have been in the air for the whole of this reporting period.]

4 SAFETY

4.1 In this respect, it is best to compare Stocken with similar prisons: although violence and self-harm have risen throughout the estate, prisoners at Stocken generally feel safer here than at other prisons which they have experienced, a finding confirmed by HM inspectors.

4.2 We have been impressed by the process of receiving and inducting men into Stocken. Reception is a department which works well. It is fully staffed, opening in the evenings and at weekends 90% of the time. Interviews and testing are thorough and carried out respectfully and decently. Incomers have access to a small shop which helps to avoid a build-up of debt while they are waiting to order their first canteen. Incomers have two private interviews, one in reception and one following transfer to H wing (the induction wing).

4.3 The induction process benefits from the active involvement of mentors from start to finish (about two weeks). The introduction of an induction “tracker” trial is to be welcomed: this involves a systematic record of a new prisoner’s progress through the induction scheme from the moment they arrive, making sure that all aspects of information and training are covered. New arrivals are offered a voluntary drugs test with no sanctions if the result is positive. If they refuse, they are put down for a mandatory test at a later date. Generally, uptake is good.

Violence.

4.4 **Assaults:** (and in particular serious assaults) on prisoners have shown a slight decrease, but serious assaults on staff have risen.

Assaults on prisoners: total 153 (of which 30 [19.6%] adjudged serious); monthly mean, 12.75; 43 in Q3, 38 in Q4.

Assaults on staff: total 80 (of which 17 [21%] adjudged serious), monthly mean 6.7. 35% of the total took place in Q4 and over half the serious assaults occurred in that period.

An impressionistic analysis of assaults on staff suggests that it is often perpetrated by men who are determined to get a transfer to another prison in order to escape debt and the associated violence from other prisoners. Would-be transferees often smash up cells. Their belief seems to be that dangerous behaviour here will increase the urgency with which the prison seeks to move them to another establishment. Such prisoners tend to spend too much time in the segregation unit awaiting transfer to institutions unwilling or unable to take them. The IMB feels strongly that too many unsuitable men are transferred to Stocken simply because there are spaces, (for example, four men from Pentonville were transferred to Stocken and within a short space of time had all been recategorised as category B prisoners.) The Prison Service’s prisoner movement unit (PMU) needs to take much greater care in sending prisoners to Stocken who can benefit from what the establishment can do for them. As it is, there is a high degree of churn, with over 60% of prisoners here for less than six months, making it difficult to build the long-term relationships with the establishment which will give them a better chance of rehabilitation.

4.5 A new system for recording and addressing violence has been introduced. This is challenge, support, intervention planning (CSIP). Those prisoners whose involvement in violence seems particularly ingrained or problematic may be placed on a CSIP, where their case is managed by a team of staff. It is still in its infancy and we are not yet able to assess its effectiveness.

4.6 Use of force: early in the year, the IMB expressed concern over the lack of up-to-date documentation in this area, though this dramatically improved in the weeks before the anticipated HMIP visit. There were 386 occasions in total, 32 per month, monthly range 20-48, with 125 (32%) in Q4. The HMIP report stated that though it had increased, it was not out of line with other similar establishments.

4.7 Stocken was one of 10 prisons chosen to pilot a new ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) document. An ACCT is opened when, for example, a prisoner speaks of feeling that they are likely to self-harm. The new document (ACCT version six) seems to us more coherent and informative, though initially more complex to navigate. This has been confirmed in conversations with officers and mental health staff, who both find it a distinct improvement. The number of ACCTs open at each month's end was typically 16, with no discernible trend over the year.

4.8 Self-harm is a serious problem. However, the data indicates that the majority of instances are the responsibility of a very small number of prisoners. There were 381 recorded incidents (c. 32 per month) with a range of 20-54. Again, there was no discernible trend over the year. The average number of incidents per prisoner was 1.8. However, if the eight most prolific self-harmers ceased to self-harm, incidents would fall by over 45%. It is to the staff's credit that their response to this information is to try to work with these men rather than transfer them to other prisons.

