



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at
HMP Leyhill

for reporting Year
1 February 2019 – 31 January 2020

Published
June 2020



Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Sections

Section	Topic	Page
1	Statutory Role	3
2	Executive Summary	4
3	Description of Establishment	7

Evidence Sections

4	Safety	8
5	Equality and Fairness	9
6	Segregation/Care and Separation Unit	11
7	Accommodation (including communication)	12
8	Healthcare (including mental health and social care)	14
9	Education and Other Activities	16
10	Work, Vocational Training and Employment	18
11	Resettlement Preparation	20

C	The Work of the IMB	22
D	Applications to the IMB	23

A Sections 1 - 3

1 STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

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

The Board is specifically charged to:

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

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

This Report provides a short summary of the assessment by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) of the state of the prison, not a comprehensive account of its life and work. It is based on observations during visits, scrutiny of data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, and applications from prisoners.

Main judgements

Already a prison with many strengths, during this year HMP Leyhill displayed a new dynamic, based on an all-embracing concept of community. Despite some frustrating external factors and the complexity of some internal issues, this approach has undoubtedly rounded out further the prison's impressive level of performance.

Are prisoners treated fairly?

Fairness pervades most of Leyhill life: the conduct of adjudications and ACCT reviews (see paragraphs 4.4 and 6.2); the provision for the disabled (see paragraphs 7.2 and 7.7); the respect accorded to the views of prisoner representatives (see paragraph 4.1) and to the prisoner body as a whole (see paragraph 7.11); and the special arrangements made for sub-groups (see paragraphs 7.7; 8.8 and 8 passim); and pervades so much more. However, unfairness continues to be evident in the delays caused to prisoners' release by the lack of places in approved premises (see paragraph 11.1) and when, through lack of facilities in the optimum geographical area for successful resettlement, opportunities are not maximised (see paragraph 11.1). Unfairness is most glaringly evident in the treatment of many prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) (see paragraph 5.1).

Are prisoners treated humanely?

A fresh emphasis on community within the prison and closer engagement with the outside community have created an ambience which speaks to the humane values espoused and exemplified at the establishment (see paragraphs 4.1; 5.4; 7.1; 7.7-7.9; 7.10; 9.5; and 10.7). This emphasis also plays an important part in preparing prisoners for release (see below). However, some physical conditions are not consistent with humane treatment (see paragraphs 7.2; 7.5 and 7.6).

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

As befits a resettlement prison, many opportunities are provided to prepare for release. starting with ensuring that prisoners have a realistic understanding of the process of preparation (see paragraphs 10.2; 11.1; and 11.5). A widening range of courses leads to nationally recognised qualifications (see paragraphs 9.1-9.3) and, more subtly, there is exposure to activities developing self-confidence (for example, see paragraphs 9.5; 9.7; and 10.7), and the self-discipline (for example, see paragraphs 8.5 and 10.4), self-reliance (for example see paragraphs 8.6 and 8.7) and community commitment required for successful reintegration into outside society (for example, see paragraphs 4.1; 4.3; 7.3; 7.8; 7.10, 7.11; 8.6; 9.6 and 9.8). The necessary nourishing of supportive family relationships is also important (see paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6), but for some prisoners, because of their history,

there are inherent constraints both on that and on preparing for successful rehabilitation more generally (see paragraphs 10.6 and 11.2).

Main Areas for Development

TO THE MINISTER

- (a) The work on refurbishment of the ablutions in the residential units still has not been started, despite the need being recognised since 2016 (see paragraph 7.2) and having, in some aspects, intensified (see paragraph 7.5). As this situation is inconsistent with the decent treatment of prisoners and thus not supportive of rehabilitation (see paragraphs 7.2 and 7.5), what assurance can the minister give that funds will be made available to remedy the situation forthwith?
- (b) For the reasons set out in the body of the Report (see paragraph 5.1) and in last year's Report, what further consideration will the minister give to possible ways of swifter progression to conclusion of the majority of IPP sentences?
- (c) In view of the unfairness (and potential for discouragement) created when a lack of spaces in approved premises leads to delay in release on temporary licence (ROTL) and thus the potential timing of release (see paragraph 11.1), what action will the minister take to remedy this situation as a matter of urgency?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- (a) In view of the present unsatisfactory level of night-time staffing (see paragraph 7.13), will the Prison Service ensure that a thorough review is carried out, bearing in mind both present conditions and any future plans for the prison, to ensure that all on-call staff are close enough to provide a fast and effective response in acute circumstances.
- (b) Given the increase, from an already high figure, in property lost prior to arrival at Leyhill (Section D, Code H2) and the unsettling effect this can have during a key period in prisoners' preparation for release, what further action is planned to deal with this recurring problem?

