



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Hewell Grange

**For reporting year  
1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020**

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## **Introductory 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 is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- 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
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- 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.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

## 2. Description of the establishment

Hewell Grange Resettlement Unit, also known as Hewell Grange and The Grange (hereafter referred to as Hewell Grange) was an adult male category D open prison, jointly managed with HMP Hewell, a local adult male category B prison (house blocks 1–6). It was located on adjoining property, and a single IMB monitored both prisons. Although they shared almost all services, contracts and staff, Hewell Grange and HMP Hewell operated as separate units and existed for two very different purposes.

Certified normal accommodation: 224

Operational capacity: 224

Physical health provider: Care UK

Mental health provider: Care UK

Substance use treatment provider: Care UK

Learning and skills provider: Novus

Library service: Worcestershire County Council

Community rehabilitation companies (CRCs): Staffordshire and West Midlands; Warwickshire and West Mercia

Careers information and advice: Coventry/Solihull/Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP)

Escort contractor: GEOAmey

Maintenance: Amey

Hewell Grange is a three-story Grade II listed country house, built in 1894. It held young offenders from 1946 until 1991, when it became an open prison for adult men. Accommodation in the main house was in dormitories, with shared toilets and showers. Additionally, there are two purpose-built hostels, with single-room accommodation, at the Harwood House and Plymouth annex. There is a gym, a modern kitchen and a purpose-built block for Learning and Skills.

The prison is set within a substantial estate. There are large areas of pastureland, woodland and a lake. The pastureland supported a prison farm with a dairy and pig units, poultry, a market garden and farm shop. Some produce was sold to the public through the prison's farm shop, along with plants and vegetables from the market garden, firewood from the woodlands and items made from reclaimed timber in a workshop within the closed prison. The gardens of the house and a large area of parkland are historically significant and are listed; part of the property is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In March 2020 the Governor left and was replaced on an interim basis by the deputy governor.

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

Between 1991 and 2008 HMP Hewell Grange was a category D prison with its own Governor and IMB. In 2008 it merged with HMP Blakenhurst and HMP Brockhill and all three sites became known as HMP Hewell (the Brockhill site closed in 2011). Therefore, until 31 March 2020 HMP Hewell comprised two separate elements. The larger one is the local adult male Category B prison (houseblocks 1 to 6). The smaller element was The Grange resettlement unit, an adult male category D open prison. Although their functions were very different, both elements shared most arrangements for staff, services and contracts.

This report relates only to the resettlement unit which ceased to be a prison on 31 March 2020, so the report deals with a period of just six months. A separate report on the closed prison will follow when the full reporting year has run its course.

In June 2018, it was announced that HMP Hewell (including Hewell Grange) would be subject to special measures, and in February 2019 there was a change of Governor.

The deficiencies of Hewell Grange have been the subject of frequent comment in recent reports. Detail of these can be found in reports from the IMB in 2018 and 2019 and in the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) following its unannounced inspection in June 2019. The latter report, which expressed serious concerns about HMP Hewell as a whole, with inspectors reporting that there had been a marked decline, described living conditions at Hewell Grange as the worst the inspectorate had found in a prison of that type.

The inspectors found that, 'extraordinarily for an open prison, it was poor in both purposeful activity and rehabilitation and release planning', and living conditions were the worst seen in this type of establishment.

On 16 October 2019, the Director General of Prisons, following his own visit to the establishment, announced that, 'the open unit at HMP Hewell in Worcestershire, also known as Hewell Grange, is being withdrawn from use', and that the site would close by the end of the financial year, with no prisoners accommodated on the site after this date.

Immediately the Governor wrote to each resident with an initial Q & A and the deputy governor moved to Hewell Grange to project-manage its closure. A regular newsletter, clear lines of communication and a weekly forum was instituted.

A phased programme of closure then ensued, with the last resident being discharged on 31 March 2020.

Prisoners had mixed views about the closure. In conversations with Board members, some stated that the unit was an asset and should have been invested in and kept, others believed that it was totally inappropriate accommodation.

This IMB report, covering the work of Hewell Grange during its final six months in service is, therefore, essentially a report on an extended period of contraction and closure.

## **3.2 Main judgements**

### **How safe is the prison?**

The Board found Hewell Grange to be a safe environment for prisoners.

### **How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?**

The Board found that prisoners were treated with a high level of fairness and humanity during the process of closure, although the living conditions remained unacceptable.

### **How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?**

The Board found the provision of healthcare to be patchy. It was frequently adequate, but not reliably so.

The general wellbeing of prisoners was evidently prominent among the prison's priorities and a high standard was achieved in circumstances that were unsettling.

