



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP Lowdham Grange

for reporting Year
2019/20

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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.

Main judgements

Are prisoners treated fairly?

Prisoners at HMP Lowdham Grange are generally treated fairly. Although the prison population is made up of some very challenging prisoners, the regime is built on a positive ethos. This is well illustrated by the amended approach adopted in the social responsibility unit (SRU), which emphasises positive reinforcement of good behaviour, as opposed to a coercive approach (see section 4).

However, concerns remain about:

- the loss of prisoners' property on transfer from other prisons (see section 5)
- the perception that some hold that the prisoner information and amenities committee fails to make swift progress to remedy issues raised (see section 7).

Are prisoners treated humanely?

Prisoners are treated humanely at Lowdham Grange. The Director provides firm leadership in this regard and frequently reminds staff of their obligation. This is reinforced by mechanisms such as the weekly sampling of use of force reports by the Deputy Director, who reviews paperwork and closed-circuit television footage. The emphasis on prisoner links with families is another good illustration of this, and the appointment of a proactive family liaison officer has been welcomed.

There are concerns remaining however in that:

- body-worn cameras are not worn as routinely as they should be, which makes elements of the regime difficult to monitor (see section 4)
- The key worker scheme is not yet working as consistently as it is meant to (see section 11).

Are prisoners prepared well for their release?

Although few prisoners are released directly from Lowdham, much work has gone on to improve this aspect of the regime. These include the reintroduction of vocational courses by the education department (see section 9) and the establishment of a team of prison-based probation officers.

Concerns remain over:

- the slow progress being made towards the release of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) (see section 11)
- the relatively slow progress towards improving education provision (see section 9)
- the apparent unwillingness or inability of local prisons to take Lowdham Grange prisoners in the months leading up to their release (see section 11).

Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the minister please:

- continue to work with colleagues in other government departments to ensure that appropriate facilities are available for those prisoners with mental health issues, in order to prevent the need for prisons to hold them in segregation for extended periods
- prioritise the review of those prisoners serving IPP sentences, in order to facilitate their safe release.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will the Prison Service please:

- give renewed emphasis to the work of storage and retrieval of prisoners' property when they are moved between prisons
- clarify, as a matter of urgency, the arrangements for the future of the contract for running this prison, given that Serco's contract has only just over two years to run.

TO THE DIRECTOR

Will the Director and his team please:

- continue to work on the systematic storage and retrieval of prisoners' property
- ensure that more staff use body-worn cameras regularly
- continue to give priority to improving the standard of education and training on offer to prisoners.

Improvements

It is pleasing to note that there have been some improvements this year to areas that have previously been of concern. These include:

- A full staffing complement has now been achieved and maintained.
- Time has been devoted to making more provision for those prisoners serving life sentences.
- The drug rehabilitation programme has been established and is well regarded by prisoners.
- Few, if any, prisoners are now held under Rule 45 on the wings.
- Healthcare facilities are being improved.
- A concerted effort to reduce violence has shown positive results, in that the number of assaults is down, and of serious attacks on staff has also reduced.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

HMP Lowdham Grange is a category B male training prison, opened in 1998. It is located in the village of Lowdham, 12 miles outside Nottingham.

The prison is operated by Serco Justice and Immigration, a part of Serco Plc ('Serco'). All services in the prison, except healthcare, are provided by Serco.

The certified normal accommodation is 888, with an operational capacity of 920. At the start of the reporting year, 1 February 2019, the prison population was 888. At the end of the reporting period, 31 January 2020, the prison population was 885. The average population for the year was 886. On 31 January 2020, the breakdown of the prisoners held was:

Life-sentenced prisoners	167
Indeterminate-sentenced prisoners	31
Determinate-sentenced prisoners	687

THE PRISON'S ROLE

The prison usually receives category B prisoners with more than four years left on their sentence.

Many of the prisoners have convictions for offences involving violence. Prisoners arriving at the prison have always spent a period in prison at another establishment. Prisoners are usually transferred to a category C prison, when they achieve category C status, or to a resettlement prison when they are close to their release date.

THE DIRECTOR

The Governing of private sector prisons is referred to as the 'Director'. They are appointed under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and have to be a certificated prison custody officer.

THE CONTROLLER

All private sector prisons have a controller's team, based in the prison. The role of the controller is to monitor the contract between the Secretary of State for Justice and Serco, to ensure compliance. The controller and her team have held senior positions in state-run prisons prior to appointment.

B Evidence sections 4 – 11

4. Safety

HMP Lowdham Grange is designated as part of the long-term high-security prison estate, and, as such, has a demanding prisoner profile. Almost 96% of prisoners are category B, the majority of whom are serving sentences of four years or more.

The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) notes that the number of Lowdham Grange prisoners serving indeterminate sentences, including those designated as IPPs, has shown a slight increase during the reporting period, as illustrated in the following table:

Prison population

	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	May 2019	Aug 2019	Nov 2019	Jan 2020	% at 31 Jan 2020
Cat B	836	865	853	850	858	845	95.80
Cat C	43	21	25	32	30	34	3.85
Cat D	1	1	3	3	0	3	0.34
Total	880	887	881	885	888	882	100
No. of indeterminate sentences	194	192	193	197	201	198	22.45
% Lifers	22.05	21.65	21.91	22.26	22.64	22.45	
No. of IPPs	33	32	27	30	32	30	3.40

Violence in the prison

The Board is pleased to report that the incidence of violence in the prison has generally reduced during the reporting year. This is best illustrated by the tables below.

Violence: prisoner-on-prisoner assaults

During the year (February 2019 to January 2020), there were 116 reported incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner violence. Although there was an overall reduction of 11.45% over the previous year, the Board is very concerned about the increase in the number of serious assaults, as shown below:

Prisoner-on-prisoner	2018	2019	% change
Minor assaults	112	82	26.79% reduction
Serious assaults	19	34	78.95% increase
Total assaults	131	116	11.45% reduction

The increase in the number of serious assaults is perhaps indicative of some of the tensions and rivalry that exist among the various group members within the prison. However, it is pleasing to note that few prisoners raised concerns with the Board about their safety through the application process or in person. This may indicate that prisoners, on the whole, feel safe.