Improvements

The Board is pleased to report that: the new ramped access to Ash Unit has enabled provision for those with disabilities to be expanded in response to demand; there is now a clear acceptance of the potential benefits of access to the creative arts and consequent

expansion of these activities; and there has been a significant reduction in fire risk created by the jamming open of fire doors in Beech Unit.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

- 3.1 HMP Leyhill is a Category D open prison located just off Junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds with many attractive features. Its normal capacity is 515 prisoners housed in three residential units. Most of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century.
- 3.2 The prison holds a highly complex group. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept men convicted of sexual offences irrespective of sentence. The number of those held convicted of sexual crimes varies over time but latterly has been about 60% of the population.
- 3.3 Just over half of its prisoners are aged 50+; and nearly a quarter are 60+. About a fifth of all its prisoners have some form of disability, and some have two or three disabilities.
- 3.4 At the end of 2019, there were 170 serving a life sentence, 152 were on an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) and 185 on a determinate sentence. Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.
- 3.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, during the reporting period a variety of support to prisoners was provided by the following organisations:
- Career information, advice and guidance: in-house provision
 - Personal development, social and life skills and work-related learning: Weston College and Somax
 - Benefits and appointments on release: Department for Work and Pensions - Job Centre Plus
 - Qualification Support: Weston College
 - Resettlement services: community rehabilitation company and Catch 22
 - Specialist Support: Talking Money
 - Bank Accounts: Nationwide
 - Gym Courses: Astara
 - Healthcare services: Inspire Better Health
 - Mental health services: Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust
 - Day centre for older prisoners: RECOOP (Resettlement and Care of Older ex-Offenders and Prisoners)
 - Family service providers of visits and casework: PACT (The Prison Advice and Care Trust)
 - Prodigal Arts
 - Changing Tunes
 - Hardman Trust
 - Escort services to and from the prison - GEOAmey

B Evidence sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

- 4.1 The safer custody team (including, as well as relevant staff, fully integrated prisoner representatives of the violence reduction group and the Listeners) played an important leadership role during the reporting year, impressing the Board observer at their meetings with their purposeful, well-informed approach, pervasive humanity and concern to support the prisoners under discussion.
- 4.2 The group safety strategy (which includes the 5P safety framework, and challenge, support and intervention plans) was adopted during the reporting year and, with its zero- tolerance approach, resulted in improved management of violence. Board checks found that entries in units' violence reduction books were routinely conscientious and professional. While it would be unrealistic to imply that, as a consequence, HMP Leyhill is a prison where no prisoner ever feels under pressure from a fellow prisoner, the changes and the new emphasis on developing a healthy community spirit (see paragraphs 7.7-7.11) are increasingly positive factors in Leyhill life.
- 4.3 For prisoners under stress, the Samaritans helpline, the regularly monitored safety hotline, and the improving access to fellow prisoners serving as violence reduction representatives or Listeners, provided an impressive range of potential support. The distinctive Leyhill 'GOB-OFF' scheme, run by the 12 Listeners, provided an opportunity for letting off steam, enabling many potentially difficult issues causing anger and anxiety to be dealt with promptly and at least partially defused. The frequency of its use – some 900 times a month during the stressful December/January period (approximately 200-450 otherwise) - indicates its value.
- 4.4 The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened was very low, even including the recurring ACCTs on the same prisoner. There were no worrying trends in the ethnicity and/or ages of the prisoners concerned or in the few who were transferred to closed conditions. The paperwork that the Board monitored showed the thoroughness of the process. Observation of an ACCT review confirmed the professional skills in play when action plans were developed. In it, there was well-timed, although limited, input by a wide range of relevant staff, leading the prisoner to play a key role in shaping the next steps. The prisoner was in no doubt that he was a key member of the team.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

