



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

**HMP Brixton**

**for reporting year**

**1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019**

**January 2020**



*Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody*

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## A Introductory sections 1 – 3

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### 1 STATUTORY ROLE

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison, and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- (3) report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison, and also to the prison's records.

### 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 2.1 This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP Brixton for the period 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019. Our evidence comes from observations made through visits; scrutiny of records and data; informal contact with prisoners and staff; surveys; and prisoner applications.

#### MAIN JUDGEMENTS

- 2.2 The prison received praise from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) after an inspection in March 2019, particularly for improvement in the areas of safety and respect. It has continued to improve since then. The challenge now is to sustain this progress, while improving the resettlement chances of men on release, where many of the determining factors are outside the prison's direct control.

#### Are prisoners treated fairly?

- 2.3 Prisoners are generally treated fairly. This is evidenced by the predictability of the regime, which allows most men to be out of their cells for a substantial period each weekday; by the reduced use (both in numbers and duration) of the basic level of the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme, where the regime is more restrictive; and by the apparent lack of bias in the IEP system with respect to protected characteristics (see paragraphs 5.13–5.14, 7.7).
- 2.4 However, the weekend regime is too limited for men who have not achieved the enhanced level of IEP; there are still too few activity places to keep everyone busy during the working day; and men who achieved category D status waited too long (sometimes six months) for a transfer, often losing the opportunity to benefit from open conditions before release (see paragraphs 5.15, 10.1–10.3, 11.3).

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

- 2.5 Prisoners are generally treated humanely, where this is under the prison managers' control. There has been growing success in developing a rehabilitative culture – evidenced in improvements to the outside environment, greater procedural justice in adjudications, and, particularly, more active engagement between staff and prisoners. The Board commends staff at all levels for their work in establishing this cultural change. Some men with very complex needs are treated with great humanity – for example, by segregation unit staff; in reviews of prisoners' risk of self-harm; and by careful selection of key workers for the most troubled men (see paragraphs 4.13, 4.20–4.22, 5.4, 5.24, 6.1, 6.11, 7.6, 7.12–7.15, 11.5).
- 2.6 However, the age and condition of the prison mean that living conditions are generally poor; and the national pressure on prison places means that most men are sharing a tiny double cell (significantly smaller than the decency requirements of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture). This is particularly inhumane for men who are old or frail (see paragraphs 5.2–5.3, 6.6, 7.1).

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

- 2.7 Although there has been some improvement during the year, more needs to be done in a resettlement prison such as Brixton to prepare men for release.
- 2.8 Good work has been done to keep men in touch with their families; key workers have helped men prepare for release; and men who are able and willing to take advantage of certificated vocational training have been helped into work (see paragraphs 5.16–5.19, 9.1–9.2, 10.2, 11.5, 11.9–11.22).
- 2.9 However, there was too little vocational training for everyone, especially for men convicted of sexual offences. Many men who required programmed help with their offending behaviour did not receive it before release because they were not transferred to a prison that could provide it. Many men arriving at Brixton did not have an up-to-date offender assessment system (OASys) report to identify what interventions were needed to reduce their risk of reoffending. There was not enough expectation put on men to adjust to a normal working day ahead of release. Many men had nowhere to live on release. The Board carried out a survey of men due for release in June and July 2019, which found that 32% of men said they expected to be released without accommodation, with many feeling anxious about the consequences; in addition, 38% said they had no prospect of work or training. Resettlement work at the prison is the responsibility of a large number of external agencies, many of whose contracts the prison does not control. These agencies are not necessarily motivated to work together efficiently, however committed they are to individual prisoners (see section 10, and paragraphs 11.1–11.3, 11.9, 11.12–11.13, 11.16, Annex 1).

### **IMPROVEMENTS SINCE LAST YEAR**

- 2.10 Men are safer as a result of:
- tighter security processes to prevent drugs and mobile phones entering the prison and to identify the traffickers
  - better knowledge of, and work with, the most vulnerable and the most violent men
  - continued improvements in prisoner–staff relationships through the introduction of key workers and a management drive to instil a rehabilitative culture.

### **MAIN AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

#### **For the Minister**

- 2.11 Work with colleagues in other departments to reduce reoffending by:
- providing adequate accommodation, including approved premises, for all prisoners on release: men with nowhere to live on release are less likely to get work and more likely to

reoffend; and men who, because of the current shortage of accommodation, are only found somewhere to live a day or two before release are likely to be too anxious about accommodation to give thought to employment on release (see paragraphs 11.16, A1.4–A1.9, A1.22)

- raising the prison discharge grant from £46 in line with current costs, as recently requested by the National IMB chair (see paragraph 11.16)
- increasing funding for education and vocational places in prisons, so that more men are released with a qualification that will get them a job (see paragraphs 10.2–10.3, 11.12–11.13, A1.10–A1.14).

#### **For Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service**

- 2.12 Increase the number of category D prison places, so that all men who earn this status can benefit from the better preparation it provides for release (see paragraph 11.3).
- 2.13 Ensure that men who need offending behaviour programmes are identified without delay and not moved to prisons like Brixton that do not provide them (see paragraph 11.2).
- 2.14 Adopt an OASys report format that can be completed for all prisoners, and that adequately assists with their rehabilitation, instead of continuing year after year to impose a system that cannot be implemented with available resources (see paragraph 11.1).
- 2.15 Consider the changing demographics of the prisoner population and put in place a national strategy for the older prisoner, to ensure that basic minimum standards and facilities are achieved. In the Board’s view, Brixton would require further investment to make its accommodation suitable for older and infirm men (see paragraphs 5.2–5.3, 7.1).
- 2.16 Expedite the longstanding review of how prisoners’ property is handled, to reduce the number of losses and claims for compensation (see paragraph 5.25).
- 2.17 Increase the funding available to Brixton for prisoners’ pay, so that men are not financially dependent on their families in order to afford canteen and telephone calls to keep in touch, and to incentivise them to engage in activity. Men tell the Board that at other London prisons they earned £10 more than the maximum Brixton weekly wage (see paragraphs 10.7, 10.9).

#### **For Prisoner Escort and Custody Services**

- 2.18 Ensure that food is always available for men who will miss prison meals during a transfer (see paragraph 4.1).

### **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

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- 3.1 During the year under review, HMP Brixton has continued to be a category C resettlement prison. The certified normal accommodation is 528, and the operational capacity is 798.
- 3.2 There are five residential wings: C wing accommodates full-time workers and enhanced prisoners; G wing is used for men convicted of sexual offences; D wing is a mixed drug recovery and wellbeing unit; B wing is used for induction; A wing accommodates general population and the London Pathways Unit (LPU), for up to 36 prisoners committing to psychological therapies.

A wing	232 prisoners	135 cells
B wing	150 prisoners	88 cells
C wing	133 prisoners	70 cells
D wing	48 prisoners	26 cells

G wing      235 prisoners      149 cells

- 3.3 The segregation unit has seven cells and one special cell (doubling as a holding cell).
- 3.4 Overall, the condition of the accommodation is unacceptable (see section 7).
- 3.5 The main external service providers are:
- Maintenance and kitchen: Mitie
  - Education and training: Novus, subcontracting to Bounce Back and Allandale; The Clink
  - Prison Radio
  - Call centre: Census Data Group
  - Library: London Borough of Lambeth
  - Community rehabilitation company (CRC): Penrose (subcontracted by MTCNovo)
  - Housing resettlement: St Mungo's (subcontracted by the CRC)
  - Work and benefits: Jobcentre Plus (JCP), National Careers Service (up to April 2019)
  - Physical health and pharmacy: Care UK
  - Mental health: Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust
  - Substance misuse, and wellbeing: Forward Trust (FT)
  - Visitors centre, and children and families work: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- 3.6 Dozens of other organisations, many of them voluntary, provide a wide range of additional training, support and advice.