The exception to this picture is presented in some segregation reviews boards, where a significant minority of prisoners report concern about their ongoing safety on the wings. This is usually to do with drug debt.

Violence: prisoner-on-staff assaults

During the year (February 2019 to January 2020), there was a total of 67 assaults by prisoners on staff. The Board is pleased to consider this to be a significant reduction of almost 35% over the previous year. Of particular note is the reduction in serious assaults on staff.

Prisoner-on-staff	2018	2019	% change
Minor assaults	78	58	25.64% reduction
Serious assaults	25	9	64.00% reduction
Total assaults	103	67	34.95% reduction

Board members have observed that relationships and cooperation between staff and prisoners is, in general, satisfactory and cooperative, and the improvement shown above may be a reflection of the greater stability of staffing leading to a more experienced officer profile.

Violence: weapons finds

The discovery of weapons in the possession of prisoners (or in cells and other hiding places) is made during intelligence-led and ad hoc searches of the establishment and prisoners. During the reporting period, there were 316 weapons found as a result of searches, an average of 26 finds per month. In the previous year, the average number of weapon finds was about 20 per month. While it is concerning that so many 'weapons' are being created by prisoners, it is to the credit of the staff that so many are discovered and that the number of incidents involving weapons is low.

Investigation by Board members indicates that 10–12% of the prisoners at Lowdham Grange have been involved with organised crime groups from areas such as London, Merseyside and the West Midlands. However, the real number may very well be higher. Often, these gangs are natural rivals and this may give rise to incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner, and probably drug-related, violence. Such a prisoner population profile suggests to the Board that challenges to discipline and good order are likely to continue.

Action taken by the prison to reduce violence

The Social Responsibility Unit (SRU)

The SRU accommodates 22 cells that are screened off from the remainder of the residents on L wing, to provide a dedicated area to allow prisoners enhanced support, where resources can be focused and concentrated to assist in making lasting change through a psychologically informed enabling environment. The main aims of the unit are:

- to address and manage all forms of antisocial behaviour and violence tendencies shown by identified individuals in our care
- to increase responsibility for behaviour and build motivation to address our own problems pro-socially
- to raise and develop awareness of prevention of violence
- to create a safe and stable environment for prisoners and staff living and working at Lowdham Grange.

The SRU has continued to develop over the last reporting year. Further resources have been allocated to support this, including the allocation of a full-time forensic psychologist in

training (FPiT), who was based on the unit from the beginning of 2019. A further part-time FPiT was allocated to the unit to support the running of the programme in January 2020. Within the last year, all SRU prison custody officers (PCOs) have had their training updated, and been able to access additional training courses. There is now an enhanced regime on the unit, which includes art courses, a bespoke programme devised by the mental health team, regular gym sessions specifically for the unit residents, in addition to other community-based activities, which are encouraged.

The SRU is now using a different approach to moderating prisoner behaviour. It has been recognised, through research, that a more strengths-based approach is needed, by offering incentives and rewards rather than rules, control and punishment.

SRU statistics

Approximately 124 referrals have been received and reviewed during this period; all referrals receive a full file review by one of the FPiTs and are discussed within the SRU admissions and progression meeting. The SRU has successfully worked with approximately 52 prisoners over this period. In regard to adjudications and incentives and earned privileges (IEP) warnings, from analysing the available data set, SRU leaders were able to confidently identify that completion of the full SRU programme had an impact on the overall reduction in adjudications and IEP warnings pre- and post-engagement.

Summary

Overall, the development of the unit and refinement of processes and procedures have witnessed some real successes from those prisoners who were fully engaged.

Incidents at height

There were 87 reported incidents at height during the year. All but one of these lasted for between a few minutes and a couple of hours. They were brought under control successfully by security staff, without serious injury.

One incident at height took place during the summer, on one of the warmest days of the year, and lasted for more than six hours, where the prisoner had hidden in the rafters of the gym hall. The command suite had been opened and, following the unsuccessful efforts of security staff, the National Tactical Response Group was called-in to resolve matters. Eventually, the prisoner surrendered and was returned to his cell without injury.

By the end of the reporting year, the prison was training an 'in-house' team to deal with incidents at height, which, it is hoped, will resolve matters more quickly and effectively when they occur.

Drug use in the prison

The inappropriate use of drugs by prisoners has continued to give cause for concern during the reporting year. Most common is the use of illegal psychoactive substances (PS) and new variants (also known as 'spice'). On some occasions, prescription drugs are mixed with PS, perhaps in an effort to gain an additional 'high' effect.

Drug finds

Drug finds are made during planned and ad hoc searches of cells and prisoners. During the reporting period, there were 201 drug finds, a monthly average of 17 finds. This is a very slight increase over the number of finds in the previous year (16 per month).

Although the Board is pleased that there has not been a major increase in drug finds over the year, we continue to be concerned that drug use has two significant effects on the safety of prisoners and staff, and the possible long-term damage to the mental health of users:

- Drug use poses a health and safety risk. Those who use drugs have little control of the dosage they are taking or the effects it will have. The use of PS results in a range of behaviours, from the catatonic to the extremely violent, both of which are difficult for staff to deal with. Violent behaviour can result in a threat to other prisoners and to staff, while psychosis induced in others can cause long-term damage to mental health.
- These drugs are often bought from other prisoners as part of organised supply activity. The result is debt, which can easily lead to bullying and intimidation, leading to situations where prisoners are relocated to the segregation unit, having committed acts of serious indiscipline and self-harm.

Action taken to reduce drug use and prohibited items

Random mandatory drug testing (MDT)

MDT takes place on a monthly basis, and during the 2019 reporting period 531 tests were administered, of which 78 tests were positive for traces of drugs. This represents a total of 14.7% positive tests and is an improvement by approximately 2.5% over the previous year (17.3%).

