



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Pentonville**

**For reporting year  
1 April 2019 to 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 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

## **2. Description of the establishment**

HMP/YOI Pentonville, on Caledonian Road in the London Borough of Islington, is a category B local prison primarily serving the magistrates' and Crown Courts in north and east London. The four cell blocks remain much as they were when the prison was opened in 1842.

Pentonville holds category B and C male adults and young adults (YAs; aged 18 to just before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday). Almost half of the adults are on remand. Most stay for six months or less, either serving short terms, recently convicted but still awaiting sentence, or sentenced to longer terms and awaiting transfer to other establishments. Most of the YAs are on remand; once sentenced, they are transferred to other prisons. At the end of the reporting year, approximately 18 foreign nationals were held as detainees beyond the end of their sentence at the request of the Home Office.

The certified normal accommodation – the normal capacity of the prison, as judged by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) – is 909 prisoners. The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners it can hold without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) is 1,098. At the end of the reporting year, there were approximately 1,025 prisoners (of which 111 were YAs).

In April 2019, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) noted that Pentonville was one of the busiest prisons in the country, with approximately 33,000 movements a year through reception. For all prisoners, this high turnover has major implications for assessment, education and treatment programmes.

### **Providers**

- Maintenance: Gov Facilities Service Ltd (GFSL)
- Education: Novus
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC): Penrose (subcontracted by MTCNovo via the London CRC)
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Care UK
- Mental health: Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust NHS coordinates the work of Care UK primary mental health nurses, with its own secondary mental health, inpatient and day care services.
- Substance misuse programme: Building Futures
- Gym qualifications: Active IQ
- Housing resettlement: St Mungo's
- Gang violence reduction: Catch22
- Visitors centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: Only Connect, Switchback, Standout

### 3. Executive summary

#### 3.1 Background to the report

##### COVID-19

On 25 April 2020, the *Islington Gazette* published a letter from the Board:

*Prison staff are also in the front line tackling the effects of Covid-19. HMP Pentonville houses over 1,000 men in cramped and insanitary conditions, with immense practical impediments to effectively isolating prisoners who are unwell. Two members of staff have tragically lost their lives to the virus, and many others are unwell or self-isolating.*

*Essential workers are rightly applauded, but we must include the heroic efforts of prison staff, who continue to come to work and strive tirelessly to care for prisoners who are frustrated and frightened, and many of whom are unwell.*

*Reports from Pentonville are of staff working flexibly to cover the absence of their colleagues; adapting to the loss of opportunity for education and collective worship by bringing materials to prisoners' cells; maintaining contact with anxious relatives and offering individual pastoral support to prisoners and fellow members of staff. All of this at personal risk. This deserves public recognition.*

Under the new emergency regime, prisoners were allowed out in small groups once a day for either a shower or exercise to ensure social distancing. Prisoners shielded because of underlying health conditions, or isolated because of suspected exposure to the virus, had even less frequent showers, to minimise exposure to staff and other prisoners. Television in the cell became standard rather than a privilege, and more channels were added.

Just in time, the work to install a telephone in each cell was completed. The Governor put £5 in telephone accounts weekly and the cost of calls was reduced by a third. GPs conducted clinics by telephone, and some other services worked in the same way. The prison obtained a small number of tablet computers, so that prisoners could see family for compassionate reasons. Some prisoners were bereaved and many of the men came from the communities hit hardest by the virus. The Samaritans number was available 24/7. The Board could not visit the prison for the first few months of lockdown, but a new freephone line for prisoners to raise concerns was made available. It was inspiring to hear of members of staff going to great lengths to support prisoners and colleagues in these challenging times.

The impact of the pandemic, how staff rose to the challenge, and the restraint shown by prisoners, all put into perspective this report, which covers a year in which there were comparatively few improvements.

A new Governor, the third in two years, took up post in December. HMIP returned in February 2020 to conduct an independent review of progress (IRP) on key recommendations in their 2019 inspection report. The verdict: ‘Unfortunately, our findings at the end of this IRP, more than nine months after the inspection, were a cause for continued concern.’

## **3.2 Main judgements**

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

Hand-made weapons were found on a regular basis. Self-harm increased by 14%. There were six deaths in custody; the causes have yet to be established by inquest. Assaults on staff increased by 30% between the HMIP inspection and their return to inspect progress (IRP), with a marked reduction in the last quarter before the lockdown. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) covered three wings, and provision for a fourth was nearing completion. There is no firm funding for the remaining two wings. Body-worn video cameras (BWVCs) were not always worn by staff and the technology failed regularly. There was insufficient management grip on the use of force.

The prison made good progress – noted by HMIP – in tackling the significant drug problem. A coherent supply reduction strategy and action plan was in place. Dogs are a visible and flexible resource to restrict the flow of drugs and other contraband. However, the ‘allocation’ of five handlers to Pentonville was meaningless. Only one turned up – and not daily.

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

There is no dispute between the Prison Service, HMIP and the Board that Pentonville is unsuitable for the incarceration of prisoners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But there is still no sign of the significant and urgent financial investment noted as being needed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) director for prison estate transformation following a prison maintenance group audit carried out in January 2019 (PMG audit 2019). One landing was refurbished and then ‘mothballed’ for months because of ineffective water pressure. Although £284,000 funding was agreed in September 2019 for refurbishment of showers, this work has not begun. Organising lift engineers, plumbers or pest control seemed to be daily challenges for GFSL.

After a gap of several months, key working was resurrected by the Governor in January 2020, and delivered 350 sessions a week in the first month, offering a glimpse of its potential for staff–prisoner relationships.

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

The healthcare centre provides primary care, mental health and drug treatment and occupational therapy. Waiting times were equivalent to those in the community, as far as the Board could judge.

The inpatient wing of 22 beds has an experienced team of nurses and prison officers, who care for challenging patients. The establishment has a large proportion of prisoners with severe mental illness because of the national policy of discharge from a secure psychiatric unit to the nearest prison.

Hospital appointments were sometimes cancelled at short notice because of a shortage of prison officer escorts. Applications to the Board about healthcare increased by around 50%; the reasons are unclear. The wellbeing centre, a therapeutic day service, deservedly received the Royal College of General Practitioners' national award for best team in clinical services. However, attendance at the centre is not seen as a clinical priority by the prison, and during any routine lockdown the centre is empty. The Board has raised this concern repeatedly.

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

Popular family activity days were organised regularly. However, the lift in the visits hall was out of action for months. A prison manager took the initiative to organise groups and motivational speakers for YAs, and this approach is being developed formally through a new programme known as Time4Change. Education and training opportunities increased, including creative arts. Intensive courses were introduced to prepare for release. Two lively job fairs were held.