### **How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?**

The decision to close Hewell Grange had inevitable negative implications for the resettlement plans of most men who lived there. Sustained efforts were made by the prison to reduce these to a minimum.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

The Board hopes that the Minister is able to find an appropriate way to formally recognise the achievement of management and staff at HMP Hewell in creating a community that worked together to make the closure of Hewell Grange the best it could possibly be.

### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

The Board believes that, following the closure of Hewell Grange, additional male category D places should be made available within the West Midlands region.

The closure process adopted at Hewell Grange should be utilised as a case study for senior management development.

### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

Management and staff involved in the closure of Hewell Grange should be made aware of the positive view of the closure developed by IMB members.

### **3.4 Progress since the last report**

Hewell Grange has been withdrawn from use with no prisoners on site since 31 March 2020.

During the past six months the physical building continued to deteriorate with the cessation of repairs and minimal maintenance, prisoners continued to be held in substandard accommodation. The dismantling of the dormitories apparently brought the rodent population out into unaccustomed areas.

However, leadership, with continuous focused attention to communicating with prisoners as a group and on an individual level resulted in a closure process remarkable for its overall uneventfulness. There were, inevitably, periods when prisoners told the Board that the outcome for them was not as they wished and no one would help them. Similarly, at times staff informed the Board that they had invested in the establishment and that their aspirations for the future were being overlooked.

Overall, staff at all levels are to be congratulated on how they managed the expectations of each individual prisoner to achieve an appropriate outcome. As in previous reports, the board witnessed positive interactions between officers and prisoners.

The initial project plan envisaged retaining sufficient prisoners to maintain the property. However, as prisoners were transferred out as and when space became available in receiving establishments, this plan was unable to be realised. A prisoner, no matter how important to the running of the house or farm, could not be retained when alternative accommodation was available. Since this accommodation was often available due to unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances (for example, prisoners being returned to closed conditions) at the receiving prison, prisoners moved out faster than initially planned. This left the unit virtually empty at the start of March with the last transfer out leaving six prisoners there awaiting release.

The Board was impressed with how the prisoners and project staff from HMPPS undertook the task of clearing the building of its contents, the accumulated result of more than 70 years in the hands of the Prison Service and its predecessors. It was undertaken in a meticulous fashion, room by room, as each was vacated. Other prisons were informed of the furniture and equipment now available and invited to have what could be useful to them.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

There were two receptions in the period up to the announcement of the closure.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody**

There were no deaths in custody and one assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document (the care planning process for prisoners identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm) was opened. The Board did not find any direct evidence of self-harm.

#### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

During many hours of conversation with residents of Hewell Grange, the Board did not elicit any suggestion of physical insecurity. Nor did members detect any sense of threat as they moved about the buildings and the grounds.

There were no instances of self-isolation.

#### **4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding**

There were no vulnerable prisoners on the roll.

#### **4.5 Use of force**

The Board is not aware of any instances of force being used.

#### **4.6 Substance misuse**

A combination of informal remarks and an occasional odour made Board members aware that there was a degree of substance misuse, although it was not possible to assess its extent. However, for example in December 2019, a large quantity of cannabis and weighing scales was found in the communal area of a dormitory resulting in all three men living in the dormitory being returned to closed conditions. Of the 19 adjudications held during the year, one involved substance misuse. Prisoners with a drug dependency and requiring detoxification were not accepted for transfer in.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

The fact that the Chief Inspector of Prisons stated, in the June 2019 inspection report that 'living conditions were the worst I have seen in this type of establishment', and: 'I can only describe it as squalid, demeaning and depressing' was principally responsible for the decision to close the establishment (see 3.1. Background to the Report). There was, understandably, no effort made during the closure to address the continual problems with the toilets and showers in any fundamental way. As the numbers on roll began to fall, however, there was quite evidently less pressure on the facilities and concern about the dormitories, toilets and showers became less acute. Board members on rota visits observed this for themselves and also experienced a reduction in the number of informal complaints from the residents who remained. Another side effect of the falling roll was its erratic effect on the schedule for domestic duties. The IMB would sometimes, on investigating the reason for ineffective cleaning of a particular area, learn that the men who had been allocated to clean it had recently moved out and that their replacements had yet to be found.

The Board was not aware of any issues related to clothing.

The kitchen continued to prepare and serve meals right through to the point of closure. Latterly the catering manager attended the weekly forum (see 5.3 below) and sought opinions in an effort to match the more limited choice of food to the preferences of the men remaining.

### **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

These categories did not apply to Hewell Grange.

