



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP BELMARSH

for reporting Year
1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019

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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.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board is pleased to present this annual report.

The Board is pleased with the development of the equalities policy and the work of the team.

The Board is pleased with the increased staffing levels which are enabling a more consistent regime.

The Board is very concerned by the increasing number of gangs and the influence their members try to exert over others. The impact of conflicts causes many prisoners to self-isolate and lose opportunities for purposeful activity.

The Board regrets the lack of progress in reducing and then eliminating the use of triple occupancy cells.

The Board regrets that work to refurbish the showers across the prison has been postponed again.

The Board regrets the lack of provision of purposeful activity for prisoners, particularly those who are segregated.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?

The Board believes that generally prisoners are treated fairly.

Are prisoners treated humanely?

The continued use of three-man cells designed for two people is unacceptable. It is of great concern that no progress has been made on reducing the occupancy back to two-man cells. The Governor is also unhappy about the situation. (para 7.2)

The state of the showers and many of the toilets across the prison is appalling. It is a disgrace that despite a funding programme being available from 2017, work continues to be delayed. (para 7.3)

The growing influence of gangs within the prison is a major concern. The resulting level of violence and aggression towards prisoners and staff can often be directly linked to gangs. The prison works hard to separate prisoners who claim to be in conflict. This is an increasing problem for the Governor and his staff. An outcome is that more prisoners are choosing to self-isolate. (para 4.4)

The lack of adequate purposeful activity is considered inhumane. The situation has hardly improved since last year, and there are still only places for approximately a quarter of the prisoners to attend activities at any one time. There are unacceptable levels of non-attendance often because the quality of the activity is inadequate. (paras 6.2.4, 6.7, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 10.2, 10.3, 10.5)

Once again, the poor processes in place across the prison estate for the management of prisoners' property remains a major issue. There is still an inconsistent approach across the estate. (paras 7.18, 7.19)

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

Preparation for release has been inconsistent during the year. In part this has been due to lack of staff to run programmes. (paras 11.1.1 to 11.1.4)

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

1. Will the Minister intervene to ensure that triple-occupancy cells become a thing of the past? (para 7.2)
2. Will the Minister examine the procedures followed for dealing with counter-terrorism clearance and ensure that these procedures are speeded up and made more efficient? (paras. 7.16, 9.6, 10.2, 11.12)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. Will the Prison Service take steps to ensure that sufficient funding and expertise is available to the prison, to strengthen the ability to deal with the growing influence of gangs? (paras 4.2, 4.4, 11.20)
2. Will the Prison Service review the space available across the high security estate for prisoners with specific accommodation needs so that they are not kept in segregation or healthcare for extended periods? (paras 6.6, 8.3)
3. Will the Prison Service approve the funding programme for shower refurbishment in the prison? (para 7.3)
4. Will the Prison Service review the processes for the transfer of property between establishments; and will they also consider permitting twice-yearly exchange of property? (paras. 7.18, 7.19)
5. Will the Prison Service take steps to improve recruitment of Band 3 and 4 instructors as well as physical education instructors to ensure the proper provision of purposeful activity? (paras 10.2)

TO THE GOVERNOR

1. Will the Governor review what improvements can be introduced to ensure that use of force reports are always completed in a timely manner? (para. 4.8)
2. Will the Governor work to improve communication between the prison and the Samaritans manager? (para. 4.10)
3. Will the Governor take steps to ensure all prisoners in segregation can receive the exercise to which they are entitled? (para 6.1.3)
4. Will the Governor take steps to ensure an effective cooling system in the high security unit? (para 6.2.3)
5. Will the Governor continue to review the provision and quality of purposeful activity, including improving the number of places available and monitoring levels of participation and reasons for non-attendance? (paras 6.2.4, 6.7, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 10.2, 10.3, 10.5)
6. Will the Governor discuss with Milton Keynes College ways of improving the in-cell educational provision in the segregation unit and the high security unit? (paras 6.1.,7 6.2.4)
7. Will the Governor ensure improvements to the speed of phone call clearance for the approved visitors scheme for prisoners in the high security unit? (para 6.2.6)
8. Will the Governor improve the effectiveness of the process for dispensing medication on houseblocks? (para 8.6)

9. Will the Governor ensure preparation for release is consistently delivered and the quality monitored? (paras 11.5, 11.12, 11.14)

Improvements

1. For several years the Board has been reporting that management of equalities has been neglected due to staff shortages and budgetary constraints. The Board is pleased to report that this area is now fully resourced and being managed effectively. Regular meetings are held to review progress and the house blocks are well-represented by prisoners in attendance at the meetings. (paras. 5.1, 5.2)
2. The Board welcomes the introduction of offender management in custody (OMIC). Once it is fully operational, prisoners should benefit from knowing there is a named officer who can advise and assist them. (paras. 7.7, 11.11)

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

Belmarsh opened in April 1991 at a cost of over £105m. It occupies some 60 acres on the old Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in South East London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall.