Many of the prisoners at the establishment, however, have complex and multiple needs that a local prison serving the local courts is ill equipped to address. Despite planned improvements in provision and an effective provider, homelessness remains a problem. The constructive use of prisoners' time is negatively affected by what seem to be persistent problems in delivering them to education and work – the 56% average attendance figure is dismal.

While prisoners with drug problems are relatively well provided for, systematic detailed work on their risks and needs is not available. For that, they must be transferred elsewhere. A number of 'through-the-gate' initiatives are in place, some newly introduced in the reporting year, but they benefit only a small number of prisoners. While there have been welcome developments, under an energetic governor, in establishing strategic oversight of the reducing reoffending pathways and improving accountability for performance, it remains sadly inevitable that rehabilitation, as a means of progression towards successful resettlement, takes a back seat.

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

Will you take steps to reduce the population in Pentonville and invest in the fabric of the prison to provide a safe and rehabilitative environment?

Will you commit to giving Pentonville the funding it needs to install CCTV on those wings which still do not have it?

Will you commit to funding the repair or replacement of all remaining insecure cell windows and grilles, which were identified four years ago as needing urgent attention?

Will the investment in technology made during the lockdown be sustained going forward – for example, more video links for those having legal visits?

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

Will the Prison Service deliver essential refurbishment for decency, such as toilets and showers?

Regional allocation of dogs is not working; will you commit to basing dogs permanently at Pentonville, to tackle contraband?

Will the Prison Service increase the capacity of offending behaviour programmes, so that there is a better chance of Pentonville prisoners transferring and benefitting?

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

Will you tackle the conundrum of allocation lists and attendance at courses and workshops provided by the education department as the regime starts to ease up after lockdown?

What will you do to improve the quality assurance of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes, as highlighted in the HMIP IRP report, and ensure that all relevant participants are included in reviews?

Will the recording and scrutiny of use of force incidents be prioritised?

Will you refresh the local incentives and earned privileges policy and give enhanced prisoners meaningful privileges that will incentivise sustained good behaviour?

Will you commit to updating and progressing the equalities action plan?

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

#### **Safety**

- CCTV coverage
- Implementation of a drugs strategy and action plan to reduce supply and demand
- Significant finds of contraband by dogs.

#### **Fair and humane treatment**

- Refurbishment of a landing on the largest wing
- Some cells in the care and separation unit (CSU) were refurbished
- In-cell telephony; call charges reduced by 50% on completion of installation contract.

#### **Health and wellbeing**

- The wellbeing centre received the Royal College of General Practitioners' national award for best team in clinical services.

#### **Progress towards resettlement**

- Activities and support specifically for YAs
- Creative arts courses under the leadership of an inspiring tutor, in partnership with RADA, Guildhall, Shakespeare Workout and Shake It Up
- Intensive pre-release courses provided by Switchback and Stand Out.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

Staffing of the safer custody team at all levels has fluctuated over the year. Nonetheless, the Board has observed the team routinely working actively on the wings, trying to ensure the safety of the most at-risk prisoners in a very challenging environment. Attendance at monthly meetings (by non-safer custody staff based on the wings) has routinely been poor and many meetings were cancelled at short notice owing to lack of meeting space or availability of key attendees. The last meeting to take place in the reporting year was in November 2019 (and prior to that, September 2019).

Hand-made weapons are found on a regular basis, but the most common finds are mobile phones (from full-size iPhones to tiny Zancos), SIM cards and drugs or tobacco. Such contraband is either smuggled in on a prisoner's person, trafficked by social visitors or staff, or thrown over the prison wall. Despite two separate National Offender Management Service (now HMPPS) investigations mandating that 800 cells needed either their window or grille replacing (following the homicide and double escape in 2016), by the end of March 2020 the work had still not been completed – meaning that contraband can still enter in this way.

Five dog handlers are 'allocated' to Pentonville from the HMPPS regional hub, but the reality is that there is only one handler who regularly works at the prison with both an 'active' and a 'passive' dog – and not daily. Active dogs search off the lead and may make contact with the person they are searching for contraband, whereas passive dogs stay on the lead and do not make contact. For a prison as vulnerable to drugs and contraband leaking in as Pentonville, provision is not adequate. Dogs are one of the most visible and flexible resources governors have to restrict the flow of contraband. When on site, a single dog has prevented tens of thousands of pounds worth of drugs (especially 'spice') from getting into the prison by sniffing the chemical compounds soaked into fake letters purporting to come from legal advisers.

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

Pentonville is a busy local prison with approximately 33,000 movements into and out of the prison reception annually. Interviews with prisoners undergoing the reception and induction process have indicated that, for many, the system of reception and induction is humane, respectful and reassuring. However, a number of concerns remain.

The physical condition and layout of the reception area remain poorly suited for its purpose. For example, it has a large central holding room in which significant numbers of prisoners must wait together, often for periods of several hours, at some distance from officers. This has been reported as a matter of concern for the safety of staff and prisoners.

During the reporting period, physical screens were installed between interviewing booths, in an attempt to provide greater privacy. However, the screens offer little additional privacy, and prisoners still undergo their cell sharing risk assessment and are asked personal questions to assess their safety needs while in earshot of other prisoners. Efforts to add further screening to the area are hampered by safety considerations, given the layout of the building. Despite these challenges, Board members have observed careful and considered work by prison officers to isolate and provide greater privacy to prisoners deemed exceptionally vulnerable.

The person escort record, which accompanies each prisoner arriving at the prison, is frequently incomplete or inaccurate. Moreover, the vans bringing prisoners arrive unpredictably and are often delayed. The result is that officer numbers in reception are often poorly matched to requirements. For example, when many vans have arrived simultaneously and late, a lack of interview-trained staff in reception has meant that the last arriving prisoner was not located in a cell until 3am. Likewise, staff have reported that when prisoner escort vans are delayed earlier in the evening, the resulting need to allocate additional officers to reception has a detrimental impact on the running of the rest of the prison.

In January, the MoJ announced that Pentonville would become one of a number of challenging prisons to be installed with an airport-style body scanner to screen new arrivals. Work was to start in the spring, with the hope that it would be fitted by summer. However, its installation has been delayed, and during the reporting period it was not clear when the scanner would be installed.

New arrivals are taken from reception to the early days wing, where the intention is that they receive a two-day induction consisting of a prison induction session from officers and Insiders, and a mathematics and English test, so as to allow prisoners to be allocated to work and education. The observations of the Board are that induction sessions are generally well delivered but are not always delivered to every prisoner. Of particular concern are very vulnerable prisoners sent straight to the vulnerable prisoner unit, who often enter the prison having received no induction or basic kit.

During the reporting period, the 'Welcome to Pentonville: Induction Book' was for a brief time replaced by a generic 'Welcome to Prison' booklet, before being replaced by a reviewed and revised version of the original after July. The book is detailed and informative, although, at 35 pages in length, the Board is not confident that it is widely read by all prisoners, given the overall literacy and diversity of first languages within the prison. Interviews with prisoners and our experience of applications have tended to support this observation.

