Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HM YOI Cookham Wood
1 August 2018 to 31 July 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**

2.1 **Introduction**

This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HM YOI Cookham Wood for the period 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019. In this period IMB members made 363 visits to Cookham Wood.

IMB evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with boys and staff, and applications by boys to speak to the IMB.

2.2 **Main judgements**

Staff are caring in their work, with a sympathetic understanding of the boys’ needs. We do not believe there is, and have not observed, any deliberately inhumane treatment by staff; however certain aspects of life at the establishment are inhumane:

The **Phoenix segregation block** is unfit for purpose. Cells become very hot in summer and very cold in the winter months; they do not have individual showers or telephones. The exercise yard is very small with no exercise facilities; it is lined with steel sheeting – and thus, in hot summer sun, becomes a brutal, oven-like space. Inevitably therefore, stays in segregation on Phoenix result in an inhumane regime.

*There is a significant sub-group of the prison population who have endured extremely long stays in segregation (some for more than 90 days); with boys isolated in their cells for up to 23 hours a day; and at worst, facing a three-officer unlock in full personal protective equipment (PPE) – so, even when their cell door is opened they experience the barest of human contact.*

(See section 2.2.2, below)
2.2.1 Are prisoners treated fairly?
Staff are fair and their relations with the boys are generally good; but:

- Staffing difficulties have led to a significant loss of regime.
  (See section 5.4)

2.2.2 Are prisoners treated humanely?
As outlined above, staff are caring in their work, with a sympathetic understanding of the boys’ needs. The IMB has seen no deliberately inhumane treatment by staff. However:

- Two boys were segregated in Phoenix for more than 90 days without either a phased plan for return to a normal location, or plans to move them to another YOI. It took an unacceptably long time for these boys to be transferred to another YOI – where they were taken off segregation.

  *Delay in organising transfers to another YOI in such cases is inhumane.*
  (See section 5.2)

- A significant number of boys 18+, with lengthy sentences and complex needs, waited months for their transfer to young adult YOIs. There are no agreed pathways for transferring 18-year-olds, and no central Youth Custody Service team charged with making judgements about when and where they should move. This has resulted in adult prisoners – including those convicted of sexual offences and those with high levels of violence or strong gang affiliations - being held in segregation at Cookham Wood.

  *Delay in organising transfers to the adult estate in such cases is inhumane.*
  (See section 8.6)

- The chronic lack of secure mental health hospital beds nationally for children has led to boys with significant mental health issues being placed in Cookham Wood, for extremely long periods (a number of months), which the Board considers inhumane. The boys do not receive the therapeutic treatment they need; at worst they will be on a three-officer unlock with staff in full PPE.

  *The time taken to organise a secure mental health hospital bed for these boys is inhumane.*
  (See sections 5.3, 6.4)

- *The Phoenix segregation block is an inhumane environment.* Cells become very hot in summer and very cold in the winter months; they do not have individual showers or telephones. The exercise yard is very small with no exercise facilities; it is lined with steel sheeting – and thus, in hot summer sun, becomes a brutal, oven-like space.
  (See section 5.1)

2.2.3 Are prisoners prepared well for their release?
Most boys leave Cookham Wood well prepared for their release.

The extracts from a five-page letter, written by a former prisoner at Cookham Wood, illustrate how effective the work of the staff, and especially the Cedar unit, can be.

(See section 8.5)
However:

- Some ‘looked after children’-(who have been in the care of their local authority) have had little or no contact from their local authority social worker during their stay in Cookham Wood and have no idea where they will be living or what they will be doing after release – sometimes right up to the day of their release.

One boy over 18, who was ‘looked after’, was released without an address. He had to present as homeless to the local authority.

(See section 8.6)
Main areas for development

Development is required in 14 areas:

TO THE MINISTER

1. There is a chronic lack of secure mental health hospital beds for children nationally; and the time taken to transfer boys with significant mental health issues to hospital from a YOI is inhumane. (See sections 5.3, 6.4)

   What urgent steps will be taken to work with ministerial colleagues in the Department of Health to provide more secure mental health services for children?

2. Accommodation for boys leaving Cookham Wood is often not arranged by responsible local authorities until the last minute – often mere day(s) before their release. This is distressing and disorientating for the boys and is a longstanding problem; indeed the IMB raised this issue last year in its report. (See section 8.6)

   What urgent steps can be taken to ensure that accommodation is arranged in good time for boys leaving YOIs (at least a month before their release)?

3. Boys are often held in court cells for long periods awaiting prison transport and then may have to endure long journeys. On numerous occasions boys have been delivered to Cookham Wood well after 8pm (and a significant number after 10pm). (See section 5.5)

   What improvements will be made to ensure a swifter transfer out from court for boys, and an earlier arrival at Cookham Wood?

4. For much of the year Cookham Wood has operated with fewer prison officers available for active duty than it needed. (See section 5.4)

   What assurances can be given that prisons will not suffer again with inadequate operational staffing ratios as was experienced for much of last year, resulting in unacceptably lengthy periods of time locked in cells for the boys at Cookham Wood?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

5. What steps will be taken to achieve a swift transfer to an alternative YOI for boys who have seriously assaulted staff, rather than them being held in segregation for inhumane lengths of time? (See section 5.2)
6. What steps will be taken to arrange transfers to the adult estate for boys who are 18+ and have lengthy sentences and/or complex needs – some boys have been held inhumanely for long periods in segregation while other institutions refuse to take them?  
   (See section 8.7)

7. While Cookham Wood saw improved officer numbers this year; the number of staff on restricted duties led to far too many losses of regime for the boys. Can the IMB be assured that the service will be flexible in its deployment of staff nationally to cover for such eventualities?  
   (See section 5.4)

8. What will be done to either improve the inhumane Phoenix segregation unit, or remove it from use?  
   (See section 5.1)

