Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP Exeter

For the reporting Year
2019

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody
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1 STATUTORY ROLE

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 HMP Exeter for the year 2019. Members of the Board have visited the prison regularly – at least twice a week. The Board’s findings are based on the monitoring of accommodation, facilities and services, focused monitoring of specific areas, observation of a range of activities, review of records and data, external surveys and audits, attendance at some prison meetings, formal and informal conversations with prisoners, staff and other agencies, and prisoners’ applications.

2.2 Background to the annual report 2019

2.2.1 This has been another challenging year for HMP Exeter. Following the urgent notification protocol (UNP) from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), which was invoked in May 2018, the prison has been trying to promote improvement through implementation of a performance improvement plan (PIP) and linked plans to address the concerns and recommendations of the HMIP report. In April 2019, an independent review of progress (IRP) took place which recognised progress in some areas, but also a lack of meaningful progress in others.

2.2.2 The reporting period covers both a time when staffing at the prison had improved, and a time when it deteriorated and subsequently became a concern. Retention of both new and experienced staff became very difficult. By the end of the year, the prison was 16% understaffed in terms of band 3 officers, and on its third governing governor since May 2018. Its senior leadership has not been stable, the prison has often had too few officers to maintain an adequate and effective regime, and there have been some consequent safety vulnerabilities (see section 6.3). This report recognises the negative impact that reduced staffing has had on the regime, prisoner communication, and administrative functions and areas. A key impact has been that some welcome improvements that were initially made have not been able to be sustained.

Towards the end of the reporting period, the Board became increasingly aware of fluctuating and low morale among some operational staff. This did not go unnoticed by prisoners.

2.2.3 The establishment continues to be constantly under pressure owing to the deterioration and condition of its structure and fabric, which has had an impact on both regime and prisoner opportunity. Scope for improvement is often constrained by the age of the building, its infrastructure and its limited space for development.

2.2.4 Disappointingly, the appointment of Government Facility Services Limited (GFSL) has not resulted in improvements to either the scheduled maintenance of the fabric and facilities of the prison or to routine and basic maintenance needs identified by wing staff or the Board. This has not helped to improve living conditions or embed and sustain a decency culture at the prison. In September 2019, the Board was told that there were over 400 work requests outstanding.

2.2.5 The arrangements for, and the quality and effectiveness of, some significant prison meetings continue to be a concern for the Board. Throughout the reporting year, it was not unusual for scheduled meetings to be cancelled or postponed, often at the last minute. Poor attendance and a lack of multidisciplinary representation often resulted in limited meaningful discussion of agenda items, and limited accountability. Although the Board was aware of efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings towards the end of the reporting period, given the nature of the performance improvements required, we were concerned about the capacity of meetings to play their part in these expectations (see sections 4.3, 6.6 and 7.7).
2.2.6 Statistically, Exeter has reflected the national background of high levels of violence in prisons, the damaging impact of new psychoactive substances (NPS) and other drugs, and increasing levels of self-harm found in local and other prisons (see sections 4.3 and 4.5).

2.3 Progress against the PIP
During the course of the reporting year, the prison progressed from reacting to the consequences of HMIP’s decision to invoke the UNP, to taking on board the conclusions of the IRP in April 2019, and developing a comprehensive PIP. The Board was briefed on the plan by the governor with lead responsibility, and was pleased to see that weekly update meetings involving the senior management team (SMT) and functional heads were introduced, along with quarterly meetings with the prison group director. The Board has a standing invitation to attend the weekly meetings. The Board’s view is that the process adopted is appropriate, and that all those involved are taking seriously the need to make progress and to work together, rather than in silos. Nevertheless, progress has been disappointingly slow in some areas, with a lack of resources, human and financial, being a significant factor, and resulting in some improvements not being sustained or becoming sufficiently embedded at a cultural and operational level.

2.4 Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?
Greater attention to an equality agenda during 2019 has resulted in some improvements to practice and outcomes for prisoners. However, approaches to promoting equality of opportunity are not yet sufficiently embedded at a cultural level, and across the prison. This can result in inconsistencies in the application of some processes and practices, which can create unintended inequities and different experiences for prisoners. Examples include responses to prisoner complaints (see section 5.6), prisoners with disabilities or particular needs (see section 5.3.) and lost employment (see section 10.1).

Are prisoners treated humanely?
There are intentions to treat prisoners humanely, but deterioration of the prison’s fabric, structure and facilities, along with delays to basic and routine maintenance (see paragraph 2.2.4), can undermine these intentions. Prisoners have been provided with essential and basic residential services, and there are some examples of improvements to living conditions (see sections 7.1 and 7.6). However, on occasions, decency has been compromised because, either at an individual (cell) or communal level, prisoners have not lived in a clean or decent environment in a good state of repair. Expectations, which have often been low, and tolerance levels, which are often high, have not helped to challenge this.

The Board is satisfied that the standard of healthcare provision that prisoners receive is similar to that which individuals could expect to receive in the wider community. However, the Board continues to be concerned by the number of prisoners with mental health issues in prison and by the delays in transferring some seriously mentally ill prisoners to more appropriate environments (see section 6.5).

Generally, relationships between staff and prisoners are positive and courteous. Most officers seem to know the prisoners on their detailed wing fairly well.

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?
Prisoners receive preparation for their release. However, limited prison resources and external social arrangements and systems can undermine overall effectiveness. The ‘departure lounge’ and ‘checkout lounge’ initiatives (see section 11.1) continue to provide good preparation in the lead up to, and immediate support for, release. We are aware that
most prisoners receive some support to work towards targets in their sentence plans. However, the main concerns are that not all prisoners have suitable or sustainable accommodation identified on their release, and even fewer leave with some kind of employment prospects (see p section 10.1).

2.5 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

**Accommodation on release**
To help reduce reoffending rates, and better support the early days following release, will the Secretary of State commit to increasing and improving social housing arrangements, to enable prisoners with no fixed abode to have suitable accommodation provided on release (see section 11.1)?

**Funding to support the retention of staff**
Will the Secretary of State provide the Prison Service with additional funding, to enable it better to support governors in being reactive to competitive job markets which undermine the retention of experienced and other staff?

**Guaranteeing (ring-fencing) funding for prison improvements**
Will the Secretary of State undertake to guarantee and ring-fence funding allocated to prison improvements, to assist governors with planning such projects?

**Appropriate provision for prisoners with mental health issues**
Will the Secretary of State urge his colleague, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to commit to increasing national provision of secure psychiatric beds, so that no prisoner waits an unacceptably long time, in inappropriate conditions, for a suitable placement to meet their mental health needs (see section 6.5)?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

**Recruitment and retention, autonomy and financial support**
Will the Prison Service devolve greater autonomy to prison governors, to enable them to act decisively, react to and take advantage of the local employment context and job markets in the recruitment and retention of staff?

**Maintenance backlog and impact on decency culture**
Will the Prison Service review its quality assurance arrangements, to improve the effectiveness of GFSL in providing an efficient and responsive maintenance service which supports governors in the delivery of their dignity and decency agenda (see paragraph 2.2.4 and section 2.4)?

**Workshops and industries, and employability skills**
With an increased focus on resettlement, will the Prison Service support the prison to establish workshops and industries that promote personal development, self-esteem and transferable employability skills, which could improve employment prospects on release (see section 10.1)?

TO THE GOVERNOR

**Prison meetings**
Will the governor establish a culture of expectation that scheduled meetings take place when they should, and ensure that attendance is prioritised so that meetings are more effective in progressing matters, driving improvements and securing commitment and accountability (see section 7.7)?
Communication with the Board – notifiable incidents
Will the governor ensure that communication with the Board is improved, so that it is routinely informed of serious and other notifiable incidents or events, and within the timescales as set out in the memorandum of understanding between Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the management board of the IMBs (December 2019)? (See also section 4.8.)

Prison complaints system
Will the governor continue to keep under review the prisoner complaints procedure (from submission to recording, receipt and response), with a view to further improving practice and outcomes for prisoners, thereby improving prisoner confidence in the process (see section 5.6)?

Workshops and industries, and employability skills
Will the governor undertake to provide workshop and employment opportunities which promote personal development, self-esteem and transferable employability skills, which could help improve employment prospects on release (see section 10.1)?

Key worker engagement
Will the governor undertake to improve the priority given to key worker engagement (see section 7.5)?

Segregation review boards (SRBs)
Will the governor consider holding SRBs on fixed days of the week, which would help establish the necessary routines and actions to ensure the regular attendance of all those who should be present or invited (see section 6.2)?

Prisoner representation and consultation
Will the governor reconsider the setting up of a prisoner council or undertake to provide more opportunities for prisoners to be consulted and give feedback on services, facilities and routines at the prison (see section 7.8)?

Staff training
Will the governor endeavour to restart, as soon as is possible, a programme of core training and attendance at specialist training courses, so that staff can update their competencies and progress their careers?