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

Reported incidents of self-harm have increased by 14%, from 598 to 682, in this reporting year – a similar (albeit slightly smaller) increase to that seen across the whole prison estate (16%), according to the most recent MoJ data.

There have been six deaths in custody this year, compared to one last year. The inquests have not yet taken place but, of the six, three were apparently self-inflicted and one appeared to be the result of a serious underlying health issue.

The Board attended one inquest in 2019, after which the coroner issued a Prevention of Future Deaths report on 30 October 2019 expressing concerns around the resuscitation attempt made by prison and healthcare (Care UK) staff. She recorded that this was ‘the fifth occasion in five years that [she had] written to Care UK about the quality of first aid at Pentonville’.

The number of ACCT documents opened has risen again, from 742 to 786 this year. This may be partially due to the key worker scheme as, when it was fully operational, between approximately April and August 2019, the scheme allowed for regular, dedicated time for officers to support prisoners, which could result in the opening of an ACCT.

Notwithstanding this, the number of ACCTs has fallen quite steeply since December owing to a reorganisation of the way that the most vulnerable prisoners on F wing (including those with substance misuse problems) are managed, and an attempt to systematically improve the quality of the interactions and targets within the ACCT documents (a concern of the Board and one shared by HMIP, as documented in the IRP report). Much of this work was led by an energetic governor who has since left Pentonville.

In November 2019 (the last time the relevant meeting was held), there were reported to be 10 trained Listeners for over 1,000 prisoners. The safety governor described this as an ‘all-time low’ which needed addressing. Training was scheduled for that month, but it is not known how many were working at the end of the reporting year.

## **4.3 Violence and violence reduction**

When HMIP made an unannounced inspection in early April 2019, it reported that levels of violence had increased by 50% since its last inspection in 2017. When it returned in February 2020 for the IRP, it reported that overall violence had increased by 10% on April’s levels, and assaults on staff had increased by over 30%. The prison’s own data on staff assaults shows an improving position over the last quarter of the year – for example, 15 in February 2020 compared to 24 in February 2019.

The challenge, support, and intervention plan (CSIP) scheme has been mandatory across the prison estate since February 2019 but only started to be implemented at Pentonville in January 2020, at which point two prisoners were admitted to the scheme. The Governor told the Board that, based on Pentonville’s violence diagnostics, a far higher proportion of the population than the 1–2% estimated by HMPPS should be engaging with CSIPs. Unfortunately, as no safer custody

meetings were held between November and March, the Board has not seen the latest data on CSIPs and cannot comment further on how this important, and overdue, initiative is progressing.

Catch 22's contract to provide analysis and support to the prison and prisoners around gang issues ended in March 2020, at which point the prison began using its own questionnaire to elicit relevant information. The Board understands that the prison is in the process of reviewing the most effective way for gang conflict information and resolution to be delivered, but with so many prisoners (especially YAs) connected to gangs, a robust solution to this seemingly intractable problem is needed as soon as possible. In January 2020 (the most recent data that the Board has), there were 129 gang members, from 51 different gangs, on Catch 22's database, representing approximately 12% of the prison's population.

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

The vulnerable prisoner unit held about 60 prisoners assessed as at-risk in the wider prison population. Most were charged with or convicted of sexual offences, but others were unsafe – for instance, because of their high-profile, disability, age-related vulnerability, or transgender status. In April 2019, vulnerable prisoners felt much safer after the unit moved to upper-level landings.

Fears about visits by these prisoners to the healthcare centre continued until, in August 2019, clinics were reserved for vulnerable prisoners once a month and GPs visited their landings daily. Risks remained, however, when mixing with the wider population on the way to medication, visits or work.

The downside to the new location was its small size, limiting the regime. Education was initially provided for about eight prisoners on the noisy, cramped upper landing before halting over the summer. A 'pod' purchased to provide a protected space never arrived. In November, short classes began on a lower landing but these failed to meet the need. Sentence progression was hampered by the lack of opportunities for transfer to prisons providing sexual offence-related courses, which are in very short supply.

Library access, initially scarce, improved from September 2019. Access to exercise and the gym improved between Mondays and Thursdays but remained limited at weekends. Chaplaincy staff or volunteers visited every week, but vulnerable prisoners were also regular attendees at weekend services. Leisure activities improved during the year, but games equipment often needed repairs. Job opportunities for these prisoners remained limited, and they complained of not having enough to do.

Lack of a full induction for new vulnerable prisoners arriving from reception was a recurring concern. Some lacked information, a kettle, cutlery and telephone access (see section 4.1).

Staff–prisoner relationships on the vulnerable prisoner unit were generally good. Several officers were valued highly for their helpful and flexible approach, but a few were said to be unhelpful and to have an excessively authoritarian manner.

Three transgender prisoners were located on the unit, and felt safe and supported by safer custody staff, with sensitive and comprehensive case reviews as required. Most, but not all, landing officers were respectful and helpful, while canteen provided necessary toiletries.

Prisoners with mobility problems were sometimes placed on the vulnerable prisoner unit, which was not a fit or safe location for them. The lift was frequently broken or unreliable, disrupting access to visits and the healthcare centre. One prisoner said that he crawled up and down the stairs for his visits. There was no access to exercise yards. It is not clear how these prisoners could be safely evacuated in the event of a fire as staff lacked training on the emergency evacuation chair.

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

The HMIP report from April 2019 found that use of force was high, and governance very poor. When the inspectors returned for the IRP in February 2020, they found that use of force had increased, many use of force reports were incomplete and data collection was poor. They concluded that governance of the use of force remained poor overall. They also noted that BWVCs were not routinely activated in the event of an incident.

BWVCs have been taken in and out of service on many occasions during the year, and the whole system needed to be sent back to Scotland for repair at one stage. This does not help officers establish the habit of wearing them. Indeed, the Board noted in September that few officers appeared to be wearing them. There is possibly a perception among officers that the footage will be used against them. Since April 2019, a system of local decision logs has been in place, to learn lessons from ‘near misses’ and other events. This has also revealed that staff are not recording incidents. The message to wear BWVCs was reinforced by the new Governor from December 2019. There were still issues in January 2020 with the BWVC system not working properly.

In July 2019, the Board was told that weekly use of force review meetings would take place, and that a system to be in place by December 2019 should improve use of force governance. In fact, use of force meetings have only been held since January 2020. The minutes of the three use of force meetings that have taken place since January 2020 have also revealed that BWVCs are rarely used during incidents where force is used, and that the paperwork is routinely missing signatures and submissions (including evidential details).

