



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Rochester

For reporting year

1 April 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.

Description of the establishment

Rochester is a Category C Resettlement prison for both adult male and young offenders; it has an Operational Capacity of 695. Prisoners are held in eight residential units: one is a dedicated drug reduction unit, six are general accommodation, and one caters for prisoners with enhanced privilege status, and has improved cell facilities. There is a separate Care and Separation Unit (CSU). One wing has been allocated for first night accommodation and induction into the prison.

The prison has four Edwardian built wings and 4 modern blocks. The older wings are challenging to maintain. The newer wings have continual ventilation and heating problems. Maintenance is provided by GFSL. The grounds are spacious with each wing being a separate location. The open location of the prison gives plenty of opportunity for fresh air and outdoor activity

From May 2020 (outside of the reporting period) an Annex utilising the old Medway Secure Training Centre has been in place, in order to provide D Cat residents with suitable accommodation during the Covid-19 lockdown period. The Operational Capacity however has remained at 695.

As a Resettlement prison, the regime is intended to give prisoners training through a structured sentence plan. Rochester actively engages with prisoners to address their offending behaviour and offers opportunities to engage in training, education and work, linked to employment where possible. Increasing the links to real employment vacancies is a continuing aim. The Forward Trust manages the drug-recovery programmes; Kent Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company prepares prisoners for release - housing, finance and mentoring. The physical well-being of prisoners is catered for through two well-run gymnasiums, offering competitive and recreational activities. Healthcare support for prisoners is available from the NHS/OXLEAS Healthcare team, with InReach for mental health wellbeing. The Chaplaincy is fully staffed and can provide assistance across all faiths. The Spurgeons charity is involved with Visiting Arrangements, and more generally there is community support from various external organisations.

3. Executive summary

The COVID-19 outbreak has had an impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of the constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

3.1 Background to the report

HMP & YOI Rochester continues to provide a safe and decent environment for prisoners. Its prison officers deal with offenders in their care as sympathetically and effectively as resources allow, despite there being some prisoners who are especially demanding and whose needs are increasingly difficult to meet. In the main the most demanding prisoners are those with mental health issues, including those with an underlying substance abuse issue which may be exacerbated whilst in prison.

The availability of contraband including new psychoactive substances (NPS) and other illicit drugs, mobile phones and tobacco is leading to violence, to debt and, in turn, becomes a prime cause of prisoners self-harming. Although there are improved security cameras, efforts to overcome the availability of contraband are hampered by Rochester's open location.

Many of the buildings are Edwardian, structurally poor, and difficult to modernise. Throughout the reporting period there has been a severe vermin control problem in many of the prison's buildings.

The Key Worker system has been introduced successfully and has proved particularly effective during the Covid-19 Lockdown period, where conversations between prisoner and key workers have helped gain buy-in to the restrictions being imposed. Prior to this, the Board witnessed the effectiveness of key working in a range of areas, such as property, healthcare and activities.

The new Incentives and Policy Framework was piloted at Rochester this year, coming into effect from 30 January. The Board monitored its development, and believes it was undertaken in a thorough and effective way, in consultation with staff and prisoners. The communication supporting its introduction was especially good. However, due to Covid-19 Lockdown, it is too soon to comment on how it will actually work in practice.

As a resettlement prison, preparation for release is a key feature of the regime at Rochester. However a lack of tutors impacts on the availability of education and skills training. The position is better for work activity, with attendance rates increasing to 85%. Behavioural programmes have also reached their target. Numbers being released on temporary licence (ROTL) have increased, but there are delays on home detention curfew (HDC) because of late replies from probation and social services. There are too many Category D prisoners awaiting relocation to a Category D establishment; the Board has received many applications about the

disappointment and feeling of general unfairness the delay is causing.

A good decision was made by the Prison Service to utilise the old Medway Secure Training Centre building for housing Category D prisoners during the Covid outbreak. Known as the Annex (as it is run by HMP Rochester), the conversion was achieved speedily, and demonstrates what can be accomplished when all parties work together coherently. The Board was duly impressed and commends all those involved in achieving this project.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