4.9 Drugs and alcohol: The Governor has made it a major priority to reduce the availability of drugs, particularly PS. To this end, a policy of photocopying incoming mail was instituted, and then increased to cover all mail (barring that covered by legal privilege). This caused a sharp fall in the number of men judged to be under the influence (UTI), as we traced from looking at the daily briefing sheet. The prison has acquired equipment which can test unopened mail, which has revealed that a certain amount of supposed legal correspondence is also contaminated. Another source appears to be staff corruption, and a mixture of random and intelligence-guided searches has identified several individuals whose cases have been passed to the police. We have observed two predictable consequences of this success: a) the price of PS has rocketed, unfortunately leading to the acquisition of often huge debts by the most addicted prisoners, and b) there has been an upsurge in the brewing of alcohol ("hooch"). The latter is felt by some to be the lesser of two evils: it is less easy to overdose on, and much easier to detect.

A further, and more concrete indicator is a dramatic fall in positive mandatory drug testing (MDT) results. Until January 2019, these were typically running at c. 20 a month. They are now down to four on average.

4.10 We are sorry to report three deaths in custody. Two occurred on the same night on different wings (6 October 2018). The third was on 6 January 2019. The inquests have not yet been held.

4.11 During the reporting year, illicit goods discovered were:

Mobile phones 53 (last year: 51)	Alcohol 187
SIM cards 42 (28)	Drugs 347 (85)
Phone chargers 39 (24)	Tobacco 37
Memory cards 7 (7)	Weapons 123

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 During the reporting year, the Board at Stocken received only four applications in the category “equality” (three in the previous year). Also, when prisoners complain to us about healthcare, wheelchair provision, food, loss of privileges etc., it is rare for that prisoner to allege discrimination as a contributory factor. As a result, we are aware that we have been reactive rather than proactive in this area, tending to deal with issues on a case-by-case basis through the applications process rather than scrutinising the prison’s policies and practice. (In part, this is because the prison itself has hitherto adopted a similar approach.)

5.2 There are two diversity and equalities representatives, one of whom specialises in LGBT issues. The latter told us that his role is poorly defined and cited a case of (alleged) racism which was escalated to the Governor but the complainant had received no information four months later.

Other concerns raised by mentors: there is not enough information regarding equality and diversity for new arrivals. There is thought to be an increase in the number of gay men coming to Stocken. Data are not easy to come by in this area: only five prisoners identify as LGBT but a further 119 either left the response blank or declined to state their orientation. The equality and diversity representative has drafted a form and information for new arrivals to disclose whether they are comfortable with their own or others’ sexuality/orientation/gender. This will be addressed by the new equalities manager. The establishment held an LGBT awareness month during the reporting year, but it is difficult to judge its impact.

5.3 The HMIP report highlighted Stocken’s relatively underdeveloped structures. The number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) over the year was 99. However, just over half of these were received in Q4. 6 were upheld. With the appointment of a band 6 equalities manager towards the end of the reporting year, we fully expect the prison to take a more active role in monitoring equality and fairness with respect to protected characteristics.

5.4 In our opinion, the faith and religion provision is good. At the start of the year, all faith groups were provided for, in terms of a regular time for worship, a faith leader (where relevant) and dietary needs (again, where relevant). The only group which lacked a faith leader was Rastafarianism, but the prison was fortunate in being able to appoint one six months later. There is a regular Sunday service for Protestant (largely Anglican) worship, and the congregation is typically 50. Leaving aside the 23% of prisoners who profess no religion, the next largest group is Roman Catholics (c. 20% of the population) who worship on a Friday afternoon. Muslims (currently 17%, though it has ranged from 15-20% over the year) form the next largest group. The multifaith room is already cramped for this group and the prison will seek to provide a larger alternative space, such as the gym, when the prison’s population expands to 1000+ in the near future.

5.5 Complaint systems appear to work well, in that they are widely understood by the prisoners. We monitored monthly 10% samples of responses, and generally found that the standard was improving, with lengthier, more explanatory replies increasingly common.

5.6 Lincolnshire Action Trust (LAT) has the contract to run visits. There were six visits slots per week (rising to seven when the prison expands), taking place on four days of the week, and 12 family days per year, plus special occasions such as Fathers Inside presentations.

