



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Whitemoor

**For reporting year
01 June 2019– 31 May 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, of 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Whitemoor lies outside the Cambridgeshire town of March. Opened in 1992 as a maximum security prison for men in categories A and B, it is one of eight high-security prisons in England within the long-term and high-security estate (LTHSE). On 31 May 2020, the prison held 457 prisoners, against an operational capacity of 458. A total of 144 were category A, of whom 11 were high risk. All Whitemoor prisoners are accommodated in single cells, with integral sanitation but separate shared external showers.

2.2 The prison comprises the following units:

- three main residential wings (A, B and C wings)
- the Fens unit, accommodating up to 70 prisoners diagnosed with a personality disorder and undergoing psychological treatment, delivered in partnership by the National Health Service (NHS) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service professionals (D wing)
- a close supervision centre (CSC) holding up to 10 prisoners, managed under a nationally coordinated strategy to provide a secure location for the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners (F wing)
- a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) unit, designed to enable prisoners to maintain and build on developments they have previously achieved in prison, holding an average of 19 full PIPE prisoners (out of a capacity of 30) and 11 lodgers at the end of the reporting year
- the Bridge unit, opened in April 2019, designed to support prisoners progressing out of segregated conditions, with a capacity of 12.

2.3 Healthcare services are provided by Northamptonshire NHS Foundation Trust, education and the library by Milton Keynes College, and maintenance by Government Facility Services Ltd. Cambridgeshire County Council provides adult social care services. Psychological services in the Fens unit are provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This has been a challenging year for HMP Whitemoor. The tragic killing by a terrorist, previously held at Whitemoor, of two young Cambridge University workers at a prisoner rehabilitation conference had a devastating effect on the whole community, residents and staff alike. It was followed by two more violent incidents, one categorised as a terrorist attack, within the prison. Later in the reporting year, the crisis caused by COVID-19 caused Whitemoor, like all other prisons, to be locked down for several months. (The lockdown is still in force at the time of writing.) The recently appointed Governor (formerly the Deputy Governor) and her team handled these challenges with skill.

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant 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 these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

Board members have not been able to visit the prison since mid-March 2020.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

In normal circumstances, Whitemoor is a reasonably well-ordered prison, in terms of individual prisoner–prisoner relationships, but in recent years there have been a number of incidents of concerted indiscipline. During the year, there was a small increase in the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (29, up from 23), taking the number back to the total of the previous year. There were 46 prisoner assaults on staff, one very serious (see below). The number of incidents of self-harm was 286, an increase of 25 from last year. One hundred and ninety-four assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened, more than 30% up on last year.

The reporting year has been marked by three grave acts of violence:

- A recently released terrorist prisoner who had previously served part of his sentence at Whitemoor committed the high-profile killing at London Bridge of two young graduates who had worked on a Cambridge University programme offered by the prison.
- Two residents conducted a prearranged attack on an officer, seriously wounding three members of staff.
- There was an incident, involving two large groups of prisoners, classed by the police as violent disorder. Control was maintained as a result of timely and effective action by officers.

The lockdown imposed by the government on 23 March led to limits on movement and social distancing, which reduced routine threats to safety, such as bullying and

intimidation. Prisoners frequently expressed appreciation of the prison's efforts to keep them safe. As time went on, inevitably some frustration developed and there was some testing of the boundaries – for example, by prisoners resisting being locked up or going onto the netting – but staff sought to avoid heavy responses.

Staff absence reached over 260 at the peak, when there was infection in the prison, but by mid-May absences had fallen to 76, with all but 16 COVID-19 related. This increased the prison's management challenge considerably and was a factor in the long periods of confinement to cells.

Cell searches were temporarily halted but resumed in the middle of May, with significant finds of drugs (mainly cannabis), mobile phones and SIM cards.

There were two deaths in custody in the course of the year; the inquest is awaited for both. An inquest took place in the autumn on a prisoner who died in March 2019; all actions called for have been completed.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Whitemoor is seeking to develop a culture characterised by consideration and concern for its prisoners. The prison fails sometimes to live up to its aspirations, particularly where segregation unit prisoners are concerned. Arrangements to supply newly arrived prisoners with clothing and a bed pack improved in the course of the year, but are not yet foolproof. During lockdown, the reports we received indicated that treatment was fair and, within the constraints of the prevailing health concerns, humane, but it was disappointing that Whitemoor did not always comply with national guidance in areas such as exercise and time out of cell. The interim use of incentives and earned privileges (IEP) warnings as the sanction for all but the most serious breaches of discipline, without resort to adjudications, conformed to national policy but risked unfairness and lack of transparency. Governors' reports referred to some inconsistency in the management of prisoners by officers, particularly those more recently appointed and less experienced.