9. Release on temporary licence (ROTL) administration is burdensome and overly bureaucratic. What will be done to streamline procedures to enable easier and more effective use of ROTL for the boys?  
   (See section 8.3)

10. What will be done to improve the repair and maintenance provision at Cookham Wood?  
    (See section 6.1)

**TO THE GOVERNOR**

11. There has been an increase in boys self-segregating – in fear of mixing with other boys. What will be done to improve boys’ safety; or their perception of feeling unsafe?  
    (See section 4.2)

12. What will be done to improve the education offered to segregated boys?  
    (See section 7.1)

13. What will be done to improve attendances at mainstream education?  
    (See section 7.2)

14. The Phoenix segregation unit is old and has inadequate facilities. What will be done to improve these facilities, or to relocate the unit? In particular, boys in the Phoenix Unit (unlike all the other boys at Cookham Wood) do not have in-cell telephones to speak with their families. Will in-cell telephones be provided in Phoenix, and if not, why not?  
    (See section 5.1)
Improvements since last year’s report

- Cookham Wood now appears to have one of the best records for ROTL use in the entire youth estate, despite the challenges of the system.  
  (See sections 8.3, 8.4)

- The establishment of the Woody’s Barista cafe has given boys the opportunity to be trained in the skills required to prepare food and beverages for staff and visitors in the prison, and to earn a City & Guilds qualification.  
  (See section 7.4)

- Cookham Wood’s overall segregation policy has become more humane in the last year. When sent to Phoenix, most boys now only stay in the CSU for a short period (less than a week), before they are transferred to the Bridge separation landing.  
  (See section 5.1)

- The use of enhanced status (under the incentives and earned privileges policy) for boys when they first arrive at Cookham Wood is welcomed by the IMB.  
  (See section 5.6)

- New and creative visiting opportunities have been created in the last year.  
  (See section 6.6)

3. Description of HM YOI Cookham Wood

3.1 Population

Cookham Wood is one of five juvenile Young Offenders’ Institutions (YOIs) in England and Wales. It accommodates boys aged 15–18 years.

It has certified accommodation for up to 188 boys. Its actual population over the year averaged 166 (ranging between 153 and 173 boys). As there are usually several cells out of commission, it is regularly working at or near full capacity; (it is common for around 15 cells to be out of action; and in May there were 20 cells unavailable, awaiting repair).

It has a wide catchment area, serving courts in London, the South East, the South West, Central South and East Anglia.

Its population consists of both remand and convicted prisoners. The normal length of stay for remand prisoners is 4 – 12 weeks. The normal length of stay for convicted prisoners is about six months, although many have sentences of one or two years. There is an increasing number of boys with very long sentences of 5 to 20 years; there were 6 boys serving extended sentences and 7 boys serving life sentences at the end of this reporting year.
3.2 Accommodation and facilities

Cookham Wood was originally built in the 1970s, but new residential accommodation and an education block were opened in 2014.

The new accommodation block has 179 single cells, each with its own telephone and shower, spread over six landings.

Two specialist units are housed in the old 1970s accommodation: the Phoenix care and separation (segregation) unit (seven single cells); and the Cedar unit for boys who have proved themselves to be of good behaviour and are due for release in the near future (17 single cells).

One of the residential landings, B1 - ‘The Bridge’, is dedicated to running a progression programme for boys who are persistently disruptive and violent, or self-segregating.

3.3 Uniform staff

In August 2018, Cookham Wood’s target number of Band 3 prison officers (the number considered necessary to ensure a full, settled regime for the boys) was 144. Its actual number was 137. By July 2019, there were 138 Band 3 Officers in post. While the number is only slightly lower than full complement – full regime was not possible on many occasions as not all staff were available for active duty (see section 5.4 below).

3.4 Agency support

Primary healthcare nursing services are delivered by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

Mental health services (health and wellbeing) are delivered by the Central and North West London Foundation Trust.

Open Road provide Cookham Wood’s substance misuse service.

The education provider is Novus.

Youth work is provided by Kinetic Youth Work Services.

The resettlement team is a totally in-house provision.

A social work team provides child protection oversight and looked after children (LAC) support.

Barnardo’s provide independent advocacy support to the young people and also a proactive children’s rights service, educating boys in their rights and championing the most vulnerable.

When the contract for maintenance and repair work management was brought under the direction of GFSL – after the demise of Carillion last year - the IMB saw a significant improvement in works with repairs being initiated swiftly and new projects being commissioned smoothly. However latterly, maintenance and repair works have again taken unacceptably long periods to be implemented.
4. SAFETY

4.1 Violence and restraint

There were 465 boy-on-boy assaults and fights in the 11 months August 2018 - June 2019. Though this was much the same level of violent behaviour as in 2017-18, more boys were seriously injured and required hospital treatment (13, as against eight in the previous year). The number of recorded assaults on staff also greatly increased – 203, as against 113 in 2017-2018. Twelve members of staff were seriously injured and required hospital treatment.

The level of violence varied a great deal over the year, peaking in April-May then dropping dramatically in June. Overall, however, the IMB was concerned that violent incidents, if not more common, were frequently more reckless than in previous years.

Sixty percent of the boys at Cookham Wood this year had convictions, or were on remand, for violence/robbery offences. Many also brought gang affiliations and resentments.

The IMB has been consistently impressed by the speed and professionalism of officers’ response to violent and potentially violent incidents. Without their immediate intervention, there would be far more serious injuries.

Use of restraint is inevitable, to protect boys from each other and also from self-harm. IMB members viewed video recordings of ‘high end’ restraints at weekly restraint minimisation meetings. They found, in each case they examined, that the officers’ use of force was necessary, proportionate and controlled. Wherever possible, force was only used after de-escalation had been attempted.

No boy required medical treatment following restraint: some sustained minor bruising and abrasions.