It is a core local prison within the high security estate. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and magistrates' courts in south east London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial. All category prisoners may be housed in Belmarsh.

The certified normal accommodation (CNA) is 829 and the operational capacity i.e. the maximum population it can hold is currently 910.

The main providers of contract services to the prison are:

Maintenance: Government Facilities Services Limited

Healthcare: Oxleas Healthcare Trust

Education: Milton Keynes College (replaced Novus (Manchester College) in April 2019)

Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

- 1. Overview.** The prison had a rating of overall ‘substantive green’ after the full security audit done by the Prison Service in February 2019. The prison put in a huge amount of effort in preparing for this audit and were pleased with the positive outcome – 70 baselines found to be fully compliant (score 4), 10 minor finds (score 3) and one significant find (score 2). Overall there is concern about the high levels of violence in the prison with a 50% increase in comparison to the previous year. This is in part due to errors in the manner of reporting in the previous year which have now been rectified.
- 2. Assaults.** There was a high number of assaults during the year (refer to table below). Changes in reporting methodology mean that direct comparisons with previous years are difficult to make, but there appear to have been increases in prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff assaults over the previous year. Generally, however, the figures for other comparable London prisons are higher. The majority of the assaults were carried out by young prisoners with a few individuals committing a high number of assaults. The complexity of the prison population contributes to the high levels of violence. For example, in the middle of June 2019 there were 550 sentenced prisoners (200 of them being category B long-term), and 279 remand. Additionally, the prison manages a high security unit and takes prisoners from the whole of London, adding to the high number of gangs identified in the prison. Over the last three months the statistics show a slight reduction in the number of assaults on staff and prisoners and the Board hopes this trend will continue.
- 3. Drugs, phones and weapons.** All incoming mail is scanned using an itemiser to detect impregnated drugs. The body scanner is used on consenting prisoners coming into the prison. Where they do not consent, they are treated with suspicion and monitored. Poles are also used in various parts of the prison on staff, visitors and prisoners to detect phones, weapons and drugs. The highly-trained dog teams are used to detect drugs and explosives. For the figures on the number of finds, refer to the table below. There are no available figures for tobacco, although this has now become a high-value illegal item in the prison since tobacco was banned in September 2017.
- 4. Gangs.** Up to 120 gangs have been identified in the prison, with a high number of prisoners declaring an affiliation to these gangs. This is a challenging environment for staff, making it difficult to ensure that prisoners with conflict issues are housed separately from others where appropriate. Nearly ten prisoners from specific gangs have been identified in two houseblocks, forming strongholds. Pressure is put on other prisoners in these houseblocks to pay for, and to try to bring in, drugs and phones. The ‘Change Grow Live’ agency provides one person who works with gang members to try and offer alternatives to violence. Similar work is done by the Catch 22 group which also advises prison staff on gang management and reducing violence through intervention.
- 5. Self-harm and disorder.** The incidents of self-harm and disorder are shown in the table below. Although the use of razor blades was controlled in 2017, weapons can be made from other sources such as bedding, plastic cutlery, metal, pencil sharpeners and glass, all of which are still commonly used.
- 6. ACCTs.** Assessment, care in custody, teamwork (ACCT) documents are regularly opened to manage prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide, and staff hold regular

reviews. Board members continue to quality-check entries on a random basis and these are mostly found to be acceptable.

7. **Deaths in custody.** There were three deaths in custody during the reporting year, one apparently self-inflicted.
8. **Use of Force.** Use of force incidents are up overall for the reporting year, with 153 incidents having been reported by the end of May. Outstanding paperwork continues to be a problem. From January to May 2019 there have been 135 missing reports, compared to 150 for the whole of 2018. The prison informed the Board that towards the end of the reporting year there were 296 outstanding reports. This raises concern about the governance of the use of force system, and also has significant implications for the adjudication process.
9. **Body-worn cameras.** Body-worn cameras have been available this year and are now used regularly. Officers are encouraged to wear them for their own protection and to reassure prisoners, although some staff remain reluctant to wear them or to turn them on. Prison staff periodically experience technical issues using the body-worn cameras, and the batteries fail regularly.
10. **Listeners.** Currently 14 new Listeners are being trained. There are Samaritan phones on each of the houseblocks and these are checked each month to ensure they are in working order. There are still no Listeners, nor access to Listeners, on the high security unit (HSU) and there are no Samaritan phones. The Board remains concerned that HSU prisoners are not getting the same provision with regard to access to Listeners and Samaritan phones as they would have in normal location. When new phones are installed as part of the in-cell telephony project, it will then be possible for HSU prisoners to access Listeners. Regrettably there have been problems in co-ordination between the prison and the trainer of the Listeners, from the Samaritans, which have affected the additional support and training she would wish to provide.
11. **Safer custody team.** The safer custody team comprises four officers, one administrative person, one custodial manager (CM) responsible for violence and suicide prevention and one CM responsible for equalities. Now that the prison has higher staffing levels overall, the officers are no longer being regularly redeployed.
12. **Challenge support and intervention plan.** Every violent incident is investigated and an intervention plan is put in place with the aim of reducing violence. This ties in with the offender management in custody programme and the allocation of key workers. In these cases, key workers (see paragraph 7.5 below) are assigned to work with the prisoners involved in these incidents.