- 5.1 The new emphasis on developing the establishment as a community relates readily to the energetic work on equality and fairness reported in recent years. However, in this reporting year, as for several years past, the Board has deep concern about prisoners serving IPP sentences. The Board noted, in the former minister's response to last year's report, his satisfaction that the momentum in the number of IPP releases was being sustained. However, currently there are still 170 IPP prisoners at the establishment. In highlighting this, the Board recognises the overarching importance of public protection. However, when a judge has indicated, for example, a likely tariff of four years (that is, a low sentence for the offence), it is hard to see the actual punishment as proportionate when the offender is still in custody many years later. It is all the more worrying as the longer the period of imprisonment, the more difficult is eventual resettlement.
- 5.2 A total of 40 discrimination incident report forms [DIRFs] were submitted during the reporting year, of which four were withdrawn and seven judged not to be cases of discrimination. The most significant group (of 14) involved race. Four were judged discriminatory. The 10 which were not so proved included DIRFs from prisoners accusing staff of being racist without providing any evidence of racist behaviour.
- 5.3 The issue of race also underlies the often-repeated comment by Black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners that there is unfairness in work allocation. Although both the Board and, separately, the prison authorities have examined data on this issue, statistically it is inconclusive. Therefore, the prison's establishment of a focus group to continue monitoring the issue more broadly is welcome. Equally welcome has been the attractive range of colourful and informative displays heightening awareness of events (such as Black History Month Holocaust Remembrance Day and the festivals of different religions) that are significant in the calendar of different ethnic groups within the prison.
- 5.4 The prison continues to take steps to address aspects of disability. A disabilities awareness quiz was published over the Christmas period and was warmly received. A problem with wheelchair access to learning and skills classrooms was resolved by the installation of an emergency stairway evacuation chair. To alleviate the difficulty which faces those suffering a visual impairment or dyslexia when completing canteen sheets, coloured foils (with colours varying for different needs) were made available. Such initiatives are making for a more humane environment. However, the lack of places at approved premises, while affecting many at Leyhill, continues to be a particular concern for those with disabilities. The frustration and anguish caused is uncondusive to the maintenance of a fair and humane environment and obstructs the path towards resettlement.
- 5.5 For many prisoners, an area of prison life that is key to their ability to prepare for successful resettlement (and, sometimes, key to being able to concentrate on other

aspects of that journey) is the opportunity to maintain supportive outside relationships. During this reporting year, the setting for Visits, always physically spacious with good accommodation both in and out of doors, has been considerably enhanced. The main hall has been redecorated and the environment softened by features such as a display of paintings and sketches from the prison's Prodigal Arts exhibition, two refreshed well-resourced play areas for children, and a snack bar where prisoners and their visitors are able to buy refreshments; the latter include not only tea and cake, but also a range of savoury snacks, giving the snack bar, in part through the informal layout of furniture, the feel of a local café.

- 5.6 Family Days were well-arranged and resourced; some for adults only, and others were child-oriented. Lunch and entertainment were provided on these days. On one occasion during the reporting year, the music was provided by a group of prisoners who performed to much acclaim from visitors and staff alike. The sight of staff and visitors interacting in such an informal setting is an indication of the sense of community which has become more noticeable during the reporting year. Overall, the supportive provision of visiting facilities is currently an outstanding feature of the prison.
- 5.7 That concern for community in the widest sense is very clear in the work of the chaplaincy. Although the team is able, if required, to respond to distinctive belief needs, what marks its work is an approach based on response to human need where, the creed and the colour and the name don't matter. This approach and the chaplaincy's wide-ranging programme of events draws many to its premises. It is an approach clearly in tune with the wider Leyhill development of 'community'.

- 6.1 As an open prison, the establishment has no segregation unit, although there are three holding cells, which are occasionally used, briefly, when prisoners are being moved to closed conditions. The Board has no concerns about their use or about the minimal use of restraints.