The START (substance misuse treatment and recovery therapy) programme

This innovative drug reduction programme was introduced in January 2019 and is a positive example of NHS specialists working closely with prison staff and prisoners to initiate a new approach to tackling drug use and any form of substance dependency.

The wing PCOs are selected on the basis that they have demonstrated an understanding of the recovery process, together with having a supportive attitude towards drug recovery. The healthcare START team is on the wing daily, enabling the prisoner to have access to their support on a regular basis.

Currently, there are 12 places available on the START programme; to be eligible, each prisoner must self-refer and have a current drug or alcohol problem, or be drug-free but struggling to remain abstinent. Those prisoners attending the programme are all housed in a single wing of a house-block. They remain on this wing for the three-month duration of the course and then for a further three months post-course completion, supporting new members. Two (prisoner) mentors are assigned to each group by the substance misuse health care team.

Initial results for the three programmes completed are very encouraging, with a 'graduation' rate of over 60%, as follows:

START programme number	No. at Intake	No. of Leavers	No. Graduated
1 (Jan 2019)	12	4	8
2	11	3	8
3	11	3	8
4 (Jan 2020)	10	5	In progress
Total:	44	15	24

Investigation by the Board revealed that, out of the 15 leavers to date:

- six were removed for assault, bullying or inappropriate behaviour within their group
- five decided that the programme was 'not for them' (a variety of reasons was given)
- one was expelled for being 'found in possession'
- one was reclassified as a category C prisoner
- two were removed for other reasons.

Although feedback, both from staff and prisoners, about the structure and effectiveness of START has been positive, the Board recognises that the programme is still undergoing some fine-tuning to make it more effective. In addition, we are informed that the number of specialist healthcare staff in the unit is not yet up to strength.

Although the other prisoners on the wing are carefully selected to be sympathetic to the aims of the programme, the natural turnover of prisoners on brings with it the possibility that more drugs and other substances may become available, and for some prisoners this temptation may be too great to resist, and make their recovery much more difficult. Nevertheless, some prisoners report that this programme is the most positive experience they have had while in prison.

The Board will continue to monitor the programme and the progress of the participants over the coming year.

Incoming mail

In addition to the programme of MDT in the prison, all incoming mail to prisoners is scanned, and where there is evidence of drugs, the mail is photocopied and the photocopy is given to the recipient with a letter of explanation. The original is bagged and tagged, and sent to the security department for disposal.

Evidence has shown that the use of Rapiscan equipment since April 2018 has successfully disrupted the supply of drug-impregnated mail to prisoners at the establishment. The principal PS drugs being detected are spice and cocaine. However, problems remain because of the changing composition of spice as new variants of the substance become available.

The rate of detection during the reporting year was 40–50 drug finds each month. This is a small reduction over the previous year, when the rate was 50–60 finds per month. This suggests that the knowledge that all mail will be scanned is acting as a deterrent. In January 2020, there were 45 finds, which is about average.

Searches and detection equipment

Visitors to the prison are subject to screening on arrival, and when prohibited items are found they are denied entry. Prison staff and external prison workers are also screened. The Board notes with some concern that the range of detection devices available to prison staff is limited, and detection is further hampered by current restrictions on body searches of visitors.

With regard to mobile phone finds during the reporting year, there was no change in the number of detections compared with the previous year. The current rate is 8–9 detections per month.

Bearing in mind the very strong possibility that drugs, mobile phones and other prohibited items are brought into the prison by visitors, the Board is encouraged to note that plans are in place to obtain a body-scanner for the visits hall to augment existing equipment.

Alcohol (hooch)

The discovery of hooch in cells and other hiding places is made during planned and ad hoc searches of the establishment and prisoners. The Board has found that there was an average of 33 hooch finds per month, with a spike in December (55 finds). Over the full year, there was an increase of over 30% in hooch finds.

The volume of hooch discovered over the 12-month period was almost 1,900 litres.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents

This is the process in prisons to support people at risk of suicide and self-harm.

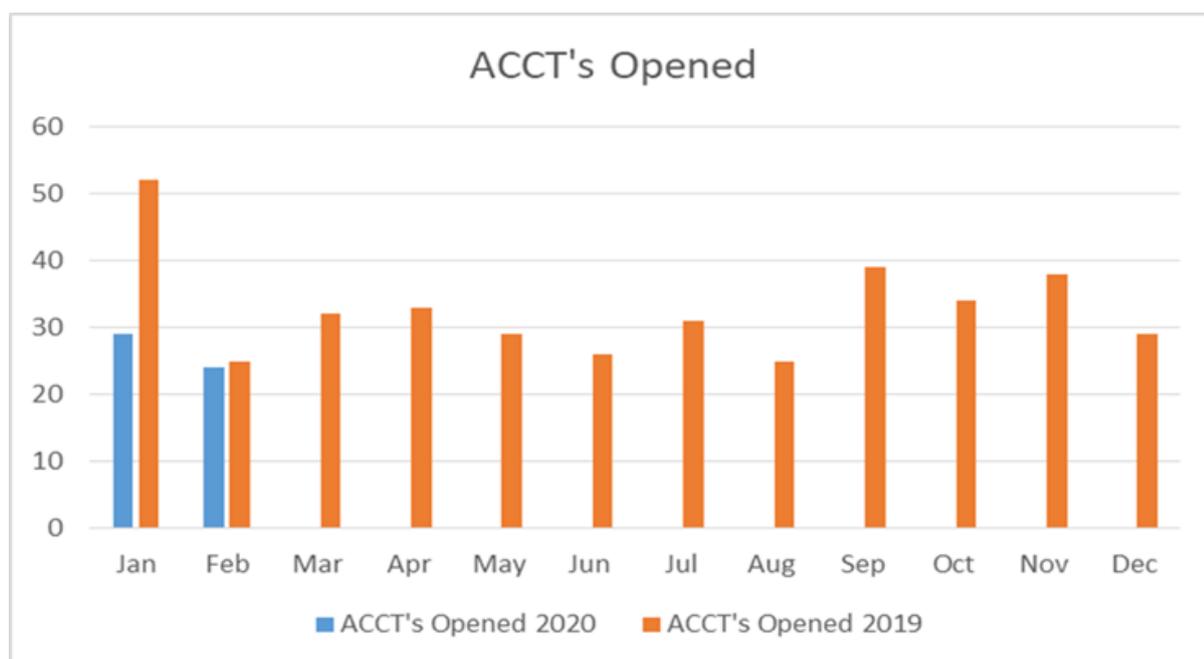
Lowdham Grange was one of nine prisons that took part in the pilot that introduced ACCT version 6. The pilot ran from February 2019 for four months and was then adapted for continued use. This was the culmination of a complete review of the ACCT process by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice. The previous system was found to have an over-emphasis on process over support for the individual prisoner.