Issue	Statistics
Assaults	171 prisoner-on-staff (of which 22 serious)
	310 prisoner-on-prisoner of which 38 serious
Self-harm	104 cutting
	61 suffocation
	10 ingestion
	56 other
Disorder	43 incidents at height
	4 barricades
	9 indiscipline
	1 hostage

Finds	208 drugs
	136 phones
	172 weapons
	10 alcohol
	Tobacco: no figures available
Deaths in custody	2 natural causes
	1 self-inflicted

Figures are for the period 1 July 2018 to mid-June 2019.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

1. **Prisoners equality action group (PEAG).** The Board is pleased to report that for the latter part of the reporting year the equalities area has been properly resourced and effectively managed. Regular meetings are held to review progress. An impressive series of events has been organised during 2019 across all equalities strands. These include such things as arrangements for Ramadan and Eid al Fitr, autism and disability awareness themes and LGBT Pride and Black History months.
2. **Protected characteristics.** Managers have been appointed for each of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and they report back to the PEAG and have quarterly review meetings. A lot of attention is currently being focused on older prisoners, defined as those aged 50 or above, with the opportunity for those who wish and who have been risk-assessed, to be located on a specific older prisoner spur, with more planned in the future. The regime on this spur allows more time out of cell. A special gym session has been set up for these older prisoners. As at 1 June 2019, the age breakdown in Belmarsh was as follows:

Age range	Number
18-21	108
22-29	293
30-39	236
40-49	95
50-59	68
60-69	20
70+	9
Total	829

6 SEGREGATION AND HIGH SECURITY UNIT

6.1 SEGREGATION

1. **Capacity.** Segregation contains 16 cells, all of which were in working order at the time of writing. Two of the cells are designated for close supervision centre (CSC) prisoners, for which the prison receives payment and two extra members of staff. The segregation unit is seldom at full capacity, the average occupation level being 14.
2. **Contacts.** Prisoners in the segregation unit are visited on a daily basis by a governor, a member of the chaplaincy, and mental health and health care staff. The psychology team regularly visits any CSC referrals and others with complex and challenging needs, and offers support to officers working on the unit. The Board visits at least once a week to attend Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) reviews and to speak to each prisoner. There are no permanent Listeners in the unit, but a Listener from one of the houseblocks may be called to attend if necessary. Prisoners also have access to the Samaritan phone which they can take into their cell, but phone reception can be sporadic.
3. **Staffing and regime.** The segregation unit has not yet reached full staffing but despite this almost all prisoners, except those with a high multi-unlock (above four officers) or those on a refusal regime, have access to visits, phone calls, showers and exercise on a daily basis. CSC prisoners can have up to one hour in the in-house gym and one hour's exercise in the yard, as stipulated by the close supervision centres. The majority of prisoners (non-CSC prisoners) are entitled to an hour's exercise, but are restricted to 30 minutes owing to population pressures when the unit is full. In order to facilitate a full hour's exercise for some prisoners, others would have to decline their exercise period. At the moment non-CSC prisoners do not have access to the in-house gym unless they can provide a specific reason for its use. The Board regards this as unfair.
4. **Multi-unlock prisoners.** Those multi-unlock prisoners who require at least six officers to unlock them are put on a highly restricted regime. They can go for a week without being unlocked for a shower owing to shortage of staff. The Board considers this to be inhumane treatment. The multi-unlock system is currently under review within the prison.
5. **Refusal regime.** The refusal regime (i.e. prisoners limited to three showers per week, and with no television or radio) is still running for prisoners who refuse to return to normal location after serving their time in the unit, but it is implemented only if there is a need for accommodation. The number of prisoners who refuse to return to normal location reduced considerably during the reporting year, although towards the end of the year there was some anecdotal indication that numbers were increasing again.
6. **Length of stay.** Fewer prisoners are spending long periods in the segregation unit, although one CSC prisoner spent 371 days waiting for trial. This was authorised by the close supervision centre. Another prisoner spent 155 days in the unit refusing to return to the houseblocks. Some self-segregating prisoners think that a refusal to leave will enhance their chances of being moved to another prison.
7. **Purposeful activity.** Access to purposeful activities remains limited and prisoners spend most of the day in their cells. They are allowed out of cell each day for 30 minutes plus time for a shower. The library maintains a cart of reading material which is updated once a fortnight. There has been no improvement over the year to the weekly in-cell education provided by the education department, which consists only of printed handouts. Some prisoners sign up for education only in order to get paid. Two cleaners are currently involved in painting cells and over the reporting year several prisoners have taken on painting jobs. Other activities include cleaning showers and decorating poppy tins.