4.2 Self segregation, keep apart restrictions, bullying reduction

In a December 2018 HMIP survey, 90% of boys said they felt safe at Cookham Wood – that is, they were confident staff could and would protect them from harm. This is pleasing, but it cannot disguise the fact that (at least) 10% of boys are fearful of being attacked.

The number of boys self-segregating, either on their own landings or on B1 Bridge landing, increased this year (to about six at any one time). It became difficult to move some boys from B1 to other landings because they feared they would be attacked there.

Much of the boys’ fear has to do with gang affiliation, grudges and intimidation. In April, 12 of the 22 boys on the A3 Induction landing claimed they could not mix safely with other boys on the landing. Difficulties increased in June-July when Cookham Wood’s catchment area was extended because of the temporary closure of Feltham A to new admissions. Five boys from a particular London borough had to be given a completely separate regime to the other boys.

In these circumstances, there was a long and complicated list of ‘keep apart’ restrictions. Cookham Wood has worked hard this year to shorten the list and break down antagonisms between groups of boys. Boys from different landings have moved to education, visits and religious services together. The conflict resolution team has continued its trailblazing work with
individuals. But there is a long way to go. The senior management team has committed to a 75% reduction in ‘keep aparts’, and 75% of boys able to mix by the end of 2019.

Reports of bullying trigger individual bullying reduction support plans, for boys who are victims, and also for boys who are perpetrators. The IMB is impressed by these plans: they are clear, user-friendly and well maintained. However, there was a decline in their use over the year: 17 Plans opened in March (12 perpetrator, five victim) but only seven in May (six victim, one perpetrator) – but the IMB is not convinced that there was an equivalent drop in cases of bullying. Management oversight and officer training was increased, but the number of plans had not risen by July.

The IMB believes that more use should be made of the bullying reduction plan system. It understands the difficulties – victims are fearful of exposing themselves as ‘snitches’ – but believes they can be overcome by a co-ordination of intelligence. This is in hand: from July, all altercations between boys are to be reported to security department analysts for a bullying review.

4.3 Self-harm

There were 111 self-harm incidents - 48 of them in the months of March and April. Most of the incidents involved the preparation or use of ligatures. This was a big increase (there were 59 incidents in 2017-18), but did not mean that the number of boys self-harming had greatly increased.

A small number of boys with severe behavioural difficulties made a hugely disproportionate number of threats and attempts to self-harm. These boys told IMB members that they used ligaturing (and also lighting fires in their cells) as a way to get immediate attention and their demands met. Clearly that was not the whole story: all the boys were receiving mental health support. The IMB checked carefully and repeatedly to make sure that, despite the boys’ challenging behaviour, officers answered their cell bells immediately: they did.

The IMB routinely checked ACCT care plans (assessment, care in custody and teamwork case management files for boys at risk of self-harm). It found they were supportive and flexible, with good records of ‘quality conversations’ and handovers. ACCT files were opened whenever there was any risk at all of a boy self-harming (including, for instance, following a heavy sentence at court). This is something that Cookham Wood does well.

4.4 Death in custody

In late June, a 16-year-old boy collapsed at Cookham Wood, apparently because of a bleed on his brain: he died in hospital. It was his first time in youth custody.

The courage, dignity and compassion of this boy's parents were deeply moving. They asked to attend a small memorial service at Cookham Wood in early August and afterwards talked individually and kindly to each of 13 boys from his landing, as well as to staff. All the boys will remember these conversations.
5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Segregation

Cookham Wood’s segregation policy has in some respects become more humane in the last year:

- When sent to Phoenix, most boys now only stay in the CSU for a short risk assessment period (less than a week), before they are transferred to the Bridge separation landing.
- As soon as boys move to the Bridge, they are encouraged to join small groups of other boys for exercise, education and association. There is ‘dynamic assessment’ of boys on the Bridge: if boys become fearful or disruptive, they can be placed on short term Rule 49 segregation, but then join another group before waiting for their weekly Rule 49 review.
- All boys who self-segregate are placed on Rule 49, but, wherever possible, they remain on their own landings rather than moving to the Bridge in the first instance, so that they can be supported and encouraged by officers they know.

The Phoenix segregation block is a depressing and inhumane environment. It is part of the old Cookham Wood buildings and falls well below the standard of the newer blocks which are located elsewhere on the site. The block has very poor insulation – so cells become very hot in summer and very cold in the winter months. The cells are very basic and do not have individual showers or telephones. The boys are isolated from each other and must be escorted individually out of their cells to use these facilities. The exercise yard on Phoenix is very small and basic with no exercise facilities; it is lined with steel sheeting – and thus, in hot summer sun, becomes a brutal, oven-like space.

Some boys have stayed segregated in Phoenix for many weeks – including boys who were suffering from serious mental health difficulties.

5.2 Long periods of segregation

Following a serious assault on officers on 30 October, 2018, two boys were segregated in Phoenix for an extended period, as a result of a system failure nationally. They were kept there for more than 90 days without either a phased plan for return to a normal location or plans to move them to another YOI. The boys were charged with serious public order and violence offences. During their 90 days in segregation they developed a good rapport with Phoenix officers, but remained in Phoenix until late January when they were transferred to other YOIs and taken off segregation there.

The IMB wrote to the Deputy Director, Youth Custody Service asking why it had not been possible to transfer these boys and take them out of segregation sooner.

The IMB was also concerned that during this period (October–January), two other boys were segregated in Phoenix for over six weeks each following assaults on officers.

A joint statement by the British Medical Association (BMA), the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health says that there is an “unequivocal body of evidence on the profound impact solitary confinement can have on health and wellbeing”.

It reads: “Various studies indicate an increased risk of suicide or self-harm amongst those placed in solitary confinement. As children are still in the crucial stages of developing socially, psychologically and neurologically, there are serious risks of solitary confinement causing long-
term psychiatric and developmental harm.” The groups urged the government to take “immediate action” to ban the policy, adding that until solitary confinement is completely abolished, the youth secure estate must ensure that the health needs of those in solitary confinement are met.