The purpose of the ACCT system is to identify an individual's risks, triggers and protective factors, and to put in place a care plan to provide individual, person-focused support to address issues and reduce risk. To achieve this, there were some key elements of ACCT where there was a need to improve practice. These are:

- identification and assessment of risk
- multidisciplinary working and information sharing
- provision for person-centred care (with a focus on outcomes for the individual).

The new documentation has allowed this to happen, and the process is an improvement.

The chart below shows the numbers of ACCTs opened during the reporting year.



The Board has noted from rota visits that the completion of ACCT documentation has improved dramatically, and believe that this is because there is a dedicated team involved with the ACCT process.

Deaths in custody

Despite the good work observed in the ACCT process, there were, unfortunately, three deaths in custody during the reporting year, compared with four in the previous reporting year. All deaths in custody require a full inquest, with a jury.

No inquests for these three deaths took place during the reporting year. There were four inquests held during the reporting year, relating to the four deaths that occurred during the previous year. Board members have attended all the inquests as observers.

Date of inquest	Verdict
25/03/2019 Mr F	Death by misadventure (drug toxicity-related death)
01/04/2019 Mr B	Death by misadventure (drug toxicity-related death)
19/08/2019 Mr F	Narrative verdict of self-inflicted death (Found hanging in cell)
06/01/2020 Mr W	Death by misadventure (drug toxicity-related death)

Body-worn cameras

The Board has noted, and observed on rota visits, that despite instructions from senior managers, some officers are reluctant to use body-worn cameras. The Board is firm in its belief that they are a very useful tool that help to de-escalate potentially violent situations, and that they also provide essential evidence as to what happened in a given situation.

The Board hopes that the use of these cameras will become more prevalent in the coming year.

Conclusions

The safety of all at Lowdham Grange continues to be a priority for the management of the prison. Evidence suggests that, despite a challenging population of prisoners, the safety of prisoners and staff alike is improving, thanks to the initiatives being taken.

5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

Age

Over the 12-month reporting period, the age profile of prisoners has been stable in the 30–49-year age group; however, the Board notes that there are fewer prisoners aged 21–29 and more aged 50+. The Board will be continuing its monitoring of the regime and targeted activities, including healthcare provision, specifically for prisoners in the upper age groups.

Ethnicity

The Board notes the very diverse population, and an increase (in this reporting year) in the percentage of prisoners identifying as being from the Gypsy and Traveller community to 5%.

Throughout the reporting year, the number of black and minority ethnic prisoners has averaged around 400, despite prisoner movements each month. This represents nearly 50% of the population of Lowdham Grange and is significantly greater than the 26% which is the UK prison average for men from a black or minority ethnic group.

Religion

The wide range of religious beliefs practised by the prisoners again reflects the diverse population. The Board believes that managers, officers and, in particular, the chaplaincy team respect and accommodate all of these religious beliefs, giving committed faith support to prisoners, families and staff.

The Board notes that the chaplaincy team has hosted several courses from the Sycamore Tree project, which brings together unrelated victims and prisoners, where they talk about the effects of crime, the harm it causes and how to make things right. A trained facilitator opens up conversations about responsibility, confession, repentance, forgiveness, amends and reconciliation.

The Board has noted, in its monitoring, that the dietary needs of religions are met and that there is an understanding and respect of religious festivals.

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual	Gay/bisexual	Not disclosed
777	6	99

Prisoners declaring a disability

Yes	175
No	707

The Board notes that there are some good examples of support for a prisoner with a declared disability. A Board member was approached on a wing visit by a prisoner new to the establishment, claiming that he had virtually no sight. He said that his cousin had been transferred to Lowdham Grange with him and was his carer, but that he had been moved off his wing.

The prisoner did not come with a written assessment of his disability, so managers arranged for a comprehensive assessment of his needs to be made by an appropriately qualified social care professional from the county council's adult social care team. This resulted in a written assessment, with recommendations of 'reasonable adjustments', which were subsequently made, including the appointment and training of a prisoner to support his day-to-day activities.

In reviewing the daily menu choices which prisoners make on the electronic ATM on the wings, the Board notes that each option is clearly identified by a photograph and symbols for allergens, and that there are appropriate meals for all religious beliefs.

Foreign nationals

The number of foreign national prisoners has remained at a constant level of around 100 each month throughout the reporting year. Regular support is offered to these prisoners as part of their sentence planning, and contact is made with relevant embassies and consulates.

IEP status

	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Jan 19	53	394	433
Feb19	87	354	446
Jul 19	110	301	473
Jan 20	88	324	470

The Board notes that there has been an increase in the number of prisoners on the standard or enhanced level of the IEP scheme over the year, although in its monitoring it has seen that a robust system of review is used, and that privileges are swiftly removed in cases of violence towards other prisoners and staff.

Rewards and incentives

The community reward incentive scheme (CRIS) was launched throughout the prison in April 2018, and all prisoners had a choice to be a part of the scheme or remove themselves from it. To date, there are only three prisoners who have requested to leave the scheme, giving an involvement rate of 99.66%.

The scheme aims to reduce violence and increase attendance at purposeful activities. It also has a community-based aspect to it that encourages members to work together to earn points. It also aims to remind prisoners that their behaviour could also affect their community if they do not meet acceptable standards.