8. **Accommodation.** The segregation unit is generally in good condition, but cells are often damaged by prisoners, reducing the available accommodation while they undergo repair and incurring high costs. The area outside the cell windows is always covered with litter which cannot be kept under control despite the efforts of the unit's cleaner. There were four dirty protests during the year.
9. **GOOD reviews.** GOOD reviews are held weekly to determine whether a prisoner is ready to return to normal location or make a progressive transfer to another establishment. The segregation governor and representatives from healthcare, psychology, probation and the IMB attend. No reviews were cancelled over the reporting year, although they were sometimes moved to another day without due notice.
10. **Adjudications.** A minimum of 10 to 12 adjudications are held each day from Monday to Saturday, conducted by a governor or an independent adjudicator from outside the prison. At the beginning of the reporting year the backlog of adjudications was over 300 but at the time of writing the backlog had reduced to 112. Staff shortages mean that some reporting officers are not attending the adjudications but are relying on telephone links, which is not ideal.
11. **Use of force.** There were 18 use of force incidents reported during the year in the segregation unit.
12. **Body-worn cameras.** Body-worn cameras are not worn universally in the unit. They are usually worn by one senior officer and one other officer.
13. The Board recognises the challenging and at times dangerous work the segregation team performs.

6.2 HIGH SECURITY UNIT (HSU)

1. **Accommodation.** The HSU is being refurbished and upgraded. Once this is completed it will offer a better standard of provision to the population, and could operate as an emergency Separation Centre (centre for extremist prisoners). The areas being improved include spur 2, the HSU in-house segregation unit (which is often vacant), visits and provision of a cell for disabled access. At the end of June 2019, the spurs were reduced to one. As a result the officers can run a full regime which includes daily access to phone calls, showers and up to an hour's exercise. For much of the reporting year, however, a split regime has operated, with attendant problems, resulting at times in prisoners receiving less than they are entitled to. Cleaning and painting jobs have been built into the new regime.
2. **Showers.** The shower refurbishment project, due to start several years ago, has again been postponed (see also paragraph 7.3 below). The showers are in an appalling and indecent state: tanking has come away from the walls, sharp chips from crumbling paintwork cover the shower floors, and the walls and ceilings, painted with what appears to be emulsion, are covered in mildew. Drainage is poor and is never inspected and small flies come up through the drains.
3. **Air-flow.** The old air-flow system for cooling the HSU has never worked properly and is now being replaced, throughout the building, by new sealed windows with narrow slits for ventilation. There is concern that this system will not be adequate to cool the building during a hot summer when high temperatures are often recorded in the cells.
4. **Purposeful activity.** The provision of purposeful activity remains limited and of poor quality. Weekly in-cell education consists of printed handouts provided by the education department. Most prisoners are not interested in them. There is an Islamic Studies group but there is no other education.

5. **Use of force.** There have been six use of force incidents in the unit over the reporting year. The last was in January 2019.
6. **Garden.** The garden appears to be growing well, with crops of strawberries, herbs, tomatoes and beetroot. Some prisoners maintain individual plots. Garden visits are part of the work format and can be substituted for exercise sessions.
7. **Communications.** There has been an improvement in getting telephone numbers agreed, and all numbers are currently up to date. Delays in sending and receiving mail have been resolved. Phone call clearance for the approved visitors' scheme continues to be slow.
8. **Listeners.** There is still no provision for a Listeners' scheme or for a Samaritans' telephone service.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