During lockdown, the prison gave high priority to enabling prisoners to stay in contact with their families. There were creditable efforts to make it possible for them to make telephone calls on a daily basis. In the early part of lockdown, when there were COVID-19 cases in the prison and staff absence was high, they were offered a telephone call plus a shower and exercise on alternate days; however, once conditions stabilised, daily telephone calls, showers and exercise were reinstated, although not at weekends until mid-June. The prison took part in national trials of innovative approaches to family contact, such as WhatsApp and 'email a prisoner'. Time out of cell and normal and purposeful activity such as work and education were seriously curtailed. The prison struggled to meet the national standard of 30 minutes' outside exercise a day. Corporate worship was suspended. The education provider issued learning packs, as well as enhancing book and DVD availability, but most education staff were not present in the prison during the crisis. Prison staff also distributed distraction materials. Under national guidance, the basic IEP regime was suspended and all prisoners were provided with a television; the number of channels was increased.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Impressive efforts were made to treat those affected by COVID-19 and to protect other prisoners and staff. The total number of cases among prisoners was very low. By mid-May, Public Health England recognised Whitemoor as a 'well-contained outbreak site' where infection rates were under control; by 31 May, there had been no cases for four weeks.

Throughout the year, we have been concerned by the failure of healthcare staff and psychologists to attend ACCT reviews and segregation review boards (SRBs); the appointment of a dedicated segregation psychologist mid-year has improved the situation where SRBs are concerned.

We were informed that healthcare staff and the mental health team were in the prison and working effectively during the pandemic. Before the crisis, we continued to have some concerns about performance in this area, partly because of a repeated shortage of staff.

In May, the Governor announced a wide-ranging review of food provision and invited the Board to take part.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The offender management in custody (OMiC) model, phase 2 of which was implemented in October 2019, was jeopardised by the shortage of probation officers, a situation that has been exacerbated by the transfer of staff into the community during the COVID-19 crisis. Even before lockdown, the proportion of education classes that were cancelled owing to a shortage of staff, on the side of both prison and provider, was much too high, at 55%; prisoners were unable to complete their qualifications within the required time limit, gravely undermining their motivation and calling into question the prison's ability to deliver the rehabilitative culture to which it aspires.

The COVID-19 crisis precluded attention to other aspects of resettlement planning. There were no visits. The key worker strategy was suspended (due to be restarted after the end of the reporting year) and the workshops were closed. The prison gave priority to supporting family contact, with arrangements for more family telephone calls, including for foreign national prisoners, and innovative approaches to the use of email contacts and video technologies, which the Prison Service had previously been slow to facilitate.

When visits start again, the prison should review the accommodation provided for families, some of whom travel a long way with young children or elderly grandparents. It is not acceptable that there is no hot food available and no safe area for young children to play outside.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the minister re-examine the dispersal system under which Whitemoor holds genuinely high-risk and dangerous men alongside those who could be held in less restrictive conditions, where they would be less vulnerable to pressures, could benefit from a wider range of opportunities to progress, and perhaps be located closer to their families?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Although central controls on the use and duration of segregation were strengthened in 2015, Whitemoor has not always succeeded in observing them. In the year under review, the segregation unit often held prisoners for whom more appropriate accommodation could not be found (see section 5.2). Will the Prison Service make better use of existing specialised units and, if necessary, increase their range and number as well as genuinely treating them as a national resource?

Will the Prison Service ensure that the special arrangements made to give prisoners, including foreign nationals, better access to their families during lockdown, by using technologies such as email and video links (see section 5.4), are continued as part of the new regime when the crisis is over?

Will the Prison Service take steps to introduce a nationwide system for managing prisoners' property and its transfer between prisons, an issue which causes enormous anxiety and anger among prisoners and wastes countless hours of Board members' time (see section 5.8)?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Before the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor was taking steps to develop a stronger spirit of community in Whitemoor, with prisoners being given greater opportunities to engage in active citizenship and make choices about the way they live their lives in prison (see section 5.3). We look forward to seeing this important agenda making an impact on prisoners' day-to-day experience of prison life as soon as the health emergency allows.

In relation to the above, will the governor give priority to establishing fully the key worker scheme which has the potential to make a significant impact on residents' relationships with officers and their general progress in prison?

3.4 Progress since the last report

We are disappointed that improvement in the areas where we raised issues last year has been patchy. We have seen little progress in:

- reviewing the use of LTHSE prisons for the custody of younger offenders
- support from the Prison Service for the introduction of more varied and stimulating work for prisoners, particularly younger men, at Whitemoor
- improving the facilities for older men in LTHSE prisons
- improving the physical environment of the prison, particularly the showers and bathrooms
- the development of a rehabilitative regime in the CSC.