The Board was pleased that CCTV was installed on an additional wing, with funding secured for a fourth. However, it remains a concern that two further wings still have no CCTV funding in place.

## 4.6 Substance misuse

### Positives

- With energetic leadership, and commitment and joint work by key departments, the prison made good progress in developing and implementing a local strategy and supply reduction action plan. HMIP noted that the approach usefully included an emphasis on promoting wellbeing and access to specialist services.
- A 'movements officer' ensured that three beds were available each evening on the detoxification wing for new receptions.
- Positive mandatory drug testing rates reduced, on average, from 29% to 23% by early 2020 and – after a large find of drugs – the immediate test score reduced further.

### Concerns

- Prevalence of drugs remains a problem. Cannabis was the drug of choice and the smell was often noticeable during the day. The new Governor renewed efforts to identify culprits.
- Although Rapiscan – technology for scanning mail for traces of drugs – was introduced in the second half of the year, in March 2020 it was still not in routine use because of the cost of training and staff deployment.
- The government announced in January that x-ray body scanners would be installed in a number of prisons, including Pentonville, by late summer. Limited progress on the installation work had been made at the point that this report was finalised.
- The prison building remains porous to contraband. Only 374 out of approximately 800 windows have been replaced (since the need was identified in 2016), with funding agreed for only 141 more.

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

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

#### **Accommodation**

Pentonville remains unsuitable for the incarceration of prisoners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We recognise significant efforts made by the Governor to improve living conditions; however, much of the accommodation remains in a poor state of repair and is unable to be maintained in a state fit for purpose. The PMG audit 2019 acknowledged the significant and urgent financial investment needed to upgrade and repair decaying infrastructure. In its IRP report of February 2020, HMIP acknowledged the Governor's efforts to improve standards, while finding that the living environment for most prisoners remained inadequate. The Board observed that the cleanliness of communal areas was noticeably better in the first few months of 2020, and just before lockdown prisoners were being recruited to clean and disinfect hard surfaces such as handrails and telephones.

Serious concerns remain about poor performance by GFSL of its maintenance duties, in particular long delays in, or failure to carry out, repairs; specific examples include: (i) the disabled bathroom in the healthcare centre, which has been out of action for over 12 months; (ii) showers on one wing being out of action for eight days due to installation of the wrong size water tank; (iii) a leak in the induction room which went on for several weeks; (iv) minor repairs to a cell in the healthcare centre which took five days to carry out; (v) a laundry room being out of action for a week due to a blocked drain which was finally resolved by prisoners; and (vi) delays in repairing numerous broken observation panels which pose a risk to safety.

#### **Positives**

- The 'Respect and Decency' programme, including weekly inspections by senior managers, has led to an increased focus and some improvements, including improved decorative state, cleanliness, and tidiness of the wings.
- The securing of £284,000 funding in September 2019 for the refurbishment of showers.
- Refurbishment of some cells under the 'Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent' programme.
- The provision of new pool tables, board games and other distraction activities.
- In-cell telephones installed across the prison.

#### **Concerns**

- Continuing delays and failures in the performance of GFSL contribute to a poor standard of living conditions for many prisoners.
- Persistent plumbing issues across the prison cause frequent lack of hot (and sometimes cold) water, blocked toilets and showers, and leaks.
- Many cells still have inadequately screened toilets.
- Many showers are mouldy, infested with flies and in a poor state of repair.
- The plan to deep-clean all toilets by the end of 2019 has not been completed.
- There is a persistent problem of vermin, especially cockroaches, despite weekly Rentokil visits.

- The refurbishment of a landing by GFSL Projects was completed in May 2019 but it remained non-operational owing to plumbing issues until its deployment in March 2020 for prisoners self-isolating because of COVID-19.
- Several lifts were out of operation for extended periods, causing problems for prisoners (and visitors) with mobility issues. These include the lift on one wing, the lift in the visitors centre and the lift to the vulnerable prisoner unit, making it very difficult for disabled prisoners to leave the unit. At one point during December 2019, there were five lifts out of order across the prison.

## **Clothing**

There have been reports of insufficient supplies of clothing at reception and on the wings. The system of giving out clothes on a one-for-one basis does not always work well with prisoners who often have little motivation to care for clothing, and some YAs who lack basic life skills.

## **Food**

Over the year, the food budget was around £2.26 per prisoner per day. Menus for the daily hot meal appear balanced and varied, including for special dietary options, and there is good planning for religious festivals. However, some prisoners complain about small portions, and those without access to canteen sometimes report being hungry. There have been complaints of food arriving cold on the wings owing to faulty heated trolleys.

Kitchen management is strong and positive, despite multiple recurrent equipment issues which create significant challenges, and the presence of vermin. Kitchen workers appear well motivated, although a recurrent issue is their lack of time for telephone calls, showers and association back on the wing.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

The CSU (formerly known as the segregation unit) has 11 cells and three special accommodation cells. During the year, the occupancy of the unit was 50% or higher. The unit houses prisoners who are awaiting an adjudication and others who, following an adjudication, are serving days of cellular confinement. Some are also held there for the good order and discipline of the prison or for their own protection.

The CSU has suffered from a vermin problem again this year. The overall fabric of the unit is very tired and in urgent need of further renovations. Cells are often out of use, and observation panels broken. Delays to repairs can run into weeks or months. A budget for renovation was allocated to the CSU in 2019 and some cells were refurbished.

Some prisoners held on the unit come with complex mental health needs. Only occasionally are prisoners on an ACCT held there. Weekly good order and/or

discipline (GOOD) reviews are attended by a multidisciplinary team and include a Board member. The reviews aim at getting the prisoners who are held on the unit for the good order and discipline of the prison back onto normal location as soon as is practicable. The Board finds that these reviews are conducted with thoroughness, care and respect for the prisoners. There have been a few long-stay prisoners in the CSU during this reporting period. One prisoner was regrettably held on the unit for five months before a place in the high-security estate was finally found for him. Pentonville managers tried their best to move him out, and it is unacceptable that it took the Prison Service so long to facilitate this transfer.

When a violent or refractory prisoner is held in a special cell to prevent him injuring himself or others, the Board is informed. The special accommodation forms must, in these cases, be filled in. The Board noted in July 2019 that this was being done more thoroughly than in the past. More details, especially concerning the extent of the initial search taking place and the reasons for it, were included in the forms. During the lockdown, officers went out of their way to keep the Board informed of every use of special accommodation, and to include the Board in the 48-hour review held for a prisoner in a special cell.

Segregation monitoring and review group meetings resumed in December 2019, with plans to monitor the CSU more effectively. January's meeting was very thorough and evidence based, well attended and well prepared.

The CSU has been under new management for the last few months of the reporting year, and the Board has noted a drive to improve the quality of the paperwork and the collection of data. The staff try their best to give all prisoners a decent regime, and activities and events are noted on the prisoner's record sheet. The CSU is a very challenging environment to work in, and the Board often observes good staff-prisoner relationships.