1. **Capacity.** Belmarsh has an overall capacity for 906 prisoners. The houseblocks contain 281 single person cells, 67 dual-occupancy cells and 147 triple-occupancy cells.
2. **Triple-occupancy.** The Board acknowledges that some attempt was made during the year to reduce the use of triple occupation cells, but this situation has proved inconsistent and currently the use of these cells remains a necessity. The Governor agrees that triple occupancy cells are indecent and he would like to do away with them. Whilst they remain, the prison is unable to demonstrate improvement since the last inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). Satisfactory levels for decency are impossible to achieve. In his response to last year's IMB report the Minister agreed that holding three men in a double cell is not desirable. The Board considers this to be an unsatisfactorily mild response. The Board has invited Jo Farrar, Chief Executive of HMPPS, to visit the prison to see the situation, and awaits her response. It is unacceptable that this situation continues indefinitely. A solution needs to be found.
3. **Showers.** The state of the showers on all the houseblocks is appalling. The plaster on the walls and floors is cracked and uneven, making these areas unhygienic. There are no privacy doors and nowhere to put clothing and toiletries. The Board considers this is not decent. A funding programme has been approved since 2017 but work has been delayed several times. Prisoners are justified in feeling disgusted with the current situation. The prison is planning to recruit some trusted prisoners to redecorate some areas as a temporary measure. This is not an adequate solution.
4. **Staffing.** Staffing levels significantly improved during the year, with a total of 164 new prison officers recruited. This has helped to ensure that a more predictable regime has been available to prisoners as the year has progressed. For a time, the number of new recruits made the prison difficult to manage as the ratio of new officers to experienced staff was out of balance. With experience many of the new staff are proving to be enthusiastic and capable. Unfortunately, a number of experienced officers left during this period for a variety of reasons. The prison needs to do some concerted forward planning to ensure that officer numbers do not drop again. There are many good, professional officers in Belmarsh and the Board has witnessed some positive interactions with prisoners during the year. There is some established mentoring of inexperienced officers to ensure that good practice is adopted and remains consistent. The culture of the prison needs constant positive attention.
5. **Offender management in custody.** The offender management in custody (OMIC) programme is being established. As part of this, a key worker is being assigned to each prisoner, allowing them 45 minutes per prisoner per fortnight. The aim is for the key worker to assist prisoners with any issues and to help strengthen family ties. The scheme started in January and it is expected to be fully operational by September 2019. The Board is pleased to monitor the roll out of this programme and there has been some positive feedback from both staff and prisoners.
6. **Complaints.** The Board had been concerned on occasion with the way complaints to the prison have been dealt with. There is evidence that these are being handled more consistently, with the quality of response improving. Senior management carries out a monthly 10% audit of complaints, and written responses are made to commend good practice and to highlight what could be improved on. The issue of interim responses is being addressed and these are used now only in the few cases where it is impossible to give a full response in the allotted timescale. The Lammy Report has influenced a new policy on handling complaints which is due to go live in August 2019. The introduction

of OMIC may be having a positive influence on the need for prisoners to resort to applications to the IMB. It is too early to judge.

7. **Washing machines.** Some washing machines on the houseblocks have been out of action for long periods during the year, making it difficult for prisoners to wash and dry their laundry. Basic standards of hygiene have been lacking for some prisoners which can cause frustration and adds to resentment.
8. **In-cell telephony.** In-cell telephony is being installed. There have been some installation problems, and it is anticipated that it will take months to complete the work. The Board hopes that once the system is up and running it proves to be positive for prisoners and their families.
11. **Older prisoners.** The Board notes that the prison is in the process of establishing a spur for older prisoners, i.e. those aged 50 or above, who will be able to choose whether they would like to locate there (see also paragraph 5.2 above).
12. **Vulnerable prisoners.** A concern for the Board earlier in the year were the arrangements for the location and care of vulnerable prisoners. The Board is reassured that the policy has been updated and there have been efforts to ensure that there is better communication between officers to keep prisoners safe.
13. **Incentives and earned privileges.** The prison recognises that the incentives and earned privileges policy needs updating. There are currently few incentives to encourage prisoner involvement. Suggestions being considered include evening exercise and association sessions for enhanced prisoners. These have been successfully adopted in other establishments.
14. **Visits.** The visit booking system continued to be problematic during the year. The prison was aware of the issues and used various strategies to try to improve the situation. The area has often been under-staffed for a variety of reasons, including staff on sick leave replaced by inexperienced temporary staff and staff being redeployed. Two new members of staff waited months to complete the vetting procedure. The result, for much of the year, was an inadequate service. At one stage a member of the IMB was told that there were 241 emails waiting to be answered. For the last few months, the area has been mostly fully staffed and the service seems to be improving. There have also been occasions observed during the year when families have been turned away at the gate, sometimes for late arrival (in one case a mother and her children five minutes late trying to find a parking space), others for inappropriate clothing. The Board agrees there must be rules but considers they should be better communicated. There is a booklet available for all potential visitors to explain visiting procedures, which could be made more user-friendly.
15. **Prison entrance.** The plan to re-open the additional entrance for social and legal visitors has been delayed even though additional staff had been recruited. Consequently, it can be frustrating and time-consuming to try to enter the prison at certain times of the day, particularly for families with children. The staff have had to deal with some very challenging visitors during the year. The prison might do more to ensure better communication earlier in the procedure so that visitors who do not comply with the rules are warned when they arrive and given the opportunity to correct anything before they start to enter the gate area.