2.6 Improvements

It has been pleasing to see that, during the reporting year, the prison has made a number of improvements across a range of areas. However, a recurring theme and observation in this report is that staffing difficulties and the culture of the prison have not always helped improvements to become embedded and/or sustained.

Some of the improvements noted have included:

- cleanliness in some communal areas of the prison
- opportunities for prisoners to socialise in a more relaxed setting, with the provision of some wing furniture
- equality and diversity work, but this is work in progress and not yet sufficiently embedded
- regularity of, and attendance at, meetings, and attempts to make relevant meetings more multidisciplinary (improved towards the end of the year)
• analysis of prison data, which potentially can better identify trends and inform practice
• assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews, which have increasingly had multidisciplinary involvement and attendance, and accountability
• the departure and checkout lounges are providing an excellent source of advice and preparation for release.
DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

3.1 Introduction

HMP Exeter is a category B local and resettlement prison. It is a traditional Victorian inner-city establishment, built in 1853. The establishment remains under constant pressure owing to limited capacity for expansion, and deterioration of its structure and fabric. Its operational capacity is 531, although numbers are usually around 480, and the operational capacity has been reduced at times during the reporting year for urgent maintenance work to be undertaken. Most prisoners share a cell, and the majority of these have in-cell sanitation, with the exception of D wing, which accommodates enhanced prisoners, who have 24-hour access to communal facilities.

A feature of the prison is F wing, a social care unit holding up to 11 prisoners, which also contains a palliative care suite for terminally ill prisoners and a constant watch cell.

At the end of 2019, 14% of the prisoner population were over the age of 50, 2% were aged 60–69 and 2% were over 70 years of age. Young offenders made up approximately 7% of the population. The ethnicity structure of the prison can vary marginally from month to month, but at the end of 2019 white ethnicity comprised 89% of the population.

As a local and resettlement prison, Exeter has a high turnover of prisoners and an average length of stay of 70 days. It fulfils a number of functions, not all of which are compatible. It receives both remand and sentenced prisoners (adults and young offenders), primarily from courts within the south-west of England. Prisoners arrive with high levels of need. However, although the regime, opportunities and facilities offered are best suited to those on shorter sentences, an increased resettlement role has meant that higher numbers of longer-sentenced prisoners are transferred from elsewhere. For these prisoners, who have very different needs from the other groups, the regime and occupational/training and work opportunities offered at Exeter are not always suitable.

3.2 Key providers:

- Healthcare services are provided by Care UK, with some services contracted out.
- Mental health services are contracted out to the Devon Partnership Trust.
- Substance misuse services are provided by EDP Drug and Alcohol Services.
- The community rehabilitation company (CRC) is Dorset, Devon and Cornwall CRC.
- Learning and skills activities are provided by Weston College.
- The escort contractor is GEOAmey.
- Maintenance is provided by GFSL.
- Choices Consultancy Services delivers family services.

In addition, several voluntary organisations provide a range of smaller services.

Exeter is part of a south-west prison group (which also includes HMP Channings Wood, HMP Dartmoor and HMP Guys Marsh), and a number of services and resources are shared.
4.1 Reception

Members of the Board have visited the reception facility regularly. Early in the reporting year, we were concerned about reports that prison officers were often kept on duty unduly late (and unexpectedly), awaiting late transfers from courts far away. More recently, we have observed reception being well staffed, even at times when the number of transfers in and out is low, although it is hard to predict traffic flows.

Informal conversations with recently arrived prisoners on the C4 landing suggests general satisfaction with the initial reception process, including those with previous experience of the procedure.

4.2 Induction and first night

Throughout the reporting year, newly arrived prisoners were generally located on the C4 landing. On rota visits, the Board has been pleased with the awareness of prison staff in the wing office to the needs of newly arrived prisoners. Risks have been identified, with ACCTs being opened in some cases and then closed the next day after further assessment. Problems about the availability of furniture and equipment noted in last year’s report seem generally to have been resolved, but there were exceptions to this (see section 4.9, bullet point 3).

Anecdotal remarks from prisoners indicate that they are seen promptly by healthcare and education staff. Inevitably, prisoners arriving late on Fridays and over a weekend are not seen as quickly and there have been some delays getting access to PIN numbers, prescription medication (see section 8.3) and canteen over a weekend. Some prisoners in the C4 first night cells appear to remain there for several weeks.

The Board’s main concern about the first night accommodation on C4 is the proximity to other experienced prisoners, often accommodated on C wing to separate them from certain prisoners on A wing. However, the Board acknowledges that it is difficult to identify a dedicated first night landing in a prison of Victorian design. In monitoring safer custody and violence reduction reports, we have noted the high number of incidents that take place on C wing. While these do not necessarily directly involve first-nighters, it must create an intimidating and unpleasant atmosphere for them. We also understand that first-nighters can be of interest to more experienced prisoners, in terms of bullying and as potential conveyors of illicit items.

4.3 Assaults and violence

Violence continues to be a problem at the prison, possibly exacerbated by a disrupted and restricted regime in the latter part of the reporting year, but also associated with:

- a prisoner(s) having an issue(s) with staff
- bullying
- debt
- retaliatory actions.

The number of violent incidents during the reporting period averaged about 35 per month, which is a slight decrease on 2018, with about a quarter classified as fights and the remainder being assaults. Variations between months show no particular pattern, except that the vast majority of such incidents involve prisoners from A and C wings. However, the number of
assaults on staff has increased. During the reporting period, there were 94 assaults on staff, of which 31 involved physical assault, 23 spitting, 20 the throwing of objects or liquids, and 20 pushing or barging. A new grading system has been introduced, to calibrate incidents of violence; this has five bands, from the throwing of unharmful liquids up to injuries requiring continuing hospital treatment. While this system indicates that assaults on staff generally tend to be at the lower end of the scale, there have been some exceptions to this, and over a fifth were serious enough to merit referral to the police.

Regular meetings are held to monitor violence and its causes, although frequent postponements reduce participation and effectiveness (see also section 7.7).

4.4 Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs)

The CSIP initiative was introduced towards the end of 2018 and involved intervention (for violent prisoners) and support (for those prisoners thought to be vulnerable). Its effectiveness during the reporting year has been variable, and to begin with, few prisoners were placed and engaged on CSIPs. Our monitoring suggests that this was possibly because understanding about its purpose and what it could achieve was not sufficiently appreciated across the prison and by all staff. In 2019, there were 180 referrals made to the programme, resulting in 92 being placed on a CSIP. In December 2019, there were nine prisoners registered on a CSIP, and the monthly average during the year was around seven to nine prisoners. Most referrals were for violent behaviour (intervention), and the indications are that, once on the programme, the violent behaviour of the individual reduced. The Board intends to undertake a period of focused monitoring on this during 2020.

4.5 Drugs and substance misuse

Disappointingly, drugs remain a key driver for violent and other disruptive behaviour, although there are drug supply reduction measures in place. In February 2019, there was a review of the prison’s drug strategy, which culminated in a focus on restricting supply, reducing demand and building recovery. Priorities for tackling the ingress and availability of drugs were identified as throw-overs, visits, prescription medication diversion and incoming mail. Mail continues to be photocopied, with only the copies passed on to prisoners. This has undoubtedly helped matters. However, intelligence and drug-provoked behaviour suggests that drugs are still widely available in the prison, thought to be obtained largely via throw-overs, visits, recalls and emergency hospital attendances.

Mandatory drug testing (MDT) took place each month during the reporting year, although the last six months saw a drop in testing due to a lack of staff. Additionally, the poor staffing levels have reduced the number of cell searches taking place (see also paragraph 2.2.2), which can undermine efforts to restrict availability. NPS continue to be a problem, and are not always picked up by MDT as the ‘recipe’ changes frequently. There have been fewer external paramedic attendances in 2019 to incidents involving prisoners using NPS, as in-house healthcare staff have become more experienced at managing them.

In the run up to Christmas 2019, there was a significant increase in finds of ‘hooch’. This was picked up quickly by the search dog, and items from which hooch can be made were restricted further.

4.6 Vulnerable prisoners, and self-harm and suicide prevention (including ACCTs)

Members of the Board have attended a number of safer custody meetings during the reporting year. We have noted and welcomed the improved analysis of statistics conducted at such meetings. For example, analysts are breaking down the large default option of ‘believed to be at risk’ into more specific categories, which potentially can better target and support interventions.
Recent safer custody reports show:

- There has been a fairly consistent pattern of ACCTs opened, of about 70 each month, but some variation in the numbers closed each month.
- By far, the largest number of ACCTs opened relate to prisoners in the first night centre.
- The most common reason given for opening an ACCT was ‘believed to be at risk’, but this appeared to be a default option, with other options ranging from threats of suicide to actual self-harm.
- Actual incidents of self-harm were running at an average of just over 54 a month, with a range over the past year of between 36 and 71 a month.
- In December 2019, 11 prisoners were involved in 34 incidents out of 60 recorded incidents of self-harm, just over 50% of the total.
- Most of the 61 incidents of self-harm in November 2019 occurred on A wing (34), compared with 26 for C wing, of which over half (14) were logged that month on the C4 landing.