HMP Rochester continues to be a difficult and challenging prison environment, with illicit substance abuse a continuing problem. However it has remained stable and performed its key role as a resettlement prison as effectively as resources allow. Levels of violence have been gradually falling during the year and, with the exception of a few incidents, the Board retains the view that it is a safe environment for the prisoners. During the lockdown period the lack of incidents reflects the generally good and co-operative relationship there is between staff and prisoners at Rochester.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board considers that a humane and rehabilitative regime is being delivered within the prison in spite of the difficulties it faces, such as deteriorating buildings and the availability of drugs. The Board's perception is that prisoners are being treated fairly, with adjudications conducted correctly, the conclusions reasonable and the outcomes just and fair. Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) and Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) reviews undertaken within required timescales with some positive outcomes. Unfortunately, on several occasions, there were long delays in transferring re-categorised prisoners from the CSU. This is unacceptable and the Board have asked for these situations to be proactively addressed. The Board's view is that provisions for Equalities and Safer Custody are good and the prison is operating in an equitable way. The complaints system works efficiently and evening association has been successfully restored.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Healthcare appointments are commensurate with community NHS provision. Mental healthcare and drug recovery arrangements are good. The Key Worker scheme has been introduced successfully and the Board has seen evidence of the benefits it can produce, subject to prisoners being prepared to engage with their Key Worker. There is good exercise provision and the Chaplaincy team works hard to engage

with all prisoners not just those with faith. The vermin problem is severe and because of this prisoners are issued with plastic boxes for food retained in their cells.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The prison does aim to prepare prisoners for release, but staffing shortages of tutors and trainers impacts on what can be delivered for rehabilitation. Where it does happen, engagement with prisoners is good. Behavioural programmes are meeting their delivery targets, and attendance at work activity is at 85%, better than the national target. However the Board remains convinced that the inability to deliver sufficient meaningful occupation for the prisoners continues to be a contributory factor to the drugs problem at the prison

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- a) The Board retains the view that to enable a better outcome for prisoners and reduce re-offending, increased funding for resources should be allocated across the entire prison estate for tackling drug-use by prisoners. This includes improvements in security technology and intervention programmes.
- b) Re-offending rates cannot be reduced unless there is suitable accommodation for all prisoners who have completed their sentence; too many prisoners are released from Rochester to become homeless rough sleepers. The recent initiative for prisons to refer those at risk of homelessness to local authorities, as referred to by the Minister in replying to previous reports, does not seem to be producing any improvement.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- a) Property losses on transfer: As raised on previous reports, there appears to have been no progress in resolving the problems which occur when a prisoner and their property are transferred from other establishments. Frustratingly items are still going missing and unnecessary delays occurring. This is a transport issue, not one of volumetric control. Is there any likelihood of a revised framework for ensuring transferring prisoners' property is handled more effectively? (*Paragraph 5.8 a and b refer*)
- b) When a prisoner is re-categorised from C to B, they are retained in the CSU awaiting transfer. This year transfers have taken too long to arrange due mainly to lack of co-operation from receiving prisons. It means the individual is kept in confined conditions rather than returning to normal location in a Cat B prison. Can this be addressed so there is more co-

operation between prisons managers about these kinds of transfers?
(*Paragraph 5.2.5 refers*)

- c) Similarly there were too many Category D prisoners in Rochester awaiting transfer to Category D conditions. The creation of the Annex has mitigated this during the lockdown period, but it is a temporary fix and more Category D accommodation needs to be resourced. (*Paragraph 7.3.4 refers*)
- d) Roll Count Arrangements – see comments to The Governor below.

TO THE GOVERNOR

Cell clearance checks are still haphazard and many are not conducted properly, particularly when an individual is moved to the CSU from a double cell. Can this be addressed please? (*Paragraph 5.8.c refers*)

Roll Count Difficulties: The change in procedure has been difficult to implement at Rochester with its open estate. Obviously the whereabouts of prisoners must be known, but prior to lockdown this was causing unnecessary stress and disruption to many parts of the prison. As lockdown restrictions relax, can this situation be addressed so that the disruption experienced in January and February 2020 does not return? (*Paragraph 4.3.5 refers*)

3.4 Progress since the last report

The attendance rate at Work (Industries) at 85% has exceeded the national target of 80%. This is a significant achievement, given some of the work is mundane and not something the prisoners would wish to be doing.

There has been an increase in the ROTL numbers, in accordance with the Farmer Review. Some of these have taken place overnight, a facility which is not available at some other Category C prisons.

Key Working has been achieved and is working effectively at the prison.

The Incentives Policy Framework was trialled at Rochester, and was a good example of how co-operation between staff and prisoners could act together to produce a workable system.

New security cameras (referred to in last year's report) are assisting in effectively monitoring hotspots where contraband is thrown into the prison, and producing results.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Both functions work well, with healthcare checks are being made. E wing is a dedicated induction wing, with additional support being given to first-time prisoners. Induction briefings are trustee-prisoner led, with also a contribution from the Chaplaincy. The Board regularly monitors the quality of inductions, which are, in the main, good.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There have been no deaths in custody this year. There is one inquest outstanding from a death last year, but the PPO report has been completed and shared with the Board. The Board actively engaged with the relevant Governor about the report outcomes and noted that all recommendations have been fulfilled and quality assured by the regional safety team.