- 6.2 Compared with closed prisons, the number of adjudications conducted is small. Those observed by Board members were never less than fair, and at their best were exemplary in the humanity shown in ensuring that the accused had an appropriate understanding of all facets of the procedures.

- 7.1 The well-kept, characterful grounds provide an excellent setting for much of the accommodation and latterly much has been done to humanise the prison further. For example, the accommodation blocks now have names and new signage. Some redecoration and revamping (notably of some recreation areas - in one case, by a large prisoner-painted mural) have freshened the prison's appearance. Overall, the impression is of basic orderliness, cleanliness and calm, a suitable environment for easing the transition from closed conditions to meeting the requirements of outside society. The prison's decision to refer to prisoners as 'residents' is another step along the same road.
- 7.2 Access to Ash unit for those with disabilities has been improved by a substantial ramp, yet other aspects of residential accommodation are poor. The 'need for refurbishment of recesses (that is, Ablutions)' was first cited by HM Inspectorate of Prisons - and the Board - in 2016. However, the fabric is still deteriorating, with water leaking through ceilings, and there is still extensive mould on ceilings and walls. These conditions are not consistent with humane values.
- 7.3 Latterly, local efforts have produced temporary improvements (for example, a deep clean to remove some of the worst mould; brightening the ablution area with a lick of paint; and local purchase of individual wash-bowl plugs). This genuine local concern for decency and humane conditions is admirable, but can never be enough.
- 7.4 Remedial work on the fire doors in Ash and Beech units has been completed and, although they are now wedged open far less frequently, without the previously proposed door-closers, the situation is not ideal.
- 7.5 Cedar unit (which is not brick built, has narrow corridors and sub-divides into three sections) is increasingly showing wear and tear, especially in the ablution areas. What is possible within the limited remit of the Leyhill Works Department has largely been done. However, waiting for outside contractors from November 2019 to date, has meant the 40 prisoners in section 3 of the unit sharing three showers on the ground floor and a reported lack of consistency in obtaining hot water at peak times. These are not the standards that society should be setting.
- 7.6 Such delays for larger jobs outside the local remit are not unusual. After years - not weeks - the prison still awaits repairs to the kitchen, laundry, print-shop and joinery roofs. This is unfair (and discouraging) to staff and prisoners working there.
- 7.7 Over a similar period, intermittent faults to ovens, freezers, hotplates, Bratt pans and the pot washer, although now reduced, have been commonplace. Thanks to the professional skills of kitchen staff, the general catering provision has remained admirable, and the kitchen's administrative arrangements are fair and humane. Prisoners who have difficulty accessing the Dining Hall have their food delivered by orderlies; hot boxes ensure that it is kept at appropriate temperatures. Prisoners

working off-site have meals blast-frozen to be reheated, on their return, by microwave oven on their residential unit.

- 7.8 Prisoners have had an increasing number of opportunities to contribute ideas and perceptions about prison life. To make the point, during the reporting year, 'notices to prisoners' transmuted to 'community notices'. The long-standing prisoner consultative groups, various forums and focus groups, are enhanced in significance by well-used access to noticeboards and the opportunity for special displays of information relating to their interests and/or concerns. The prevalence of these items has increased.
- 7.9 Board members, especially out of working hours, have routinely witnessed staff on the residential units engaging informally, yet appropriately, with prisoners, and staff entries in the unit observation books frequently indicate concern for prisoners' mental and physical well-being.
- 7.10 The willingness of staff to join with prisoners in leisure activities - cultural (such as the community choir), physical (led by the PE Department), and practical (for example, when over a weekend education & skills staff and students voluntarily transformed the dowdiness of a major corridor in their workplace) - powerfully demonstrates a desire to treat prisoners with respect and provide opportunities for them to become used to engaging in something like normal community life prior to release. (See also paragraph 9.8).
- 7.11 Inevitably, some prisoners see their treatment differently and on occasion with good cause. However, what is encouraging is the prison's increased willingness to acknowledge and to rectify an individual situation, then use it as a springboard to wider improvement. A prisoner had told the governor that, because of some staff attitudes, he would go with a problem only to certain members of staff. The governor, in reporting the conversation in a community notice, concluded: 'If a resident has a problem and if a phone call can be made to get a result, then that is better than asking them to put an application in or sending them to another department'. Prisoners were invited to submit ideas for the community, as (according to a community notice): 'You are the ones who have to live here every day'.
- 7.12 The Board recognises that this approach is very much a work in progress, but the prison's declared emphasis on fairness, decency and the community has the potential to prepare prisoners to re-enter wider society with an expectation of making contributions which add, rather than detract, from community life.
- 7.13 In a similarly constructive spirit, the Board reports, once again, its concern at night staffing levels. During the reporting year, there was an overnight incident that led to additional staff being called in. Fortunately, they were not needed, but the Board was concerned about the length of time it took for them to get to the prison. This situation requires review.

8. HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE)

- 8.1 The reduction last year of one GP session per week initially caused the waiting times to rise, but they have since reverted to normal, as nurses increased the number of triage sessions and had authority to administer certain medications under a patient group directions. Other waiting times for regular external services such as dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy, were also unexceptional. Indeed, the dental waiting times reduced from 10 weeks to an average of seven weeks – an important improvement as prisoners often arrive with complex dental needs following years of neglect.
- 8.2 Leyhill prisoners, who tend to be older than the average prison population, include a comparative high percentage with long-term chronic conditions. Their needs are met through regular clinics with specially trained nurses and, in cases of respiratory disorders, there were also referrals to the gym where two staff members are trained in pulmonary rehabilitation.
- 8.3 Other conditions which are unusually prevalent at Leyhill, such as diabetes (11% against 6% nationally) and obesity (31% against 28% nationally) benefit from clinics run by specially trained staff, and prisoners with obesity were sometimes referred to the gym by physiotherapy staff to attend the Fit For Life course. Similarly to last year, the waiting time for mental health/substance misuse triage during the reporting year was seven days or less.
- 8.4 Given these various arrangements and the comprehensive health screening programme (including for retinopathy, bowel cancer, abdominal aortic aneurysm), the NHS physical health checks, and the well-equipped (although rarely used) palliative care suite, the Board is satisfied that healthcare provision is at least as good as that in the community.
- 8.5 Facilities for increasing fitness in preparation for release are appropriately exceptional. For example, there are nine sporting activities, and the gym is open every day. There are specialist sessions for ‘early risers’, and the fitness suite’s specialist equipment is available every evening. Such programmes also help towards resettlement by providing evaluation of options and encouraging the self-discipline necessary to reintegrate successfully into society.
- 8.6 For these reasons, there is strong emphasis in core healthcare work on self-help, prisoners being conscious of their health needs and taking responsibility. There is, for example, an open referral system for mental health and substance abuse matters. In addition, prisoners are responsible for custody of their medications (except controlled drugs), and the ‘health bar’ allows them, using their spends account, to buy medication available in outside chemists. They also have the chance of taking community, as well as personal, responsibilities. Some join the health improvement group and share in discussion of how best the system can achieve its basic aims. Other groups explore low mood and anxiety. Some individuals act as peer mentors,

providing drop-in sessions and supporting induction and group programmes, such as SMART recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Cocaine Anonymous.

- 8.7 Social Care Assessments are carried out on request from healthcare staff, and (to encourage development of self-sufficiency) prisoners can also self-refer through the disability liaison officers. There is currently only one prisoner with a care package, a figure that could be a reflection of the conscientious work of the disability orderlies.
- 8.8 In 2019, 30 Complaints were directed to healthcare and four were upheld. In addition, 37 compliments were formally expressed. In informal discussions, the Board often heard – particularly from patients with long-running, significant issues - very warm appreciation of the care provided. In the Board’s view, overall, the services provided at the prison are at least as good as those in wider society, and appropriately geared to the needs of prisoners being prepared for resettlement there.

9. EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

- 9.1 The formal educational and training opportunities provided during the reporting year reflected an increased sensitivity to the varied needs of prisoners and, in particular, their past experiences of formal education. This was evident through the provision of a wide range of courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications; the observed quality of teaching; and the good classroom relationships. It also showed in more subtle ways, such as the re-branding of Leyhill Education Centre as Leyhill Skills Centre, and the added incentive of a small monetary reward for those successfully completing functional skills courses. There were also incentives of a less subtle kind, such as the automatic imposition of sanctions for unauthorised absence. The effectiveness of the overall approach was largely validated by the external examination results.
- 9.2 This effectiveness was also validated by the successful accessing of schemes providing practical assistance towards establishing useful careers on release. The Hardiman Trust scheme is a good example. During the reporting year, 11 prisoners who fulfilled the Trust's criteria gained awards, ranging from £350 to £750, enabling the purchase of equipment and training courses. Of equal value is the possibility they now have of qualifying for a CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card (part of the Professional Competence Scheme).
- 9.3 Another impressive example of the prison's willingness to respond to prisoners' personal needs was the increasing use of distance learning during the reporting year. Seventeen students were involved with the Open University, Prisoner Education Trust, Horticultural Correspondence College and Phoenix Health and Safety.
- 9.4 For several years, the Board has remarked on the disappointingly minimal role given to the expressive arts, going little beyond fine cell work, work with Prodigal Arts (see paragraph 3.5) and (more recently) the community choir. However, during this reporting year, there were significant developments. A part-time 10-week course was provided which gave the opportunity to explore and/or expand creative skills. Whilst no expressive arts course has yet been incorporated in any sentence plan objectives (a little surprising, in view of the response from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to the Board's 2018 annual report, that: 'there is nothing...which prevents creative arts being included in sentence plans'), there have been other changes indicating that the potential of the creative arts for personal and social development is now more fully appreciated.
- 9.5 The range of concerts, drama and activity sessions led by visiting artistes has risen markedly. Among them were two talks given by an author, film and commentary maker, to engender interest in literary skills, focusing on key aspects of their acquisition. The potential of such material in preparing prisoners for release was powerfully demonstrated by the participants' reports on the 'Shakespeare Workshop' led by Shakespeare Workout. All the following comments come from

written feedback from different participants and are typical of a wider range:
'Everyone was transported into a different world of positivity'
'A little challenging at first [but] I learnt a lot in terms of how to form our thoughts and deliver them in the most effective way'
"fantastic at helping people's confidence"
'To empower, motivate, encourage, change, build self-esteem, self-belief'.

- 9.6 The PE department continued to support, encourage and offer a wide range of courses to enhance physical wellbeing and to support mental health. Highlights were a run, walk and talk event in conjunction with Parkrun England and Mind (additionally valuable as another community-building occasion when staff and prisoners worked together on a project) and a well-supported motivational talk by David Dein and Richard Scudamore who encouraged prisoners to gain qualifications which could provide stepping stones towards paid employment.
- 9.7 During the reporting year, the Lobster Pot (the facility coordinating appropriate services for the over-50s) continued to receive visitors from other prisons that were interested in replicating its success. Over the year, prisoners found particular satisfaction in recording their stories as part of the digital national archive celebrating 70 years of the NHS. However, the significance of its work lies rarely in a single activity but in building up relationships and, through them, self-confidence. As one prisoner, after going through prison gates without cuffs for the first time in 30 years said: 'You said it would be alright and it was'. Another wrote, after his release: 'The Lobster Pot gave me a sense of security, a feeling of worth again... gave me hope, an inner strength I have now taken forward with me'.
- 9.8 During the reporting year, the Library provided very varied resources, including: for recreation; for maintaining awareness of outside society; and for prisoners' research, entertainment and/or edification. Eight-five percent of prisoners held library membership and about 65% were active borrowers, taking advantage every month of over 1,500 newspapers and magazines and over 300 console games. The fact that, solely through the services of volunteer orderlies, the library was open on all Bank Holidays (including Christmas) speaks to its importance and a healthy sense of community.
- 9.9 Given the increasingly varied range of enriching activities, the Board is confident that the chances of successful resettlement have increased.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