5.7 The prison’s isolated position makes it difficult for most families and friends to get here. We feel that the prison could do more to mitigate the difficulties this presents to families. It is all the more important, therefore, that the visits process and experience is as good as it can be, and the Board can confidently report that over the course of the reporting year, LAT have achieved great success here. Visitors quizzed by members report that the experience here, both in visitors’ reception and in the visits hall itself, compares very favourably with other

prisons, with good access for disabled visitors. Facilities are usually clean (though there are issues about conditions over weekends when no cleaners are available), booking in is reasonably stress-free, the searching of visitors is conducted with respect and good humour (though rather slow in comparison with some other establishments who perhaps rely more on intelligence-driven searches), and the atmosphere in the visits hall is almost always positive. There is ample provision for children to play and paint, food is good and reasonably priced, furniture is comfortable. We feel the start time is in practice rather erratic and this can lead to frustration on the part of both men and visitors.

5.8 In addition, LAT liaises with schools to allow release of pupils on weekdays, advise on family law, and interact with OMU where families have logistical difficulties in coming from distant places.

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

6.1 Each week, on one or more days, members on rota speak with every man in the segregation unit (SU) The on-call member speaks with newly located arrivals within the required period, as long as they are informed of them (which, after representations on our part, now happens much more reliably).

6.2 In general, the Board is very impressed with the dedication and professionalism of the permanent segregation staff. They deal with mentally ill or violent prisoners with the same patience, firmness and constructive concern that they bring to those who are no trouble. The resource of a dedicated clerical assistant has contributed greatly to this, as officers can now spend more time on engagement with the men rather than doing admin tasks for which they did not always have the appropriate skills. The unit relies heavily on plugging staffing gaps with guest officers from the wings, and this, though unavoidable, is undesirable, since wing officers are rarely familiar with the routines in the SU, nor with the longer-term residents. The allocation of an officer to the night shift, where before there was only one officer support grade (OSG), is to be applauded.

6.3 The presence of a dedicated custodial manager (CM) and a proactive governor have also brought about a great improvement. Unfortunately, the staff member allocated to oversee the adjudication administration is in practice almost never present, being drafted elsewhere in the prison to plug gaps on the wings. Hence the administration for adjudications now falls predominantly on SU officers.

6.4 The level of occupation of the unit has on average fallen since December. In the period May – December, there were rarely fewer than 16-18 occupants, which is close to 100% occupancy. Although these sorts of level have sometimes occurred post December, typical numbers have been more like 12-14 (60-70%). A spike in cell-smashing in the last month of the period has caused great difficulties, especially as special cells have also been affected. Amey has struggled to keep up with the repairs, with times of three months being quoted for some special cells.

6.5 Board members attend rule 45 reviews as a matter of course, though very occasionally we instead inspect the paperwork within 24 hours. Mental health staff almost invariably attend despite sometimes significant shortages of personnel. They are generally well prepared. Governors by and large conduct reviews fairly and sympathetically. The men almost always attend, with very low numbers refusing to do so. Documentation is not always prepared in advance, and the presiding governor does not always inform themselves about the prisoner they are about to see, either by asking staff or consulting the prison national offender management information system (PNOMIS). We think that the review is more effective when they do so. Record-keeping is usually good.

6.6 The SU governor has worked hard to create a more focused and systematic approach towards getting each man back on to normal location as soon as possible.

6.7 Our overarching concerns include these: the lack of any plan to increase the capacity of the unit when the prison population increases by 20% in June 2019; the number of mentally ill prisoners who find themselves held for long periods; the occasional cases where detention exceeds 42 days, and where paperwork to go to the deputy director of custody (DDC) is not prepared in sufficient time; linked to this is the “revolving door” of relocating long-term inmates to the wings only for them to return within hours.

6.8 Adjudications: The SU is under great pressure to manage the all-morning (and sometimes all-afternoon) adjudication sessions when they would be better employed in dealing with residents. The backlog of outstanding adjudications is excessive – sampling by members

typically reports 115-130 on any given day. In addition, far too many adjudications are dismissed for technical reasons (missing paperwork, out of time, reporting officer not present, CCTV unavailable, etc). The external adjudicator has approached the Governor to draw up a strategy to reduce non-viable adjudications since s/he feels valuable time is wasted when so many hearings are pointless for the reasons given in brackets above.

Segregation usage	305	(last year 338)
Cellular confinement	646 days	(1585)
Dirty protests	10	(28)
Mechanical restraints used	0	(0)

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

7.1 The six wings are mainly generic, except for H (c. 110 men) (induction), I (c. 78) (drug and alcohol recovery), and L (c. 180), which has an older prisoners' landing.