4.2.2 ACCT reviews are, in the main, completed properly. ACCT numbers are around 25 per month, which is a slight increase on last year. However this increase reflects a couple of prolific self-harmers at the prison. Some prisoners use self-harming as a coping mechanism. However, there is also evidence that some self-harming is used as means to avoid adjudications and court appearances, or as a form of protest and manipulation.

4.2.3 Last year the Board noted that ligature incidents were increasing. This trend has not continued, but the Board would like it noted that commendable swift action by prison officers has on many occasions prevented attempts by prisoners at self-inflicted death.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The availability of drugs, especially NPS, at Rochester continues to be the main issue for safety and security management at the prison. Drug-related debt, and the subsequent bullying and intimidation remain significant elements of life at Rochester.

4.3.2 In spite of this, the Board's view is that Rochester continues to be a safe environment for those living there. In walking around the grounds, it feels very safe, particularly during free-flow, with groups of men chatting amiably with each other and with staff. Prior to lockdown, violence levels were falling, with 275 violent incidents recorded for the report period. During the reporting period 119 weapons were found, a significant drop from last year (cf 135). Challenge, Support and Intervention Planning (CSIP) arrangements are working well. Most violence is associated with debt caused through drugs.

4.3.3 Gang-related violence is relatively low. There were some incidents relating to the arrival of newly transferred prisoners, and for a while 'county lines' gang issues were causing concerns. There is a lack of evidence of how this may have developed because of Covid19 lockdown. More generally, 'gangs' are formed within wings and across the prison, irrespective of previous gang membership.

4.3.4 The Board visits the few prisoners who are self-isolating, and checks that arrangements to support those who are doing so are appropriate. More generally the Board has found that those self-isolating usually wish to remain at Rochester, rather than transfer. A VR (Violence Reduction) gym session is available for prisoners who are self-isolating, and also works as an effective way to re-integrate vulnerable prisoners.

4.3.5 The Board must highlight its concerns regarding the additional stress to prisoners caused by the change in roll count arrangements. In February there were some indications of a possible increase in violence due to the frustration prisoners were experiencing by being locked up at various locations until the roll count was correct. For example over 40 prisoners were left locked into Healthcare at one point. The delays mean that medications are not collected at correct times, kitchen trolley collections are held up, and prisoners end up remaining behind their doors. Prison managers acknowledge there is a procedure which has to be followed, and the whereabouts of prisoners must be known, but this change of procedure is difficult to implement at Rochester with its open estate. While the roll count process was gradually improving before lockdown, the difficulties it caused needs to be addressed as the situation relaxes.

4.4 Safeguarding

From evidence through conversations with prisoners, Safer Custody at Rochester is now providing good support. Any prisoner who is at risk from fellow inmates has been swiftly protected. Unfortunately, the only safe accommodation is within the Segregation Unit, and it takes time for transfer arrangements to be made. The Board has monitored those prisoners who need special accommodation because of disabilities, and are satisfied this requirement is being properly addressed.

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1 Incidents recorded as Use of Force at 485 are slightly less than last year. Of these 32 were planned and 453 responsive. The Board is notified of planned forced removals and has noted the level of force used on the occasions monitored has been appropriate. The Board has no knowledge of Pava spray being deployed

4.5.2 The majority of incidences of Use of Force are for those aged between 22 -29. Looking at the figures for March (which is a pretty typical month), it does seem that a higher percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) prisoners are recorded under Use of Force. (*See paragraph 5.4.*) This is the first time the Board has noted this statistic and will look into it more closely in the coming year.

NB: The criteria recording level for UOF is different to that of violent incidents, for example UOF can cover non-compliance about returning to a cell etc, hence the higher numbers.

4.5.3 The National Team were called to the prison 4 times during the year, compared with 10 times last year. All were for incidents at height.

4.6 Substance misuse

4.6.1 The openness of the Rochester site presents the greatest challenge for the security team in its effort to stop illicit substances and mobile phones coming into the prison. Newly installed CCTV has assisted in identifying items thrown over the prison fences and to monitor hotspots more closely. The regular movement of prisoners around the grounds provides opportunities for collection and dispersal of contraband. New processes have been introduced to identify when a parcel is seen being thrown over the walls. This instructs staff to secure residents, cease movement and search any resident returning to any area. This was created in conjunction with guidance from the National Safety team who are assisting prisons in trying to reduce the supply illicit substance consumption. In the reporting period, 66 parcels have been intercepted by the security team. The parcels are often large multiple 1 litre bottles. Unfortunately, it is difficult to estimate the interception rate of parcels, due to the openness of the site; sometimes it can be as high as 50%, but also much lower.