### **5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers**

These relationships were of critical importance during the lengthy process of closure. The 208 men who were held there when it began were all in category D. They were accustomed to a degree of autonomy, preparing themselves for a life beyond custody and in many cases were, through work or home visits, renewing their first-hand contact with the world outside. Disgruntled though they were by aspects of their life at Hewell Grange, they would not readily accept the upheaval of being directed to transfer to an establishment that was not only unknown but quite distant. (The three nearest male open prisons were each between 60 and 70 miles away.)

The relationships did not get off to a good start. On the day that the decision to close was made public, a large squad of officers, supported by dogs and vehicles, arrived to move 21 men back to closed conditions. Although still in category D, they were deemed to be at risk of absconding on learning of the impending closure. Over the ensuing days, following risk assessments, some of these men returned to Hewell Grange while others were moved on to other prisons. The IMB is not in a position to judge whether this pre-emptive action was carefully considered or justifiable. What was clear, however, was that its consequences ran far beyond the men most directly involved. It was perceived to be an assertion of power, a statement of intent by the authorities which would be administering the closure.

Amidst the many individual uncertainties that the impending closure provoked, the Governor moved her deputy governor from the closed prison to oversee the closure. With her arrival came two undertakings, clearly defined and repeatedly stated:

- any transfers between then and the end of the calendar year would be voluntary.
- henceforth she would be as frank and accessible as the situation allowed.

A weekly forum was instituted. Any prisoner on the site could attend and any general topic could be aired. The deputy governor chaired the meetings and the unit's senior staff also attended. The IMB was represented at 13 of these meetings. A fortnightly newsletter was published and made widely available. In parallel to this was a programme of clinics and consultations where men could explore the options open to each of them.

The tangible outcomes of these processes are reviewed in Section 7, Progression and Resettlement. In the early days of the closure process, Board members met prisoners who informed them that their concerns were not being taken seriously by the staff. Some prisoners were, by temperament, ability or circumstances, slower to engage than others. Board members observed the sustained effort to get the relevant message out to everyone. Management worked hard to promote an ethos of "one community" and as time progressed there were fewer such concerns. More generally, the population became increasingly relaxed as its anxieties were unwound. During its weekly round the IMB observed staff to be good humoured and supportive. Gradually a sense of community emerged. This was demonstrated most emphatically by the celebration of achievement held early in January. The contributions of many individual residents of Hewell Grange were marked and then, in an unusual turn of events, the residents themselves presented certificates to members of staff whose services they had particularly appreciated. It will live long in the memory of those who were there.

When the reporting period is taken as a whole, it becomes clear that the positive transformation of staff/prisoner relationships during the closure process was not only an important achievement in itself. It also created the degree of trust which allowed men to engage frankly with knowledgeable staff in assessing options and weighing possible compromises in regard to both the remainder of their time at Hewell Grange and their future plans.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

This table shows the ethnic breakdown as found by HMIP and during the closure. It illustrates that the ratio of each ethnic group remained similar as prisoners departed.

	HMIP 2019	%	During closure	%
White	97	46.5	58	48
Mixed	14	6.7	16	13
Asian	58	27.8	34	28
Black or black British	25	11.9	12	10
Other ethnic group	2	1.0	1	1

<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
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The Board was unaware of structured planned equality and diversity work or focus groups with prisoners. The specific characteristics of the prisoner population were not, in the Board's view, adequately reflected in discussions. The Board understood that the prisoners from a minority group only had their distinct needs met individually on request. Conversations with black and minority ethnic prisoners provided anecdotal comments about inequitable treatment.

In the HMIP survey in 2019, 16% of residents said they had a disability. There were generally limited facilities for disabled prisoners, and access throughout Hewell Grange remained a significant difficulty for individuals with mobility problems. A few older and disabled prisoners were located in a dormitory that provided some adjustments.

### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The different faith communities were well supported throughout, and chaplains had a high profile, visiting the site most days. The Board was not informed of any concerns regarding worship.

### **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges**

The IMB has no evidence to suggest that these were an issue in the experiences of prisoners.

### **5.7 Property**

The practicalities of moving property to another prison threatened to become a worry to many men preparing for transfer. Often, they had accumulated property which went well beyond the three bags and one large item which the HMPPS transport contractor would accept. The weekly forum (see 5.3 above) was used to repeat and reinforce the message that action needed to be taken in good time, including handing property out on a visit or removing it during a home leave. During the whole closure process, the IMB received no applications from receiving Boards regarding lost property.

There were several occasions when the contractor's vehicle was too small to take both the prisoners being transferred and even their statutory allowance of property. On each occasion the prison, to its credit, used a vehicle of its own to deliver all the property within the same working day.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

Primary care was delivered through a clinic, staffed by a healthcare professional from the closed site and scheduled to be held at Hewell Grange each evening. Although it usually did take place, the Board was aware of instances when it did not. The availability of pharmacy and dentistry services proved to be particularly inconsistent and problematic with consequent negative impacts for the men using those services.