Communication.

7.2 In general, we have observed good and respectful relationships between staff and men in their day-to-day interactions.

7.3 The establishment focus group (EFG) consists of prisoner representatives from each wing, which meets with the accommodation governor on a monthly basis. The agenda is led by the men. The governor invites other staff to talk to the men about any issues which may arise. For example, the security governor explained about the procedures surrounding incoming mail. The EFG members then report back to the other men on their wings and minutes are displayed on wing notice boards. Each wing holds monthly focus group meetings, specific to that wing, with minutes being published for all to see.

7.4 There is an obvious rapport and respect between the governor and the men. The men can speak freely and their concerns will be listened to and acted upon if possible. The men also undertake to follow up on action points themselves, e.g., the establishment of a peer audit on cell decency throughout the prison. HMIP awarded a three (reasonably good) for respect, decency and positive staff interactions at HMP Stocken, and we concur with this judgement. The introduction of key workers under OMiC has also clearly helped to explain and justify regime practice and decision-making.

7.5 Wing officers have regular daily briefings on the wing concerning the men in their care and any issues arising. This, along with their key worker role, gives officers a good knowledge of individuals. Communication is generally good and delivered by notices, in wing folders, over the public address system and, in cases of a situation leading to a lockdown, notices being pushed under each cell door. Unlock times are not always consistent, and lack of a reason why leads to frustration, particularly if men are on visits or have specific jobs to do. A pressing issue is that incentives and earned privileges (IEP) notices were not always explained properly or recorded in a timely manner, but the Governor has recently issued more stringent IEP rules and expects all IEPs to be formally written down and issued to the person concerned with an appeal form on the reverse. We have urged this for some time, since too often less experienced officers simply put a man on a charge, leading to an excessive number of adjudications.

7.6 Interviews will shortly take place for a new (band 6) engagement officer. This position is intended to address communication across the board at HMP Stocken. He or she would do well to address the often-observed tendency of wing officers to cluster in the wing office, rather than circulating so that they can interact with prisoners, picking up intelligence, calming tensions, and answering questions or complaints.

7.7 All prisoners have access to a free phone number for access to legal advice. Additionally, they now have access to legal information services with support from law students (who in turn are supported by their staff) at Lincoln University and the citizens advice bureau (CAB). This is not a legal advice service, but it gives prisoners the opportunity to discuss issues on family, finance or issues relating to the criminal justice system, which can be researched with the help of law students and the CAB, who can then direct prisoners to relevant agencies for help.

Quality of Accommodation

7.8 Board members visit at least one wing each week. Over the course of the period, it became clear that during the first eight months of the reporting year the standard of cleanliness and food hygiene varied too much across the establishment. Put simply, the large wings were often not performing to the standard found in the smaller wings, and the evidence for this was overwhelming. There was considerable improvement in the last four months. Most wings show up badly over the weekend when much less scheduled cleaning takes place. Food safety books are often not filled in or missing, and the kitchen supervisor feels that all wings, but especially the large ones, need to take food hygiene seriously, as did the regional catering managers inspector who issued a red warning in November 2018 because of this. Food trolleys from the large wings are often dirty while the small wings almost always clean them thoroughly. Washing machines and driers on all wings are often in need of repair: they are heavily used, partly because men increasingly decline to send prison-issued kit to the prison laundry since (on the large wings) they cannot guarantee that their own kit will come back to them. (The smaller wings have their own wash kit bags.)

Maintenance

7.9 The relationship between Amey and the prison is showing improvement (albeit from a low base). Wing staff have been urged to report faults as they happen, rather than en bloc. Also, they are seldom aware that Amey has a contractually agreed priority list, which may not mesh with officers' perceptions of priority. On the other hand, issues with washing machines/driers can drag on for months with no progress. Amey Commercial takes too long to provide estimates for work required, without which it cannot be progressed. Also, the requirements of the contract often stifle both fault-reporting and fault-correcting. If 40 lightbulbs need replacing, 40 separate computer entries have to be made. The root cause seems to derive from inadequately specified contracts between Amey and the Ministry of Justice.