Board members have received positive feedback from prisoners about the scheme. It has definitely encouraged improved attendance at scheduled work/education activities, which has risen to over 60% in the year. The benefit to prisoners of the scheme is to spend 'earned' points, of which the purchase of phone credit is by far the most popular, although other award items are being considered or introduced.

The CRIS scheme has also held several family days, including summer sports days and winter markets. These have been highly praised by prisoners and their families as having a positive impact on the prisoner's life and building family ties.

The number of assaults by prisoners on staff and other prisoners, and of serious assaults has been closely monitored by the prison, and has fallen in each category in comparison with the previous year. It is not possible for the Board to determine how much of this reduction is due to the CRIS scheme or other initiatives (see also section 4).

Complaints

The Board has observed that most prisoners know how to make a complaint, and that there is support on the wings for those prisoners who have difficulty in completing a COMP1 or COMP1A form.

In the reporting year, there were 2,496 COMP1 forms submitted by 733 different prisoners, and 441 COMP1A forms. The Board notes that one prisoner submitted 134 complaints (5.4% of the total), while another submitted 98 (3.9% of the total) – that is, nearly 10% of all complaints were submitted by two prisoners. Of the 733 prisoners who submitted a COMP1

complaint, 332 did so on one occasion only (that is, accounting for 13.3% of all COMP1 complaints).

The Board notes that 15% of all complaints relate to prisoners' property, many of which refer to property lost in transit from another establishment or damaged/lost at another establishment. Other issues that are frequently complained about are residential issues (12%), mail (8%) and staff (7.8%).

The Board notes that there has been some improvement in the quality of the responses to prisoners' complaints, and also the efforts being made to follow up their property complaints. The Board has advised prisoners, once all other procedures have been exhausted, that they can seek investigation and compensation via the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The Board notes that this process can be very long winded, as there is a considerable backlog of appeals being considered. It also notes that once a judgement has been made by the PPO, there is also an opportunity for the prison to appeal, which can further delay any outcome.

Prisoner advice line (PAL)

PAL is manned by a team of three prisoners, who are trained and supported by senior managers. The Board notes that this service is providing a wide-ranging service to all prisoners at the establishment, especially in supporting newly arrived prisoners on the induction wing. The number of enquiries handled by PAL during the reporting year was just over 7,200, with the majority being to follow up on 'bag and tag' orders from external suppliers. The Board notes that the prisoners running the service answer almost all of the enquiries directly, and do not need to refer things on to departments/wing officers. PAL is very well appreciated by prisoners.

Family contact and visits

The Board is pleased to report that there continues to be an emphasis on maintaining family ties while prisoners are serving their sentence at Lowdham Grange. During the reporting year, the post of family support worker was made a substantive post and was observed to do good work in supporting prisoners with difficulties in family relationships.

During the reporting period, six family days were arranged, in addition to 'lifer days', which set out to address the different needs of these long-term prisoners and their families. Effort is made to make all these days special, with, for example, a mini zoo of small animals on one occasion.

Qualification for participation in these special days requires prisoners to have a demonstrable record of good behaviour for six months. The Board notes that some prisoners feel that exclusion from these days by virtue of their IEP status is unfair and denies them contact with their families. The prison counters this by saying that these events serve as a powerful incentive to improved behaviour.

The previous Board report noted that the visits hall was 'tired and unwelcoming', and during this reporting period plans have been drawn up to revitalise the space by extending the tuck shop into a canteen, providing additional crèche facilities and exchanging the current seating. These new arrangements are designed to give families more privacy and separation, while balancing the need for security and safety. Despite the delay to the scheme, work is scheduled to be completed during 2020. The Board notes that the planned improvements are aimed at facilitating better-quality and longer-duration family visits.

The photo booth, allowing family pictures to be taken for prisoners and their relatives as keepsakes of the visit, continues to be an important feature of the visits hall.

6. SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

Accommodation

The segregation unit is referred to as the 'reintegration unit'. It is housed in a purpose-built block, which contains 24 individual cells, including a constant observation cell and two 'special accommodation' cells.

The unit has two showers and two outdoor exercise areas, as well as a kitchen servery, where meals are received from the main kitchen and prepared for prisoners to eat in their cells.

The fabric of the unit can sometimes appear 'tired', as it is dealing with some very challenging prisoners who frequently abuse their surroundings. Damage to cells through such acts as flooding, setting fires and dirty protests is fairly common. Work on the environment is done on a constantly rolling programme, and acute damage is dealt with in a timely manner.

A new fitness room has also been created on the unit, which is popular among prisoners, who also have daily access to the exercise yards.

Staffing

Staffing levels on the unit have improved during the year, and those working there are now more carefully chosen. They are selected on the basis of experience and, especially, mental health awareness. The unit is led by a respected and skilled custodial manager, supported by three senior officers, who play an important part in mentoring and training staff who are new to the unit.

The Board frequently observes good and positive interactions between staff and prisoners on the unit. Even the most disturbed or disruptive prisoners are treated calmly and with respect.

The Board notes the greater involvement of the mental health team in the work of the unit. They attend and work with prisoners much more than in the past, and when attending segregation reviews are much better informed and more proactive. An example of this was observed when a prisoner with very long-standing behavioural difficulties, including severe and chronic self-harm, was being reviewed and the mental health nurse gave a detailed briefing of the strategy for managing him more positively. The substance misuse team also makes weekly visits to the unit, to work with some prisoners there.

Prisoners

The unit ran for most of the year at almost full capacity. As an average across the year, 20 prisoners were held in the unit. The total number of prisoners held during the year on Rule 45 was 204, and on 'own interest' was 21.

These figures mask an area of some concern, in that some prisoners are still held in the unit for extended periods. As an average, two prisoners are kept in excess of 100 days at any one time. While the Board is satisfied that the correct permission is granted at the 42- and 84-day deadlines, in accordance with national policy, these extended stays are undesirable and cause distress in some prisoners.