- 16. Security clearance.** There has been no improvement in the amount of time it takes for the counter-terrorism clearance process, or the excessive amount of time for clearance to be processed by shared services in the Ministry of Justice. It is not uncommon for this process to take in excess of six months, often with the consequence that potential recruits are discouraged and drop out. The Board raised this issue with the then Minister in last year's annual report. He responded that "steps have been taken to review the whole recruitment end-end procedure within HMPPS, to look at the points in which delays have or can take place. Steps to review the process and to further improve the procedure and the applicant's experience going forward will continue." The Board has not seen any improvement during the year.
- 17. Kitchen.** The kitchen continues to be well managed, with hard-working staff operating in a hygienic environment. A number of essential pieces of equipment have been in a poor state of repair and some replacements have taken a very long time, although two new Bratt pans were installed at the end of the reporting year. The budget available per head is only £2.15 a day, but the manager is creative and keen to do a good job. On the whole prisoners are provided with a nutritious diet, but there are occasions when the Board would like to see more fresh fruit and salad available. The manager and his staff have catered for a number of festivals and family days throughout the year. Prisoners are regularly consulted to develop the menu.
- 18. Reception.** Reception is a busy area, a total of 8,537 movements in and 8,743 movements out were dealt with during the year. The body scanner installed during the year is effective in identifying prisoners attempting to smuggle illicit items in to the prison. Prisoners' property is not effectively managed. Prisoners can wait months to receive their property. In some cases, there seems to be a dispute over whose responsibility it is to unite prisoners with their property. This is a great source of frustration for prisoners. IMB members continue to deal with issues around missing property including property lost during transit between prisons and within the prison. Volumetric control is not working across the estate. Claims for compensation are a drain on resources.
- 18. Annual clothing exchange.** This seems to be problematic for many prisoners, who do not receive their entitlement for a variety of reasons. It seems to be difficult for prisoners and their families (and some officers) to understand the system. During the year some prisoners have waited months to exchange their clothing. This is another source of frustration for them. The Board believes that consideration should be given to enabling exchanges to take place twice a year.

8 HEALTHCARE (including mental health and social care)

GENERAL

1. Healthcare services are provided by Oxleas Health Trust. Healthcare believe they have a robust complaints procedure, and most complaints are dealt with within the time limit. The Board has been asked to monitor how complaints are dealt with, and this work has just started.

IN-PATIENTS

2. **Capacity.** There is a capacity for 33 in-patients, many of whom present with challenging behaviour. The average number of patients who require a controlled unlock is about 40% of the in-patient population. Controlled unlocks impinge on association, exercise and shower times, as well as staff resources. The number of constant watch patients also places a burden on resources.
3. **Transfers.** Many patients are assessed for possible transfer to mental health facilities. The Board is concerned that a transfer can take up to nine months. This form of “bed blocking” has meant, on occasion during the year, that prisoners who should be admitted to in-patient care have needed to be nursed on the houseblock.
4. **Night staffing.** A concern raised by staff was the night watch staffing levels. Currently there is one nurse on duty and a second nurse available who is not required to be physically present in in-patients. The Board raised this with the prison in May 2019. In a recent update the healthcare manager confirmed that he hopes to be able to provide an additional nurse based in in-patients in the future. The Board will continue to monitor this situation.

OUT-PATIENTS

5. **Non-attendance.** Non-attendance by prisoners at their appointments remains a concern. For example, on a recent visit by a Board member it was noted that out of 42 appointments only 17 prisoners attended, a fairly standard ‘did not attend’ (DNA) rate. Previously healthcare staff have told the Board that the main reason for non-attendance is a shortage of prison officers available to collect prisoners once they have attended their clinic. Patients taken to out-patients in the morning can remain there after they have been seen until lunch time when they are taken back to the houseblock: prisoners are therefore reluctant to attend if it means spending up to three hours waiting to be returned to their cell. An additional reason for non-attendance may be that prisoners attending appointments instead of work or education do not get paid. This situation is being investigated and hopefully will be rectified. The Board raised this issue in its report last year and is pleased that the Governor’s response to our concerns has resulted in some improvement. The new healthcare manager is aware of the issues and a full DNA audit was carried out. Decliners are now followed up promptly and encouraged to attend, but work to improve attendance will be ongoing.
6. **Medication.** Dispensing medication on the houseblocks has been a cause of friction between nursing staff and officers on occasion during the year. In excess of 500 medications are dispensed every day. The problem seems to arise through inconsistent detailing of officers to unlock. Healthcare management believes that the process would be easier and quicker to manage if it was made clear which officers are responsible for unlocking.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. **Change of provider.** Milton Keynes College took over educational provision at the beginning of April. Education has been rebranded as 'college'. It is too early to determine what affect this has on courses or attendance but the future looks promising. New courses are planned, including an arrangement whereby a carousel of specific courses will be available. This will broaden the variety of courses. There are also plans to offer courses beyond levels 1 and 2 in English and mathematics. There is some anecdotal evidence that attendance figures are slowly beginning to improve.
2. **Lost days.** This has been a much better year than the previous one. Our 2017-18 annual report gave details of lost days due to staff shortages, and we were so concerned by the dearth of activity in November and December 2017 that we wrote to the Secretary of State in January 2018. As that reporting year ended the recruitment drive was beginning to show positive improvement and the Board is pleased to note that the only days lost in the last twelve months were planned closures, primarily for staff training. This amounted to 117 sessions lost, equivalent to 58.5 days.
3. **Places.** The provision of places in education is still limited to 100 in a prison population of around 800. The Board considers this to be inadequate
4. **Attendance.** Attendance has continued to be poor. It is not good that, even with the limited number of places previously mentioned, an average of 47% of places are not taken on a daily basis. A small amount of this is due to visitor appointments and health attendance. It has not yet been possible to enable these to be taken into account when places are allocated. There is also a serious problem with issues of conflict between certain prisoners, often gang-related, which prevents them attending education at the same time.
5. **Allocation.** The Board's rota reports have noted that there is some uncertainty about the allocation of places to education following assessment of prisoners on arrival. In principle a prisoner with poor levels of English or mathematics should be allocated to education in the first instance but this may not always happen. The Board hopes the new provider, Milton Keynes College, can end this uncertainty.
6. **Gym.** There has been some restriction of gym activities due to problems of staff recruitment.
7. **Quality improvement group.** A new managing governor has assumed oversight of reducing reoffending. He has instigated a quality improvement group to look at the areas of education and at workshops as well as other areas.
8. **Outwork.** The outwork into the segregation unit, high security unit and to other prisoners unable to attend education has been hit and miss and of too little value. The Board has received a number of applications from prisoners dissatisfied with the quality of outreach work, which consists of work sheets handed to prisoners.
9. **Peer mentor programme.** The peer mentor programme continues to go from strength to strength and awards were celebrated this year in a positive and emotional family ceremony.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