### **Adjudications**

All governors (not just the Governor and his deputy) and judges conduct adjudications with consideration and fairness. The prison has introduced a revised governors' adjudication tariff, to better match the types of offence to the punishments that are awarded. The intention is to regularly review outcomes, to achieve a standardised approach, although this process has not yet been fully established.

The adjudication process is cumbersome and bureaucratic, requiring the time-consuming completion of lengthy forms. Failures by staff to observe correct procedures often lead to cases being dismissed. The frequent absence of 'charging officers' and relevant reports contribute to the necessity for numerous adjournments, and the non-availability of key evidence in the form of CCTV and BWVC footage potentially compromises the process.

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

When HMIP inspected Pentonville in April 2019, it reported that ‘some aspects of staff culture were obstructing positive engagement with and care for prisoners’. The inspectors maintained that this remained a challenge for the prison when they returned in February 2020. The Board believes that the resistance of some staff to embrace change has contributed to some of the problems experienced by the prison this year, including staff suspensions and governors moving between roles.

In last year’s report, the Board noted the positive impact that key workers were appearing to have, in terms of better ACCT management – opening more ACCTs as a result of close interactions with staff, but then being able to close them more quickly as issues were resolved. Unfortunately, in summer 2019, key working was halted owing to staffing pressures.

The programme was, however, restarted by the new Governor in January 2020, and by the end of that month there were reported to be 350 sessions taking place each week, with the aim of increasing this to 500–600, staffing permitting.

By mid-March, COVID-19 had started to drastically affect the regime, and so the programme had to be wound down (as it was nationally).

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The Governor in post at the time of last year's annual report re-established equalities meetings and drafted an equalities action plan. However, notwithstanding his enthusiasm, by the time HMIP returned in February 2020, they reported that no meaningful progress had been made since April 2019: ‘Equality work was still neglected and the strategy had not been updated. There had been little focused work with protected groups. Although quality assurance of DIRFs [discrimination incident report forms] had recently been introduced, it had not yet led to sufficient improvements’.

However, largely due to the tenacity and passion of key members of staff, some aspects of equalities work have thrived.

In the case of YAs:

- Regular YA forums were organised by a prison manager (started April 2019)
- There was a Time4Change inaugural event in May – motivational talk from ‘Big Narstie’<sup>1</sup>
- Mentoring and support is in place to help YAs talk about gang experiences and knife crime for a national podcast (‘Bird’ – released August 2019)
- There is counselling to address trauma experienced by YA participants in talking about their experiences
- The ‘Through My Eyes’ programme has continued its regular work with socially excluded and gang-affiliated YAs from Haringey and Enfield

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<sup>1</sup> Time4Change is an HMP/YOI Pentonville initiative designed to improve YAs’ educational opportunities and relationships, and prepare them for release back into their communities.

- There have been regular meetings with the CRC, to ensure that YAs are supported upon their release (for example, housing and opening bank accounts).

Transgender prisoners have been routinely invited to supportive transgender review boards within a few days of arriving in Pentonville, and are usually located in the smaller and separate vulnerable prisoner unit. Provision of makeup and other relevant personal supplies has become easier than it has been in the past.

Foreign nationals have continued to have regular access to workshops hosted by Bail for Immigration Detainees, Kent Refugee Help, and Detention Action. Home Office immigration workers have a wing-based office and communicate directly with prisoners in person or in writing.

### **Prisoner forums**

Pentonville continued its contract with User Voice, an independent organisation led by ex-offenders, to support the prison council. This aims to bring prisoners, staff and senior managers together to improve life at Pentonville, but it can only succeed with support from managers and officers. The lack of effective support led to much frustration and a loss of confidence among prisoners until early 2020, when new commitment and energy from the prison (including the creation, in February, of a new head of communities governor post) led to positive change and optimism.

Meanwhile, several informal consultations between landing staff and prisoners took place, to improve communication and respect. These were welcomed, and said to be mutually beneficial.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The chaplaincy team provides a multi-faith ministry, as well as accommodating the pastoral needs of those who do not have a faith. The managing chaplain is assisted by two further full-time chaplains (one Roman Catholic and one Muslim), a team of part-time and sessional chaplains and over 110 key-holding volunteers. Between them, they represent a wide variety of faiths, including no faith, speak different languages and are of varied ethnicity. In addition, official prison visitors attend regularly.

Collective worship is well attended, with some 160 prisoners attending Christian services and some 200 attending Muslim Friday prayers. Local groups regularly attend the prison and have strong links into the community.

Inter-faith events are evidence of cooperation between the chaplains, promoting an atmosphere of religious tolerance.

The chaplaincy team receives referrals through reception, Building Futures and CSIP teams, among others, often of prisoners who are not of any faith. In addition to formal worship and smaller prayer groups, they offer:

- a seven-week Alpha course, linked to the Christian faith but open to all, with a clear focus on resettlement. Mentors continue contact with prisoners on release

- the Sycamore Tree course, run by the Prison Fellowship – a six-week accredited restorative justice programme.
- the Living with Loss bereavement group.
- daily visits to prisoners not on ACCTs who may be vulnerable due, for example, to self-isolation or concern about family members
- an individual targeted approach to Muslim de-radicalisation following assessment by the head imam
- a staff care team, to support operational and non-operational staff members.

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)**

In April 2019, HMIP confirmed the Board's view that there were insufficient incentives to encourage positive behaviour.

Early in 2019, one landing had been earmarked as a new enhanced area, where the enhanced prisoners would enjoy privileges and more time out of cell. By April 2019, the refurbishment exercise had already run some weeks over the deadline. This landing remained empty until March 2020, when it was used to isolate prisoners suspected of being infected with COVID-19. There is now a plan to turn yet another landing into a new enhanced area.

At the end of April 2019, the Governor announced a review of the IEP policy. In June, we were told that the plan was to revamp the IEP policy by the end of July. In September, the prisoners were asked at the prison council meeting to give their input for the writing of that new IEP policy, and we were told that the new policy would apply from January, in line with the new national guidelines. At the end of this reporting year, that new local IEP policy has not materialised.

Prisoners have complained regularly that they are not getting the enhanced privileges they are promised, whether it is extra association, extra gym sessions, doing their own laundry or getting microwaves and toasters. This causes great frustration and disillusionment.

It was decided in January 2020 that IEP sanctions would be issued for unacceptable absences of prisoners from their chosen activities and education, in the hope of boosting the attendance.

The Board was pleased to hear that all prisoners, regardless of their IEP status, would be given a television during lockdown.

### **Concern**

- A refreshed IEP policy for HMP/YOI Pentonville is overdue and much needed.