5.3 Lack of appropriate mental health provision nationally

As there are insufficient secure mental health hospital beds for children nationally, Cookham Wood has been required to house several very violent boys this year each of whom had significant mental health issues. This has resulted in these boys being held in a YOI for extremely long periods without the necessary treatment and support while an appropriate placement can be found and negotiated. This process has taken far too long and seems to have scant regard to the urgent needs of the individual boy.

- Two of these boys were housed in isolation in Phoenix cells for 84 consecutive days until alternative therapeutic accommodation became available.
- Another boy arrived at Cookham Wood with extreme PTSD and was so traumatised and disturbed that he was considered medically unfit to attend court. He was exceptionally violent and engaged in dirty protests. He was on three-officer unlock in Phoenix for two months. It took almost three months to secure his transfer to a mental health facility (see more details in case study below).

The IMB is very concerned that Cookham Wood has been required to hold boys who require significant mental health support; who are often violent and thus can only be accommodated in segregation. Cookham Wood does not have a health wing; nor does it have round the clock healthcare. It is totally unsuitable and inhumane to locate boys with serious mental health problems in a YOI. Cookham Wood’s prison officers are not mental health professionals – while they do their best for these boys, the ‘treatment’ they receive while inappropriately located in a YOI is inhumane. There is an urgent need for more appropriate provision to be found nationally.

The IMB believes that the continued segregation of such boys for long periods was inhumane. Although Phoenix staff treated the boys with consideration, they were left without any contact with other boys and with no hope of return to a normal regime.

The continued detention of any boy in below standard accommodation – as is the case with the Phoenix block – is not acceptable.

The IMB has seen the toll these delays have taken on:

- the welfare of the individual boy
- the impact such boys’ behaviour can have on the other boys in Cookham Wood
- the staff who become drained, both physically and emotionally (especially when three-officer unlock in full PPE is required every time a cell door is opened)
• the staffing resource that a three-officer unlock has on the rest of Cookham Wood’s regime – adversely impacting on the regime available to all other boys.

Case study: Mental health transfer

A vulnerable boy who did not speak much English was detained at Cookham Wood. He was very disturbed and distrusted the officers in the prison, due to the treatment that he had received from various authorities prior to coming to England. His behaviour was such that he was segregated in the Phoenix unit for his own safety, where he refused to co-operate and started a dirty protest. Although he was on a three-officer unlock, the boy was treated sympathetically by Phoenix staff and he began to calm down. They showed him pictures of his new location before his move and then two members of staff accompanied him on the transfer, which was made by taxi.

5.4 Time out of cell

For much of the year Cookham Wood has operated with fewer prison officers than it needed. In part, this has been due to a recruitment need. Crucially there have been periods, however, when there were, in theory, sufficient staff numbers, but a proportion have been unavailable for full duties: returning to work on light duties after injury or illness.

Staffing levels at Cookham Wood were below the established requirement for large periods during the year. The boys were therefore locked in their cells for long periods as there were not enough staff to supervise activities. This resulted in the operation of a restricted regime for the boys and meant that the following occurred regularly:

• Prison lock-downs prevented boys from attending education sessions. There were 87 half day sessions over the year, when the main education block could not operate due to prison lock downs; and on 52 of those half days, the Mezzanine block could not operate either due to prison lock downs.

• There were limited opportunities for boys to dine out of their cells and associate with others on the same landing.

• There was a lack of general association or use of gym facilities for exercise.

• Last minute changes to regime plans meant that boys were confused and frustrated when anticipated activities were changed or denied.

5.5 Transport to and from the prison

The IMB has recorded numerous instances throughout the year when boys have been delivered to the prison well after 8pm (and a significant number after 10pm) from magistrates’ and crown courts. This makes it very difficult for boys to be processed by reception and then be accommodated in their cell at a reasonable hour.

Boys who are returning after appearing in court have often been in the van for several hours as deliveries are frequently made to other prisons before Cookham Wood. The situation for these boys is made worse by the fact that they will have been transported from the prison to the court at the start of the day, leaving at a very early hour in order to be at the court in time for the start of court proceedings. As a court case can last for several days, or even weeks, the boys will have to endure the discomfort of the long journey to and from the prison each day.
The IMB does not understand why video-conferencing is not used more frequently in long court cases – particularly when some boys are required to travel significantly long distances to appear in court.

Cookham Wood’s staff do their best to give boys a humane start to their stay in prison; but when boys arrive late in the day this proves very difficult.

The IMB believes strongly that it is not humane for a boy – new to prison – to arrive late in the evening (sometimes well after 8pm); and then face a first night in custody with little or no chance of an association on wing before being locked in a cell for the night.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

The IEP policy at Cookham Wood has three levels – basic, standard and enhanced. Previously, new boys were assigned to the standard level and were encouraged to achieve enhanced level by consistent good behaviour, meaning that they were then granted additional privileges. This was changed during the reporting period so that all new boys were immediately allocated the enhanced level and were then reduced to standard, or even basic, if they exhibited poor behaviour. This approach, which allows all boys to experience the benefits of enhanced status, means that they know what they are missing if they are moved down a level or two, and encourages them to aspire to achieving it again by improving their behaviour. The change in approach was not universally popular among staff; but the IMB has been very pleased with its implementation.

5.7 Retention of young adults

There have been several occasions during the year when boys with long sentences, who have reached the age of 18 years, have remained at Cookham Wood for several months, instead of being moved to a YOI facility for 18-21 year olds. This situation has been exacerbated when the boys have been kept in segregation for safety reasons. [See section 8.7 below]

6. Health and Wellbeing

6.1 Context: Cookham Wood environment

With the exception of the Phoenix care and separation unit (which is claustrophobic and unfit for purpose), the boys’ accommodation is good. Each cell in the main residential block has a shower unit and telephone; and the wide landing and association areas are light and airy. The landings and cells are generally well maintained, though long delays in carrying out simple repairs (e.g. to cell name-card holders) have been frustrating.