The management of prisoners on ACCTs still gives the Board some concern. Members of the Board have noted, several times, incidences of open ACCT documentation not accompanying a prisoner, for example, to the segregation unit or adjudication. There have also been some occasions when a review of the ACCT record has shown that scheduled observations were overdue.

We note that a high proportion of ACCTs opened and closed after the first review relate to first-nighters. This may be regarded as an indication of staff being risk averse. On the other hand, we know that some recent deaths in custody have occurred during early days in prison, and that staff are dealing, at that stage, with prisoners they have not yet got to know well. In addition, we understand that there is a shortage of trained ACCT reviewers. In these circumstances, it seems reasonable for staff to err on the side of caution when opening ACCTs on newly arrived prisoners.

The analysis of safer custody and violence reduction statistics often attributes changes between months to transfers in and out of the prison of certain individuals. For instance, the reduction in self-harm to 41 incidents in October 2019, compared with 60 in August and 74 in September, was linked to the departure from the prison of several prolific or long-term self-harmers. However, valid this attribution is, it should not be allowed to induce complacency among staff about the high levels of self-harm and violence in the prison.

Members of the Board have also attended, as observers, a coroner’s inquest into a death in custody (DIC). We have been impressed with the conduct of prison officers who have had to give evidence on distressing events, which often occurred several years ago. Some inquests held during this reporting year have been into deaths which occurred in 2016.

4.7 Deaths in custody and response to feedback from Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) reports

Sadly, during the reporting year there were eight DICs. However, the provision of a palliative care suite does mean that the establishment provides end-of-life care for prisoners received from other prisons which cannot provide this. Consequently, this has an impact on the prison’s overall DIC statistics. A total of five DICs in 2019 were identified as being from natural causes, and, of the remaining three, the causes of two are yet to be formally determined.

During the reporting year, a number of PPO reports were published on prisoners who had died at the establishment in previous years. It was disappointing to note, in more than one of these reports, that applications for compassionate release were not made expeditiously or not
followed through. The Board raised this with the governor, who undertook to review the existing local policy on compassionate release, and identify a senior member of staff as responsible for ensuring that this issue is considered in a timely manner and that progress on an application is monitored in the future.

The Board has also been disappointed to find that PPO reports published in 2019, but concerning some DICs outside the current reporting period, expressed concerns about the management of suicide and self-harm (ACCT) procedures, and that these concerns had been raised in previous PPO investigations. This does raise some worries about the prison’s ability to take on board recommendations regarding good practice and improvements, and sustain them.

4.8 Serious incidents

The Board attended one serious incident involving a prisoner at height during the reporting period, but has not routinely been informed of all the incidents designated as notifiable to the Board. With the exception of a DIC, when members have observed or attended an incident, this is because they had, by chance, been in the prison at the time. The management of the incident attended was observed to be professionally carried out, although the Board had some concerns about the adequacy of the arrangements for Local Silver Command, and about the positioning of some cameras, which inhibited the ability to see the full incident from the control room. The incident was brought to an effective conclusion, and the priority throughout was to ensure the safety of the prisoner and the officers. Board members following up after a DIC reported that matters were handled appropriately, sensitively and with respect.

4.9 Young offenders

The prison houses young adults (18-21 year olds on remand and sentenced) across all residential wings. The percentage, in terms of the overall population at Exeter, is fairly constant, averaging about 7%.

In November 2019, Board members conducted a focused monitoring exercise around the experiences of young adults at the establishment, and noted the following:

- Correct cell-sharing arrangements are observed by the prison. Their status is marked by blue cell cards, although some were missing. Wing staff reported that the young adults remove these as they do not wish to be identified. Wing staff were generally aware of all the young adults on their wings and most of these young adults reported positive interactions with staff.

- The experience reported at reception varied considerably. Some young adults were reasonably satisfied with their treatment; however, there were worrying reports from others, who spoke of indifference from staff and the lack of a meal, shower or telephone call. Some spoke of being scared and anxious – mainly those coming to prison for the first time – and one spoke of his mental health being affected because a friend had taken his own life in the prison. One young adult reported being put on an ACCT in reception, and located in the constant watch cell.

- Disappointingly, half of those surveyed reported problems with their first night accommodation, ranging from dirty cells (one reportedly having blood on the walls and floor), no pillows or bedding, and in one case no mattress. Additionally, the timing and quality of induction appeared to vary considerably. All were seen by healthcare staff.
Some young adults commented on the prevalence of drugs in the prison, including NPS. Many reported infrequent meetings with their key worker, and others said that they had not seen a key worker. Others complained that the prison took too long to sort problems out. One young adult observed that officers should have a better awareness of young adults’ maturity levels.

On a more positive note, most had a good understanding of the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) system, and more than half surveyed understood how the complaints system worked. The majority reported feeling safe in the prison, most of the time. Most were taking advantage of either training or employment opportunities and some were accessing the gym and library regularly. A foreign national who spoke no English had been given materials to aid his learning, and was receiving help and support from fellow young adults on the wing.

4.10 Security
The leadership in the security department has been stable throughout the reporting year, and there is a local security strategy in place, which endeavours to ensure that security and good order are maintained. Intelligence is used effectively to support security decisions and actions. For example, recently, security risk assessments have been conducted at the Royal Devon and Exeter, and Musgrove Park (Taunton) Hospitals as part of the drug reduction strategy. One will also take place at Derriford Hospital (Plymouth) in 2020. New locks have also been fitted on the gates in the E wing corridor, this having been identified internally as a potential security weakness, and there have been more random staff searches in 2019. A key audit was also undertaken during the year.

The prison continues to have good working relationships with the police and there is a clear understanding and expectation that violent offences committed while in prison will be referred to the police.

Mobile phones continue to be smuggled into the prison, and, while intelligence is good around detection, with 86 finds across the reporting year, staffing shortages have, in the latter part of the year, had an impact on cell searches and consequently finds (see also section 4.5). The regional search teams have been asked to assist.

Security meetings are scheduled to take place monthly, although these, like some other scheduled meetings (see section 7.7), have been disrupted and attendance has been patchy. All the SMT appear to be members of the meeting, which seems both impractical and ambitious, given their other commitments, and meetings might be more effective if a smaller, more focused group met to discuss security matters and disseminate information.

The Board is aware that security staff have been waiting, for the whole of 2019, for the provision of training places to enable a wider number of staff to use the Police National Computer. Presently, there is only one senior officer who can use this, which inevitably creates a backlog and has an impact on the use of precious staffing resources.

The Board was pleased to hear that the establishment is to receive an X-ray body scanner, which should improve the detection of contraband and help improve prison security further.

5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 Introduction
Initiatives to drive the equality agenda at the beginning of the reporting year stalled after the equality adviser left. A new equality adviser was appointed in August 2019, and their operational background in the prison has proved useful. More structured monthly meetings are now taking place and include prisoner representatives. The equality team is developing further monitoring tools for measuring and comparing all aspects of equality and fairness. There is greater recognition of hidden disabilities, such as learning difficulties, and visual and hearing impairment, and there is growing awareness of autistic spectrum disorder. A significant proportion of self-declared disabilities at reception relate to mental health issues.

On occasion, the perceived poor attitude of some staff to prisoners with protected characteristics has been brought to the Board’s attention – for example, a prisoner with limited mobility being required to negotiate stairs. However, we have also seen instances of exemplary interactions by staff. Recent initiatives to raise staff awareness of the importance of the correct treatment of prisoners with protected characteristics are starting to have a positive impact and the Board views this as work in progress.

5.2 Discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs)

There were 29 DIRFs submitted in 2019, and the Board normally reviews these at its monthly meetings; however, during the reporting year their availability become more intermittent. Twelve DIRFs were submitted in November and December 2019, following a DIRF awareness campaign. Race, gender and disability were the main areas of complaint. At the end of the year, two investigations were still ongoing. Of the completed investigations, nine complaints were upheld (six prisoner, three staff). Throughout the reporting year, the investigation process has been improved, and the new governor has asked to see all completed DIRF responses. There are also plans to have DIRF responses reviewed externally.