4.6.2 NPS remains the most significant drug in the prison. All mail is now photocopied and a copy given to residents in an attempt to reduce NPS laced paper coming in. It has been noted there has been a decrease of drugs at the prison while visiting has been closed during Covid-19 lockdown.

4.6.3 Illicit substance finds have increased to 278, a rise of 25% over last year, but there has been a decrease in the number of mobile phones found at 118 (cf 216 last year). There have been numerous finds for tobacco (100 cf 93 last year), and this has become a major component of intercepted parcels. Unfortunately there is still a ready customer base for tobacco despite the availability of Vaping devices.

4.6.4 More recently there has been a significant rise in fermenting liquid ('hooch') finds, 87 cf 78 last year. This occurs when it is difficult to obtain other illicit substances; it is easy to brew and doesn't carry the same penalty of additional prison days. However its effects are disruptive with drunken prisoners becoming violent. Fermenting liquid search dogs (loaned from HMP Highdown) were particularly successful during Christmas and New Year in locating 60+ litres of 'hooch' hidden in cells.

4.6.5 Not exactly substance misuse, but for the first time the Board became aware of two cases where a mobile phone was swallowed by a prisoner, whose cell was being searched. The small size of phones acts as an enabler to prisoners for procuring drugs.

4.6.6 Mandatory drug testing is conducted correctly and in a considerate way. The Board has attended subsequent adjudications for positive tests, and procedures have been followed. Results are as follows: random tests – 417 with 111 positive results, (cf last year 411 being 151 positive); suspicion tests – 534 with 239 positive (cf 311 with 217 positive). The numbers appear to show a decline in positive results for random testing. Intelligence led testing continues to be productive, although less so than last year, and reflects the on-going problem of drug availability at the prison.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Maintenance at Rochester is challenging, and GFSL has performed better this year. The older blocks require continual physical maintenance of some kind such as repairing showers, fixing the ventilation and various flooring and lighting issues. There has been some refurbishment in the past year, but funding changes have reduced planned refurbishment projects. The Board's view is that the older buildings are meeting a minimal standard of acceptable accommodation. In addition there are still ventilation problems on the newer wings, with action taken to provide air cooling equipment. Each wing regularly has washers and tumble driers out of action due to overuse, with GFSL constantly being required to fix breakdowns. In turn this leads to prisoners becoming frustrated by the long wait for repairs. In general, however, cleanliness is good on all wings.

5.1.2 **Vermin:** As reported last year, vermin are a serious problem throughout the prison, mainly on the old wings, but also in the kitchen and healthcare buildings. Rentokil have attended without much success, although there has been improvement in recent months with a new baiting process. New arrangements for waste disposal have recently been introduced and the prison now has a cat. Tupperware boxes are being provided for prisoners to keep their food in. Control of the vermin continues to plague the Prison Governor, and is a major problem directly affecting prisoners and workers at Rochester, many of whom see vermin on a daily basis.

5.1.3 **Catering:** A variety of nourishing and balanced food is hygienically prepared and provided to prisoners to cater for their health, religious and cultural needs. This is evidenced by the IMB receiving very few complaints about the quality or quantity of food being provided. All dietary needs are being met.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

5.2.1 As noted last year, the Segregation Unit (CSU) is still being used as an opportunity to escape from the drug and debt culture of the prison with some prisoners committing an offence in order to gain access to the CSU and then refusing to leave. This is not the purpose of CSU, and the Board continues to monitor this closely.

5.2.2. There have been changes in the management and staffing of the Unit, which are taking a while to settle in. Importantly, the Board continues to be informed within 24 hours of new arrivals. Many prisoners in the CSU are exceptionally difficult to manage, and having a settled cadre of officers working in CSU enables a skilled and experienced approach in dealing with them. The Board commends past and present CSU teams for their professionalism and patience.

5.2.3 The Board visits the Unit several times a week, regularly attending Governors' and Independent Adjudications, and Good Order and Discipline reviews. With few exceptions, all reviews and adjudications attended are conducted carefully, fairly and appropriately. The actual accommodation is old, but cleanliness is good. There have been several 'dirty protests' during the year, which the Board is alerted to immediately and monitors that hygiene arrangements are followed.

5.2.4 Occupancy of the CSU fluctuates. For example in March (which is indicative) there were 40 occupants, with many only staying for a few days following a UoF incident. Of the 40 in March, 10 were noted as having mental health difficulties (*see paragraph 5.4.4*). ACCT documentation is correct, and the ACCT reviews attended by the Board are considerate towards the prisoner. Encouragingly, in the first 3 months of 2020, Special Accommodation was used on just one occasion.