Maintenance in other areas has been poor. After the demise of Carillion (facilities management and maintenance services company), there was some hope that long delays to repairs would be eradicated. Sadly, this has not proved to be the case.

The IMB has been concerned at the length of time taken to effect repairs. Broken windows and graffiti in toilets have been a depressing ‘feature’ of the education block throughout the year. The education block toilets were frequently grubby, with a build-up of graffiti and no toilet paper
or soap. While toilet paper and soap have been provided – the graffiti remains and needs constant attention. Broken windows in the block were left awaiting repairs for long periods. The main gate to the prison has been prone to failure. On one occasion, vehicle movement either into or out of the prison was not possible for over nine hours due to a complete gate failure – including for emergency vehicles. This was a particular worry for the IMB as there were a number of boys held at the time who regularly lit fires in their cells and ligatured.

Cells often remain out of use for long periods awaiting repair.

Catering is consistently good: meals are appealing and nutritious. It is regrettable that, because of staff numbers and delays in movement back from afternoon education, boys have not been able to dine out of their cells regularly.

The IMB finds landing and unit officers to be good-humoured, sympathetic and fair-minded. Their relationship with the boys is generally good. Inevitably, the depth of their engagement with the boys varies with the different staffing levels of different landings. Officer engagement with the boys is outstanding in the Cedar resettlement unit and Phoenix CSU, and has become very good on the Bridge (complex needs) landing.

The roll-out of the custody support programme (CuSP) has been disappointingly slow. Cedar resettlement unit and B3 (enhanced) landing have CuSP, and IMB members have seen that that it greatly improves understanding and engagement between boys and officers. There is an ongoing CuSP training programme for officers on other landings.

There has been a further increase in the number of boys volunteering and training for peer support and mentoring roles. Peer support boys and mentors have worked very effectively with the health and wellbeing and Open Road teams to promote mental health and drugs awareness.

6.2 Healthcare Services

The IMB is very impressed by the quality of Cookham Wood’s health services. Its healthcare professionals support the emotional health and wellbeing of the boys, as well as their physical and mental health. They always go the extra mile.

The two main healthcare providers support each other and share information:

- Primary Care (nursing team, GP services, dentistry)
- Health and Wellbeing (mental health team).

There is a crossover between health and wellbeing and Novus (education) support for boys with learning and communication difficulties.

A well-developed substance misuse service (now Open Road) provides induction and resettlement counselling, an education pathway, and psychosocial treatment programmes.

A (Prison Service) forensic psychology team takes lead responsibility for assessing and supporting Rule 49 (segregated) boys and for critical case intervention with significantly disruptive boys. In the past year, it has also greatly increased its advisory and training support for front line officers.
6.3 Physical health: primary healthcare team

Health screening is timely and comprehensive: it more than meets Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPH) Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in Secure Settings (June 2019). Nurses carry out “CHAT 1” risk assessments within 2 hours of boys’ arrival, and the boys have a full NHS health check, including hearing and sight tests, the following day. Each boy has a further NHS health check after six months, and a generic health improvement plan, reviewed every three months.

Primary healthcare cover is 7am – 9pm daily., but nurses regularly stay beyond 9pm to carry out CHAT1 assessments of boys who arrive late. All healthcare staff show a very high level of commitment.

There are GP clinics on three afternoons each week and no waiting list: boys are able to go to the next clinic. In past years, movement of boys to the clinics and six-monthly health checks was slow, but that was no longer the case this year: landing officers prioritised primary healthcare movements.

Nurses visit and assess boys in their cells. They see around 30 boys each day. In addition to boys needing or receiving medical treatment, the nurses see all segregated boys, all boys awaiting adjudication and (within 24 hours) all boys involved in restraint. They are also frequently called upon, as healthcare first responders, to help boys who are mentally distressed. As a result, they are well known and widely trusted by the boys. They have a detailed personal knowledge of the boys, and the effect of their healthcare needs on their behaviour.

This is important because primary healthcare staff have a key safeguarding role as well as their healthcare role. IMB members see this in the ACCT documents they raise (for boys at risk of self-harming) and also, most clearly, their presence at use of force incidents. All use of force incidents are attended by nurses who do not hesitate to call “stop” if they consider a boy at risk. Their presence calms and reassures the boys.

The IMB considers that, because they know the boys and are trusted by them, it would be helpful for nurses to attend more segregation reviews.

6.4 Mental health: health and wellbeing team

There is high demand for mental healthcare at Cookham Wood. The 10-person health and wellbeing team has a caseload of 80-90 boys, i.e. around half the population. This includes boys suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, speech and language difficulties, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the effects of domestic violence, and adjustment disorder: almost all the cases involve trauma.

In addition to individual counselling, treatment and support, the team provides a wide range of group-work interventions (e.g. sexual behaviour, managing emotions, art therapy). The IMB has been particularly impressed this year by the sensitive support and encouragement provided to eight boys in a long sentence (10 years plus) group.

Health and wellbeing support for boys is often difficult because of the limited private space for meetings and delays in moving boys to it.
Healthcare team members routinely attend Rule 49 and ACCT reviews, and the weekly safety meeting. The IMB finds their contribution to decision making at these meetings to be indispensable.

Arranging mental health transfers for boys with extreme complex needs is a very difficult, frustrating and slow process – particularly for boys approaching 18. The number of boys involved is small – three in the past year – but their situation is bleak and inhumane. Cookham Wood simply cannot provide the intensive treatment and care such boys require and they spend long periods in segregation. One boy attempted self-harm 33 times in the three months April–June.

Implementation of the NHS framework for the integrated care project (SECURE STAIRS) will double the size of the health and wellbeing team. Each landing will have its own therapeutic clinician and all sentence planning will be psychologically informed. Elements of SECURE STAIRS (dedicated clinician and case worker, officer training, monthly formulation meetings with each boy, community meetings) were successfully trialled on the Cedar unit this year. But, since funding to recruit more clinical staff did not become available until April, SECURE STAIRS on the other residential landings remains a hope rather than a reality.