5.3 Protected characteristics

During the reporting year, the Board carried out a period of focused monitoring of prisoners with a range of disabilities, including reduced mobility. Prisoners with severe mobility issues are generally located on the social care unit, on F wing, although some can be placed on the main wings. For these prisoners, moving around the prison to access a full range of activities is limited by the difficulties of navigating the outdated Victorian buildings, and further limited by the availability of staff to assist. However, where access to part of the prison is not possible, in most cases reasonable steps are taken to assist and provide alternatives; for example, education materials are taken to the prisoners and distance learning can be facilitated. Horticulture training, and English and mathematics lessons have been held on F wing, but one prisoner was unable to access music lessons in the chapel because staff were generally unavailable to take him. The education induction identifies those with learning difficulties, so that assistance can be provided. The Board found that prisoners with a hearing impairment had been identified, their needs assessed and steps taken to link them with a buddy and/or suitable cell-share.

A forum for F wing disabled prisoners identified a number of issues, and the prisoners expressed appreciation at having their concerns listened to. One positive outcome was a gym instructor going to the wing to provide the less mobile with exercises. F wing prisoners also welcomed the return of employment to the wing, in the form of preparation of breakfast packs, which had previously been removed. All but one prisoner reported having no problems in being taken over to the visits hall. Bed-bound and terminally ill prisoners are allowed visits on F wing, subject to security considerations and the governor’s authorisation. Legal visits take place on F wing.
Prisoners with reduced mobility located on the main wings report that being given a cell on the ground floor, where meals are served, is helpful. However, the Board noted that this is not always arranged. Most cell doorways are too narrow for wheelchair access. Regime permitting, disabled prisoners are taken to F wing for showers. The assistance of buddies, and sometimes a sympathetic cell mate, is helpful for everyday tasks, but some disabled prisoners said that they had no assistance, and the Board found some examples where main wing prisoners with disabilities did not have equitable access to the regime and facilities. Additionally, not all prisoners had their disabilities noted on their cell door cards, and most of the kiosk panels on the main wings are too high for wheelchair users to reach, although one on A wing is accessible. On balance, the Board found that acknowledgement of, and assistance for, prisoners with disabilities is variable across the prison.

The number of non-English speakers is generally low, and English for speakers of other languages courses are offered. There is an informal arrangement for English-speaking fellow nationals to interpret or access to the Language Line telephone interpreting service is available.

5.4 Faith, religion and culture

The proportion of religious groups within the establishment remains fairly constant. Despite staffing difficulties during this reporting year, the chaplaincy continues to meet prisoners’ religious needs and provides good pastoral support. Chaplains are employed as faith generic and not specific, so they are able to cover for each other when necessary. The segregation unit is visited every day. There is currently no Anglican or Buddhist chaplain, and recruitment is under way. Prisoner faith representatives are not considered necessary at present, but there are plans to hold faith forums. The Muslim chaplain regretted the removal of the washing facility next to the multi-faith room, which is required for the observation of ritual cleansing before Muslim prayers.

Black History Month was deemed a success; however, some of the black, Asian and minority ethnic representatives reported at an equality meeting that more could be done to recognise their cultural heritage. They have suggested holding DVD information evenings, to increase understanding of the various cultures, and this is being considered. The kitchen successfully met the requirements of prisoners observing Ramadan, with the provision of culturally appropriate hot meals delivered to their cells in heat-retaining containers. Board members attending the Sunday carol service before Christmas noted that the shortage of staff to escort prisoners to the chapel for this very popular event resulted in a delayed start and the service being cut short.

5.5 Visits and maintenance of family contact

Regrettably, the provision of a new visits hall has been delayed again. The hall – essentially, a large portacabin – is in a poor state of repair, and a leaking roof has further degraded the infrastructure, particularly the toilet/baby changing facility and children’s play area. Towards the end of the reporting year, some of the fixed tables and chairs were removed owing to concerns about the floor, resulting in a significant reduction of around 60 visit places a week. This, together with the poor environment, has had an adverse impact on the prisoners and their opportunities to maintain effective family engagement. On a more positive note, the excellent service provided by the charity Choices, which oversees the play area and provides refreshments, goes some way to alleviate this. The Storybook Dads scheme affords some prisoners the opportunity of maintaining closer contact with their children, and the librarian reports heart-warming feedback from prisoners. In-cell telephones continue to be valued by most prisoners, although some have been damaged.
5.6 Management of complaints to the prison

A total of 645 complaints relating to issues at the prison were received in 2019. Towards the end of 2018, a new complaints management system was implemented, consisting of more robust quality assurance measures. These involved monthly ‘dip’ testing of six completed complaints and the keeping of a rolling record of overdue complaints, which are reported, on a weekly basis, to the SMT. We commend these procedures, but are concerned that these measures alone are not necessarily resulting in improvements to practice, and outcomes for prisoners. Prisoners reported to the Board a lack of confidence in the complaints procedure, including complaints being received, and unhappiness at not getting timely responses. The number of applications to the Board increased by 47% in 2019 (see page 33) and this may, in part, reflect this lack of confidence. In dealing with prisoner applications, the Board became aware of a backlog of overdue responses, and also of a discussion as to whether these should be ‘written off’, due to their age. However, the Board was told that eventually all prisoners received a response. The Board is also aware that literacy difficulties experienced by some prisoners can put them at a disadvantage in the complaints process. We dealt with some examples of complaints returned to sender because they had not been completed as expected. For some prisoners operating at the very limits of their literacy, this was a very frustrating experience, and the process was not fair.

The Board now has dedicated posting boxes for applications; however, during the course of the reporting year, some of these became damaged, making them unusable.

5.7 Diversity and the IMB

The Board recognises that its composition lacks diversity. This may reflect the fact that the population of the south-west region is less diverse than other parts of the country. Recent recruitment has failed to broaden the ethnicity, but has been more successful in attracting younger applicants, to widen the age profile. It is hoped to increase diversity in future recruitment campaigns.

6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT (CSU)

6.1 Accommodation

The segregation unit is located in a basement on A wing (A1) containing eight cells, a special accommodation cell, an adjudication room and a shower room. When the adjudication room is in use, there is little privacy for prisoners to have confidential conversations with solicitors. This is a point we have made in previous reports.

The Board is pleased to report that the long-awaited refurbishment of the unit, started in 2018, was completed within the reporting year. The increase of segregated accommodation has improved the ability of the prison to manage its more difficult prisoners. Towards the end of the reporting year, it was not unusual for the unit to be full.

Despite its repainting and refurbishment, the segregation unit remains an unpleasant location, and in the winter months is often a very cold and austere environment.

6.2 Segregation Review Boards (SRBs)

The notification arrangements relating to the segregation unit and SRBs have remained poor, and a source of frustration throughout the reporting year. Despite attempts by the Board to improve communication relating to the notification of prisoners located to the unit, and of any good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews scheduled, and their timings, arrangements have been inconsistent and information often inaccurate. For the majority of the reporting year, the Board had little confidence in the SRB notification system and process. Towards the end of the year, there was some improvement. An outcome of this is that we have often attended to find the review cancelled or to have taken place earlier in the day. Consequently, we have only
been able to rota ‘very local’ Board members to attend SRBs. Despite this, we have been able to attend 77 SRBs, which accounts for 61% of those held.

From our monitoring and attendance at SRBs, the Board has noticed that healthcare and/or mental health staff have not routinely been present at the review. From our observations, it would appear that healthcare staff are not contacted about a scheduled review until it is about to start and, inevitably, they are not always able to attend at such short notice. The Board has raised this with prison managers, and towards the end of the reporting year there was some improvement.

SRBs at the establishment are not held on fixed days of the week. The Board feels that this does not help the prison and its segregation unit staff to establish the necessary routines and actions around the SRB process, and that such scheduling would help improve consistency and regular attendance of those who should be present or invited. The Board has raised concerns about these issues throughout 2019, and hopes that matters are much improved, and that recent improvements can be sustained, throughout the next reporting year.

For prisoners detained in the unit for a long period, and who experience a number of reviews, the Board has noticed some inconsistencies, in terms of how they are managed. This can create some frustration for the prisoner.

Despite the shortcomings in process and arrangements identified above, the Board has generally found that SRB judgements and decisions are reasonable, and the conduct and handling of the reviews to be caring.

6.3 Regime and activities while in segregation

During the reporting year, there have been a number of good examples of segregation staff going ‘above and beyond’, and working very positively with challenging individuals to support their needs and enable a return to normal location as soon as possible. However, the location, and the facilities and resources available in the segregation unit do not always enable access to an adequate regime or experience.

The Board has, again, been disappointed to find that prisoner requests for additional clothing or bedding, due to the cold temperature, are not always acted upon in a timely manner. Similarly, because the segregation unit has not routinely held a stock of wind-up radios, or replaced them when damaged, officers cannot respond proactively to requests for these, and prisoners are often denied access to this entitlement, which could provide positive in-cell distraction.

Daily records and segregation history documents are generally updated and available, but the Board has been aware that segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) reporting has not always been accurate. This has been because the source data or documentation required to undertake this has not always been completed and/or returned, to enable the officer responsible for collating the SMARG report to complete the analysis.