## B Evidence sections 4 – 11

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### 4 SAFETY

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#### **Reception and induction**

- 4.1 The reception area, upgraded in 2017/18, remains welcoming and informative. Orderlies are available to hand out welcome packs and all arrivals receive an initial interview and health screening in private. Procedures have been further improved to ensure that immediate action points (for example, disability needs) are met, and men are made welcome (for example, by being offered a hot drink). Some men have arrived hungry, having missed mealtimes at the sending prison, and also at Brixton. The Board was told that sandwiches should be provided by the transport staff but are not always available.
- 4.2 This year fewer men have arrived who did not meet Brixton's reception criteria or whose medical needs were too great.
- 4.3 Induction is delivered efficiently by Novus (which performs the education assessment), induction officers and wing orderlies. The focus is on how Brixton operates. The education assessment feeds smoothly into the weekly induction fair (introduced in January 2019) and allocation to suitable training or work.
- 4.4 Representatives of activities available to prisoners, and from other key departments, are present at the induction fair to offer one-to-one advice. The fair is welcomed both by presenters and prisoners as an efficient and friendly way to introduce new arrivals to Brixton.
- 4.5 Use of the gym is only permitted after its specific induction session has been attended.

#### **Contraband**

- 4.6 The emphasis on security has increased throughout the prison since the previous reporting year – for example, through security awareness days and 'nudge' staff information notices. A 'clear bag' policy has been introduced for all staff, and entry searches of staff have increased in number, made more efficient, and extended occasionally to other parts of the prison. The prison takes a robust approach to staff corruption: during the reporting year, a member of staff was arrested for trafficking items into the establishment; a further 10 were excluded, three were sacked and three resigned.
- 4.7 Dogs are regularly used for searching visitors and prison premises, and for conducting targeted cell searches. A second passive dog is being trained, which will allow the number of searches of visitors and staff to be increased.
- 4.8 The reception policy has also been tightened up, and prisoners have been told that if anything untoward is found in their incoming post, the entire contents will be withheld.
- 4.9 All incoming mail is scanned for drugs and tobacco, and the scanner has been updated as new drug variants are employed. Random mandatory drug testing (MDT) has continued; the failure figures are volatile (in part reflecting the small sample size) but the average failure rate has fallen from 18.37% last year to 13.97% this year, and was down to 8% by the end of the reporting year. All men testing positive on MDT are referred directly to Forward Trust for substance misuse advice.
- 4.10 The prison has had some success in preventing drug 'mules' in visits. It has also improved the scrutiny of prisoners who have been placed on closed visits.
- 4.11 As other drugs become harder to access, there have been occasional findings of home-brewed alcohol. One of the active dogs is being trained to detect this.

### **Safer custody**

- 4.12 Over the past two years, Brixton has become a much safer place. The safer custody (SC) team is committed and well resourced, and a safeguarding culture has become more embedded across the whole prison.
- 4.13 The SC team actively seeks out new strategies to improve safety. These have included challenge, support, intervention plans (CSIPs) designed to help violent prisoners, which were implemented in October 2018 and extended at Brixton to include all particularly vulnerable men; the Man's Club for peer group emotional support; TimeWise for men most likely to be violent; improvements to the induction process; distraction packs for men at risk of self-harm; and interventions like yoga and Key4Life. Seven officers have been trained to deliver TimeWise, and 10 to give mediation training to prisoners.
- 4.14 The incident reporting system (IRS) has improved and is well managed. The Board has greater confidence in record keeping after a successful audit in November 2018. Differences in methodology, however, have made it hard to compare Brixton's IRS statistics with those of other prisons; sending a prisoner out in an ambulance or finding him having a fit are included in these statistics, although national guidelines do not require this, and Brixton is the only prison to include use of force in the IRS statistics. The Board welcomes this level of care for prisoner wellbeing.
- 4.15 Self-harm statistics have been higher than in the previous year, with an average of 23 a month; however, a new grading system for seriousness (introduced half-way through the year for self-harm and for assaults) has put these into perspective. On average, 13 men self-harmed each month (1.6% of the population), and those self-harming three or more times often made up half the total. Some of these men have a history of self-harm throughout their sentence. Use of constant supervision has been low, averaging one instance per month.
- 4.16 ACCTs<sup>1</sup> (plans designed to support vulnerable prisoners) have been opened more frequently this year (with a monthly average of 22 compared with 19 last year). More ACCT reviews are multidisciplinary, and there have been improvements in the quality of reviewing, and the prioritising of risk assessment. The quality of ACCT documentation is still imperfect. Care maps tend to be aspirational rather than specific, and in several cases a lack of detail and appropriate follow-up rendered them almost useless. This chronic failing is recognised by the prison as requiring constant oversight. Since March 2019, ACCT files have had care plans and assessments placed together, to encourage linkage.
- 4.17 The Board regrets that, on 5 June 2019, a prisoner died alone in his cell. This is being investigated. Two family liaison officers were available to support the man's family.
- 4.18 During the reporting year, an elderly prisoner died in hospital after falling ill following routine treatment. The family liaison officer contacted the family and got them to the hospital quickly. There was initially overuse of handcuffs. This was identified immediately by the prison. New procedural instructions were issued and fewer prisoners have been escorted to hospital with restraints subsequently.
- 4.19 The inquest for an earlier death, in March 2018, is scheduled for March 2020.
- 4.20 Wing staff have responded admirably to incidents, including when two occurred on the same day involving ligatures; in the first case, the prisoner was hospitalised briefly, and in the second there was no need for hospital treatment. The two staff involved in saving the first prisoner's life were supported appropriately.
- 4.21 Weekly multidisciplinary safety intervention meetings (SIM), covering ACCT and CSIP, are effective and generally well attended (although patchily from A and B wing staff), and followed up through weekly visits to the prisoner by SC staff. Conversations with key workers<sup>2</sup> also help to

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment in care custody and teamwork

<sup>2</sup> Officers who have regular one-to-one time with up to eight prisoners, to discuss resettlement needs.

reduce the frustrations that provoke self-harm or violence. The approach is patient and sympathetic; some men were monitored by the SIM for only a couple of weeks, but two were supported for about 10 months. The Board was particularly impressed with the multidisciplinary efforts made, over two years, to support a prolific self-harming long-over-tariff prisoner serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP), who is about to be released.

- 4.22 The recruitment of suitable violence reduction (VR) representatives is a constant task as suitable men are often soon eligible for category D status or release under home detention curfew (HDC). At year-end, there were 10 of them, all with mediation training, and with a good spread across the wings. They and the Listeners contribute, although unquantifiably, to reducing the level of violence, and also provide useful feedback to SC staff. Including VR representatives, Listeners, buddies for infirm older prisoners, peer mentors and prisoner information desk (PID) workers, about 60 prisoners are engaged in looking after others and thus contributing to a mutually supportive environment. The average of 15 prisoners attending the weekly Man's Club discussion could be added to this total.
- 4.23 The number of incidents involving the use of force has averaged 20 per month over the year, a slight increase on the previous year. In June 2019, there was an exceptionally high level of use of force (29 uses) as a direct result of a major security operation when every cell was searched by seconded national teams in a drive to reduce levels of drugs and unlawful material. The average number of assaults has been the same as in the previous year, prisoner on prisoner assaults averaging 11 per month and prisoner on staff assaults averaging six.
- 4.24 There has been an average of 16 Listeners over the reporting year. They have been well supported by the local Samaritans, who also contributed additional support to prisoners and officers after the death in custody (see paragraph 4.17). The Listener suites have been redecorated and refurbished. Listeners are available in reception and at the weekly induction fairs.
- 4.25 The potential of body-worn video cameras (BWVCs) has not been fully exploited for much of the year. A particularly serious incident occurred in May 2019, when an officer required surgery after being assaulted by a prisoner, and none of the 10 officers present had switched on their BWVC. The footage from all serious incidents is, however, reviewed at the monthly use of force meetings. By August 2019, usage was improving, and BWVC footage was being used for adjudications and investigations.