1. **Days lost.** As is the case for education, this was a much better year than the previous one for work, vocational training and employment. The only days lost were planned, mainly as a result of the need for staff training. This amounted to 82 sessions lost, equivalent to 41 whole days.
2. **Places.** The provision of work facilities remains inadequate, with only 100 places available in a prison of around 800 men. The prison has worked hard at finding new work and training only for this to be thwarted by problems of recruitment or supply of equipment.
3. **Attendance.** Attendance at workshops is up to 70%. As with education, there are issues surrounding the system for allocation of places.
4. **Courses and workshops.** The painting and decorating course continues to be very popular but is restricted to fewer than a dozen participants. The cookery course has been expanded to include barista training. The British Institute of Cleaning Science cleaning course is also popular. While these are all highly useful in preparing men for release and future employment, they involve too few at any time.
5. There are two workshops each employing 30 or so men in preparing breakfast packs. The work is boring and repetitive, and seems hardly adequate for the needs of those attending.
6. A new recycling workshop was set up in January with two experienced trainers and a growing number of workers. This workshop has been saving the prison nearly £3,000 a month. This is an encouraging development, and even more could have been done if the skip needed to expand the workshop to full capacity had not taken five months to arrive.
7. There are lots of new plans, including provision of a horticulture course. The Board notes that in general the prison grounds and garden areas are well managed by their current staff of two. The Board would like to see category C prisoners working on the prison gardens in the same way the HSU residents tend their allotments.

11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 Resettlement planning

1. **Staffing.** For much of the year the offender management Unit (OMU) and probation have not had a full complement of staff, including in the case administration area, where a planned review was postponed.
2. Although there has been a marked improvement in staffing across the prison during the year, the OMU has continued to lose hours each month due to cross-deployment. On occasion, this has been as high as 100 hours lost during a month. Inevitably this has put added strain on these busy departments.
3. Despite reduced staffing levels, the large backlog of offender assessment system (OASys) documents waiting to be updated has reduced during the year. A focus has been on monitoring the quality of information recorded and work is ongoing to improve risk assessment and sentence planning.
4. Assisting prisoners to move on to other more suitable establishments is a constant problem. In particular it is difficult to find suitable spaces for category D prisoners. There is a lack of category B training spaces across the prison estate, and this can result in too many prisoners being stuck and unable to progress satisfactorily through their sentence.
5. **Communication and liaison.** With many different agencies needing to schedule time to work with prisoners, there is a need to improve planning and communication. Currently agencies are based in different areas across the prison. There is a plan to re-organise and centralise the working spaces to try to improve communication between all the agencies involved with resettlement planning. The aim is to integrate the work of the National Probation Service (NPS) staff, OMU staff and community rehabilitation companies (CRCs), as well as all the through the gate (TTG) agencies and immigration staff. Joint meetings have started, including OMIC and Pathways to Recovery staff. Information is shared more systematically; this should ensure a better understanding of the needs of the prisoners and the demands of the various agencies on prisoner time.
6. **Home detention curfew.** There is now a presumption that prisoners will get home detention curfew (HDC). There are no longer HDC boards to decide who is suitable for release. The responsibility to sanction release is onerous for an individual manager. The number of prisoners released from Belmarsh on HDC has increased from seven during 2017/18 to 50 at mid-June 2019.
7. **Release on temporary licence.** There are currently no prisoners on release on temporary licence (ROTL). The prison considers it too resource-intensive to support the few prisoners who would be eligible. In the Board's view, this is regrettable.
8. **Offender management in custody/offender supervisors.** To integrate the work of OMIC with the established work of the OMU and probation it will be necessary to reduce the number of offender supervisors (OSs). There is currently some uncertainty amongst prison staff about the security of the proposed new jobs. Implementation has been delayed for consultation. In the meantime OMU has been working during the year with one less OS as there has been a reluctance amongst staff to apply for a job that may only last for a few months.
9. **Rehabilitation planning.** Potentially, prisoners can access a variety of help to plan for rehabilitation, but a lack of staff has affected the ability of the prison to consistently deliver all planned programmes. There have been greater efforts this year to chase up those prisoners who decline to participate and encourage them to get involved.
10. **Community rehabilitation company.** The CRC has not been fully staffed during the year, most of the time being two members of staff down. The staff have found it difficult to cope with the workload. The length of time it takes for prospective employees to get through the security vetting process is discouraging.