### **6.2 Mental healthcare**

There was no specific mental healthcare provided. However, the Board noted an evident anxiety among some residents as their plans and assumptions concerning their remaining time in custody were thrown into question. This was addressed by the prison service staff through numerous individual discussions.

### **6.3 Social care**

Prisoners requiring social care were not allocated to Hewell Grange.

### **6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym**

A well-equipped gym remained open, was well used and appreciated by residents of Hewell Grange until the beginning of March. By that stage, the roll was small and those still living there were able to take exercise in the parts of the grounds that were open to them.

The participation in the football league was an early casualty of the closure announcement; however PE staff arranged Sunday morning “well man” walks as an alternative.

### **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

Prisoners with a drug dependency were not eligible for transfer to Hewell Grange, so there were no formal drug programmes and support but Narcotics Anonymous delivered meetings.

### **6.6 Soft skills**

The process of choosing the best available alternative prison for each man was not set up to test and develop soft skills, but it most certainly did engage them.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

The education department ceased providing courses by the end of 2019 and closed, with staff and equipment reallocated by mid-January 2020. The library had a prominent position within the main building. It was well stocked and sympathetically staffed. During the preparations for closure it added the important function of holding information about other prisons in the open estate.

College courses proved to be particularly difficult as the closure date of 31 March meant that learners had to be removed from the college system as they could not complete the full course. None of the transferring establishments were able to facilitate continuation of learning at South and City College due to travelling distances and their protocols.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

The waste management unit, which had long been a purposeful and productive feature of Hewell Grange, became especially significant during the final phase of the closure. Prisoners were widely engaged in the work of clearing the house and its outbuildings and in extracting value from the unwanted materials.

The Railtrack course, on the other hand, had also attracted a high level of commitment but had no part to play in the preparations for closure. The final class of students was seen through to the end of its course in December, but the hopes that there could be one more cohort undertaking this training were not realised.

Community work and paid employment through a resettlement to work scheme were downsized and eventually ceased with no more men being allocated to stage two paid employment after November. However, it is positive that, for example, all men who had been in paid employment and were transferred in January were back in paid employment by mid-February at their new prison.

Work at the farm was not widely popular, but from a minority it drew wholehearted engagement. A handful of men were very loath to stop their work with the animals, as their conversations with the IMB made clear. The final milking was done in the early part of March. The pigs and hens were relocated to other prison farms.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

This work was critically important in managing the impact of closure on residents of Hewell Grange. First came the work of the deputy governor and her staff in repeatedly urging the men to begin to engage with the prison, to accept that closure was on its way and to set some wheels in motion. Next was the stage of exploring needs and offering alternatives. This was where the level of trust discussed in 5.3 above became so important. Finally came the prison's effort to complete risk assessments and other necessary formalities to minimise delay in taking up opportunities at the receiving establishment.

The Board observed the energy which went into these processes and also the readiness of the great majority to accept that genuine efforts were being made on

their behalf. Compromises were inevitable and some were harder to reach than others, but in the end the Board was satisfied that no man was arbitrarily transferred. The last transfer out was on 6 March with the six remaining men being released by 31 March.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

Visits, which were a valuable part of the community life, continued to occur until closure (with an extra visit over Christmas for those men not on release under temporary licence (ROTL). A family day supported by Barnardo's happened. Access to telephones was limited and only improved as demand reduced.

The lack of any other male category D establishment within a radius of 60 miles by road inevitably had serious implications for prisoners' contact with their families. Minimising these was often an important element in the decisions which each man had to make. Once again, a degree of compromise was usually unavoidable.

## 8. The work of the IMB

This has been the fourth consecutive difficult year for the Board. As in the previous three years, the Board prioritised its work, but as new members developed their skills more areas of both sites were visited.

Prior to the announcement of closure, the Board had decided that one member would lead the monitoring of Hewell Grange, one visit each week would be attempted and new members would be introduced to monitoring the open site once they understood the complexities of the closed site.

Following the announcement of closure, the lead member spent many hours talking to prisoners and staff about their future and attending the weekly forum. His visible presence and considered responses to verbal questioning is a major reason for there being no applications to the Board.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period (monitoring The Grange)	10 (5)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period (monitoring The Grange)	10 (7)
Total number of visits to the establishment – many combined with visits to the main prison.	37
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions		
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions		
C	Equality		
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell		
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions		
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends		
F	Food and kitchens		
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	
H1	Property within this establishment		
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	1	
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	1	
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying		
K	Transfers		
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		
	Total number of applications	6	0



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