## **5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

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### **Equality**

- 5.1 Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) men make up just over half the prison's population. Young BAME men are slightly overrepresented in segregation and in adjudications. The prison is investigating the extent to which equality monitoring figures are skewed by the very different population (and discipline handling) on G wing. The IEP scheme is broadly fair across ethnic groups (see paragraph 5.13).
- 5.2 About 40 men are over 65, most living on G wing, which has only one cell on the ground floor (a second cell is being fitted out). Some showers on G wing include seats to make them safer to use by frail or disabled men. Five prisoners on G wing act as supervised 'buddies' to the infirm, assisting with cell cleaning and the collection of meals, but not permitted to offer any intimate personal care.
- 5.3 In July 2019, eight men on G wing had personal emergency evacuation plans; the prison was planning an evacuation exercise, to ensure that these men could be removed safely in an emergency. A lift was installed in April 2019 but did not come into service until September. The social care of older prisoners is developing, with greater involvement of the London Borough of Lambeth (the local authority) in care assessments, and more formal training about to start for 'buddies' (see section 8).

- 5.4 Rainbow epaulettes, produced by the fashion department, were worn by a large number of uniformed staff during LGBTQ+ month. Staff told Board members that this led to more meaningful conversations with prisoners, and more willingness among men to be open about their sexuality. A transgender prisoner was well treated and appeared confident (for example, she joined the prisoner council).
- 5.5 There is no targeted provision for the 60–70 foreign national prisoners. Home Office immigration enforcement officers visit weekly. Men are generally not held at Brixton after their sentence had expired.
- 5.6 There is continuing concern that the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) process is not well enough known about or not thought to be credible. DIRF responses continue to be externally scrutinised by the Zahid Mubarek Trust.

**Chaplaincy**

- 5.7 The chaplaincy has had a successful year, with good cooperation between chaplains. The major festivals of many religions have been celebrated. The Anglican and Catholic chaplains together officiated at the carol service and on Ash Wednesday. During summer 2019, when the Anglican chaplain was absent because of a serious illness, cover for classes and Sunday services was provided by visiting chaplains and a local Anglican church; Muslim chaplains attended on these Sundays to sign the visitors in. The Catholic service was held on Saturdays, so that mass could be celebrated by a visiting priest.
- 5.8 Religious affiliations, as reported on the Prison National Offender Management Information System (P-NOMIS) at the end of the reporting year, were:
 

Christian, all denominations	351
Muslim	213
No religion, atheist, agnostic	127
Other religions	59
- 5.9 The largest numbers of Christians were Anglican and Roman Catholic. Other religions represented, with numbers ranging from 18 to one, were Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Mormon, Pagan, Rastafarian, Sikh, Spiritualist and Zoroastrian. Services are held for several of the smaller Christian denominations occasionally, and chaplains for five of the smaller religions visit regularly.
- 5.10 Attendance at services averaged over 100 at Friday prayers, and around 30 at each of the two Christian services. Anglican and other Protestant services are held on alternate Sundays. During the Anglican chaplain’s absence, Sunday services up to August 2019 did not include the Anglican Eucharist. The Board is disappointed that it was not possible to arrange this more frequently.
- 5.11 Study groups are held weekly for Muslims, Catholics and Anglicans (two taken by the chaplain general). Men who are bereaved are supported compassionately, including by services commemorating the death. The pastoral load fell heavily on the other chaplains during the sickness absence, and made it less possible for the chaplaincy to be fully involved, for instance in resettlement planning.
- 5.12 Volunteers from Sycamore Tree have provided two six-week courses in restorative justice in 2019, open to men of any or no faith. One new prison visitor has been recruited, from a number of applicants.

**IEP**

- 5.13 In February 2019, 39% of the population was on the enhanced IEP level, 56% on standard and 5% on basic – broadly in line with national figures. The Board compared the IEP level of men who identified as BAME with those who identified as white, and found that the proportion of men on each level was roughly equivalent. A more comprehensive analysis, taking age into account, also

produced broadly fair results. There were some discrepancies but they favoured different groups; for example, young BAME men were more likely than young white men to be on the basic IEP level, but also more likely to be on the enhanced level.

- 5.14 The prison's IEP policy was updated in February 2019 in response to requests from staff and prisoners, so that key worker comments were taken into account in IEP reviews; clearer criteria were introduced for movement between IEP levels; reviews of men on the basic level were held more frequently; and men were invited to attend all IEP reviews (a requirement which has not always been followed). By the end of the reporting year, the number of men on the basic level had dropped to around 20 (less than 3%), and they were on this level for less time; the proportion on the enhanced level had risen to 48%. A focus group created in response to the Lammy Review last year has continued to run, and will feed into a new IEP policy in January 2020.
- 5.15 Men who are deliberately unemployed or who have refused to attend a necessary functional skills class are placed on the basic IEP level, and allowed only 45 minutes a day out of their cell for showering, making telephone calls and taking exercise. Other men on the basic level can, if there are vacancies, attend classroom-based education, which gives them more time out of cell. All men on the basic level are offered one hour per week of physical activity (circuit training) from gym staff. The weekday regime for men on the standard IEP level is reasonable, especially for full-time workers, who can be out of their cells for up to 10 hours, but is too restricted over the weekend, when they are unlocked for only about three hours per day, limiting the time available to talk to family. Men on the enhanced IEP level are unlocked for an additional early evening session during the week, and until 5.15pm at weekends.

### **Visits**

- 5.16 A full events programme was run throughout the year, including relaxed outdoor family days during school holidays, a child-free family day for G wing, and courses for men who were about to become fathers.
- 5.17 Efforts have been made to improve communication between the prison and visitors; for example, information notices are now displayed in the visitor area, including one about the Board's work.
- 5.18 Attempts to pass contraband to prisoners have led to some visitors being banned or arrested and charged.
- 5.19 In January 2019, the PACT charity announced a two-year partnership with Brixton and Porticus (a philanthropic organisation) to pilot the 'Routes2Change' programme, to foster family ties from reception into prison, during custody and through to release. This strategic partnership followed on from the recent Farmer Review, which identified the importance of family ties in reducing reoffending. A new visitors centre, which will free up space for a much-needed discharge lounge, was not yet ready for use at the end of the reporting period because of delays with providing computer access.
- 5.20 When the new Novus education contract started in April 2019, the Bad Boys Bakery Café in the visits hall was no longer included in the contract, but was taken over by the contractor which runs the staff café. Prisoners continue to work in the visits hall café, but the Board regrets that they no longer achieve a qualification, and that Bad Boys Bakery produce is no longer sold there.
- 5.21 Some visits staff have been trained in safeguarding following collaboration with the offender management unit (OMU).

### **Complaints**

- 5.22 In general, responses to prisoner complaints (COMP1s) have been timely and politely phrased.
- 5.23 PID workers continue to record all general applications, and have told the Board that response rates have improved now that most responses are returned to them for distribution.