## **5.7 Complaints**

Positive changes have been made to the prison's complaints system in this reporting year. From April 2019, all complaints have been logged electronically. Each complaint is allocated to an individual staff member to be dealt with, resulting in a clearer paper trail and increased accountability. Monthly checks are carried out by the Deputy Governor on the standard and timing of complaint responses, with feedback given to staff members providing those responses where necessary.

In addition, a new prisoner complaints policy framework was implemented nationally in August 2019, replacing the previous Prison Service Instruction, the purpose of which was to increase accountability and strengthen procedural justice. There is a new form for submission of complaints; this includes a slip, which is returned to the prisoner to confirm that his complaint has been received and is being dealt with.

## **5.8 Property**

Prisoner property continued to be a concern during the reporting period, and the Board recorded an increase in applications regarding this problem. Common concerns related to frequent delays in prisoners' property arriving at the prison from other institutions or going missing while in transit, and delays in receiving legitimate property which had been posted into the prison by prisoners' family or friends.

Delays of up to six weeks were not uncommon, and there were frequent instances of property disappearing. The associated impact on prisoners' morale and on the effectiveness of the IEP system (allowing, for instance, enhanced prisoners to wear their own clothes posted to them by family) was significant.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

Services are commissioned by the NHS from Care UK for primary care (including optical and dental) and from Barnet, Enfield, and Haringey NHS Mental Health Trust for inpatient and mental health services.

There is a 22-bed inpatient unit, largely occupied by patients with mental health problems, with a common room and a programme of activities. Healthcare staff contribute to GOOD reviews and ACCT reviews. They also visit the CSU to certify prisoners as fit to be segregated.

### **Positives**

- Waiting times were equivalent to those in the community, as far as the Board could judge.
- The Care Quality Commission assessment was combined with the HMIP inspection and was broadly favourable.
- Healthcare managers run a patients consultative forum, and, both from the impression of the Board and from survey responses, it appears that there is general satisfaction with clinical services.

### **Concerns**

- Applications to the Board concerning healthcare have risen. Such applications typically relate to obtaining appointments, internal or external, and to the particular drugs prescribed (on which the Board can take no view).
- There are difficulties in coordination between prison and healthcare staff, which can have clinical consequences. This was compounded by there being no healthcare liaison governor for many months.
- The cancellation at short notice of escorts for prisoners attending internal and external (hospital) appointments have clinical implications. These cancellations can be caused by pressure on prison staff arising from frequent lockdowns and staff shortages.
- Inadequate supervision by officers of opiate-substitute medication queues – reported by pharmacy staff and observed by the Board – risked the diversion of drugs.
- The failure, over months, because of equipment failures, to provide all prisoners with photo-identity cards raises the risk of prisoner impersonation to obtain dispensed drugs illicitly.
- Secondary health tests do not always occur within seven days when incoming prisoners are not located on the early days wing, so that finding and seeing them takes longer.
- There is poor maintenance of premises and equipment (by the external contractor GFSL), with showers and disabled baths out of action for lengthy periods.

## **6.1 Physical healthcare**

Primary care is run by a team including locum GPs and nurses, with a variety of clinics for GP and nurse consultations and pharmacy facilities both in the healthcare centre and on the wings.

### **Positives**

- There are approximately 400 GP appointments per month.
- The average wait times for these and other appointments are similar to those in the community: GP – two weeks, dentist – six weeks, nurse appointment – one week; serious cases are identified and accelerated.
- The GP clinics introduced on the wings have reduced backlogs and increased safety for vulnerable prisoners.
- Reception screening is run efficiently by nurse screening and referral to doctors and, where appropriate, to the drug treatment wing.
- Point-of-care testing for blood-borne viruses has been introduced. Samples no longer have to be sent away and results are available in 15 minutes.

### **Concerns**

- Some prisoners are deterred from attending particular facilities because of gang tensions, although the prison has tried to resolve these issues.
- The rate of failure to attend medical appointments varies among different clinics, and the Board believes that these figures deserve to be monitored, with a view to identifying and resolving any underlying issues.
- Some prisoners have in-possession medication but the facility to store such medication securely in cells is not adequate.

## **6.2 Mental healthcare**

The mental health in-reach team is made up of forensic psychiatrists, mental health nurses, a psychiatric social worker and a part-time occupational therapist. They provide one-to-one support for many individuals with severe and enduring mental health illness. In cooperation with staff in the wellbeing centre, the team also provides a range of therapeutic groups, including peer support, anger management and support for those experiencing voices and visions.

The enhanced support services team, which includes an officer and a clinical psychologist, tackles the issues of a small number of prisoners, usually with personality disorders, whose behaviour is particularly challenging.

### **Positives**

- The management of the inpatient wing, where there are frequently prisoners on multiple unlock, receives vital support from experienced prison officers.
- Rota reports frequently note the team's dedication in dealing patiently and compassionately with these sometimes very challenging prisoners.

## Concerns

- There are sometimes delays in the process of sectioning patients under the Mental Health Act.
- During the year, there were some problems with facilitating attendance at ACCT reviews by healthcare staff.
- The prison has a higher proportion of prisoners with severe mental illness than many others. This is partly because the national policy of discharging prisoners from secure psychiatric units to the nearest prison (instead of to those from which they came) means that HMP/YOI Pentonville receives a disproportionately high number of such prisoners.
- Unpredictable unlock arrangements reduced the time available to attend clinics and courses.

## Wellbeing centre

The wellbeing centre is a therapeutic day service which provides a range of activities for prisoners located on the wings and on the wards. The team consists of occupational therapists and support workers. It offers a range of activities to support the development of skills for daily life, such as cooking and budgeting. The centre also helps prisoners develop strategies to support mental health wellbeing through activities such as yoga, mindfulness, anger management, conflict resolution and philosophy. Creative activities include pottery, music, knitting and art.

## Positives

- The centre is led by a committed and dynamic manager, and the atmosphere is warm and immensely positive. The Board reports frequently that the service is hugely appreciated by the users.
- In November, the centre received the Royal College of General Practitioners national award for best team in clinical services.

## Concerns

- Prisoners who need this mental health support do not always get access to the provision because of lockdowns. The Board has reported this for several years.
- ACCT forms for prisoners are not always brought to the centre by the escorts.

## 6.3 Social care

Prisoners identified at reception screening as requiring social care are assessed by the local council in conjunction with the safer custody department. This year, there were 18 referrals that went to assessment. Four resulted in care plans, with external nurses providing scheduled periods of care; 12 prisoners received occupational therapy equipment; and two were deemed not suitable. In-house arrangements were also made for some prisoners whose needs did not justify a referral.

The care packages meet various needs, including washing, feeding, provision of handrails and dementia support. Fellow prisoners and officers were observed to provide sensitive support, notably for two prisoners – a blind man and one who was deaf and mute.