5.2.5 There were relatively few cases when the 42-day time limit was exceeded. The majority of these arise when a prisoner's status is changed to Category B. The delay is usually due to the unwillingness of other prisons to accept the re-categorised prisoner as a transferee from the CSU. This delay is unacceptable, and any re-categorised prisoners should be relocated as soon as possible.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The introduction of OMiC key workers this year went smoothly and the target for the number of key workers in place was met. While not all prisoners have bought into the system, there is considerable evidence that key working is becoming effective. Relationships are being built and prisoners have spoken about "letting their key worker down" by being in trouble. The Governor has reported that key workers have been an excellent tool to have during the lockdown period.

5.3.2 Importantly, during lockdown Rochester has been stable, with compliance to self-distancing and isolating, and, at time of writing, is virus free. This could not have been achieved unless there was buy-in by the prisoners to the arrangements in place and is a good indication of the level of positive interaction there is between prisoners and staff at Rochester.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The Equalities Team provides regular reporting with analysis aimed at identifying trends, relating it to reasons for self-harming and violence, and thereby being able to identify possible discrimination within the prison. There is an effective partnership between governors and officers. The team works well with prisoners

with open and constructive discussions. The chart below outlines the current ethnicity and mix of Adults and YOs at the prison.

	No of Residents	% of Residents	White British	BAME	% White British	% BAME
Total Residents	667	100%	428	239	64%	36%
Adults	593	88.91%	392	201	66%	34%
YOs	74	11.09%	36	38	49%	51%

The significant change from last year’s reporting for the same period is the increase in BAME YOs (cf 45% in 2019), which in turn was a rise on the previous year. There is also a return to the previous ratio of adult prisoners making up 90% of the prison population, cf 66% in 2019.

5.4.2 Adjudication hearings: In March of the 65 proven adjudications a third were BAME prisoners. This is roughly in keeping with the mix of White to BAME prisoners at the prison. The Board also has monitored whether a higher proportion of BAME prisoners appear at adjudication hearings, and from the prison statistics and our own observations, they do not.

5.4.3 The average number of Discrimination Incident Reports (DIRF) is running at around 11 per month, which is slightly up on last year. The Board has been unable to establish if prisoners and staff are less or more inclined to categorize an incident as racist. However it notes that data collection and analysis is good, and that concerns are investigated thoroughly, with many resolved. The Board received just 3 applications about equality this year. It is worth noting there are relatively few prisoner officers from the BAME community, although there are BAME staff working at the prison, ie as OSGs, in Healthcare etc. While this probably reflects the local employment situation, given the numbers of BAME prisoners, it is unfortunate there are so few BAME officers.

5.4.4 The majority of prisoners are below the age of 39, with about 10 aged 60 plus. The Board has noted that issues affecting elderly prisoners or those with impaired mobility are considered appropriately, for example there are mobility scooters in use at the prison. At present, 31 % of prisoners have a self-declared disability (no change from last year), with over 100 declaring a mental illness and circa 50 with learning difficulties including dyslexia, a similar figure to last year.

5.4.5 A new focus this year has been to identify those prisoners who are “Care Experienced” at some point in their lives. In March, 50 prisoners came into this category (mainly white adults) with 10 of these involved in a self-harm or violent incident during the month. This is the first time this has been high-lighted, and from conversations with prisoners this seems a little on the low side. The Board will be looking into this further during the coming year.

5.4.6 Foreign Nationals: The number has increased over the past 12 months, with the March figure of 41 from 21 different countries. Contact with Kent Refugee Help can be arranged, and the Board has been present when language assistance has been required, noting that the arrangement worked well.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The Chaplaincy team are an active and visible feature of prison life at Rochester. The team are respected by prisoners for the help they bring; religious services are well attended, and the team are effective in taking forward the wellbeing of all prisoners in its work. The Sycamore Tree Restorative justice programme has restarted and been a notable success with its powerful message.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges

5.6.1 During the reporting period, Rochester acted as the test site for the new Incentives Policy Framework. It was introduced through consultation with both prisoners and staff, and addressed the frustrations of both groups, with a focus on transparency, fairness and equality. One key change is that the new system includes a process by which the prisoner must be informed when he receives a warning (which surprisingly has not always been the case.) Following on from the consultative forums etc, behaviour principles were produced, and these are what prisoners are measured on, and importantly, they understand the expectations.