Property

7.10 Staff struggle particularly when transfers from other establishments (especially private prisons) bring far too much property with them. Volumetric controls at other establishments are simply not being observed, and this causes prisoner resentment at Stocken when property is put into storage for eventual return to family/visitors. It is noticeable from our applications register that property is by far the largest cause for complaint, with "property transferred from another establishment" the single biggest source (20%) of applications to us. The issuing of a new facilities list has helped: it clarifies which electronic devices are permitted, a frequent cause of frustration. Also, reception staff have been trained in electrical equipment testing which enables new prisoners to have their electrical items on arrival.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

8.1 Healthcare provision at Stocken has improved during the course of the reporting period. There have at times been serious shortages of staff, especially in mental health, and a necessary reliance on agency staff to plug gaps, but by the end of the period the department was in a much better position to deliver appropriate care.

8.2 Non-GP care has been reasonably satisfactory, though both the IMB and HMIP criticised the six-week wait for dental appointments. Earlier in the year, GP appointments took three weeks, though more urgent cases could be seen within four to five days, or immediately for the most urgent. When roll reconciliation was happening twice a day, men who had finished appointments were sometimes trapped in healthcare for up to an hour, while men with appointments perforce missed them, since all movement was suspended. An internal review in August 2018 found that in the preceding four weeks, there had been 269 appointments which prisoners were unable to keep, wasting professionals' valuable time. Hence, the number of did not attend (DNA) cases is difficult to interpret. This practice finished in December 2018. The department offers a wide variety of preventative medical screening and advice. Retinal scanning for diabetics [30 men], bowel cancer screening for those over 60 [25], chlamydia screening for the under-25s [24], and so on.

8.3 Healthcare was well resourced in carrying out the smoking cessation programme, which has been in our view remarkably successful.

8.4 The medical suite is adequate in terms of decency and privacy, and its expansion into part of the old MDT suite has benefited staff also. Vandalism to the chairs in the waiting area has meant the withdrawal of most seating, and there are now discussions about what kind of vandal-proof seating can replace them.

8.5 The area where the Board has had the most concerns is mental health. By the end of the reporting period, staffing was at its allocated level, but constant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff earlier in the year led to long waiting lists. Agency nurses are mostly long-term hires and continuity of care is not a significant issue. The appointment of a full-time psychologist has been of considerable benefit since her appointment. The recent establishment of a drop-in clinic (so that men self-refer) is proving effective and popular, such that it requires two sessions a week.

8.6 There is agreement on the part of all agencies here that the numbers of men with serious mental health issues, and also severe personality disorders, have increased. The Board is concerned that many of these men find themselves segregated for long periods of time, and frequently suffer from the "revolving door" syndrome of returning to a wing before shortly returning to the SU. Very often, this goes hand in hand with an increase in self-harm statistics (eight men were responsible for nearly 50% of recorded incidents this year). When the prison psychiatrist has declared that such men should be moved to a secure facility, the shortage of places as well as the choosiness of the receiving institution has led to lengthy delays before severely ill men's needs can be addressed. We understand that personality disorders are not classed as mental health issues, nevertheless, in practice there is often no difference in the problems which result for the prison, and some radical rethinking is required on this point.

8.7 The number of men under social care is currently two, although one has declined to be covered. We judge that the prison's provision is appropriate.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

9.1 “College”, as the education department is known here, was operated by Milton Keynes College until the beginning of April 2019, when the contract was reassigned to People Plus. Staff have noticed virtually no changes in aims or practice, and there has as yet been no impact on prisoners. The accommodation is extensive and staffing is usually at its desired level. The administration of assigning prisoners to vocational training (VT) or classroom-based courses and the accompanying exams leading to recognised qualifications is all handled by college staff. [See section 10 for our findings on VT.] Classroom-based courses range from level 1 in a wide variety of subjects up to A-level via distance learning and OU degrees.

9.2 Prisoners who are below level 1 in English or maths are not taught in college. Those who are motivated to learn to read and write are mentored by men trained by the Shannon Trust until they achieve level 1, whereupon they can apply to take courses in college. An outreach programme is also available to ensure that learners who are unable to engage in traditional delivery methods of education still receive support in their development of these skills. A new member of staff with a background in learning support and special needs started in late December 2018. He has a roving brief and goes around the VT workshops to help prisoners with English and maths difficulties. College can thus not only provide support but also identify and encourage those who would benefit from a more formal course. The head of college told us that there has been an increase in the number of men with learning difficulties, mental health issues and dyslexia. Strategies are in place to support such students and those who wish to apply for a full diagnostic assessment of dyslexia.