- 5.24 The number of applications to the Board fell to 362 over the reporting year, compared with last year's low of 504 (see section D). By contrast, in 2013/14 the Board received almost 1,100 complaints. The Board attributes this continued reduction to the increased stability of the prison and (more specifically) to the greater level of help available from landing officers and key workers, and the growing effectiveness of the PID system.
- 5.25 Twenty percent of applications to the Board were about lost property, which is about the same proportion as in the previous three years. Significantly, more than half of these were about property not following men on transfer from other prisons. COMP1s on this problem have often dragged on without resolution, despite the prison's complaints clerk chasing them. Other prisons have been slow to accept responsibility for losses or offer reasonable compensation, and many of these complaints have been referred to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). Nationally, one-third of complaints to the PPO concern property, and the May 2019 PPO newsletter noted the large number of property COMP1s not dealt with to an appropriate standard.

## **6 SEGREGATION**

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- 6.1 Throughout the year, regular segregation unit staff have worked with consistency and compassion with some very difficult men. Prisoners have often acknowledged this to the Board.
- 6.2 The unit is small relative to the size of the prison (only seven cells), and has been commendably little used throughout the year. Most stays are short, the longest being for men who have been recategorised to B and are waiting for a transfer. No-one has been segregated for longer than 42 days since June 2018.
- 6.3 When the unit is busy, cellular confinement, an adjudication award, sometimes takes place on the wings. This is inconsistent with cellular confinement on the segregation unit – for example, men placed in shared cells on the wings sometimes have access to television.
- 6.4 The special (unfurnished) cell has been used on only three occasions in this reporting year, compared with 18 times last year, and not at all since November 2018, apart from briefly for searching. The cell adapted for constant supervision in the segregation unit has been used only three times during the year. The Board sees these reductions in use as significant improvements in the decency and care with which men are treated.
- 6.5 The unit, which has suffered with serious damp problems for many years, was damp-proofed and replastered in early 2019. Temporary accommodation was screened off on A wing, and the staff worked successfully in difficult conditions to achieve a normal regime while this work took place.
- 6.6 Although living conditions have improved since the refurbishment, damp has continued to affect the shower and two internal walls; and cables to the prisoner-accessible telephone and the Samaritans telephone, cut during the works, remained unrepaired at the end of the reporting year. Segregated men are escorted to B wing to make telephone calls during the lunchtime and evening lock-downs.
- 6.7 Damage-resistant toilets and basins are still on order. Money has not been available to extend the segregation unit to provide a much-needed additional room for adjudications, reviews and other interviews.
- 6.8 Segregation staff rightly refuse to accept property if it is not accompanied by the requisite cell clearance paperwork. More often, some of the segregated man's property fails to arrive, creating justified annoyance from the men and extra work for the staff.
- 6.9 Paperwork for Rule 45 (good order or discipline) segregation reviews is generally thorough and fair. Primary healthcare staff rarely attend (only for one out of about 40 reviews between January and April 2019), but mental health staff regularly attend the reviews for men with relevant concerns, and men on an ACCT. Segregation staff alert the Board about reviews.

- 6.10 Segregation care maps and reintegration management plans are conscientiously and thoroughly completed. Officers check the progress of men two and seven days after returning to the wing. Key workers are involved in the process, if appropriate.
- 6.11 Efforts have been made to improve the procedural justice of governor-led adjudications. All are now electronically recorded, to allow a more natural conversation to take place without the presiding governors having to write as they talk. This encourages men to contribute positively to the process and helps ensure that they understand the decisions made. Where possible, they are held in the less confrontational surroundings of the wings; the segregation office has been reorganised to allow for a less formal discussion there. In 25% of the 385 proven adjudications in the period from May to August 2019 the sentence was suspended, giving the prisoner a chance to mend their ways without receiving punishment. In the same period, 291 adjudications were not proceeded with, 12 were referred to the police and 353 were remanded.

## **7 ACCOMMODATION**

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- 7.1 There has been no change to the cramped and undignified conditions in which most men live in HMP Brixton – sharing small cells, with bunk beds within arm's reach of a toilet shielded only by a flimsy curtain. Many cells are too small to contain adequate furniture for two people.<sup>3</sup> Only C wing, holding about 120 men, has more spacious cells with a separate toilet area. The cramped living conditions are a particular problem for older and less mobile men.
- 7.2 Curtains have been installed on cell windows (with help from the fashion workshop), and regular cell decency checks have resulted in the reinstatement of missing toilet curtains and repair of broken cell equipment where possible.
- 7.3 The A wing servery was refurbished and refloored to improve hygiene, and a long-standing leak above the G wing servery, patched several times, was tackled more fundamentally towards the end of the reporting year. Servery workers are more often adequately dressed to comply with hygiene rules, compared with previous years. The food provided, which is tasted occasionally by Board members, has continued to receive compliments from prisoners for quality, quantity and variety.
- 7.4 Wing cleanliness has improved through the year, and first night cells on B wing are generally clean and properly equipped. A programme of refurbishment work on showers, floors and cells is ongoing and necessary, given the age and poor physical condition of the prison. The Board has been told that there is no central funding to achieve more fundamental improvements.
- 7.5 There continues to be a problem with rats, generally in outside areas, although there have been several reports of cables being chewed through. Lids have been provided for bins on wing landings (which are used for food waste among other rubbish) but they keep disappearing.
- 7.6 The external space around the prison buildings is limited and rather forbidding. The horticulture tutor and his students have done a good job of brightening the environment with flower beds and planters, and large pictures have been installed in some external areas to lighten their appearance, as part of the rehabilitative culture strategy. Further improvements are planned for the A wing exercise yard.
- 7.7 The daily regime is delivered reliably, although during the summer holiday months prisoners complained about scheduled time out of cell being eroded by late opening and early lock-up. The regime on A wing (the starting destination for the main population after induction) is most often subject to lock-down searches or disruption because of the violent behaviour of a few prisoners, and men complain of it having 'a cat B regime'.

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<sup>3</sup> The minimum requirement of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, which operates under the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), to which the UK is a signatory, is 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person, not including sanitary facilities. Most Brixton cells do not meet this standard.

- 7.8 The residence governor has daily briefings with senior wing staff to consider security intelligence and drive up performance against expectations – for example, about the time taken to answer cell call bells; a year ago, more than 100 cell bells a day were routinely not answered within five minutes, but in August 2019 the figure had fallen to fewer than 10.
- 7.9 During the summer months, the cells were extremely hot; men were given extra water and allowed some additional time in the open air during this time.
- 7.10 The Board checked the night state in December 2018 and felt that there were very few staff on duty, especially if there were to be an emergency, but noted that there has been no evidence of difficulties arising.
- 7.11 The canteen (prison shop) offers a good range of products, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Other items, like clothing, are available from a range of catalogues. Cooking facilities on the wings are well used by prisoners, some of whom prepare all their own meals.

### **Communication**

- 7.12 Interactions between staff and prisoners are generally good, and have improved as new staff have gained experience (at the end of the reporting year, only 20% of officers had more than two years in post). In some cases, the interactions that we saw were outstandingly good, especially from officers working with vulnerable or very violent men. The key worker scheme was praised in a prisoner survey in October 2018, and by HMIP in March 2019.
- 7.13 Information notices on the wings are kept up to date by PID workers. Regular prisoner council meetings and meetings of PID workers also support good consultation and communication. Prison managers regularly communicate the changes made to procedures as a result of prisoners' suggestions and complaints in 'you said – we did' notices.
- 7.14 A Seeds of Change newsletter, produced by Prison Radio, allows prisoners and staff to 'shout out' praise for progress made and help given. Prisoners have thanked officers, tutors and counsellors – one thanked his key worker, saying: 'I am better than I used to be. You taught me to listen. Most people would just give up on me'. Staff have also thanked prisoners for their hard work, whether as orderlies or in addressing anger problems, and given interviews – for instance, on the TimeWise violence reduction scheme.
- 7.15 Prisoner representatives on the rehabilitative culture committee are involved in the drafting of prisoner information notices to help change the tone and language of communications, and are able to suggest other ways in which the prison might be improved. Residence governors hold wing surgeries every three weeks, and appear to be practical and engaged in trying to solve problems immediately wherever possible. If the regime has to be disrupted, prisoners are given forward notice – although healthcare and education staff have complained that disruptions are less well communicated to them.