6.5 Forensic psychology and CuSP

Cookham Wood’s small forensic psychology team became much more involved in supporting and advising front line officers this year. The interventions team, conflict resolution team, Cedar unit and induction and bridge landings all had dedicated forensic psychology advisers (called “treatment managers”).

The team also led on delivering CuSP (motivational interviewing and custody support planning) training for officers across all landings. Delivering three days training to this number of officers was a huge task and a slow process. By July, all Cedar and B3 officers had been trained and most B1 officers, but five more landing teams remained to be trained.

For a number of years, personal officer support arrangements for boys at Cookham Wood have been hit and miss. Now, under CuSP, each boy will have a psychologically informed support plan, reviewed weekly at hour-long meetings with his personal (CuSP) officer. This would be a very significant improvement in care and the IMB urges Cookham Wood to complete the training and roll out CuSP across all landings with all possible speed.

6.6 Engaging with families: visits and events

Weekly visits (Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday) were busy and cheerful, and, as in previous years, monthly family days (11am–3pm with activities and a themed lunch) were heart-warming. But numbers on family days are limited because of space: a maximum of eight boys and their families each month.

The IMB was therefore very pleased to see new and creative visit opportunities open up in the last year:

- Cedar unit family days
- Conflict resolution sports days
• Intervention awards days (beginning this year, families of all boys who complete intervention programmes have been invited to a proper awards ceremony, with presentation of certificates by a Governor, food activities and lots of conversation).

The breakthrough with these new-style visits is that families can not only talk to their boy in convivial surroundings, but also to his friends and, critically, to the staff who have been working with him. This can only be reassuring and encouraging for them and the boys.

Cookham Wood published a draft ‘Family and Significant Others’ strategy in April 2019 and has set up a multidisciplinary working group to develop and implement it. Its objectives include increasing visits, developing family support groups, and expanding the personal officer/CuSP role to include family engagement. The IMB strongly endorses these objectives.

A family therapist was appointed in January 2019, and in addition to carrying her own caseload (10 - 12 boys and their families), is consultant for Cookham Wood’s family strategy.

7. Education and purposeful activity

Education in Cookham Wood is provided by NOVUS. Boys are allocated to classes by an allocation planning board, a multi-agency body. Allocations are, to a significant extent, governed by ‘keep-aparts’ between boys, and thus education can become territorial. For example, a boy from A-side is unlikely to be placed in the prison radio class as he would then be mixing with boys from whom he is to be kept apart from B-side, whereas music technology has become an A-side class and boys from B-side generally will not be considered. Despite the pressure on the department from ‘keep-aparts’, education and conflict resolution departments liaise to facilitate a number of measures such as team sports with children who do not normally mix and have seen some success. The activities, under the restorative play agenda, have been a joint venture between conflict resolution, education, supported by K Sports, an external partner; with football being the most popular.

Overall, the rate of boys succeeding on the various educational pathways is very high. Educational pathways range from classroom- to workshop-based, and there is a basic skills provision for boys who have not received significant formal education.

The boys’ education is restricted by lengthy movement times from the residential block to the education block, and staffing availability resulting in prison lock downs. There were 87 half day sessions over the year, when the main education block could not operate due to prison lock downs; and on 52 of those half days, the Mezzanine block could not operate either due to prison lock downs

*Boys in Cookham Wood consistently do not receive the full core day to which they are entitled.*

7.1 Education for segregated boys

Boys who were segregated again received significantly less education than the rest of the prison community, though efforts and provisions are made on a case by case basis. Boys on Phoenix and many on B1 were only being offered a short session on a one-to-one basis daily. However
latterly more efforts have been made to ensure that boys on B1 had access to significantly more education than they had been previously offered, including small group sessions being arranged. Library data showed a low number of books issued on B1 and Phoenix.

### 7.2 Attendance at education

The following graph illustrates monthly average percentages of attendance of boys at education during the reporting year:

![Monthly averages of attendance](image)

Attendance figures in education were at the lowest for the year in April 2019 at an average of 68.13%. The high for the reporting year was November 2018 at 88.63%. In April the regime was curtailed in the afternoons as a result of prison staffing profile changes, which resulted in association being provided instead of education classes for a time. The education team provided work for the children in their rooms in the afternoons.

### 7.3 Movement to / from education

The following graph illustrates average movement times (in minutes) of boys to education during the reporting year:
Movement times took longest in January 2019, with an average of 48 minutes per movement (morning) and 40 minutes per movement (afternoon). The issues of movement are discussed at the quality improvement group and education progress review meetings. The learning and skills manager scrutinises the issue on behalf of the prison.

The main library facility is run by Medway Council library services and offers a range of fiction, non-fiction and graphic novels popular with the age group. There are also audiobooks, books with larger print and foreign language books available, as well as a service to source books on request. Groups of boys in education are allocated 30-minute time slots from Monday – Thursday in which to use the library. Education staff are able to manage the library if Medway library staff are unavailable.

### 7.4 Woody's Barista café

Although the installation of the equipment for the café was painfully slow, and caused significant delays to the café’s launch, the outcome has been a triumph. Woody’s Café is an outstanding success story. The initiative has seen a strong liaison and cooperation between teams in the prison to achieve a high-quality accredited pathway and start-up business enterprise for the boys who can earn a City & Guilds Level 2 barista skills qualification. Woody’s Barista café offers breakfast, lunch and a range of hot and cold drinks to staff and visitors to the establishment from within a 5-star hygiene rated kitchen/servery. It runs from Monday to Friday from morning until mid-afternoon and orders can be taken in person or via an internal telephone. Woody’s is universally popular across the establishment.