Despite the staffing challenges faced by the prison, the Board has been very concerned to find that, during some of its lunchtime visits to the unit, it has been left unstaffed and unsupervised for more than 20 minutes, despite the fact that cell bells were ringing and some prisoners there were on an open ACCT. The explanation we were given was that the area was covered by closed-circuit television, but the Board’s understanding is that the only place where the coverage of individual cells can be viewed and monitored is in the segregation unit office.

6.4 Use of special accommodation

The Board notes that use of the special accommodation cell has been more regulated during this reporting year, and that the concerns raised in 2018 have been resolved. Although not always informed of its use, the Board is aware that efforts are made to ensure that prisoners are not kept there longer than necessary. Records show that special accommodation was used seven times during 2019.
6.5 Days spent in the segregation unit and length of stay

Across the reporting year, 1,576 days were spent by prisoners in the unit, which is a 38% increase compared with the previous year. However, it was not until 2019 that all segregation cells were on-line and available to be used. Almost 50% of these days were spent on GOOD, with a significant increase in the use of GOOD toward the end of the year. The monthly profile of days spent in the unit, compared with 2018, was very similar, and peaked in September (n169). From regular visits to the unit and a review of records, the Board is aware that turnover in the unit is generally high, indicating that prisoners are not being kept there for longer than necessary.

Again, in 2019, the unit held a number of long-term complex cases diagnosed with severe mental health problems. Although these prisoners had been assessed as requiring a specialist and secure hospital placement, because of the shortage of such placements, it was not unusual for their stay in the unit to be prolonged, and beyond the control of the prison. The Board was aware that several prisoners waited far longer than the target two weeks for a secure mental health placement, and one such prisoner was held in the unit for 128 days (see also section 8.4).

A total of 196 days (12.4% of all days) were spent in the unit by prisoners from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. The average percentage of these prisoners at the establishment is around 16%, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were over-represented in the unit.

During the reporting year, 54 prisoners on an open ACCT were held in the unit. No prisoners were removed because of a risk of self-harm. However, the Board remains concerned about the segregation of prisoners on an ACCT. This is because the Board observed a lack of direct supervision in the unit over the lunchtime period (see section 6.3), and also because of the particularly poor environment and the impact that isolation from others can have on mental health and wellbeing.

6.6 Use of force (UoF)

Levels of UoF were broadly similar to those in 2018, but showed a marginal 2% increase across the year, with peaks during May, June and October 2019.

The Board regularly attended monthly meetings on UoF and was aware of an SMT drive to improve the effectiveness of these meetings, through:

- better scheduling, to avoid cancellations or postponements
- increased and multidisciplinary attendance and engagement
- a more thorough interrogation of the data available
- peer scrutiny of UoF documentation.

There was some evidence that the improved analysis of data was beginning better to inform practice and strategic actions. However, at the end of the reporting year there were still some unresolved issues with the use of different data sets in different administrative areas of the prison to compile the overall UoF statistics. Peer scrutiny of UoF documentation often did not happen because a sample of the documents were not made available to the meeting.

Independently, the Board reviewed a sample (12 cases from five different months of the year) of completed UoF paperwork. Two of these concerned planned events, and the remainder involved spontaneous UoF. In all instances, there was a complete set of statements from the officers involved and, in all except one case, the statements were consistent and built up a rounded picture of the incident, the nature of the force used, and why. The Board noted, in a number of cases, that the forms were incomplete in some way, including not indicating what evidence was available, and forms not being signed. Some pieces of information, such as injury to an officer, were only recorded in an individual’s statement. While most of the cases included the debrief form, these were generally very brief and incomplete. There was also a striking lack of reference to the use of body-worn cameras (BWCs) in all but one of the
spontaneous incidents, which raises issues related to either the reporting of the use of BWCs or inconsistent or lack of use of BWCs during incidents. Of the two planned uses of force, one included a comprehensive description of the use of the handheld camera throughout the incident, while the other made only a passing reference to the presence of a camera operator at the start of the incident. The documents reviewed showed efforts by officers to de-escalate incidents before moving to guiding holds, and in only one instance did we question whether further de-escalation might have been tried before a prisoner was forcibly removed from his cell.

The Board was able to observe partially two UoF incidents during 2019. These were spontaneous incidents, resulting in the prisoners’ relocation to the segregation unit. On these occasions, Board members raised no concerns about the proportionality, necessity or lawfulness of the force used.

6.7 Adjudications

The number of adjudications held in 2019 was 4,379, which is a decrease of 9% on 2018. Of these, 1,550 (35% of all offences charged) were proven on the first appearance, and 21.1% of all charges were referred to the independent adjudicator or police. From March 2019, data in relation to the age of prisoners referred for adjudication was included in the monthly analysis, and showed that the significant majority referred were 25+ years old. During the reporting period, the Board observed adjudications and found them to be procedurally correct, professionally managed and conducted fairly and with respect.

7 ACCOMMODATION (including communication)

7.1 Accommodation

With the exception of some painting and some heavy-duty communal wing furniture, which has improved opportunities for prisoners to socialise in a more relaxed way, very limited progress has been made during this reporting year in improving residential and other accommodation within the prison. The fallout from the collapse of Carillion has continued to hamper the delivery of planned improvements, along with an inconsistent approach to the provision of financial resources. On the plus side, fewer cells were off-line. Against that, however, important works on improvements to the fire detection system have still not been carried out, the library remained out of action for several months after a serious leak in the roof (see section 9.3), the replacement of showers in C wing is running several months overdue and, while the showers in the gym have been replaced, they cannot be used as the boiler is not working. These are just some examples of the problems that remain. The Board is aware that there are plans in place for major refurbishment of the residential wings during the next financial year, and hopes very much that the funding agreed for this work will be maintained.

The cleanliness of the landings, stairwells and communal areas ranges from being very good to poor, and has not been consistent across the prison or even within wings of the prison. Although the prison was audited as green/amber for ‘clean and decent’ in September 2019, the Board’s monitoring suggests that this has not always been sustained.

C1, a self-contained basement area, had been re-designated as accommodation for enhanced-level kitchen workers towards the end of 2018, but for much of the reporting period the additional facilities promised did not materialise and the regime was not equivalent to that for enhanced prisoners on D wing.

The cleanliness of outside areas has been variable throughout the reporting year. It has not been unusual to find rubbish piled up outside key areas, such as the kitchen, for a number of weeks.
7.2 Cell call bells

Following criticism in the 2018 HMIP report about the timely response to cell call bells, the prison put in place a clear policy with expectations on the answering of these. Intermittently, the Board has monitored this and, although, initially, there was greater awareness of bells ringing and improvement in response times, practice is still variable, in that some bells still go unacknowledged, even when there are officers nearby. Understaffing (see section 7.4) clearly had an impact on this towards the end of the reporting year.

7.3 Regime

At the start of the reporting year, there was some optimism that projected increases in staff numbers would enable a more positive regime to operate, with prisoners spending more time out of their cells and in purposeful activity, such as education. For a short time, this worked but as staff departures began to bite, it had to be reconsidered. The SMT decided that it was best to have some consistency in approach, one which provided prisoners with a more predictable daily routine, and a restricted regime was therefore introduced in August 2019.

Towards the end of the reporting period, the Board became aware of an even more disrupted regime operating, which has had a further impact on predictable time out of cell. This varied for employed prisoners (9.5 hours), unemployed prisoners (4.0 hours) and over the weekend (5 hours). This restricted regime has managed to provide time for the basic domestic routines, such as showering, collecting medication, exercise, cleaning cells and some recreational activities. However, it has had an impact on the variety of activities experienced, and access to other purposeful and out of cell activities, including education. This coincided with decreased staffing levels (see also paragraph 2.2.2 and section 7.4).

7.4 Staffing

This has been a particularly challenging year for staffing in the prison. At the end of 2018, and continuing into early 2019, recruitment looked reasonably encouraging. As the year progressed, however, it became clear that the retention of staff was a major issue. Undoubtedly, the relatively buoyant employment market in and around Exeter has been a factor, but it also seems evident that a number of the newer recruits have not been prepared for the challenges posed by the prison environment. At the end of the reporting period, band 3 officers accounted for 16% of the understaffing in prisoner-facing roles, and this figure excludes those on sick leave or on restricted duties. Inevitably, staff shortages have had an adverse impact on the regime that can be provided, and on matters such as the timely completion of paperwork. There has also been a worrying impact on individual officers and on morale. While the Board commends the efforts of the SMT to make a case for pay supplements, and to provide funds for overtime to help staff retention, there is a limit to the number of additional hours that members of staff can work and remain effective. By the end of the reporting year, the prison’s active recruitment strategy had resulted in the appointment of 10 prison officer entry-level trainees, and there was some confidence in the ability to increase this further.