## **8 HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE MISUSE TREATMENT AND SOCIAL CARE)**

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### **Healthcare**

- 8.1 Primary care staffing continues to be a challenge; for instance, a band 5 nurse was recently lost due to the long vetting process, which delayed the appointment by several months. Agency staff ensure continuity of service. Prisoner surveys following medical consultations are generally positive.
- 8.2 The reinstatement of local delivery board meetings half-way through the year has improved communication between the prison and healthcare staff, but the lack of attendance by healthcare staff at Rule 45 segregation reviews and ACCT reviews remains an issue, and healthcare staff are

not always notified of planned shut-downs, so routine appointments are wasted. The number of hospital appointments cancelled by the prison has fallen steadily.

- 8.3 Except for a couple of months over the reporting year, when 40% and 53% of men waited over six weeks to see the dentist and podiatrist respectively, most waiting times for appointments reflect those in the community. However, heavily subscribed services like smoking cessation and sexual health clinics have long waiting lists, causing anxiety for men. Age-related and other screenings available outside prison are provided.
- 8.4 Apart from the dispensing of methadone on A wing, uniformed staff supervision of dispensary hatches on the wings is uneven and often non-existent, creating opportunities for the diversion of medication.
- 8.5 The recording and tracking of healthcare complaints changed in January 2019, and since then complaints have been hard to monitor. The number of psychoactive substance-related incidents to which nurses were called has also been unavailable all year as a result of misrecording; the Board has been told that this is being resolved.

### **Mental health**

- 8.6 During the reporting year, a clinical psychologist who worked well with men with learning difficulties and limited communication skills like autism, left but was replaced. By the end of the year, staffing had expanded to include an additional psychologist, as well as an occupational therapist. One patient was transferred to a secure hospital within the recommended time, under section 47 of the Mental Health Act; another was waiting for a bed at the end of the reporting year.
- 8.7 The awareness centre (TAC) provides a welcome expansion of counselling services. With a caseload of 30 to 35, TAC staff consistently see men within five days of referral. Communication between the prison and TAC has yet to be properly established. This has frequently resulted in TAC staff not being able to attend their clients' ACCT reviews, where they could often make a valuable contribution.
- 8.8 Forensic psychologists from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) London and Thames Valley Service work with around half a dozen Brixton men with personality disorders. By the end of the reporting year, the LPU, which offers psychologically informed services to men with complex personality disorders who are on the offender personality strategy pathway, was at full capacity, with 31 residents.

### **Substance misuse, and health and wellbeing**

- 8.9 Forward Trust (FT) has carried a caseload of between 270 and 280 men – about a third of the prison roll – through the year, and received about 40 referrals per month. It runs a 12-step drug desistance programme for about 20 men on D wing. The rest of the D wing population require health and wellbeing (H&WB) support, and engage in group work and therapies such as meditation, acupuncture, yoga and family workshops. Men are referred to the service through daily meetings between healthcare, mental health, FT and TAC staff. H&WB group work and therapies are also available for men on all other wings, except G wing. Men on G wing had little or no access to substance misuse or H&WB services until June 2019, when a small rolling H&WB group meeting was started. The Board hopes that services for G wing men will be expanded.
- 8.10 FT's 12-step programme requires a compact of total abstinence. This has caused tension and potential security issues with those H&WB residents who are on methadone maintenance. Although communication between residential and FT staff has improved, with weekly meetings now held, there have been times when unsuitable men have been placed on D wing by the prison, against FT advice. This has been disruptive, and at times made the wing difficult to manage.
- 8.11 D wing men have the benefit of substance misuse peer mentors trained by FT. Certitude, a charity subcontracted to Care UK, provides peer mentor training for men on other wings; some 20 men

completed this nine-week course between June and August 2019, enabling them to offer their services on a voluntary basis to men on their own wings.

- 8.12 FT started to offer voluntary swab testing for men on D wing during spring 2019 (to demonstrate and support drug desistance). A planned post-release drugs helpline and a pre-release injection, to protect men who relapse after release against overdose, had not yet been put in place at the end of the reporting year.
- 8.13 Alcoholics Anonymous runs three small groups on C and D wings. Narcotics Anonymous groups are not available because of the difficulties in getting security clearance for group leaders.

### **Social care**

- 8.14 A memorandum of understanding for the provision of social care had not been finalised and signed between Lambeth Council, NHS England/Care UK and the prison by the end of the reporting year. Nevertheless, 23 men were assessed over the previous 12 months by a Lambeth social worker, who now visits the prison one afternoon every two weeks. One resident on G wing has a care plan and receives personal care from healthcare nurses.
- 8.15 'Buddies', who provide practical support for up to 15 older or less mobile men, will be replaced in autumn 2019 by prisoner assistants. They will receive more formal training in safeguarding and the provision of care by the Change Grow Live charity.

### **Post-release care**

- 8.16 All men have a meeting with a primary healthcare nurse two weeks before release, to ensure that they have a general practitioner and continuing access to mental health services. Contributions from other health-related agencies are uneven. FT offers appointments with community drug and alcohol teams, and supports housing or rehabilitation placements for anyone needing one. Lambeth Council has taken responsibility for the continuity of social care, whether to another prison or outside, coordinating with the social services of the local authority where a man has ended up living. In August 2019, it was discovered that some men were being discharged without their prescription medication; the prison is investigating this.

## **9 EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND OTHER ACTIVITY**

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- 9.1 Novus, the prison's education provider, offers a good range of full-time vocational workshops, providing up to 88 men on the main wings training in barbering and industrial cleaning, and (through Bounce Back) scaffolding, dry lining, and painting and decorating; and 28 men on G wing training in fashion, horticulture and music technology. Men working in the kitchens receive level 1 food preparation training. Bounce Back also runs occasional Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card courses, giving men access to work on construction sites after release. Qualifications are generally at levels 1 and 2, but horticulture and fashion classes offer level 3 courses to a few men. Pass rates last year were high (almost 90%).
- 9.2 An additional 64 full-time vocational places are available outside the Novus contract, through The Clink restaurant, Prison Radio and, since early summer 2019, a call centre which plans to offer a customer service qualification. The Clink trains men in a number of level 2 food preparation and service national vocational qualifications (NVQs), and offers a level 3 course in professional cookery to a few talented men. The Bad Boys Bakery trains men to level 2 NVQ in proficiency in baking industry skills (a higher level than many professional bakeries).
- 9.3 Some functional skills are usefully embedded into workshops but men need to achieve level 1 English and mathematics before they can start vocational training.

- 9.4 Novus classroom education, mostly part time, includes English (including English for speakers of other languages and creative writing), mathematics, IT, graphics, customer service, retail, employability and food safety, at a range of accreditation levels from entry level to level 2. Lower-level classes appear to be the hardest to recruit to. The Board was told that the graphics class is hampered by a shortage of materials (for example, paints and brushes). Open University (OU) and other distance learning is well supported. In August 2019, 39 men were actively involved in distance learning (of whom 15 were on G wing).
- 9.5 The virtual campus is used by distance learners and OU students. The data line is said to be very slow, so it can only support a limited number of students, and cannot be used to sit exams online. It was upgraded towards the end of the reporting period and should become more generally useful as soon as a faster data line is installed (expected by the end of 2019). This will also allow men to access written work and CVs post-release.
- 9.6 Novus tracks men with learning difficulties and generally supports them in mainstream classes, allowing them extra time to complete their work. It also monitors attendance and success rates by ethnicity, including Travellers, and has reported no discrepancies.
- 9.7 Learning needs are assessed quickly after prisoners' arrival, and most men are allocated to suitable education or work at the weekly (and very successful) induction fair.
- 9.8 Men were mostly well engaged in the classes observed by the Board. Teaching standards were variable, but some tutors offered their students high levels of support. For example, the graphics tutor showcased the work of her students to the wider prison in an art exhibition in August 2019; the fashion tutor was nominated by her class for a National Learning Alliance 'outstanding teacher' award, and won.
- 9.9 All men in education and training have an individual learning plan, setting learning and employability targets that are reviewed regularly. However, these plans are not linked to sentence plans or used to allocate activities.
- 9.10 Quality improvement group meetings, which monitor the performance of education and training providers, were held only sporadically until summer 2019, when they became more regular.