The most common reason for this to occur is the unavailability of suitable alternative provision for prisoners who are diagnosed with severe mental health issues. The Board reiterates its belief, noted last year, that extended periods of segregation are inappropriate for prisoners who are mentally ill or suffer from personality disorders. However, the Board is also satisfied that prison managers only use this facility when they have considered all alternatives available to them, and segregation provides the only option to keep staff and other prisoners safe.

It is of some concern that there are still considerable numbers of prisoners held in segregation who are subject to an ACCT. On average, this means that between 5 and 6 prisoners are subject to this arrangement at any one time. When considered in more detail, the Board is

satisfied that the ACCT process is followed carefully, and considers that the care shown by staff is commendable. This was illustrated by two examples of the ACCT review process, chaired by an Assistant Director and attended by senior representatives from a range of services such as psychology, mental health, safer custody and the drug abuse team. We observed these reviews to be careful and considered.

The Board notes that ACCT documentation is generally of a good standard.

Segregation reviews

As a change to previous practice, all reviews are now chaired by members of the senior management team, most of whom display impressive skills in managing prisoners. However, it is still the case that plans for the future of prisoners in the unit are made at a multidisciplinary meeting once a week, and that sometimes the senior team member chairing reviews is not as informed about future plans as they could be.

Virtual Seg

Over many years, the prison has had difficulties in moving violent and challenging prisoners on to other prisons. There has been a marked reluctance by category A prisons to accept transfers. During the reporting year, a 'virtual seg' arrangement was introduced by a number of participating prisons. Once a month, each prison can nominate two prisoners for transfer. The prisoners are put into 'virtual seg', and the last prison to refuse to accept the prisoner has to accept him.

In this way, two prisoners a month are moved on to start afresh in a new prison. The Board thinks that this is a good initiative. In all cases Lowdham Grange has done all it can to improve the behaviour of the prisoners being transferred and feels it is right that the prisoners are relocated to another establishment to have a fresh start in a different environment.

7. ACCOMMODATION (INCLUDING COMMUNICATION)

Accommodation at the establishment consists of five house blocks, divided into 14 wings. These were all built in the 1990s and 2000s, and so are relatively modern by Prison Service standards. All of the cells include toilet and washbasin facilities, and on six wings they include showers. The remaining eight wings have showers on the landings.

As we reported last year, the superficial fabric of these house blocks is still looking rather scruffy and unkempt in some areas. A programme of painting has helped in some instances but the work still needs more attention, in the view of the Board. A major refurbishment of floor coverings, which we referred to in our last report, has still not started in earnest, which is disappointing. It is believed that a plan and dates have been agreed with contractors for this work to be done soon.

All cells have telephone points and all but a handful of prisoners have a telephone handset for their use. Telephone numbers must be approved on an individual basis, and calls are regularly monitored. This is an important service and gives individuals regular access to their family, and to facilities such as the Samaritans. Telephone 'credit' must be paid for from earnings, although additional credit can be granted at times of stress or difficulty.

All the cells are single occupancy, with the exception of seven built to be shared. These are seldom used in this way.

Food is prepared in a central kitchen, which is run well. Meals are delivered to house blocks in heated trollies, towed by an electric tug. Each wing has a servery with heated serving stations, where food is distributed to prisoners. There is a good choice of menu, from which prisoners choose via the electronic ATM on each wing. Complaints about food are rare, which, we believe, reflects a decent standard of catering.

Staffing of wings

Staffing numbers have stabilised across the prison, and for much of the year the prison has had a full complement of custody officers. This is thanks to a recruitment and retention strategy, which has been driven by the Director. The strategy includes successive 'end-to-end' training cohorts of new recruits and a mentoring scheme for newly qualified PCOs. The result is that most wings are better staffed than in the past.

There has also been a determined attempt to identify staff corruption, and this has resulted in two cases of staff being prosecuted for breaches of security during the year.

Communication

The ATMs (see above) provide an excellent conduit for communication. Things such as menu choices, medical appointments, and family visits and work applications are all done via these ATMs. The Director expects his managers to communicate changes to policy and provide regular reminders about key matters via the same route. However, when the situation demands extraordinary action, individual printed notes under doors are provided. For example, Board members have noted the use of this method when it has been necessary to manage an incident at height on a wing, with other prisoners being locked down.

It should be noted that an unusual exception to the good level of communication occurred during the reporting year. A group of several dozen prisoners had traditionally received what they believed to be medically approved 'special diets'. After review by the healthcare team, it was decided that these diets were unjustified as the wide choice of menu allowed prisoners to make their own appropriate selections to match their needs. Unfortunately, on this occasion, prisoners were not consulted or forewarned and the Board received numerous complaints about this. This matter was eventually dealt with by swift and decisive action by the Director and his senior colleagues.

It is also important to note that there is a regular meeting between prisoner representatives from each wing and team managers from across the prison, to discuss and take action on prisoner concerns. Known as the 'prisoner information and amenities committee', this has been attended by Board members, who note that, while generally well attended, agreed action can sometimes be slow to be enacted.

8. HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE)

Healthcare at the establishment continues to be provided under contract by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and the Board believes that, in most cases, the services delivered are comparable to those in the community.

The Board reported a number of concerns in the 2018/19 annual report but also referred to improvement plans to address these shortcomings. In this reporting period, work continued to develop these plans, some of which relied on significant additional funding. The 2017 healthcare needs analysis had recognised a shortfall, and the additional funding stream started in July 2019, facilitating staff recruitment and capital projects.

Commissioning

The local delivery board is now meeting regularly. It is chaired by the Director and is consistently well attended by key prison and healthcare managers, social care team members and commissioners. Board members with special responsibility for healthcare also attend regularly.

This group is very task focused and monitors all development projects closely. It also maintains a detailed assessment of outcomes for prisoners. The group is demonstrating excellent partnership working.

Pharmacy provision

A new pharmacy has been created in redundant space, and opened in January 2020, thus ensuring compliance with the regulations for storage of medicines. Storage on the wings remains inadequate but may be improved by the acquisition of medication lockers, which are currently being assessed.