5.6.2 The communication about the new system was imaginative and excellent, labelled '12 Days of Incentives' it tied the change into Christmas, with the revised scheme introduced on 30 January. So far, it seems that both staff and residents have bought into the new arrangement as result of how the programme was delivered and the communications. An "enhanced work book" has been a successful change, with prisoners completing a workbook to gain enhanced status.

5.6.3 The Board's view is that the new system has certainly brought clarity and was effectively introduced. However due to the Covid-19 lockdown it is too soon to say how it will develop.

5.7 Complaints

The complaints process continues to be run efficiently. This year 2022 complaints were handled by the Complaints Unit compared to 1953 last year, and without additional resources. Of these 100 % were replied to within the required time period, although some are interim replies. Frustratingly for prisoners most delays arise from slow responses from other prisons. Once again, most complaints were generated for missing property, early release issues (HDC), and wages/money. As with previous years, the Board notes there have been some "serial complainers" at Rochester over the past 12 months. (NB: Complaints about healthcare are not included in these figures.)

5.8 Property

The Board received 60 applications relating to property this year, the highest category. There are three key issues to be addressed:

- a) Too many transferring prisoners arrive without their clothing, shoes and family photographs (the loss of which is detrimental to their well-being) and it takes an unacceptable length of time for these to arrive and often items go missing. It is a source of needless frustration for prisoners, and hard-pressed wing staff who are left to deal with the consequences.
- b) Some time ago, HMPSS indicated that work on a new prisoner property framework would start once the new incentive scheme was in place. The Board notes this, and seeks reassurance this work will be completed.
- c) The loss of property within the prison usually arises from the lack of a cell check following a disciplinary incident, and the individual's removal to the Segregation Unit. The possessions belonging to the prisoner who is being removed become 'available' to other prisoners, especially when a prisoner is removed instantly from a double cell, and the cell is not closed down. A lack of care around securing personal items in these circumstances continues. The Board has raised this as an issue on previous reports, and is doing so yet again. The Board strongly recommends more effective control is required over cell checks on all wings.

On the plus side, the Property Office is efficiently run. When monitored, the IMB noted that prisoners were being treated with consideration and understanding about their missing property.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1 Primary Healthcare is provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. There is nearly always a staffing shortage and the Board notes there is a team of dedicated nurses at the prison, often working additional hours and exceeding what is expected of them. In the recent past the working relationship between the provider and senior managers at the prison has been rather difficult, but it has improved more recently, and especially during the lockdown period.

6.1.2 The waiting time to see the GP is commensurate with that in the community, with additional time being allocated for emergency appointments. Unfortunately there are still occasions when wing officers fail to deliver appointment slips to prisoners until it is too late to attend, and in addition there are still prisoners who fail to attend for an appointment. A GP visits prisoners in Segregation three times a week, and there is a daily visit by a member of the Healthcare team.

6.1.3 There is a continuing problem of prisoners found to be concealing medication and, in turn, selling it on. For example a prisoner had a cotton wool swab in his mouth when given oral methadone, to catch the medication and sell on. Such prisoners are referred to the GP for review; as too are those who fail to collect medication regularly or are found to be non-compliant as a result of wing-based medication checks.

6.1.4 In the autumn, the Board became concerned about comments by healthcare staff and prisoners over delays in outpatient appointments due to the insufficient number of officers available for escorts. This was drawn to the Governor's attention and an improved understanding about the provision of escorts was achieved. Ambulances are called regularly to the prison, mainly due to the NPS problem. For example during February, 26 were called with 19 stood down.

6.1.5 There are a range of good nurse-led clinics which are run regularly. An optician visits the prison every fortnight. There is some delay seeing the dentist, however those with urgent dental requirements are given priority.

6.1.6 Due to Covid-19 limitations, the number of Healthcare complaints is unknown. The IMB received 58 applications related to Healthcare provision. These usually relate to perceived delays in appointments to see GPs or a hospital visit and are generally resolved.

6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1 The service is provided by NHS/Oxleas Inreach. The team has a heavy workload, while carrying vacancies; at present two posts are unfilled. On the March Equalities report, it notes that over 100 prisoners at Rochester have identified they have a mental illness. Current case load numbers are not available, but are unlikely to have changed from last year at around 70-80, plus further referrals coming into the team weekly. If necessary, prisoners are referred to the inpatient service at Elmley. Inreach can also refer clients to the Bradley Therapy Centre at the prison. It runs workshops and longer courses on issues such as sleep difficulties, mindfulness, managing and dealing with trauma, and coping with bereavement. It also provides one-to-one support including counselling.