11. CRC staff use the initial basic custody screening tool (BSCT1) to interview all newly arrived prisoners within three days of arrival, approximately 100 each month. This initial assessment aims to provide a detailed record of a prisoner's situation on entry. Towards the end of their sentence in preparation for release all prisoners should be offered some group work and guidance towards release and rehabilitation. This can be at levels BSCT 2 and BSCT 3 according to individual need. During an average month, 58 prisoners completed BSCT 2 and 42 prisoners completed BSCT3. In last year's report the Board asked the Governor to consider providing interview spaces on houseblocks to enable this work to be carried out more conveniently where prisoners are located. The Governor was unable to agree to this but, during the year, since the introduction of OMIC, he has made dedicated rooms available on each houseblock. These can be booked by the different agencies who need to have one-to-one interviews with prisoners,
 12. **Getting it Right courses.** It was unfortunate that there were no Getting it Right courses for the first six months of the year. This should be an essential programme delivered by CRC staff to prisoners in the last three months of their sentence. The Board is pleased that the course was reinstated in December.
 13. **Finances.** The joint work with the Department of Work and Pensions pilot to assist prisoners to access universal credit prior to release has been successful. Prisoners are able to get universal credit as soon as they are released, and the project is continuing. In addition, identified prisoners receive help with money and debt management, and bank accounts have been set up for an average of between six and eight prisoners a month.
 14. **Citizen ID Card.** Prisoners can be helped to get a Citizen ID Card (very useful for helping prisoners to get jobs on release) but this is dependent on them having £10 to fund it.
 15. **Records.** CRC staff keep detailed records on every prisoner to reflect work completed. This data is reported to the regional manager. The prison has identified that there is some discrepancy in the way that records are interpreted and reported by the regional manager. This could potentially affect payment, and is being investigated by the implementation officer.
 16. **Accommodation.** St Mungo's continues to assist prisoners with tenancy agreements as well as trying to help them obtain accommodation. Lack of bail hostel places is a problem. There are also two Through the Gate workers assigned to support identified prisoners with housing. There is always a small group of prisoners who refuse help.
 17. **Through the Gate.** The Board is pleased to report that Through the Gate (TTG) support on release for identified prisoners has been re-instated. Prisoners can be escorted to appointments and supported for up to three months to settle positively in the community.
 18. **Pathways to recovery.** This is a well-managed department offering a variety of interventions for prisoners with a history of substance misuse. In addition there are groups to consider life skills and release planning. Change, Grow, Live (CGL) links prisoners with community projects.
 19. **Gangs.** There is one member of staff employed to work with individuals and groups of up to twelve prisoners at a time who have a gang affiliation. He helps prisoners to work on resolving their conflicts and to plan for life after prison. The Board believes this is an under-resourced area considering the growing influence of gangs in the prison.
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The Work of the Board

1. The Board has 14 members as at the end of the reporting year, with three of these having been appointed during the year. This is substantially below our complement, and places Board members under pressure.
2. A training day was held in October 2018.
3. As the Board said in our report for 2017-18, the extensive delays in the CTC process are continuing to have an impact on enabling newly-appointed members to start work on the Board. Additionally this affects existing members when it is necessary for them to renew their clearances.
4. The Board would like to thank the Governor and staff for their cooperation and openness in their relations with the Board. The Board is assisted by a clerk for 14 hours per week, and it is grateful for that support.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	14
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Total number of visits to the Establishment	287
Total number of days on which segregation reviews attended	47

Applications to the Board

APPLICATIONS 2018-2019

Code	Subject	Totals
A	Accommodation inc. laundry, clothing, ablutions	27
B	Discipline inc. adjudications, IEP, sanctions	23
C	Equality	4
D	Purposeful Activity inc. education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	21
E1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection restrictions	38
E2	Finance inc. pay, private monies, spends	23
F	Food and kitchens	2
G	Health inc. physical, mental, social care	29
H1	Property within this establishment	68
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	47
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	3
I	Sentence management inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat	21
J	Staff/prisoner concerns inc. bullying	75
K	Transfers	41
	Total for the Year ended June 2019	422