Healthcare accommodation

This unit remains unfit for purpose as it is far too small for the current prison population. However, cosmetic work on the building and the additional clinic rooms freed up by the removal of the pharmacy have made some improvement.

Diagnostic services

A monthly ultrasound clinic is now being held, following a successful pilot, and the use of telemedicine is now being explored.

Lengths of stay in segregation

Stays on the unit for those requiring transfer to mental health units remain a deep concern.

The 'Transfer and remission of adult prisoners under the Mental Health Act 1983 good practice guidance 2019', issued by the NHS, has had no impact to date. The East Midlands region has put in place the recommended Provider Collaborative (IMPACT) to support the intention to improve services by devolving budgets for specialist mental health to provider groups in each region. Unfortunately, it appears that the necessary cooperation between regions is not yet forthcoming.

The Board believes the processes and responsibilities would benefit from review.

Mental health provision

The poor mental health of many prisoners remains a concern but there is now a clear treatment strategy in place, and successful recruitment is starting to bring together a very innovative team. The planned wellbeing centre will offer programmes to help address the problems affecting a large proportion of long-term prisoners. The centre is built and is due to open in 2020. The Board will be monitoring developments closely, and hopes to see some impact of a more interdisciplinary approach this year.

Substance misuse

The drug recovery wing, which opened during 2019, is taking cohorts of 12 prisoners through programmes to become free of drugs and stay free through ongoing support. The objective is to support those who are successful to, in turn, support other prisoners in their endeavours to free themselves of drugs. The Board recognises the value of this work, and will be monitoring progress as the service develops. Some prisoners have reported to the Board that this initiative is the best drug treatment they have ever experienced.

Social care

We reported concerns about this service in the last annual report but noted that changes of personnel had been made in the local authority adult social care team. We are now pleased to report that there have been major improvements in this service, with regular visits from a specialist occupational therapist (OT) and good working relationships established between the prison and social care managers. The regular attendance of the OT and service manager at the local delivery board has led to a better understanding of the support and advice available.

Escorts and bed watches

This remains a challenge for the prison, particularly for outpatient visits and hospital stays. Internal improvements have been made, leading to a significant reduction in 'no-access visits'. Attempts are being made to engage with local hospitals to create appointment arrangements that will reduce requirements for escorts, but these have not proved fruitful at this time. The prison is exploring innovative ways of reducing the numbers of officers required for these tasks.

Complaints

Responses to healthcare complaints have improved, with standards being met in almost all cases. The use of an automated response system has helped with this, and it is possible to check that prisoners have accessed responses.

9. EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

In the last annual report, the Board reported that there were serious shortcomings in the provision of education at the establishment. Items of concern covered such matters as:

- an inadequate range of courses on offer
- a lack of monitoring of quality of provision
- poor provision for prisoners with special educational needs
- poor attendance rates
- differential pay rates serving as a disincentive to enter education, as work paid much better.

However, our report struck an optimistic note, in that plans were in place to drive improvement in all these areas.

It became clear during the early part of this reporting year that improvement was not progressing as effectively as we imagined. Among identified problems were:

- a lack of dynamic leadership for the education department
- shortages of appropriately qualified staff to expand the courses on offer
- a lack of management drive and vision to ensure that quality assurance measures were effective.

The management team of the prison identified these weaknesses and took steps to improve performance. The result was that the head of service left the establishment in July 2019 and a new, acting head of service immediately put in place a root-and-branch review of provision. This resulted in an action plan with some key targets, which we are pleased to see are making an impact.

Notable improvements in provision are as follows.

- There is a greater range of courses on offer. These include:
 - 14 courses in language and literacy, ranging from pre-entry level to GCSE
 - seven vocational courses, including painting and decorating, and industrial cleaning
 - new courses are planned in barista training, hospitality and horticulture. All courses are accredited to level 1 or 2
 - Open University courses at undergraduate level
 - Over 20 courses in art and graphic design, ranging from level 1 to AS level
 - A suite of four courses in relationships and behaviour improvement.
- These courses are supported by the introduction of the ‘virtual campus’, a virtual learning environment designed for use in prisons.
- There is a much more effective performance management system to improve teaching quality. This has resulted in the resignation of four tutors and the recruitment of more and better qualified staff.
- Eight prisoners have been recruited and trained as learning support assistants.
- There has been more systematic use of individual learning plans to review the progress of individual prisoners.
- There is now a digital learning management system in place, which draws down data to formulate digital learning plans, learner progression and achievement.
- An experienced special educational needs coordinator has been appointed, to ensure that provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities is more systematic.
- Pay rates have been restructured, to make education pay as well as work.
- A teaching placement has been set up with Nottingham Trent University which will help support the basic skills delivery and forge broader links between the education department and the university’

These improvements have been achieved in a relatively short time, thanks to the energy and vision of the acting head of service, but it is, as yet, too soon to see the benefits to prisoners in the form of hard success data.

The department has also set up a prisoner focus group to help identify more accurately prisoner needs and aspirations.

Prisoners continue to show little discontent with education provision, and during the year the Board received no applications related to education provision.

The issues of concern for the coming year include:

- recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified staff. There is a shortfall of six tutors, as of February 2020
- new Ofsted requirements. These have changed the expected focus of educational provision
- contract delivery issues leading to underperformance (October 2019 at 58% and January 2020 at 79%).

The Board anticipates significant improvements in outcomes for learners in the coming year.

10. WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

There is a varied range of employment for prisoners, including an industrial unit housing seven workshops, and several others located throughout the prison. These include a recycling centre, a small horticultural nursery and a call centre.

Employment in the workshops includes the manufacture of furniture, creation of dog beds and the production of horse blankets for use in the 2020 Olympics.

The work in these units is much sought after by prisoners as it provides a steady income, which allows them to purchase some personal items like toiletries from the prison 'shop'.