6.2.2 The Board's view is the Inreach team add significantly to the well-being and stability of the prisoners in their care. This view is validated by the visiting psychiatrist, who comes to the prison twice a month and sees prisoners on referral from Inreach. In speaking to the Board at a training session, the psychiatrist reported how impressed he was with the Rochester Inreach team, and their approach to casework.

6.3 Social care

There are a good range of peer supporters at Rochester. This includes a pro-active Listeners group. At present there are 5 fully trained Listeners. They are trained by a qualified Samaritan Leader. All Listeners must be security cleared, with 9 months of

their sentence left to serve, and attend consecutive training sessions held on Saturdays, during which they are assessed for trustworthiness and role suitability. Listeners visit in pairs, to ensure correct procedures are being followed. There has been a decrease in the number of requests for Listeners to visit over the past year; at just 66 in comparison to other Kent prisons, where the number is around 120 plus. It is not clear why this decrease has occurred, perhaps a lack of need, or possibly due to some reluctance by officers to call the Listeners in. The IMB will look into this during the year.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

6.4.1 Physical activity at Rochester is run by enthusiastic staff and is popular with prisoners. The two gymnasiums are well-equipped, and there is facility for indoor sports, such as badminton, indoor tennis. Sessions are offered to older prisoners and there is remedial gym-work for those with medical conditions. Special times are also reserved for prisoners who may miss a gym session due to work or education. Football sessions on two pitches are popular. Exercise participation figures are around 78%. In addition the open layout of Rochester means there is opportunity for fresh air and exercise when walking to activities.

6.4.2 The welcome restoration of evening association was achieved successfully and is incentivised by IEP level.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

A Wing is a dedicated drug/alcohol recovery wing and works closely with the Forward Trust with detoxification programmes. It has not been possible to gather data due to Covid-19 restrictions, however it is unlikely to have changed from those provided last year.

A new innovation has been the creation of a Serenity Garden, which is acting as a place of calm for identified A wing drug-recovering prisoners. They work in the garden and can rest there. There has been some problems gaining sufficient compost etc for the garden, but it continues in spite of the difficulties. The Board's view is that it is a welcome initiative, and hopes it can continue.

6.6 Soft skills

A new addition at Rochester is a choir which is run weekly in the Chapel by a former prison officer. This is proving popular with prisoners. There are opportunities for prisoners to be involved in creative activities including music, media and film.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education services are provided by Weston College, the first year of their contract. Rochester participated in a pilot Ofsted, which produced advisory feedback. The resulting report found some good practice, but identified several areas of weakness. In particular Maths and English had poor levels of course completion, not

helped by tutor changes. In addition there were changes in City and Guilds qualifications. Attendance at Education is not very good, at 55%. While the report also high-lighted that engagement with prisoners at lessons was uneven, the Board's monitoring experience has been better, for example at a recent Art class the attendees were fully engaged, with a committed and enthusiastic tutor.

7.1.2 One outstanding issue is the standard of tuition, which is variable. While the focus is to improve standards, this is a tough challenge for all those involved in Education and Vocational training at Rochester. There are currently 9 vacancies across both areas. The time taken to recruit and employ tutors is discouraging; for example a Food Preparation tutor was recruited early in 2019, but did not take up his post until mid-December. Others start and then leave! On the plus side, the Education Manager is keen and has proactively engaged with the Board, and outlined his plans for improvement. Given that Rochester is a resettlement prison with a focus on rehabilitation, the continuing difficulty in appointing tutors in education and skills areas is disappointing to report.

7.1.3 **Library:** This is headed by a professional librarian and is open four and a half days per week, including time in the new evening association. From our conversations with prisoners, we know it is valued by those who use it, especially those engaged in higher education.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 There is occupational activity of some kind available for circa 85% of the prison population, although some of this is part-time. Work (known as Industries at Rochester) is provided in the following areas: Floplast, Waste Management, Horticulture, Cycles, MOD supplies. Qualifications have been introduced for Waste Management. Attendance is excellent at 85%, exceeding the 80% National Target figure. Bearing in mind that the work of the MOD and Floplast is not challenging or the type of work prisoners would wish to be doing, this is a significant achievement by all those concerned. For this, the Board offers congratulations to all staff involved in achieving this excellent result.

7.2.2 The excellent Stone Masonry workshop continues at Rochester, which has now been brought back into the Prison Service.

7.2.3 Vocational Training – see comments at 7.1.2 above. If sufficient tutors could be found, there are good facilities for vocational training at Rochester, which includes Welding, Painting and Decorating, Tiling and Plastering, Building skills, Industrial Floor Cleaning, Food Preparation, Railtrack. When available, the Board has seen good examples of vocational training being given throughout the year. The requirement is for more consistency in the provision of this training.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 It is pleasing to report that as of March the OMU team were on top of the OASys backlog, and all those coming into Rochester have an updated assessment within 8 weeks of arrival. There is still a steady stream of arrivals without any

assessment; at time of writing there were 34 outstanding, with plans in place for this to be completed by May. This is a marked improvement over last year and conversations with prisoners indicate that previous issues with incomplete OASys assessments no longer feature so predominately.