Leadership during a significant time at the prison has not been stable; by the end of 2019, the prison was on its third governing governor since May 2018. That said, the process of appointing a new governor was expedited swiftly, so that the prison was not left in a leadership limbo.

7.5 Key worker scheme

The Board has been frustrated to find that the key worker scheme, introduced at the establishment in 2017, has still not achieved its potential or become sufficiently embedded across the prison to have the impact it should. The Board had been reassured by a
presentation it received in June 2019 that the plans for implementing the second phase of the rollout were in place. Unfortunately, however, a combination of staff shortages and an increase in licence recalls have had a significant impact on its delivery. Many prisoners we have spoken to claimed that they did not know who their key worker was or that they had not seen them yet. This is all the more disappointing because we are aware of individual examples where the prisoner experience has been transformed by effective key worker contact.

Fluctuating staffing levels affecting the prison detail have resulted in key worker sessions being insufficiently prioritised, and it is often one of the first activities to be dropped. The summary data for 2019 shows that there were, on average, 85 active key workers, and that a prisoner was generally allocated a key worker within two days of arriving at the prison. Over 95% of prisoners were allocated a key worker, but the average waiting time for the first meeting was 23 days, a figure which masks both shorter and longer times on occasions. Over 5,214 key worker sessions were delivered over the reporting year, which represents around 21% compliance against a target of 55%. The Board is aware that the prison will not be able to roll out the use of PAVA spray as a UoF device until key worker delivery meets the defined target.

7.6 Kit and laundry

Throughout the reporting year, the Board has regularly received complaints from prisoners about shortages of clothing and bedding, particularly in certain sizes. We recognise that steps have been taken to increase the availability of clothing, particularly underwear and socks, and welcome these developments. Extra staffing, in the form of prisoners employed in the clothing exchange store (CES)/laundry, has helped to improve the CES’s management of stocks of clean clothing and bedding, and towards the end of the reporting year this was operating more effectively. We were particularly concerned to see how well the arrangements worked over Christmas, and were pleased to note that there seemed to be adequate supplies of clean clothing during this period. However, we were disappointed to find that the problem reported for the previous two years – no staffing cover in the CES over the Christmas period – had not been resolved. Again, this resulted in a backlog of dirty kit, some of which was left wet and festering in plastic bags because it had been used on the wings to mop up water and floods.

7.7 Communication and consultation

Board members make every effort to attend monthly meetings on matters such as UoF, violence reduction and safety, and security. Unfortunately, throughout the reporting year, there has been a tendency for meetings to be cancelled, postponed or moved, often at very short, or sometimes no, notice. Aside from the personal inconvenience to members, some of whom have to travel a considerable distance to reach the prison, this has undermined our ability to undertake effective monitoring in some areas.

The Board has been aware of a directive from the governor to improve meeting effectiveness, through increased regularity and attendance, along with better data analysis. While fewer meetings towards the end of the reporting period were cancelled or postponed, and data analysis and interrogation had improved, attendance at some meetings was still poor. This potentially has an impact on the ability of the SMT to drive improvements and secure the commitment and accountability required. A revised meetings schedule was implemented in December 2019, and the Board will monitor its effectiveness during 2020.

7.8 Prisoner representation and consultation

Some meetings have prisoner representation – for example, safer custody and equality. However, with the exception of food matters, the Board is not aware of many formal opportunities for prisoners to be consulted or able to take an active role in influencing decisions about services, routines and facilities at the prison, or provide feedback. Plans to
implement a prisoner council did not materialise during the reporting year, which was disappointing.

7.9 Impact of kiosks

The installation of the kiosks on each wing has placed more responsibility on prisoners to order their food, etcetera, in a timely manner. Initially, some prisoners were slow to get into the routine of pre-ordering their menu choice, and this resulted in a number of prisoners receiving the vegetarian option, which was the default option. This led to some unintended consequences involving bullying at the servery, as some prisoners were pressurised to give up their meal option to those who were dissatisfied with their default allocation. The combination of improved servery supervision and better prisoner compliance regarding menu choice has reduced this problem during the reporting year.

There are 30 general categories under which kiosk applications can be made, and the total number of applications is running at around 5,900 per month. The speed and quality of responses are monitored by local managers, and plans are well in hand for more focused central monitoring. Most prisoners seem to cope well with the kiosk system, but the majority of kiosks on the main wings are out of reach for wheelchair users. Although very few issues about kiosks have been raised with members of the Board, some prisoners have found the limit of 25 characters frustrating, as they do not feel they can properly describe their concern. A number of different languages are catered for.

7.10 Food and catering

Arrangements for lunch and supper were reversed during the reporting year, so that prisoners now received a hot meal at lunchtime and sandwiches, soup etcetera at supper. After some initial concerns from prisoners, this routine appears to have become accepted. During the reporting year, the Board received eight applications complaining about the food (3% of all applications), and only 2% of complaints made directly to the prison were about food. Overall, the percentage of complaints about the food is very low, and they ranged from allegations of the food being cold, of insufficient quantity, contaminated, of poor quality, not meeting dietary requirements, and served too early in the evening, so that prisoners were hungry later on.

The Board has regularly visited the kitchen and observed the production of meals and service on the wings. Choice and variety of menu, quantity of food and quality appear to be satisfactory, given the limited budget. When concerns about the food have been raised, the Board has found the catering staff to be very responsive to these, and proactive in addressing them.

Wing serveries are generally adequately maintained, clean and mostly well supervised by officers. The wearing of correct attire by servery orderlies is variable across the prison, with B and D wings being the most compliant, in terms of the requirements. Towards the end of the reporting year, the Board was aware of efforts to improve this in the other wings. Washing-up facilities for personal cutlery, etcetera, for the enhanced prisoners on D wing, where there are no in-cell facilities, remain poor and unhygienic.

7.11 Property

During the reporting year, we have continued to receive a steady stream of applications about missing property. While many continue to arise from transfers between prisons (n7), we have been concerned to note a growing number (n24) arising from transfers between cells within
the prison, or cell clearances following a move to the segregation unit, where it should be possible to make arrangements for all the prisoner’s property to be identified, recorded and secured in a timely manner. These complaints accounted for 10% of all applications to the Board. Of concern has been the number of times that the Board has been told that property not packed or cleared by the prisoner has subsequently been found to be incomplete or missing. This is particularly frustrating when it concerns the loss of personal items and legal documents.

Resolutions to missing property complaints are often prolonged and unsatisfactory. The prison paid £1,588 in compensation to prisoners for lost property in 2019, which represented 65 claims.

7.12 Canteen

The arrangements for canteen generally appear satisfactory and, where there are issues, most of these are around missing canteen and related billing matters. During the reporting year, the Board investigated eight complaints, (3% of the total applications received) and the prison received 99 complaints (14% of all complaints received) related to canteen which was not received but charged for. Resolution of such matters is often complex and protracted.

8. HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE)

8.1 Overview of healthcare services

Prisoners often come into custody in poor health, and the healthcare services offered can be instrumental in preparation for release and resettlement. The Board is satisfied that services provided by Care UK generally are comparable with community provision. This finding is based upon research including interviews with staff and prisoners, observations of practice, data provided by Care UK, a review of applications to the Board, and appraisal of healthcare complaints/feedback.

Healthcare services operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Clinics, including dentistry, physiotherapy, radiology and ophthalmology, are held from Monday to Friday.

Interviews with prisoners indicate that they are largely satisfied with the services provided. In a satisfaction survey, most said that privacy and provision, in terms of clinical space, is ‘good’ and that generally the service is ‘adequate’ or ‘good’, with courteous, sympathetic staff. Prisoners are aware of the healthcare complaints system, and that they can request social care support.

However, prisoners complain that prescriptions do not match those which they have received from practitioners outside prison. During 2019, there appears to have been a particular issue around the prescription of pregabalin, and how the transition to other medication is both communicated and managed with individual prisoners. However, the Board recognises that over-prescription of pain killers is a national issue, and practitioners at the prison prescribe within agreed national guidelines, on the basis of clinical need.

Seventeen per cent of all applications received by the Board were complaints about healthcare, representing a 68% increase compared with 2018. However, monitoring of the way in which healthcare staff deal with complaints indicates that this is a robust and fair system, involving face-to-face interviews with complainants. Most complaints are dealt with satisfactorily within three days, but a small minority of prisoners continue to upgrade their complaint, taking legal advice if necessary.
8.2 Strengths observed in the healthcare service

These included:

- the arrangement whereby healthcare applications from prisoners are registered electronically via the kiosk, with information available in several languages. Help is available for those who struggle with this
- access for all prisoners to a full range of smoking cessation support, with psychosocial support from the substance misuse service team being developed
- the provision of a palliative care suite, which enables end-of-life care in a supportive environment, with a GP lead and specialist in palliative care, supported by the local hospice service. The Board has been impressed by the flexibility of care offered – for example, with dietary arrangements and visiting times to suit both the prisoner and their family
- the facility for some prisoners to keep their medication in possession in their cell; each prisoner is risk assessed for this, but there are no secure storage facilities in cells
- the opportunity for all prisoners to have tests for hepatitis B and C, and HIV.