There were changes in pay structure in the course of the year, in an effort to incentivise the uptake of educational opportunities. The disparity between the two areas was such that prisoners preferred industrial jobs because of the income opportunities, against a lower income from education. This has been addressed, and there is now parity. Attendance rates for workshop jobs continue to be high.

Overall, there are 332 jobs in business enterprises workshops; an increase of 51 from the last reporting year, which is a welcome improvement. There are a further 351 jobs available on the wings and around the prison, ranging from wing cleaners, servery workers and wing buddies. There were 35 prisoners engaged in vocational training at the end of the reporting year. This training includes kitchen work, industrial cleaning and warehouse/manufacturing training.

A limited number of prisoners have access to a video editing suite, where they learn how to build websites, coding and video editing; notably, all of this is done without access to the internet. This training can allow prisoners to achieve an appropriate qualification in this field. This wide range of employment accounts for the majority of the prisoner population. However, at the end of the reporting period there were 51 prisoners unemployed, of whom 27 were intentionally unemployed. This latter group are regularly challenged by their key worker and offender supervisor in an effort to reduce the overall number. In essence, this group is composed of prisoners who refuse to engage fully with the prison regime for a variety of reasons. The remaining unemployed prisoners are between jobs; this can occur frequently, as when there is a vacancy it cannot automatically be filled, as the security clearance requirements need to match those of the prisoner awaiting a job. The turnover of prisoners moving from one job or course to another, or moving to another prison, leaves a vacancy to be filled.

The majority of prisoners in the workshops are engaged in production line activities, which may in many instances be monotonous. This reflects much of the work available in the outside world, and the Board views this as appropriate preparation for life on release.

As reported earlier (see section 9), there is a renewed emphasis on revitalising vocational training. It is expected that, in the coming year, there will be a wider range of vocational training opportunities on offer. However, the Board is acutely aware that all prisoners at the establishment are serving long sentences of more than four years, with 232 serving life or IPP sentences. Release from this prison is rare, and as a consequence some vocational qualifications are likely to be outdated by the time of release, or, if a prisoner moves to a category C establishment, there is often no opportunity to use these vocational skills.

Work allocation is overseen by an allocation board, which meets weekly and is attended by an Assistant Director and representatives from a wide range of functions inside the prison. When visited by the Board, the allocation board appears to function well. However, prisoners complain about the process, challenging both the fairness and slowness of decisions made; these claims have yet to be substantiated.

11. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

As part of the long-term high-security estate, HMP Lowdham Grange should hold very few prisoners immediately prior to their release. However, in the last year 20 prisoners have been released from the prison. This is a higher number than the Board expects, as prisoners are meant to transfer to a local prison near to their home in the three months before release, to facilitate planning with local probation officers and other services. On investigation, it appears that it is increasingly difficult to access places in local prisons for this purpose. This is a matter of concern to the Board.

As we reported last year, the prison does much commendable work to prepare prisoners for their eventual release. The offender management unit (OMU) appears to function well, and sentence planning is generally good. Few problems with the OMU are raised with members of Board.

Good-quality support for improved behaviour and socialisation is offered from the education department, in the form of such courses as

- the START programme (see section 4), to reduce drug use
- the work of the sports academy, which has been the springboard for at least four ex-prisoners to take successful posts in the sports and leisure industry
- the pro-social behaviour modelling course
- a greater range of vocational courses than previously on offer, such as in industrial cleaning, and painting and decorating.

In addition to this, the regime introduced into the SRU (see section 4) is designed to make a positive impact on a prisoner's long-term self-management.

Work and relationships with the Probation Service have considerably improved during the reporting year, with the first appointments to a team of probation officers attached to the prison. The Board is impressed with the enthusiasm of their initial work, and looks forward to additional appointments to bring the team up to full capacity. Their work is likely to have a significant input into the support of prisoners as they near release.

IPP prisoners

The Board is pleased to note that the Prison Service is giving more attention to the sentence management of those prisoners serving IPP sentences. Unfortunately, regular updates to the Board indicate that there are still 31 IPP prisoners at Lowdham, some of whom are many years over their original tariff. It is of concern that these prisoners find it very difficult to progress with their sentence plan.

Key worker scheme

The key worker scheme has become more embedded in the work of the prison during the year. Board members have noted the involvement of PCOs across the prison engaged in key worker interviews with prisoners. All prisoners now have a named key worker.

The scheme is not without challenges, however, and the following issues have been noted by the Board.

- Prisoners have complained that, although they have a named key worker, some see as many as four different officers deputising for them. We believe that this matter is being addressed.

- Some prisoners complain that they find the sessions with key workers too frequent and similar in format to be useful. They describe that they are only minimally engaged with the conversations.
- Members have observed sessions that apparently last for less than five minutes. This seems to illustrate the point above.
- Professional review of the documentation underpinning these key worker sessions by the Ministry of Justice controller team suggests that the quality of recording is inconsistent. Some is of a good standard but not all.

It is hoped that the good foundations established will see an ongoing improvement in the key worker scheme in the future.

C Section – The work of the IMB

During the reporting year, five new members were appointed by the minister, and four of them successfully completed their training period and have become valued Board members. They bring a diverse range of skills and experience to the Board, complementing our varied, energetic and committed membership.

The Board has had a wide range of very relevant training during the year, including a full briefing on serious incidents in the command suite, a security update, and presentations from healthcare staff, Probation Service staff and the police investigations officer within the prison. This has enabled all members to gain a greater understanding of the work of these departments/agencies.

A group visit to HMP Dovegate to share procedures and ideas was also valuable.

During the year, members attended inquests into deaths in custody as observers. This attendance was noted and appreciated by the Coroner.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Total number of visits to the establishment	545
Total number of segregation reviews attended	132

D Section – Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	6	8
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	4	12
C	Equality	7	10
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	17	35
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	10	25
E 2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	4
F	Food and kitchens	13	8
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	21	24
H 1	Property within this establishment	30	57
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	23	46
H 3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	1
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	7	16
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	14	26
K	Transfers	10	8
L	Miscellaneous	37	41
CA	Confidential access	18	26
	Total number of IMB applications	221	347