7.3.2 ROTL: ROTL at Rochester is undertaken in support of the Farmer Review (to help men maintain family ties and prevent reoffending). Initially this was day release, but has increased to overnight release in some circumstances. This is unlike other Category C prisons. Prior to lockdown, these numbers were steadily rising to around 45. The Board notes this improvement has been achieved without any additional resources to the OMU team.

7.3.3. HDC: Delays in reports being returned on time (from Police and Social Services) has impacted on HDC numbers. Additionally, lack of many BASS hostel placements also has reduced numbers, as these have become premium accommodation placements. For prisoners hoping for HDC, this is frustrating and difficult, and in some circumstances has caused poor behaviour.

7.3.4 Category D: Lack of Category D places remains a significant problem. Many IMB applications concerning categorisation relate to frustration felt by prisoners who have worked towards getting Category D status only to find they remain at Rochester in Category C conditions. Currently there are 50 Category D prisoners waiting to go. More recently some temporary mitigation has come from the utilising the Annex (the old Medway STC building) where the accommodation is not dissimilar to university accommodation. At time of writing 32 Category D prisoners are there.

7.3.4 Probation: Having a full time Senior Probation Officer at the prison has been beneficial. However, Kent Surrey and Sussex CRC continues to have staffing vacancies. Additionally, probation staff are being redeployed into the community to assist with workloads. Consequently, OMiC Stage 2 has not been implemented. However some cases that previously would have been managed in the community have come into prison. The Board's view is that while for some prisoners their experience of probation is frustrating, on many occasions probation officers are effective at meeting the demands of a difficult role.

7.3.5 Offending Behaviour Programmes: As Rochester is a resettlement prison, the delivery of these programmes is an important function, and it is good to report the target of 50 starts was met. As a lack of an OASys can be an issue, the team have used a TSP Needs Assessment Tool for evaluating risk for those still awaiting OASys through no fault of their own. The team now has full staffing, with some still in training.

7.3.6 Interestingly, the Programmes team keep an informal check on how many former group members in the community have reoffended. While some have come back, they believe an estimate of 20% appear to have reduced or stopped offending behaviour. This compares very favourably with reoffending national figures from other prisons.

7.4 Family contact

Visits are now run by the Spurgeons charity, and yet again the IMB has received complimentary comments from visitors about how well the visiting experience at Rochester is managed. Family days are arranged, allowing fathers to meet with their children in a less formal setting at the gym. This has changed from being earned through IEP status and is now awarded according to behaviour. It appears to have been a successful innovation.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 All prisoners are given a mandatory appointment to see Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC, via the Through the Gate programme, which includes help with housing, employment, finances and mentoring. The initial session is used to allocate men to particular training and work opportunities available at the prison.

7.5.2 Finding suitable accommodation on release is a very difficult task, especially when trying to link this up to a job opportunity. The prison and CRC work with Nacro over accommodation, but given that accommodation in the South East is at a premium, the frustrations felt by the Rehabilitation Team are considerable. On average 12% of men being released from Rochester will be homeless.

8. The work of the IMB

At present there are 13 working members of the Board. In addition one other is on sabbatical and there is a new member who has been unable to join the Board due to Covid-19 lockdown.

The Board continues to enjoy a constructive working relationship with the management of Rochester prison. Either the Governor or his Deputy have attended all Board meetings this year. Action points are regularly followed up. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the Senior Management Team and all staff at Rochester for their openness and willing support to the Board during the year.

All statutory visits and those relating to individual members' Areas of Special Interest have been undertaken. The Board regularly attends GOOD reviews and has a positive working relationship with the Segregation Unit staff. It is informed promptly of incidents requiring attendance. There is a regular training session held before our monthly meeting, with speakers from across the prison. The Monitoring Framework continues to be used as a guide in how the Board conducts its work. The increase in the number of applications to the Board is due in part to a couple of particularly prolific applicants.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	20
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13

Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the establishment	Data unavailable
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Data unavailable

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	14
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	16
C	Equality	6	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	21	32
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17	25
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	Included above	Included above
F	Food and kitchens	0	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	42	58
H1	Property within this establishment	67	60
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	Included above	Included above
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	Included above	Included above
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	48	36
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	12	26
K	Transfers	17	21

L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	27	41
	Total number of applications	273	339



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