8.3 Challenges observed in healthcare

The Board was aware of a number of matters which have had an adverse impact on prisoners’ experience:

- The disparate nature of offices and treatment rooms means that prisoners may have to be escorted away from the main wings, and this can make attendance dependent on the availability of a member of staff ('runner') to escort them (see below).
- Appointments are missed for a variety of reasons, including the ‘runner’ not being available for escort. As this is a flexible role, it is often dropped in favour of other duties when staffing is short. Additionally, wing organisation and the regime sometimes result in prisoners not being ready for collection, even though appointment slips are given to them the night before. This both wastes clinical time and results in delays to prisoners being seen by visiting healthcare specialists.
- Prisoners arriving from court on Fridays and Saturdays can experience delays or interruptions to their medication and be disadvantaged because it is not always possible to access medical notes. The lack of an on-site pharmacy can also mean that prisoners have to wait 24 hours for their prescription and medication.
- Waiting times for some clinics can be long; for example, in October 2019 the waiting time for an optician’s appointment was 54 days.
- There can be difficulties when medicines have to be taken at certain times and the prisoner has to queue. Prisoners have reported being late at ‘the hatch’, missing their dosing time and not receiving their medication, which disrupts the cycle.
- On release, medicated prisoners do not always leave with their prescribed medication.

8.4 Mental health

The Board is impressed by the quality of care offered by the mental health team, and during the reporting year observed practice in a variety of contexts – for example, in face-to-face clinical reviews of progress and medication, including GOOD and ACCT reviews. As well as supporting staff in formal reviews in how to help prisoners, the team’s offices act unofficially as a ‘drop-in’ centre for staff requiring further information. The Board has been impressed by the in-depth knowledge that the team appears to have of the prisoners in their care, which is a result of close liaison with other professionals, including officers. Mental health workers appear skilled at establishing a rapport with prisoners, even if their poor mental health contributes to communication problems.

During the reporting period, the following strengths were noted:
• There is seven-day-a-week care, with cover from an on-call service. Staff include a rich variety of professionals, including a learning disability nurse, psychologists who can provide guided self-help, and two psychiatrists who can support the decision to ‘section’ and transfer patients. Newly appointed staff include nurses and psychology assistants to help those with dementia and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

• All ACCTs are reviewed, and prisoners are seen within the first 24 hours. Referrals, which can come from any staff working with the prisoner, average 40 a week and are triaged according to need.

• Continuity of care on release is being supported by an NHS England project called ‘Reconnect’, which helps to support prisoners back into the community.

There has been a training programme for all operational staff in mental health awareness offered; however, low staffing levels have meant that staff were not free to attend this. This is a cause of much regret by the Board, given that so many prisoners at the establishment have mental health problems.

A challenge for the mental health team and the prison staff who care for prisoners with severe mental health issues is the often-long delay in securing a mental health placement in a secure psychiatric unit following assessment. While the referral system, which aims to transfer assessed prisoners to a secure psychiatric unit within 14 days, has worked reasonably well in the past, in 2019 the benchmark for referral was higher. This meant that some prisoners with less severe mental health needs were not referred and there were a number of prisoners at the establishment, often held in the segregation unit, whose mental health needs could have been better met elsewhere. During the reporting year, there were 11 transfers from Exeter, but only five within the recommended 14-day limit (see also section 6.5). Frustratingly, the speed of transfer can depend upon where the prisoner is to be transferred.

8.5 Social care

Social care for those prisoners with a mixture of mental and physical needs is provided mainly on F wing, but also on other wings according to need. Care on F wing, where there are several wheelchair users, appears to be good. Prisoners are appreciative of the help they receive from a mixture of professionals, including trained prisoner ‘buddies’. The buddies receive training from the RECOOP charity, and welcome the opportunity to spend time away from their home wing.

Provision on other wings is potentially more challenging for those with mobility problems (see also section 5.3) – for example, in terms of staircases and longer distances to access food and medication. However, there is still a degree of satisfaction with buddies, who can collect food and assist with mobility.

Referrals for social care can come from a variety of sources, including self-referral, and these are then collated by Care First, to be triaged by an occupational therapist and social worker so that those in need receive appropriate care.

8.6 Dentistry

There is a dedicated and sympathetic dental team, from Time for Teeth, which operates two days a week, and all prisoners interviewed were satisfied with their treatment. This is an important service, which can give prisoners confidence in coping with resettlement, as successful dental treatment gives an opportunity to look and feel better. Prisoners generally self-refer, but emergencies are triaged by a doctor or nurse and seen quickly in emergency appointment slots.
Waiting times for non-urgent cases were unacceptably long in 2019, at up to 37 days. This was compounded by the number – approximately 300 – of missed appointments during the year. The prime cause was prisoners not being collected from the wings on time (see also section 8.3). Dental staff tried to overcome this by block-booking for particular wings, but it remained a problem throughout the year. The Board was most concerned that precious clinical time was wasted, resulting in delayed treatment for many prisoners because of management failure, as highlighted previously in the 2017 Care Quality Commission quality report for HMP/YOI Exeter (Care Quality Commission 2017, p8).

The Board was also aware that, although defective dental equipment is reported, a time delay for repair or replacement can mean that some procedures may be compromised and/or delayed further.

8.7 Optician

Prison opticians provide a service two days a month. There are high levels of satisfaction from prisoners, who generally receive spectacles within two weeks of examination. There is good communication with other professionals; for example, if a prisoner is found to have high blood pressure, healthcare staff are immediately informed. Equipment is generally fit for purpose, although it was reported that equipment for determining visual field would help to support diagnosis. However, referral to hospital can be organised quickly if necessary.

As with other healthcare facilities, the main challenge to the service is access to prisoners, as there is a high level of 'did not attend', mainly caused by difficulties in bringing prisoners over from the wings (see sections 8.3 and 8.6).

9. EDUCATION AND OTHER PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES

9.1 Education

Education continues to be provided by Weston College, which is also responsible for education at the other prisons within the group. This enables some coherent planning between prisons. As a local prison, HMP Exeter experiences a high level of churn, with many prisoners staying only a short time. To address this, in many subjects, level 1 is offered at Exeter, with the higher levels available elsewhere within the prison group. Completion and achievement rates are encouraging. A wide range of courses is offered, from peer mentoring to functional skills, to painting and decorating. A horticulture course started in late 2018 and has run well throughout the reporting year, providing very positive outcomes for prisoners, in terms of a sense of achievement. Prisoners were enthusiastic about the programme. Prisoners on F wing have also received help from the horticulture tutor to develop the small garden attached to the wing, and have engaged enthusiastically with this.

The education block has a positive, welcoming atmosphere, with attractive wall displays. Graphs of prisoner feedback indicate high levels of satisfaction with the range of courses offered and quality of teaching. This is despite a persistent problem with cancellation of classes, mostly because of a lack of staff to escort and supervise prisoners (see section 7.4). Between April and December 2019, 95 half-day sessions were cancelled. This has also had an impact on the timely completion of induction, which should be completed within five days of arrival.
The Board is aware that for prisoners with mobility problems, and those located in the segregation unit, the opportunity to access education can be problematic. However, we have seen that, where possible, educational materials are provided on the wing or in-cell, to give those prisoners limited, but continued, access to education.

9.2 Gym

Gym provision in 2019 has been dominated by the refurbishment of the gym showers (although by the end of the year there was still no hot water) and converting the weights room into a studio suitable for classes such as Pilates, and which will also contain running and spinning equipment, enabling a wider programme to be offered. However, this meant that provision during the year was compromised. The weights room was moved to one end of the sports hall, which meant that team games such as football were curtailed, although it was still possible to play badminton and table tennis.

Usage of the gym was limited to 14 people at any one time, but staff put on extra sessions so that prisoners did not lose activity time. Although guidelines stipulate that there should be at least one session a week, for a minimum of an hour, instructors liaised with staff to offer far more than this. Most prisoners had the opportunity to attend up to three sessions a week, and those who were enhanced prisoners and/or on D wing received four opportunities. However, some offending behaviour programmes, which involved small numbers, were temporarily withdrawn.

Access to the gym for wheelchair users was compromised, but some alternatives were provided; for example, there was a regular weekly gym session held for suitable participants located in the social care unit on F wing, and staff provided exercise guidance for any wheelchair users on the main wings, to use in situ.

Despite these difficulties, gym staff worked hard to provide a popular, professional and friendly service, which encourages a healthy lifestyle. Staff and prisoners appeared to interact well, with no behaviour issues, and the process of escorting prisoners to the gym was more effective than in some other areas because all gym instructors are band 4 supervising officers.