9.3 Our observations over the year lead us to think that college is one of the most consistently successful, effective and professional sections of the prison. 95% of men report that they enjoy attending their classes. We can confirm this from talking with prisoners, who almost universally feel very satisfied with and well supported in their learning. The numbers engaged in higher level learning have nearly trebled. The standard of art produced by the art academy (available to men who have completed level 2) is remarkable, and often some of the hardest to reach can make a significant contribution through their artwork, much of which adorns corridor walls and offices throughout the establishment. Segregated prisoners are fully integrated into programmes, where work in cell is possible, and achieve a 97% completion rate. One concern is lack of punctuality to classes. Also mentioned elsewhere, the roll reconciliation requirements had severely impacted the work of college, with some men reported as having barely 30 minutes of their allotted education time. The latter problem has disappeared, but the former has not, and we estimate that 20 minutes of staff time is taken up with registering men who are late to the start of each session.

9.4 Careers advice is still lacking since the closure of the section in March 2018. We strongly urge that it be reinstated. It makes sentence planning difficult for OMU and limits what college and VT can do to enhance employability.

9.5 Gym: This facility has been running at 90% capacity all year, and could hardly be better used. They run several excellent initiatives, including a well-being gym for mental health referrals, a well man gym for older prisoners, the overweight, and men with healthcare referrals. There is a weekly community partnership session for locals with a disability to take part in a gym session with the men. There is also an impressive gym timetable covering every minute of every accessible day within the prison regime. Recently, understaffing and the imminent expansion of the population have led to tentative plans to use prisoners to bolster provision. In fact, the major worry all year has been that the 20% expansion in population will force the unit to reduce prisoners’ access, since no corresponding expansion of gym facilities has been planned. (Fortunately, during the reporting period, this has not transpired as the new wing is still not open.) However, the vacated kitchen space will, we trust, be at least

partly kitted out with exercise machinery. Additionally, the new wing itself has outdoor equipment of this kind.

9.6 Library: the library is another great strength of the prison. It is now fully staffed as far as librarians and orderlies is concerned, but a shortage of prison staff in the evenings and at weekends has regrettably limited prisoner access to a first-rate facility. The much-needed expansion of IT provision has been welcome.

9.7 Their core function is of course the lending of books and DVDs, providing access to legal books, prison service instructions (PSIs) and prison service orders (PSOs), and newspapers and magazines. But the library also runs reading groups: the six-book challenge, operating at two levels, one more challenging than the other, which is aimed at those who have little experience of reading for pleasure; Storybook Dads – in the run-up to Christmas some 50-60 men were recorded stories for their children; and the Shannon Trust, which provides support for those with low literacy.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

10.1 As a training prison, Stocken operates a wide range of workshops and other activities where prisoners can gain experience and useful qualifications. According to March 2019 statistics, the percentage of men employed is 88% of the population. Of the remaining 116, 27 (3%) are classed as unemployed, (2/3 of whom are regarded as unemployable). 10 are down as 'work refusal'. The remaining 79 (9%) are sick, in SU, on programmes, retired, on the induction wing, plus a few very minor categories.

10.2 Attendance at workshops is patchy, with some experiencing near-100% attendance, while others are often missing a substantial proportion (a third in some cases) of their expected personnel at the start of the session. Sometimes there are good reasons (e.g. medical appointments) and men turn up when finished, but too often it is unclear to supervisors or wing staff or activities where the missing might be. In addition, punctuality is poor in that men show no hurry to get to work or education, an observation echoed strongly by HMIP. We have asked the prison what they intend to do to improve this, but so far no strategies have been suggested.

10.3 Almost all the jobs on offer lead to some form of qualification, except for those in the camouflage netting workshop. These range from barista training in the staff café (Stockpot), to Wamitab (waste management), to level 1 City and Guilds (gardens and grounds), Level 2 (painting/decorating "qualified tradesman" status), and in some areas level 3 (plumbing, for example). DHL is emulating Timpson's in introducing a certified key foundation training scheme leading to potential paid employment on discharge, either with the company or elsewhere. A national co-ordinator will come to visit a prisoner around six months prior to his release to review his progress and to help find him a job through working on his CV, conducting practice interviews and offering advice generally.