The IMB has seen a leap in the maturity and professionalism in those boys working in the café.
Case study: vocational skills

One boy in first-time custody was very shy and somewhat withdrawn prior to working at Woody’s, but has significantly developed his confidence and a range of transferrable skills via his employment as a barista; not only has he earned a City & Guilds level 2 in the trade, but he has also developed his communication skills, taking telephone and face to face orders, and his general customer service skills such as handling cash and operating the till. This boy has blossomed under the trust and responsibility afforded him and he is evidently a bright young man who has taken significant strides on this pathway. He is widely regarded as a pleasure to deal with.

7.5 Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is a success in Cookham Wood. It is a paid and aspirational pathway in which boys who are working towards enhanced status and have good communication skills can apply for a position as a peer mentor. Boys follow an accredited pathway before working with other boys. They grow in confidence and maturity.

The peer mentors have developed into a significant resource as part of the support services available within the prison. Not only do peer mentors support boys directly - such as one to one on English and maths, or by working with vulnerable boys - but peer mentors also contribute to input from agencies such as conflict resolution and interventions. Peer mentors present as being engaged with the process and invested in the results of their efforts.

7.6 Other notable successes include:

- The Hackney music project, who come into the establishment and work with boys to produce high quality prison radio.
- Six Cookham Wood art entries in the national Koestler exhibition from 700 entries submitted from Kent and Sussex.
- Entries to the national writing day, with 33 submissions from boys within the establishment.
- 25% of the prison population completed CSCS (construction skills) training this past year. This is the recognised requirement to work in construction and provides access to an opportunity for employment on release, and for further education for long-term detainees who will move onto the adult estate.

7.7 Education improvements

The education department at Cookham Wood self-audit with ‘learning walks’, led by a senior member of the department, on which other staff and visitors, including IMB members, may join in small numbers. They enter classrooms and discuss matters with both the teaching staff and boys. Observations are taken by the education department and then circulated where relevant.

Quality improvement group (QIG) meetings are held monthly and are attended by various agencies and boys from the Cookham Wood Youth Council, including the chair and vice-chair. The aim of the group is to drive improvement across the establishment and this includes piloting new schemes driven by the boys.
8. Resettlement preparation

8.1 Casework staffing and workload

Co-ordination of sentence and resettlement planning for the boys is the responsibility of the casework team.

The team’s staffing establishment is 10; with six non-operational and four operational. As recruitment has not been permitted due to the planned closure of Medway STC, this was five operational and five non-operational for much of the year. Operational staff were frequently redeployed, affecting the performance of the team. The casework manager was on sick leave for an extended period during the year; staff acting up worked hard to cover this significant gap.

Caseloads for staff in the team averaged 1:16/17. This was the same as in previous years, however the increasing number of boys with lengthy sentences for very serious crimes increased the complexity of the caseloads.

Pressure of other work led to casework representatives regularly failing to attend weekly Rule 49 (segregation) reviews in December, January and again in May. The IMB raised its concerns about this and, from June, caseworkers attended all the reviews.

8.2 Interagency working

Every boy entering the prison has a sentence plan, developed from their arrival in the prison; this includes boys with long sentences who will transition to young adult establishments. Caseworkers are responsible for the sentence plans, with input from other agencies. In the IMB’s opinion this input was not well coordinated.

The monthly resettlement meeting was cancelled on three occasions during the year, and attendance by other agencies at the meetings which did take place was variable, resulting in a lack of integrated discussion and planning.

There is an expectation of healthcare involvement in the planning 1: but although good healthcare links were made for boys leaving the establishment this information was not reflected in sentence plans.

Regime restrictions resulting in missed education and therapeutic sessions affected the delivery of resettlement plans.

The casework team has worked well with YOTs, particularly some in London, developing closer relationships to improve support to boys. But there were frequent delays in the clearance of telephone PIN numbers by YOTs resulting in delay for many boys in contacting family and friends when in custody.

8.3 Release on temporary licence (ROTL) administration overly bureaucratic

This year Cookham Wood has started to make good use of ROTL to support boys’ rehabilitation. Indeed, Cookham Wood appears to have one of the best records for ROTL use in the entire youth estate.

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1 https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/healthcare-standards-children-young-people-secure-settings
However, the procedures required to facilitate an approved ROTL are so burdensome (perhaps based on the requirements of the adult estate) that some boys have missed pre-arranged appointments due to a missing part of their ROTL paperwork.

*The IMB asks for an urgent review of ROTL procedures in the youth estate to enable a more streamlined approach to be used. This need is particularly apparent when a boy is going out on a regular appointment – e.g. to attend a college placement.*

### 8.4 Successful initiatives

- The **Cedar unit** continued to demonstrate best practice for boys eligible for ROTL approaching their release date.

- The **community engagement manager** worked hard to develop a range of education and training opportunities for boys during the year. A total of 835 ROTL licences were granted. On average, nine boys enjoyed ROTL each month. The IMB considers this an outstanding achievement.

  Some of the group-ROTL experiences have been particularly memorable for the boys.

- Boys have been working in the **prison kitchen**, though this is not currently an education pathway.

- A successful **education to employment event** was held for boys nearing release, and also for boys who will transition to the young adult estate.

- The opening of **Woody’s Barista cafe** gives boys the opportunity to be trained in the skills required to prepare food and beverages for staff and visitors in the prison. This is now a recognised training pathway.

- **Family contact** was well supported during the year, including by excellent monthly family days organised by the casework team and Cedar family events.

- Boys approaching the end of their sentences were able to access support for financial planning; a number of boys on Cedar were able to open a bank account.
8.5  Extracts from a five-page letter of thanks from a former prisoner of Cookham Wood  
24 July 2019

“I don’t know how to say or write what I want / need to, but there’s too much to say.

“I’m gonna start it ...with:

“My time in Cookham Wood has been an adventure.

“... My journey started with a few up's and down's until I started seeing things more clearly.