- 10.1 Work (or the preparation for work) is an integral part of prison experience at HMP Leyhill, unless a prisoner is excused because of disability or age. As Leyhill is an open prison, the options available tend to be wider than experienced previously, although – as in outside society – obtaining the precise opportunity hoped for can also be a matter of delay and frustration, expressed frequently to Board members.
- 10.2 As part of the induction process, prisoners have an interview with a Prospects adviser who discusses resettlement and job plans, and the various courses and work opportunities that the establishment offers. This is another way that prisoners increasingly are invited to take responsibility for their own future (though with specialist support, if they are willing to take it).
- 10.3 Despite the opportunities offered, the Board has found it is difficult sometimes for prisoners to grasp that they are on a clear pathway aimed, not just at release, but also at successful resettlement. For this reason, it welcomes the recent initiative to produce the HMP Leyhill Information Guide, a very professional-looking document, issued to all prisoners, largely prepared by prisoners and printed with the involvement of others in the print shop. The guide provides a logic to the process in which the prisoner is involved.
- 10.4 Once the Induction process is over, all eligible prisoners are allocated a provisional workplace on site, to start to get back into (or even experience for virtually the first time) the routine and self-discipline necessary for successful reintegration into wider society. The Board is impressed by the effort made to assign prisoners to the type of employment that builds on previous experience or interests (for example outside in estates or market gardens, or in carpentry or joinery, in car valeting, or even in an office environment, such as Route which co-ordinates various information and support services). Even at this stage, choice - starting to chart one's own route again – comes in, as, after two weeks, prisoners can apply for a change of employment.
- 10.5 In addition to the work opportunities at the establishment, depending on vacancies, suitably qualified prisoners have the opportunity of working in the community, engaging routinely with wider society in over 70 work settings. Some are volunteers; at the other extreme, some are fully paid jobs. As a direct result of some of these placements, prisoners have sometimes been released with guaranteed employment. However, there continues to be difficulty in finding former white collar workers suitable community employment as a stepping stone to employment on release. Partly for this reason, guidance is also available on making the most of eventual self-employment opportunities. The Board is impressed by the determination of the prison, evidenced in these ways, from the earliest possible stage to move prisoners along towards eventual resettlement.

- 10.6 However, for some prisoners, there are inherent difficulties stemming from the type of offences of which they were convicted. The establishment houses a significant number of prisoners convicted of a sexual offence (varying over the reporting year between approximately 50% and 60%). There are also prisoners convicted of offences of serious violence. In recognition of potential public concern, the prison continues, as in previous years, to operate a supervised work programme benefiting the local area, as represented by local councils, businesses, community groups and charities, but also easing prisoners back, in a very controlled way, into day-to-day community life.
- 10.7 During this reporting year, the Board has been pleased to see an expansion of the opportunities for prisoners, irrespective of their previous background, to interact with local members of the community in semi-social situations. For several years, the public has been able to visit Leyhill Grounds, a commercially-run café, staffed (apart from supervisory staff) by prisoners and receiving very warm reviews from a wide range of customers. In this reporting year, there have been other carefully chosen opportunities - for example, to watch a play, attend a concert or take part in athletic activities. In their way, such efforts to gain public understanding of the workings of Leyhill as a resettlement prison are themselves of value in helping to provide a deeper understanding of the task it undertakes on behalf of society, to reform and reintegrate the prisoners it houses.