### **Gym**

- 9.11 Gym sessions (aerobic and weights) are popular, and men who are not on the basic IEP level who wish to attend (about 50% of the population) are offered a minimum of three one-hour sessions per week. Men on the basic IEP level are offered one hour per week of circuit training. Older and infirm prisoners are very well catered for, with walking football, bowls, seated aerobics and individually tailored sessions. A new diet and nutrition course has started for men in the H&WB group on D wing, and there are plans to expand this for G wing men. A bespoke fitness session was designed for a transgender prisoner.
- 9.12 The all-weather sports surface has been renewed, and is well used. Some men have achieved level 1 or 2 fitness instructor qualifications. Fulham Football Club Foundation recently ran a 10-week coaching course for 15 men, which supported successful graduates into work or training after release.

### **Library**

- 9.13 The library, run by the London Borough of Lambeth, is too small but the librarian offers a good range of books and other library services, and maintains a bookcase on each wing. Reading groups are hosted, and reading is encouraged through the Reading Ahead charity and the Shannon Trust. A recent writing course was very popular, as were talks from visiting authors and playwrights. The library provides resources for private study and legal correspondence, and hosts occasional prisoner advice sessions. The 'start up in libraries' programme gives advice on setting up small businesses.

9.14 The library is well used throughout the week, including one early evening session. From September 2019, a member of uniformed staff will escort prisoners to and from the library, relieving the librarian of this job and improving access to the library for private study. The library will open on Saturday mornings from the same date.

**Other activity**

9.15 A large number of external agencies engage men in a range of non-accredited activities as diverse as patchwork and quilting ('Fine Cell Work', on the LPU), CV development and disclosure (Clean Sheet, working with G wing men), yoga (delivered by Prison Phoenix Trust) and anger management (delivered by Chelsea Football Club).

**10 WORK AND EMPLOYMENT**

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*Prison data about activity places available and attended on one morning in mid-July 2019*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Total attending</b>
<i>Education and training</i>		
Classroom education	70	43
Novus vocational education	120	84
Other vocational training*	58	37
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>164</b>
<i>Efficiency (attended/capacity)</i>		
		66%
<i>Other work</i>		
Stores/works/bins	18	13
Wing workers**	96	102
Kitchen assistants	28	23
Learning assistants	11	10
Orderlies	22	20
Representatives/coordinators/PIDs	55	38
Drug recovery/wellbeing	55	47
Other	20	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>431</b>
<i>Efficiency (attended/capacity)</i>		
		78%
Prison roll	744	
Retired/long term sick	52	
Unemployed	116	

\* The Clink, Prison Radio, Bad Boys Bakery, call centre

\*\* Cleaners, wing painters, food servery and laundry workers

10.1 As this table indicates, there are not enough activity places to keep all prisoners fully occupied, particularly after taking into account that classroom courses are generally not full time, and that many of the wing-based and other jobs, although counted as full time, do not occupy a full working day.

10.2 Vocational work and training, all of which is full time, accounts for only about 30% of activity places. Many men speak highly of these courses, and in a recent resettlement survey conducted by the Board (see Annex 1), about 20% of the 81 men interviewed said that the qualifications

obtained had resulted in good job leads on release. However, 38% said that they had no work or training arranged, and no leads, which was disappointing in a resettlement prison.

- 10.3 An offender needs analysis conducted by the prison in May 2019 confirmed HMIP's judgement that more vocational training was needed, particularly for men on G wing. There is physical space to extend the range of vocational training offered, but no HMPPS funding to make the space fit for use. Identifying suitable courses for G wing men that would lead to work on release is difficult because of the reluctance of employers to take on men who have been convicted of sexual offences.
- 10.4 The overall efficiency (attendance rate) at education and training increased from about 50% 12 months ago to about 70% in summer 2019. There are legitimate reasons for non-attendance (such as visits, healthcare appointments and adjudications) but the Board was told that these are not always recorded, and that men are not routinely escorted to their allocated activity after a healthcare appointment. Some activities are over-allocated, but it would be helpful for the prison to make more use of over-allocation to make up for allowable non-attendance.
- 10.5 Courses generally run reliably, and are seldom cancelled by the prison. However, course tutors complain from time to time about men arriving late for classes, and of poor communication from the prison when there are planned lock-downs or men are removed from their classes.
- 10.6 Recording the daily capacity and attendance at each activity is laborious because it depends on a multiplicity of inputs from around the prison; there are plans to introduce a better recording system to improve accuracy and efficiency.
- 10.7 The unemployment level varies, depending on the number of men on the basic IEP level, but there were over 100 unemployed men whenever this was checked by the Board. Some men refuse activity or are unwilling to engage in the level 1 English and mathematics classes that are a prerequisite for other employment. Others with a high-risk assessment are waiting for wing work or other low-security clearance vacancies to become available (there were 24 such men in April 2019). Some feel that the pay is too low to make working worthwhile. Some men on G wing feel that the activities they are offered are too limited, and refuse to engage.
- 10.8 There has been too little active challenge of unemployed men for much of the year – partly because of a series of staffing changes in the learning and skills department, and partly because of technical deficiencies in the way that attendance is recorded – so that some men have managed to be without an activity, even if residing on the enhanced C wing. In spring 2019, the prison started to be more active in sanctioning refusal to engage. Activity representatives on the wings have been given lists of vacancies, and are expected to encourage unemployed men to apply for them.
- 10.9 Pay rates are very low, ranging from 35p to 75p per half-day session for orderly or wing work, depending on IEP level. Higher rates, from 75p to £1.15 per session, are offered for participation in education classes, but this is little incentive, given that wing workers and orderlies are paid for seven days per week (that is, 14 sessions) for work that is often only part time, whereas education class attendance can attract pay for nine sessions per week at most. Until late summer 2019, when the Board raised it with the prison, pensioners were discouraged from engaging in an activity because they lost their £8 per week pension payment if they attended more than two sessions. Men working for the call centre or The Clink can access slightly higher rates of pay, up to £15 per week, but this is still much less than some prisons offer, and low relative to canteen and telephone charges.
- 10.10 Towards the end of the reporting year, Novus recruited an ad hoc adviser for employability advice and liaison with external partners, and there has been an increased expectation on all education and training providers to develop links with potential local employers.