10.4 Those administering activities are conscious that it is becoming harder to persuade men to take up jobs in some areas where the work is repetitive but nevertheless skilled. There is thus a growing tension between the prison's remit to enable prisoners to become qualified and employable on the one hand, and a growing tendency for prisoners to arrive with low levels of skills and/or motivation on the other.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 As reported last year, about 75% of arrivals at Stocken have no OASys (offender assessment system), and this is likely to worsen. We have been told that one of our major feeder prisons is to stop doing them altogether. The offender management unit (OMU) at Stocken therefore is continuing with the rolling programme of catching up, relying on overtime since no budgetary provision is built in. The constant churn of prisoners means that this backlog will not fall. The typical backlog is 80, though HMIP, using different criteria, assessed it at c. 200.

11.2 Prisoners see an offender supervisor (OS) during induction, though this is not always their allocated OS. By the end of the reporting year, there were four and a half probation officers at Stocken, but the benchmark number should be seven. Band 4 officers, with a typical average caseload of 50, are often deployed at short notice to cover staff shortages or incidents elsewhere, which disrupts their work and concentration. The introduction of OMiC and other reforms should mitigate this since the prisoner offender managers (POMs, a new category) will be non-operational and thus able to concentrate exclusively on their caseload. In April 2019, the situation is a mixture of POMs and OSs as the changeover proceeds, but staffing levels seem adequate. Meanwhile, key working has been rolled out with apparent success. Prisoners know who their key worker is, and staff and IMB can usually rely on the relationship being actual rather than theoretical (unlike the previous personal officer system). Regular meetings since April 2019 between key worker and prisoner are achieving a hit rate of 69-80% (internal target 74%). Some of the under-performance is due to “non-effective” staff – eg those on nights, those off sick, those attending an incident, etc., but clearly this will need regular monitoring to prevent a good start from declining into routine mediocrity.

Programmes

11.3 Courses offered include Resolve (general violence – eight weeks, five groups of 10), Kaizen (partner violence – six months, eight men, rolling programme), and TSP (Thinking Skills – six weeks). During the year, the last of these has struggled to fill up places but this has allowed staff to offer more Resolve courses in the meantime to allow a TSP waiting list to build up until a viable size is achieved.

Categorisation

11.4 The prison no longer has any men on release on temporary licence (ROTL). HDC affects a small number, though work is sometimes hampered by lack of acceptable accommodation. The major problem with category D (i.e. open prisons) assignment is the acute lack of places in local category D establishments. This results in the IMB being approached by men who have achieved category D status but who then face perhaps months of uncertainty and frustration while awaiting a transfer. A particular problem arises when men who are from the south east are offered a category D establishment even further away from home.

Release

11.5 Stocken is not a resettlement prison, and theoretically should directly release only a handful of prisoners (if any). In practice, we find that a large number (105, roughly 1 in 8) were directly released over the course of a year. 56 of these were released on instruction from the Parole Board. It is perhaps a tribute to Stocken that a number of prisoners prefer to finish their sentence here, but the prison is not resourced to give them the best chance of success post-release. Of course, such men will have had some preparation for release, but we believe that even so some leave here with no accommodation to go to or are unprepared in other ways.

11.6 We have been most impressed with the work of Lincolnshire Action Trust (LAT). This is financially supported by several British and EU partners, and has funding till 2023. They perform two related functions – one team prepares men with multiple needs (no bank account/no accommodation/debt issues/etc) for release. They have a caseload of about 200

men with a waiting list of 50. Men self-refer and their feedback is very positive and appreciative. The other is their role in Visits.

C The Work of Board

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the Establishment	1037
Total number of segregation reviews attended	416

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	11
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	29	16
C	Equality	4	3
D	Purposeful Activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	17	16
E 1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	34	12
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	11	12
F	Food and kitchens	4	6
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	36	33
H 1	Property within this establishment	27	40
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	67	63
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	9	3
I	Sentence management including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	19	50
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	37	38
K	Transfers	28	36
	Total number of IMB applications	333	339