11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

- 11.1 A major challenge for the prison is the difficulty of finding external work placements for the large proportion of men convicted of sexual offences (up to 60%). During this reporting year, there were occasionally up to 15 external placements available, but could not be filled because of the nature of prisoners' offences. Similarly, for these prisoners (and others with complex backgrounds, for whom a higher level of monitoring is required) the lack of spaces available in approved premises has delayed overnight ROTL.
- 11.2 However, the ROTL process has, on occasion been delayed for organisational reasons: hold-ups with paperwork from community offender managers, a need for more detailed risk assessments, and 'lost' paperwork (this has occasionally been a major factor in delaying ROTL – in one case, for roughly three years). Such types of delay are unfair and justifiably led to disgruntlement among those affected. Unhelpfully they have also led to a distorted overall perception of the work of the offender management unit (OMU).
- 11.3 In reality, over the reporting year, there has been a 10% increase in the granting of ROTL and the number of prisoners taking resettlement overnight release (ROR) has increased by 14%, due probably to recruitment of new staff by the National Probation Service and OMU, coupled with better working relationships between them and also the holding of weekly ROTL surgeries (dealing on average with 100 prisoners a time). At these, the ROTL process is fully explained, the prisoner receives an immediate update on where his application is in the system and, if required, offender supervisors and other prison staff can take immediate remedial action.
- 11.4 There have also been improvements in other steps in the journey towards release. Mid-year, the resettlement section introduced a new 'through-the-gate' action plan, which enables prisoners together with their offender manager, offender supervisor and prison staff, to identify the Pathways to be followed in preparation for their release. Key to this has been the prisoner's full involvement in the process, with extra community rehabilitation company engagement in identifying their needs prior to their parole boards and release.
- 11.5 It has also been helpful that involvement in the process leading towards release has widened further, perhaps another aspect of the new stress on the prison as a community. The chaplaincy has become involved in resettlement by mentoring prisoners and providing links to outside churches and faith groups. This enabled, for example, one prisoner due for imminent release to make several visits, including attending services, to a church in his resettlement area, starting to build a support network and thus his self-confidence.
- 11.6 These various factors have contributed towards a significant decrease in the number of prisoner complaints about ROTL. Perhaps inevitably, because of

occasional blips, some staff and prisoners are yet to be convinced that there have been significant improvements in this area. However, the judgement of the Board is that these have taken place and, in the process, helped to establish a fairer and more humane prison.

C Section – Work of Board

1. The Board welcomed the appointment of the first regional representative for the South West. In particular, it appreciated her positive response to its concerns about the lack of a national forum in which the leaders of Boards at open prisons could share concerns and best practice. This led eventually to national agreement to the holding of an initial gathering and, at her invitation, Leyhill undertook the administrative work to set it up, and chaired the first meeting. It was held on 2 October 2019 at HMP Sudbury and, as a result of the benefits derived, the decision was made to meet twice yearly.
2. Subsequently, the Board benefited from the exchange of local policies with Boards at other open prisons; made a Board visit to HMP Sudbury; welcomed Board officers from HMP Haverigg, following its changing role to an open prison and hosted, with excellent cooperation from the prison authorities, a visit by members of the Association of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards.
3. Membership of the Board remained fairly steady during the reporting year. There is currently one member who is nearing completion of their probationary training. All established Board members undertook special responsibilities relating to areas of the Board's work, the definition of these areas reflecting the annual reporting structure.
4. The day-to day practices of the Board within the national framework were largely unchanged, though with minor alterations following the team performance review of late 2019. The prison's three-year strategic plan, built on work started prior to the change of Governor in March 2019, has seen a deal of activity, and the Board has appreciated the willingness of the governor (and the regional director, when meeting with the Chairman) to discuss a wide range of issues.
5. Two Board members visited the prison on rota every week. They followed a predetermined pattern of sectional visits, although responding to any applications and chance opportunities to observe reception procedures, adjudications, ACCT reviews and so on. Normally there were two or three visits to the prison a week, with flexibility to increase if required. Weekend and evening visits were markedly fewer, although almost invariably providing a differently nuanced – and reassuring – perspective of staff-prisoner relationships. We attended no incidents that were complex enough for the prison to set up a command suite.
6. The majority of Board meetings were preceded by a training session. These were sometimes led by senior members of the prison staff but, in a departure from recent practice, occasionally from within the Board. These focused on particular aspects of its work (for example various types of prisoner applications and how best to respond to them). The annual team performance review took place on 27 November 2019 and culminated in a half-day planning meeting.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	13
Number of Board Members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board Members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the Establishment	267
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

D Section – Applications

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	2
B	Discipline including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	5	17 (includes 8 from two applicants)
C	Equality	1	1
D	Purposeful activity including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	5
E 1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	3	9
E 2	Finance including pay, private monies, spends	5	6
F	Food and kitchens	1	4
G	Health including physical, mental, social care	4	5
H 1	Property within this establishment	8	5
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	15	12
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	0
I	Sentence management including home detention curfew, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	12	20
J	Staff/prisoner concerns including bullying	1	9
K	Transfers	2	2
	Total	61	97