At the end of the reporting year, Pentonville was in the process of changing its social care provider.

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

Prisoners on the wings frequently complain to Board members that they have had no exercise for several days or that association has been cancelled. These claims have sometimes been verified from written records or confirmed by officers. As the completion of the regime log has been intermittent, it is not possible to provide statistical evidence of time out of cell, including for exercise, association and use of the gyms, throughout the year. It is, however, the impression of the Board that prisoners were far too frequently locked in their cells for 23 hours a day before the severe lockdown that followed the Covid-19 pandemic..

Those on the healthcare wards are encouraged to associate and exercise, within the constraints of ensuring safety and security. Activities and books are provided, and there is a dayroom. The healthcare centre has an outside space for association.

#### **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

The Building Futures treatment service is an integral part of the health and wellbeing team, and engaged with around 150 referrals each month – including new receptions on the detoxification wing and prisoners referred by other prison departments (or prisoners). The majority were offered a care plan, from group work – including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings – to individual support.

#### **Positives**

- The involvement of prisoners as peer mentors was welcomed by the prisoners.
- Through-the-gate support continued to operate well, with a team member meeting the prisoner on release, going with him to initial appointments and keeping in touch for three months.
- Appointments were made for other prisoners with local drug services on release. Naloxone pens (to avert death by overdose) were issued on release, as part of harm reduction advice.

#### **Concerns**

- Groups were sometimes cancelled because of prison security lockdowns or glitches with the allocation of prisoners to different activities.
- The team thinks that there are probably more prisoners with alcohol problems than are being picked up at reception or later. Veterans are one group which tends to mask their needs.

- From mid-March, group work stopped. The team continued with individual assessments and support, within COVID-19 constraints. Through-the-gate support stopped. Prisoners on prescribed drugs were given an appointment with their local drug service, so that they could continue to get medication on release. Other prisoners were given details of local drug services, but most of these had stopped taking new clients.

## **6.6 Soft skills**

The education department develops soft skills through the creative arts programme, philosophy, mentoring and debating skills. The wellbeing centre makes an invaluable contribution to the development of soft skills in prisoners (see section on the wellbeing centre). Empathy, talking and listening, and self-confidence are developed through the Listeners, Insiders and prison council programmes run by the prison. A range of programmes offered through the chaplaincy also makes a valuable contribution.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

The education contract is held by Novus. There are 180 places available for the morning and afternoon sessions. In spite of the low attendance rate of 56% (due to issues with the prison's organisation; see below, in *Concerns*), the overall success rate (that is, the percentage actually completing their courses) is approximately 82%. Provision is divided into four 'hubs': functional skills, vocational, employability and enrichment.

The education provision is very well led by the education manager.

#### **Positives**

- The quality of education induction has improved. (Ofsted 2020)
- The quality and scope of support for prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much improved. (Ofsted 2020)
- The quality of teaching and learning across courses and quality assurance procedures have improved. (Ofsted 2020)
- The level 3 criminology units, taught with local universities, have high-quality teaching, and there is good engagement of the 'inside' learners and continued development of Open University provision and virtual campus use.
- There is an increasing range of high-quality provision within the creative arts, led by an inspiring tutor. This includes partnerships with London Shakespeare Workout, RADA, Guildhall and Shake It Up. A partnership with Gray's Inn develops the speaking and debating skills of prisoners. A philosophy course has been developed which develops thinking skills and enables learners to discuss moral and ethical issues.
- There is a well-attended monthly 'celebration of success in education' event in the library, with external speakers and certificates for learners.
- Air conditioning units have been installed in the department, to improve conditions for staff and prisoners.

#### **Concerns**

- There are continued issues with attendance, with an average of only 56% during the year. The low attendance figures are often due to lockdowns, prisoners not being taken to education classes by prison staff, double booking with visits, and inappropriate allocations (see below).

- Allocations remain problematic. The allocation of learners to courses by the prison does not consistently match their skill level or likely length of stay in Pentonville.

## **Library**

The library, provided by Islington Council, is a focal point for many activities for prisoners. It is, for example, the venue for the Shannon Trust literacy mentor training programme (which includes vulnerable prisoners), advice sessions for foreign national prisoners, educational sessions and a monthly book club. Towards the end of the reporting year, the library was on track to reach its target of 8,000 library visits by prisoners.

### **Positives**

- Access to the library for vulnerable prisoners has improved this year.
- There has been good outreach work by library staff, including for the CSU.
- Access to information technology in the library for Open University courses has improved.

### **Concerns**

- Owing to staffing issues, the library has been closed on Thursdays.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Vocational training is largely provided by Novus, with a small proportion being provided through the prison. The Novus provision includes barbering, radio production, industrial cleaning, painting and decorating, and carpentry, and has an average attendance of 56%. The prison provision comprises recycling and textiles, and provides 43 places, and the attendance average is 80%. The vocational training provided by Novus has been further developed, providing routes to employment on release – for example, Railtrack and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. Links with employers have been further developed through Novus workers who specialise in employment skills and opportunities.

### **Positives**

- Attendance is very good in the prison-run workshops, but this may be due to the unlocking of prisoners being more consistent for these workshops, for which the prison has key performance targets, than for those run by Novus.
- The Novus-run vocational training has been further extended, and includes regular recruitment events and job fairs.

- Liberty Kitchen, a social-enterprise street food training initiative, where food is cooked by a team of prisoners and supplied to external outlets, has continued to work successfully.

## **Concerns**

- The work in textiles is routine and repetitive, and despite long-held plans to tie the work to vocational qualifications, until very recently this had come to nothing.
- For a period in May 2019, eight out of 19 machines were not working in textiles.
- The recycling workshop was shut down for several periods during the year, owing to staff shortages. The shutdowns have had an adverse effect on the capacity of prisoners to gain qualifications.

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

The offender management unit (OMU) is responsible for a wide range of issues relating to how a prisoner's sentence is managed. This includes sentence planning, eligibility for home detention curfew (HDC), transfers between establishments and recategorisation. The range and number of issues with which the OMU deals, and the importance of many of these to prisoners, mean that aspects of the unit's work generate a considerable proportion of prisoners' applications to the Board. Prisoners also tell the Board in the applications that they make that their attempts to acquire information from the unit – for example, via the prison's own application system – can go unanswered. In marked contrast, the Board's intervention in such issues usually results in the unit making useful information speedily and readily available, such that it is possible to provide prisoners with a helpful reply.

Despite this willingness to answer specific queries in relation to individual prisoners, and despite repeated requests, the Board has been unable to acquire clear and systematic information about the unit's processes – for example, the timelines and responsibilities that support and result in effective decision-making. As some of these processes are dependent on information being provided by other organisations (for example, from probation and the local authority for HDC assessment), this can result in delays that are not of the unit's making.