## **11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION**

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### **Sentence management**

- 11.1 A major barrier to the successful resettlement of men in HMP Brixton is the number who arrive without a completed OASys assessment. In the report of their March 2019 inspection, HMIP noted that in the previous three months, 69% of men had arrived without an OASys assessment. There was no improvement in the following three months. The OMU worked hard to reduce the backlog, from 238 at the time of the inspection to 183 at the end of July 2019. The Board is of the view that the issue can only be satisfactorily resolved at a national level.
- 11.2 A further related challenge arose last year from the number of men sent to Brixton requiring an offending behaviour programme. G wing was set up to take only men who had completed sex offender treatment programmes or did not need them, and other behavioural courses were removed from Brixton in early 2019. Men identified as needing a behavioural intervention but nevertheless sent to Brixton had to wait, generally for several months, for a transfer to a prison providing it. Prison managers liaised with sending establishments, so that men needing an intervention were not sent to Brixton. This led to a slight under-occupancy of G wing, but reduced the number of men awaiting transfer from 20 in May 2019 to three in early September. However, 37 men on G wing will be released without completing a required programme because they have too little time left to serve.
- 11.3 Resettlement opportunities are also missed because of the delay in transferring men who have achieved category D status to open prisons. At the end of the reporting year, there were 53 category D men in Brixton, 22 of whom were on G wing. At least one man on G wing had been waiting for almost six months for a transfer to open conditions. Delays in recategorisation decisions are being reduced by obtaining contributions from external probation staff by telephone. Since the HMIP visit, men have been given more encouragement to make a submission to the recategorisation board.
- 11.4 Decisions about HDC, under which men can be released early, are generally made on time, and the CRC is informed of the outcome. The main reason for refusal is the lack of a suitable address.
- 11.5 The Board has seen evidence of the benefits of the implementation of the first phase of offender management in custody (OMIC), under which each man has a key worker. HMIP praised the key worker scheme in Brixton, and this accords with the Board's impression from reading P-NOMIS entries and talking to men and officers. Conversations with key workers have generally been good and meaningful, providing support to the men in their progress towards release. Key workers for men with the most complex needs appear to be well chosen.
- 11.6 Recruitment of civilian prison offender managers to replace uniformed offender supervisors has generally been successful. The regular wing surgeries held by OMU staff are helpful. However, the Board continues to hear complaints about difficulties in accessing OMU support.
- 11.7 In early September, there were seven men serving life sentences in Brixton and 11 serving IPP sentences. Most (five of the lifers and seven of those with IPP sentences) were residents in the LPU, where specialist help is available.

### **Resettlement pathways**

- 11.8 Work on the seven resettlement pathways has been affected by staffing changes and vacancies. The HMIP inspection in March 2019 identified a decline in support for rehabilitation and release, that careers advice was limited and that the CRC was not adequately resourced or embedded.
- 11.9 The National Careers Service was withdrawn from April 2019, and a new national contract was still not let in August. There are, however, continuing good relationships with employers, who visit the prison for job fairs, and there is a growing expectation on all training suppliers to provide employability links. By the end of August 2019, the CRC was fully staffed, with the exception of an engagement worker. Referrals can be made to an education, training and employment 'through-the-gate' worker, who advises on CV disclosure, interviews and links with employers, and is shared with three other London prisons. From October 2019, they will be employed full time at Brixton; following

a review of the role, the engagement work will be covered by partner agencies. The CRC is now better embedded; for instance, workshops are held to provide advice on the wings, and more information is available there. The 'Getting it Right' programme has been provided since March 2019. In the Board's annual survey of men being released during June and July, however, there was no increased acknowledgement of the assistance provided by the CRC. Uncertainty over the contract and staff movements have been a factor throughout the year in reducing performance.

- 11.10 Action plans for the resettlement pathways have not been updated pending consideration of an offender needs analysis, completed in May 2019. This was very thorough but delays in its implementation have been regrettable.
- 11.11 In March 2019, the prison introduced a new strategic target for rehabilitative culture, to be achieved partly through improving the prison environment and also by the provision of more self-help opportunities, like the Men's Club and yoga. Twelve prisoners took part in a children's cancer charity challenge, cycling 100 miles on static bikes, with support from gym staff, on the same day as the deputy governor did the challenge.
- 11.12 Another pathway, aimed at increasing employment opportunities for G wing men, was added during the year, and seems likely to lead to a small, directly procured contract for support. Clean Sheet now works with G wing men on employment opportunities. The needs analysis identified a G wing demand for practical courses, like those offered by Bounce Back, but there have been difficulties in finding construction employers who will take on men who have been convicted of sexual offences.
- 11.13 Continuing efforts to create new activity spaces in partnership with employers have largely been unsuccessful, and there has been no HMPPS funding available. A call centre was opened in an education classroom in May 2019, with guaranteed employment on release. Finding rooms for interviews with men, and space for additional workshops, also continues to be difficult.
- 11.14 JCP has arranged job interviews for some men before release, and has also worked on uploading men's CVs to the virtual campus run by Novus, so that these can be downloaded after release by their adviser in the community. CV writing advice was also provided in a one-off intervention by Goldman Sachs trainees.
- 11.15 Debt advice is sometimes provided by the CRC. A specialist finance, benefit and debt adviser has been available four days per week since May 2019 and had advised 65 men by the end of August. Nevertheless, two men responding to the Board's resettlement survey in June and July (see Annex 1) told Board members that they had problems with debt and had received no help. More bank accounts – 35 in July 2019 – were being set up by the end of the reporting year, after problems with HSBC were eventually fixed.
- 11.16 Accommodation, including approved premises for high-risk men, is often difficult to find, and in July, 2019 'massive delays' were reported. St Mungo's, the contracted accommodation service, has an in-house 'through-the-gate' worker to support higher-risk CRC clients who do not have guaranteed accommodation on release, and offers other services in the community to CRC clients who are released to no fixed abode. In the Board's survey, 32% of men interviewed said that they had no address on release. The standard discharge grant of £46 has not been increased for over 20 years, and gives inadequate temporary financial support. Since April 2019, 19 men have been supported with a discretionary additional grant of £50, paid directly to the accommodation provider.
- 11.17 Care UK, the lead healthcare contractor, does not contribute to the resettlement pathway meetings, although there appears to be more collaboration between them and FT, including on discharge boards. FT appears to be the major driver on the health and wellbeing pathway, although the mental health services have also contributed. However, JCP, which helps men to prepare for applying for universal credit on release, has had difficulties in getting evidence from healthcare staff on men's unfitness for work or eligibility for disability payments. The CRC aims to get this from healthcare staff on an ad hoc basis.

- 11.18 Children and family work has continued to progress well. As mentioned earlier (see paragraph 5.19), the 'Routes2Change' programme, designed to support family relationships throughout custody, began in early summer 2019. There have been some practical problems with office space and IT access for staff. In addition, because communication problems have delayed the opening of the new visitors centre, the current facility cannot be used as a discharge lounge.
- 11.19 During the reporting year, the SSAFA volunteer has supported 36 military veterans in Brixton, and offers continued support on release. A new prison officer liaison has been appointed, and the volunteer has given a Prison Radio interview, with the aim of encouraging more veterans to come forward for support. Some dedicated healthcare provision is being considered using SSAFA funding.
- 11.20 Prison Radio reaches out to former prisoners through their Straightline project. Straightline also allows prisoners to send messages to their family and friends on the outside. The Brixton staff member employed in the radio station produces the Seeds of Change newsletter (see paragraph 7.14).
- 11.21 In advance of Brixton's 200th anniversary, the prison planned a number of events to reach out to the local community. A social media account was set up in June 2019. In July local residents were invited to a street party in Jebb Avenue which showcased the work of the prison. The experiences of former prisoners who came to the party were recorded to provide positive examples for broadcast on Prison Radio. Money raised at the party was donated to Western Lodge, a local charity working with homeless people. In addition, 'Penned by a Prisoner' allowed current prisoners to write about their experience, and get messages of support from the community, broadcast on the in-prison messaging screen. Other community links have included development of a showcase for prisoners' creative projects.
- 11.22 By the end of the reporting year, there was better support for individual men's resettlement across all pathways than previously, although there is still a need to coordinate support for resettlement more consistently and to avoid duplication. In the Board's survey, however, although some outcomes improved – for instance, there were fewer men with insecure accommodation, and more with job leads – others were worse than in the previous reporting year. There were more men with no address on release, and fewer with a definite job to go to. It is difficult to see why better outcomes have not followed from what appears to have been better efforts from the various agencies involved.