Gym induction is now facilitated through the kiosk system, so that prisoners are able to use the gym quickly, and those missing work to attend do not lose pay. The gym and physical activities at the establishment provide prisoners with opportunities for purposeful activity and appear to be a promising area of growth, with dedicated and committed staff.

9.3 Library

The prison has a well-stocked library, and a committed librarian works hard with limited resources to provide a broad range of books to suit most tastes, backgrounds and reading abilities, including dyslexia-friendly materials. Since the library ceased to be part of the Devon Library Service, and responsibility and management was transferred to Weston College, there has been less opportunity to rotate and refresh the book stock. The library contributes beyond its remit to support wider activities for prisoners, including talks from outside speakers.

For a considerable part of the reporting year, the library was out of use because of damage caused by a leak to the roof. The Board was particularly disappointed by this because it was entirely foreseeable, given the lack of proactivity to undertake the repair in a timely manner. The scale of disruption and impact on prisoners could have been avoided had this happened. The valiant efforts of the librarian enabled some kind of service to continue, but its reduced
capacity did have an impact on prisoners’ recreation routine, and opportunities for learning and social interaction.

The library continues to promote literacy via the Shannon Trust scheme, but the restricted regime has had an impact on this, along with the problems over the availability of staff to escort prisoners to their mentoring sessions. Its effectiveness has also been limited by a shortage of trained mentors and the high turnover of mentors, who are often transferred to other prisons before they can achieve very much.

For prisoners who are unable to visit the library in person – for example, prisoners located on F wing or the segregation unit – there are arrangements to request books.

9.4 Faith and religious activity

The full-time chaplaincy team has been significantly depleted during this reporting year owing to resignations and other staffing matters. However, despite this, the remaining staff have done their best to ensure that prisoners continue to receive the support they need (see also section 5.4). The chaplaincy plays an important role at the establishment, and contributes positively to prisoners’ overall care, support and guidance.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EMPLOYMENT

10.1 Employment

HMP Exeter offers a number of employment opportunities within the prison, including in workshops, cleaning, the kitchen, the servery, barber, and as a wing orderly. In addition, some prisoners are trained by the relevant department to act as mentors in specialist settings, particularly substance misuse, or as Listeners. Others have been trained to act as ‘buddies’, to help prisoners with care needs. This is an effective and worthwhile programme and the Board knows that these roles can provide a sense of achievement and fulfilment for those engaged in these jobs. However, the Board still regularly hears complaints that jobs have been lost for reasons deemed to be unfair by prisoners and/or have been inadequately explained to them.

Throughout most of 2019, the prison ran three workshops:

- the main workshop for the majority of prisoners. This workshop sewed towels and other items for the Prison Service and fulfilled several external contracts, such as the filling and packaging of air freshener bottles. 53 work places were available
- the vulnerable prisoner workshop (VP), which fulfils contracts for three external contractors, such as packaging bulk hardware items. 23 work places were available
- the D wing (enhanced and low-risk prisoners) workshop, which paints and packages small items, such as figures for a model railway manufacturer. This is meticulous work, which the prisoners carry out carefully. 12 work places were available.

Both the vulnerable prisoner and D wing workshops have functioned well and consistently throughout 2019. However, a broken boiler necessitated the temporary move of the vulnerable prisoner workshop to the main workshop, which unfortunately was closed in mid-November owing to a staff problem. By the end of the reporting year, this had not reopened, which meant that workshop employment opportunities for a number of prisoners was reduced. During the last 3 months of the reporting period, attendance at the VP workshop represented 68% of the allocated places and for the D wing workshop, attendance represented 81% of the allocated places.

While the workshops provide opportunities for prisoners to develop a positive work ethic and some transferable experience, much of the work remains limited, in terms of employability
skills, and is uninspiring and mundane, which can make it difficult to develop a sense of pride or achievement in the outcomes. This was an observation made in the Board’s 2018 report and the HMIP’s 2018 inspection report. The Board hopes that, with an increased focus on resettlement in 2020, efforts are made to improve the industries, work experience, and employability opportunities for prisoners on release.

Employability courses focusing on issues such as health and safety, and diversity have also been embedded in the workshops, better to support prisoners’ employment opportunities on release. However, there is no structured requirement to record or acknowledge the skills and achievements demonstrated by prisoners in the workshop environment.

11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 Resettlement and support for release

Resettlement services continue to be provided by Catch 22. Initial targets for the assessment of prisoners within five days are generally met, although staff shortages may have an impact on the availability of staff to escort prisoners to the ‘learning zone’, where the assessment takes place. Moreover, the learning zone has, on a number of occasions, been closed for the same reason. Thereafter, Catch 22 will only work with a prisoner when specific needs have been identified. Ongoing support should be primarily the responsibility of a prisoner’s key worker. However, the key worker process has stalled and few prisoners are receiving the type of support envisaged by the scheme (see also section 7.5). The position is marginally better for young adults/care leavers, who are the responsibility of a single named officer who will liaise with the personal assistant in the community, where appropriate. Generally, Catch 22 will meet a prisoner again approximately 12 weeks before release, to discuss specific issues such as accommodation.

In addition, the prison has continued to run an excellent project to support preparation for release. This is the ‘checkout lounge’ and the ‘departure lounge’. The former takes place most weeks in the visits hall and is open to prisoners nearing the end of their sentences. External agencies, such as housing providers, Jobcentre Plus and support agencies (for example, concerned with drug and alcohol use, mental health and mentoring), are invited in so that prisoners can make contact with appropriate support in advance of release. In November 2019, a special employment event was arranged, to which a number of local employers were invited. The ‘departure lounge’ takes place early every weekday morning in the visitors reception building outside the gate, and offers immediate help to prisoners on the day of release. Here, they can charge mobile phones, check train times and medication needs, or receive more in-depth advice over a hot drink. Feedback from prisoners on these initiatives is positive. Funding was originally provided by the Devon and Cornwall police, and it is hoped that funding for both services will continue.

By far, the biggest problem facing prisoners on release from the establishment is accommodation. Some 80 hostel places have been lost in Plymouth in 2019. While prison and probation staff have a duty to refer to local housing authorities, in practice many prisoners fail to meet the criteria either for priority need or for sufficient local connection. There simply is not enough suitable accommodation available in our region.

Accommodation statistics for prisoners leaving custody at Exeter show that a significant number are statistically recorded as ‘homeless’. This is because, although most will have received an assessment with their local council while in prison, facilitated by Catch 22, there is no formal confirmation of accommodation at the point of departure. In the period from April to December 2019, 283 (43%) prisoners leaving the establishment were defined as homeless. In the same period, prisoners going to accommodation provided by friends and
family accounted for 176 (27%) prisoners, 44 (7%) were discharged to ‘approved premises’, 47 (7%) went to supported housing and 52 (8%) went to private rental accommodation.

Board members have regularly attended the departure lounge and have always asked prisoners about their accommodation. One young man expressed the intention to spend his discharge grant on a tent.

Family support is a key element of rehabilitation. Choices, a voluntary agency, provides first-night support and can deal with immediate problems, including advising family of the individual’s whereabouts. Choices also provides volunteers for the visitors centre (both in the visitors reception outside the prison gate and in the visits hall inside, where a very popular, high-quality refreshment service is offered). Concerns have been raised by Choices with Board members about the prison’s commitment to family liaison, and this is a matter that will be monitored carefully in 2020.
## C Section – The work of the IMB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended complement of Board members</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of visits to the establishment</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of segregation reviews attended</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the year, three new Board members received mentoring and one new Board member attended the IMB course for new members.

Because of staffing difficulties, training events organised by the prison have been limited. The Board has kept up to date by regularly inviting representatives with either key responsibilities or from key areas of the prison to speak at Board meetings.

The Board Chair regularly attended South-West area Board meetings and quarterly meetings held by the PGD for the four prisons in the group (HMPs Channings Wood, Dartmoor, Exeter and Guys Marsh).

Board members have attended, as observers, a coroner’s inquest into a DIC.
### D  Section - Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Current reporting year (2019)</th>
<th>Previous reporting year (2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 1</td>
<td>Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 2</td>
<td>Finance, including pay, private monies, spends</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Food and kitchens</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Health, including physical, mental, social care</td>
<td>42 (68% increase on 2018)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 1</td>
<td>Property within this establishment</td>
<td>24 (50% increase on 2018)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2</td>
<td>Property during transfer or in another establishment or location</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 3</td>
<td>Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total number of IMB applications</strong></td>
<td><strong>229 (47% increase on 156)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of applications to the Board increased by 47% in 2019, which was surprising, given the services provided by the kiosks. However, this may, in part, also be because some prisoners told the Board that they did not have confidence in the complaints system (see section 5.6). Concerns raised by prisoners related to submitted complaints not being received by the complaints clerk, and the time taken to respond to them.