“...I felt like I was part of a family that I never would of imagined having. Everyone always said
“XXX your time will come.” – and I guess you all were right my time is here.

“...I would have never got this far without all of [you].

“...I felt wanted and felt loved and parented by all the staff. ...I appreciate all the hard work
carried out for me and others.

“...I hope I’ve made everyone proud because I feel like I’ve done a lot with a lot of help.

“I will never forget my life on Cedar unit, actually our life - everyone has been the best like a big
family on a counselling holiday. I will miss Cedar unit a lot and never forget anything.

“I will always remember the support and respect given to me.

“My time is up now. [I] used it to my advantage with all of your help.”

8.6  Accommodation on release

No boy under 18 was released without an address, however many received very late notification. 
This was of particular concern for the significant number of looked after boys.

Some local authorities have failed to provide adequate support for the boys in their local
authority care while they have been held in Cookham Wood. This has resulted in a painful
variation in treatment between boys as they prepare for release.

- In the best cases, looked after children have had good contact with their social worker;
know where they will be living, and the education or training they will receive. In short,
they look forward to their release.
- Sadly, some other looked after children have had little or no contact from their local
authority social worker; have no idea where they will be living or what they will be doing
after release - a state of affairs that can continue right up to the day of the boy’s release –
so the boy is left in limbo, and certainly unable to look forward to release as other boys
can.

It is essential that all boys should be given adequate time to prepare for their release. Cookham
Wood’s staff struggle to make amends for poor local authority social work practice.
One boy over 18, who was looked after, was released without being given an address by his local authority. He had to present as homeless.

The Children’s Commissioner is taking a close interest in the identification and notification of addresses for boys on their release.

8.7 Transitions to young adult institutions

During the year a significant number of boys 18+, with lengthy sentences and complex needs, waited months for their transfer to young adult YOIs.

Although HM Prison Service allows Cookham Wood to hold young men up to the age of 18 years 10 months, it is meant to be an institution for children, from the age of 15 to their 18th birthday. A young man who has passed his 18th birthday is legally (and in practice) an adult. There are obvious welfare and safeguarding concerns about keeping young men in a children’s institution.

It is sensible and humane, if a young man is serving a short-term detention and training order (DTO), or close to the end of his sentence, doing well and a good influence on those around him, to allow him to stay for a time.

However, it is the IMB’s strong view that, in all other cases, young men should be transferred to young adult YOIs very soon after their 18th birthday. This does not happen.

There are no agreed pathways for transferring 18-year olds, and no central YCS team charged with making judgements about when and where they should move. Instead, Cookham Wood (like other juvenile YOIs) has to negotiate directly with young adult institutions on a case-by-case basis. This is hugely time consuming for the casework team and extremely depressing and demotivating to the young men awaiting transfer.

The young men most difficult to transfer are:

- those convicted of sexual offences
- those with life sentences
- those with high levels of violence or strong gang affiliations
- those with complex needs, particularly if they repeatedly self-harm.

In April 2019, there were 20 non-DTO 18-year olds at Cookham Wood. The casework files for two of these (both 18 years 1 month) were endorsed:

- “Tried numerous establishments – no-one willing to accept at this time” and
- “Tried numerous establishments – no-one willing to accept”.

Two months later, places still had not been found for them. One of their files was endorsed:

- “Tried to move. Is a sex offender, so nowhere will accept”.

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9. **The Work of the IMB**

### 9.1 Rota visits and segregation reviews

In total, the IMB made 363 visits to Cookham Wood in this reporting year. Board members generally made two rota visits to Cookham Wood each week; the days and times of visits varied. The first visit followed the standard IMB schedule, but the second was more flexible: its purpose was to follow up issues raised by the first visit, to dig deeper into priority areas, and to talk informally with the boys.

Weekly rota reports were circulated to the Governor, deputy governor, and head of safeguarding. IMB Board meetings were held monthly, to review progress and concerns with the Governor, and identify priorities for monitoring in the next month.

Board members also attended weekly good order and discipline (GOoD) segregation reviews. It was not always possible to attend the first (72 hour) review, but all segregated boys were seen within 72 hours. Members attended 479 GOoD reviews in this reporting year.

Each IMB member has areas of responsibility (broadly corresponding to the headings in sections 4 – 8 of this report), on which s/he leads for the Board. In addition to making rota visits and attending GOoD reviews, members visited Cookham Wood regularly to carry out research and attend meetings relating to their areas of responsibility.

### 9.2 Recruitment and Training

The number of IMB members increased from seven in August 2017 to eight (including two new members) in July 2018. The recommended complement of IMB members at Cookham Wood is 10. It is hoped that two more new members will be recruited to the Board in the new year. In addition to national IMB training, there is a local IMB training programme, with briefings preceding monthly Board meetings. Members also attend Cookham Wood staff training sessions – for instance on child protection. There is an open invitation to IMB members to attend any staff training they wish.

### 9.3 Board Statistics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended complement of Board members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of new Board members during the reporting period</td>
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<td>Number of Board members resigning during the reporting period</td>
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<td>Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of visits to the establishment</td>
<td><strong>363</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Total number of segregation reviews attended** | **479**  
(cf 449 last year) |
9.4 Applications to the IMB

Boys at Cookham Wood have the right to speak privately to a member of the IMB about anything which is worrying them. They arrange a meeting by sending an application to the IMB, electronically (using the IT Kiosks on the residential landings) or by paper slips. However, the boys make few applications to speak privately to the IMB. There were only 32 applications in this reporting year – 12 of them relating to regime restrictions.

The IMB believes that this continued low number of applications is because the boys have confidence in Cookham Wood’s internal systems for raising concerns (these systems are good), and also because they have a high regard for the Barnardo’s advocates, who are on site daily and can be messaged by telephone at any time.

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<th>Code</th>
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<th>Reporting year 2017-18</th>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Equality</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>Transfers</td>
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<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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