## C Work of the IMB

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At the beginning of the reporting year, the Board had 14 members, six of them probationers (in their first year of Board membership) and one on sabbatical because of family pressures. The sabbatical member and two of the probationers have since resigned. Another member took sabbatical leave. So, by the end of the reporting year, the Board had 11 members, one of whom was still on probation and one on sabbatical leave. The recommended complement is 20.

Board members have worked well together to cover rota duties, training visits for new members, and prison meetings. Segregation review boards and ACCT reviews have been attended where possible. Some Board members had a useful visit to HMP Littlehey, which holds men convicted of sexual offences, to understand better how the resettlement options at Littlehey compared with those at Brixton. The Board hosted a visit from IMB members at HMP Isis.

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

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

The number of applications to the Board decreased again this year. The annual total was 362.

### 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	11
Total number of visits to the establishment	495
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not recorded

## D Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothes	15	27	17	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	29	33	49	49
C	Equality and diversity, including religion	26	12	35	8
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime	13	25	32	21
E1	Family/visits, including mail and telephone	26	20	29	30
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	6	14	9
F	Food and kitchens	13	4	8	7
G	Health, including physical, mental and social care	91	47	35	34
H1	Property (within this establishment)	94	27	29	26
H2	Property during transfer/in another establishment)	67	52	63	43
H3	Canteen, facilities list, catalogues	22	13	17	10
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	178	101	82	47
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	102	56	65	61
K	Transfers	58	41	29	6
L	Not specified	104	49	0	0
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>362</b>

## E Annexes

### ANNEX 1: IMB SURVEY OF RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

A1.1 Between 21 May and 29 July 2019, the Board conducted a monitoring exercise of prisoners scheduled for release during June and July. The monitoring covered the same period as similar exercises in the previous three years and asked the same questions. We talked to 81 of the 107 men due for release in the period, generally in the week before release.

A1.2 We asked three specific questions:

- Do you have accommodation on release?
- Do you have work or training on release?
- Have you seen someone about your resettlement needs while in Brixton?

A1.3 The table below gives the percentage responses to these questions, followed in square brackets by the 2018 response. Responses from men on G wing, who have been convicted of sexual offences (31), and men on the main wings (54), are also shown separately as they have different resettlement issues. Four of the men interviewed had their release date corrected or deferred, so it fell outside the survey period; their data have not been included in the results.

Accommodation on release?		Work or training on release?		Seen about resettlement before release?	
Secure – own or with family or friends	33% [52%] (Main wings 38% G wing 24%)	Arranged	12% [33%] (Main wings 13% G wing 10%)	Yes	67% [63%] (Main wings 62% G wing 69%)
Insecure – less than a week or sofa-surfing	5% [12%] (Main wings 8% G wing 0%)	Leads	33% [25%] (Main wings 42% G wing 27%)	No	23% [24%] (Main wings 27% G wing 17%)
Hostel, approved premises or rehabilitation	30% [16%] (Main wings 21% G wing 45%)	Infirm/retired/in rehabilitation	16% [5%] (Main wings 6% G wing 34%)	Did not say	10% [3%] (Main wings 8% G wing 14%)
None (or only a telephone number or appointment)	32% [21%] (Main wings 35% G wing 28%)	None	38% [38%] (Main wings 37% G wing 38%)		

### **Accommodation**

- A1.4 Significantly fewer men than last year (33% as against 52%) reported having secure accommodation on release.
- A1.5 30% of men had a hostel, rehabilitation or (most commonly) an approved premises (AP) place on release – a much larger number than last year, when only 16% of men fell into this category. This might account for the low number of men reporting having secure accommodation, as men whose licence conditions require AP might have a property to move into afterwards (a few told us so).
- A1.6 There is a shortage of approved premises in London, so some men may not get a place, and be detained in prison if it is a Parole Board condition. A number of men commented that late notification of their AP address and licence conditions had prevented them finding work.
- A1.7 32% of men interviewed said that they had nowhere to go (no fixed abode; NFA) on release, or only a person to meet or a telephone number to call – compared with 21% in 2018. One man did not feel safe being released to the area required by probation services, and was having trouble negotiating a move.
- A1.8 Many of the men with no release address reported anxiety, and an inability to focus on finding work after release. Several men commented that they had been released from earlier sentences without accommodation and felt that it had contributed to their reoffending. In six cases where the man was due for release imminently, the Board member contacted St Mungo's after the interview. In all cases, the man was known about: two would be given referral letters to local councils; two would have accommodation; the other two were still being worked on.
- A1.9 This last-minute notification of accommodation outcomes, inevitable given the shortage of accommodation, might mean that our survey results overestimate the number of men released to NFA. However, CRC data obtained from the prison suggest that the final outcome was very close to the Board figure. An offender needs analysis completed by the prison in May 2019 reported that 26% of men expected to be NFA on release.

### **Work or training**

- A1.10 The number of men with arranged employment dropped from 33% in 2018 to 12% in the current reporting year (10 men). Eight of these 10 men were returning to their old jobs. The other two had obtained work through a Brixton activity, namely the call centre and the barber shop.
- A1.11 The number who had a reasonable job or training lead increased from 25% to 33% (27 men), with a heartening 16 of these coming from qualifications gained while in prison. These were: one through Prison Radio, two through the gym, one through The Clink, eight through Bounce Back, three through obtaining a CSCS card (two of these on G wing), one through horticulture (on G wing). In addition, one man had a lead through a job fair, two had job interviews set up as a result of seeing Jobcentre Plus in Brixton and one was being helped by a 'through-the-gate' worker.
- A1.12 38% (31 men) had no job or training prospects at all, the same proportion as in 2018. The offender needs analysis recorded 28% of men being unemployed prior to custody, and many of these might appear in the 38%; one man told us that he had never had a job. CRC data for the period appear to confirm the Board's findings.
- A1.13 Three men said that they were going into rehabilitation on release; seven said that they were medically unfit for work; three were over retirement age. Ten of these 13 were on G wing.
- A1.14 Seventeen of the men who had no job prospects said that they had no housing either.

### **Resettlement help**

- A1.15 67% said that they had seen someone about resettlement, which was about the same as last year. A number of men were unclear about what help was available or who had visited them, or did not count some agencies (for example, Forward Trust, probation staff) as being to do with resettlement, so the actual number seen was probably higher.
- A1.16 About 14% (11 men) said that they had not felt helped at all. There was a general feeling that help came too late (especially about accommodation). Two men who had problems with debt reported receiving no help. The responses from G wing men roughly matched those on the main wings, a marked improvement on 2018, when about 50% of men on G wing reported being dissatisfied. Most men on G wing said that they had been seen by probation staff.
- A1.17 About 15% of the men interviewed, on all wings, volunteered being pleased with the help they received at Brixton. Key workers and offender supervisors were most often singled out, but Bounce Back, Prison Radio, The Clink and The Awareness Centre were also praised.

### **Summary**

- A1.18 37% of men said that they were being released to NFA or insecure accommodation – a little worse than last year (33%).
- A1.19 72% of men said that they had no work arranged, compared with 62% last year. Of these, 37% had no leads, which was about the same as in 2018.
- A1.20 23% percent of men said that they had not been seen about resettlement needs – an improvement on last year (34%).
- A1.21 Overall, the resettlement prospects of the men interviewed were poor for too many men leaving a resettlement prison.
- A1.22 The final  
weeks of a sentence are among the most vulnerable times for people in prison. More timely notification of accommodation arrangements and licence conditions on release would help to reduce anxiety and increase the focus on work or training on release.