The physical environment and appearance of the unit give the impression that it is drowning under a mass of paperwork. Its problems are not helped by the fact that it is understaffed. On issues such as offender assessment system (OASys) assessments, the unit often seems to be playing 'catch-up', having to devote additional resources to address backlogs. By the end of the year, that backlog had been brought broadly under control, with fewer than 40 outstanding cases.

In February, the Governor appointed a new governor-grade operational lead, who has devised a recovery plan; however, many of OMU's problems are longstanding, and cannot be readily addressed by the unit alone.

## **7.4 Family contact**

Family contact is maintained by visits, managed through the visitors centre. The initial point of contact is run by PACT, a charity that provides practical services to prisoners and their families. Prisoners can also contact their families using telephones on the wings and in their cells. Letters and parcels to prisoners are strictly regulated but can be sent in by family members.

### **Positives**

- The visits process is generally well managed by PACT staff and prison officers working together. Problems are normally sorted out efficiently by proactive prison staff, and the internal visits hall usually has an air of calm, although occasional fights have occurred.
- The visitors centre online booking service works well.
- The prison has started a regular forum in which visitors can give their opinions on how family contact is managed directly to a prison manager. Meetings are minuted and actions have been taken in response to suggestions.
- The visitor reception area has been redecorated, including attractive murals, and is now a more pleasant place for visitors to wait before entering the prison.
- In-cell telephones have been installed this year, and all cells had their telephones activated before the end of the reporting year. It is a significant improvement for prisoners to be able to contact their families more freely during the day, rather than queuing for a communal telephone on the wing.
- The system of issuing labels to prisoners' families, to manage parcels being sent in, has improved the way in which prisoners receive property from outside the prison.

### **Concerns**

- The award of extra visits to prisoners for good behaviour is a fundamental element of the IEP scheme. Revision of the scheme was due in early 2020 but has been delayed, and although the award of extra visits was already part of the scheme, this revision is desperately needed.
- Visitors are subject to restrictions, such as what they can wear and how much cash they can carry. These restrictions are not always well communicated, particularly when the booking is made by telephone, and members of the Board have seen visitors turned away for non-compliance.
- The lift that gives visitors access to the visits hall has been out of action for several months this year, preventing disabled visitors from seeing their relatives.
- Mail sent to prisoners has been used to attempt to smuggle drugs into the prison.
- Some families have reported that the telephone booking service is difficult to use.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

In contrast to the position at the end of the last reporting year, the work of the CRC picked up during the current year with the appointment of a new manager and the establishment of a largely new team. However, by the end of the year it remained

considerably under strength, and access to prisoners on the wings remained problematic.

Last year, we commented (albeit on the basis of interviews with a small sample of prisoners, all approaching release) that few of them felt that they had had sufficient help to benefit them on release. The IRP in February 2020 noted that the CRC struggled to achieve its targets for completing basic custody screening tool (BCST) 1 and BCST2, that too many prisoners did not have an initial resettlement plan and that plans were not reviewed before release.

Two job fairs were held, and the Getting it Right programme was re-established part-way through the year, and was running weekly. Specialist teams were planning workshops on facilities available in the community. Two meetings had been held to explore the help available for care leavers.

A revamped and expanded reducing reoffending meeting, with greater strategic oversight, included a number of charities/voluntary organisations with a remit that included rehabilitation and resettlement.

Switchback provides one-to-one intensive support and work training, both inside prison and on release. StandOut offers an intensive course in the lead-up to release, together with one-to-one coaching and group support. During the year, it ran two four-week courses, for 21 prisoners, preparing them for release. It also provides through-the-gate support into employment or training.

St Mungo's provides help and referral for prisoners who would otherwise be released homeless, or need help or advice with their tenancy. Prisoners are referred through the CRC. Between August 2019 and February 2020, St Mungo's received an average of 77 referrals each month and dealt with a monthly average of 45 prisoners who were being released. Sixty-two per cent of the latter were resettled into accommodation, virtually all of the remainder being referred to a local authority homeless persons unit. St Mungo's staff provided practical assistance and advocacy with local authority staff in cases of difficulty.

St Mungo's delivered a pilot project, funded by the MoJ, to reduce homelessness among prisoners at Pentonville. From August 2019 to March 2020, 79 prisoners joined the scheme, which provides temporary housing on release and tailored support for three years, to enable these individuals to get and keep private rented accommodation. Staff worked creatively but faced significant barriers, including the cap on universal credit, high rents and addiction issues.

With the exception of the Sycamore Tree course, a restorative justice course run by the Prison Fellowship, no accredited offence or offending behaviour work is offered at Pentonville.

The prison does not offer release on temporary licence (ROTL) as a means of easing prisoners back into the community, most usefully through work.

The prison's function as a busy remand prison, the high turnover of its population, the relatively limited resources available to address prisoners' offending behaviour, and unresolved problems in ensuring their consistent attendance at education and work/vocational training mean, inevitably, that rehabilitation at Pentonville takes a back seat.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board meets once a month for two hours, and each meeting is preceded by an hour's training or discussion on issues that the Board is particularly concerned about. The Governor (or a Deputy) is invited to attend every Board meeting for approximately 45 minutes, to answer questions from the Board and to address issues raised in the previous month's rota reports.

One member is on rota and will visit between three and five times during that week. The particular areas to be visited each week of the year are set out in a matrix, which reflects perceived risk to prisoners. For example, the CSU is visited every week (and all weekly GOOD reviews are attended, except on the rare occasions when they are dealt with by the relevant governor on paper), whereas the library is visited every six weeks. If a particular concern has been raised with the Board about an area which is not due to be visited that week, it will then be visited as a matter of urgency. Owing to the lockdown, the Board did not make any in-person visits to the prison from mid-March onwards but instead kept in regular contact with prison managers and staff by email and telephone, including GOOD reviews wherever possible.

Written applications to the Board are dealt with by a team of three members between Wednesday and Friday, freeing up the rota member to concentrate their time on the regime and other matters affecting the prison at large (although they do take responsibility for any confidential applications addressed to the Chair that week). Many Board members also take additional applications 'on the hoof'. Applications are also sent to the Chair from other Boards regarding prisoners who have transferred from Pentonville to their establishment, and these largely relate to missing property. Owing to the lockdown, the Board dealt with all applications in writing only from mid-March onwards.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	23
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	17
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	16
Total number of visits to the establishment	Estimated 600
Total number of GOOD reviews attended	48

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	43	22
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	19	11
C	Equality	7	12
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	41	39
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	48	47
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	26	22
F	Food and kitchens	8	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	73	111
H1	Property within this establishment	43	50
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	29	29
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	15	15
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	96	111
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	70	84
K	Transfers	27	43
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		4
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>604</b>



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