We are pleased to have noted improvements in:

- the installation of electricity in the two cells in the segregation unit on which we have commented previously
- the consolidation of the University of Cambridge Learning Together programme, with the opening of a study centre in a refurbished workshop
- the emphasis on activities to support the mental wellbeing of prisoners, such as the gardens for A wing and D wing (thanks to the efforts of a national charity, Greener Growth)
- the Governor's aspiration to building a healthier and more harmonious community within Whitemoor, with prisoners taking more responsibility for their living conditions
- the recruitment, training and development of new prison officers, whose contribution will grow with time
- the introduction of innovative technologies to enable prisoners to communicate with their families, albeit only as a result of the pressures caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

We have been concerned in the past that reception was too frequently closed – the first area of the prison to fall victim to staff shortages. The custodial manager (CM) responsible reports that there has been some improvement this year, and closures have been mainly at weekends. When experienced reception officers are on duty, newly arriving prisoners are welcomed and taken through the arrival procedures efficiently and with consideration; the same is true for those departing. The arrangements are less reliable when inexperienced staff are on duty. Frequent changes of CM with responsibility for reception have led to too many changes in the arrangements for supplying new arrivals with prison clothing and bed packs. It is not humane or decent to leave prisoners for several days without sufficient clean clothing or a pillow, reliant on loans from fellow prisoners. As the year progressed, there was some improvement, as a result of more vigorous management, but too often it was possible to find an individual who had been failed by the system.

Arrangements for induction by Board members have been coordinated this year by an experienced officer, whose efficiency has led to considerable improvements in the administration. We are not always convinced that the induction of new prisoners has the priority among officers that it should have, given the difference it makes to how well a new prisoner settles and begins to make progress.

Razor blades were banned in Whitemoor from 1 March 2020. This has caused some inconvenience, particularly for Muslim prisoners, for whom shaving is a necessary part of personal hygiene. Unfortunately, the prison's provision of two electric razors did not satisfy all Muslim prisoners that their needs had been adequately considered. However, it is hoped that the ban has reduced the opportunities for self-harm and weapon-making among prisoners as a whole, although we have not yet seen the evidence for this.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

In the year under report, 194 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened – an increase of 31% from last year's 148. There is no single explanation for this, but a combination of more mental health assessment, increased key worker attention and staff caution might all have contributed. The Fens unit for prisoners with a personality disorder had the highest number each month, accounting for 36% of the total. This reflects the disturbed mental state of these prisoners and the challenging nature of the therapy which they are undertaking. Sixteen of the ACCTs were for prisoners in the segregation unit, a reduction from 37 in the previous year. Prisoners on ACCTs should only exceptionally be segregated, and the figure remains too high, although the reduction is welcome. During the period of lockdown, when more anxiety and need for support might have been anticipated, the number of incidents of self-harm and of ACCTs opened remained stable. It is reported that, on the whole, ACCT reviews were well attended by relevant staff but the Board has been very concerned on occasions

when there was an absence, particularly of healthcare staff and psychologists (see also section 6.2).

A number of prisoners at Whitemoor experience high levels of distress and disturbance. There were 286 incidents of self-harm during the year, an increase of 25 from last year, from serious cutting and ligaturing to less dangerous incidents of swallowing and inserting items and head-banging. The number of incidents was at a steady level in most months, apart from July, when they doubled, with 17 of the 58 committed by one very distressed man. All such instances give concern, and the safer custody team works with diligence and empathy to keep these prisoners safe. The Listeners are well used throughout the year, responding to official callouts to the Listener suite or engaging in casual conversations on the landings; they were most heavily used in the late autumn and early winter period. Gated cells were used on 66 occasions, with the highest use in the Fens unit and healthcare unit, with repeated use by three prisoners.

There were two deaths in custody in the course of the year, for which the inquests have not yet taken place. The inquest on a prisoner who died during the previous year has been held and we are told that all action points have been completed.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

In general, Whitemoor appears to offer a well-ordered environment for staff and prisoners. However, we are concerned that underlying tensions persist, giving rise to perceived bullying by particular groups, leading to some prisoners reporting that they feel unsafe at times, and restricted in their choices on the wings. There were 29 incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner assault, a small increase on 23 in the previous year, and 46 of prisoner-on-staff assault, with a sharp increase in January/February, when the two serious incidents occurred (see below).

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are part of a developing process to manage the behavioural issues arising from the prisoner profile at Whitemoor. During the reporting year, 89 CSIP documents were considered and 47 were formally opened, the others not requiring further action. The main residential wings made good use of this process of support, with specialist units such as the CSC, the Fens unit and the Bridge unit having their own alternative management plans in place.

During the reporting period, the command suite was opened 10 times for serious incidents. Two were the result of a serious terrorist incident in which three members of staff were hurt (which was followed by a three-day lockdown), and a further incident of concerted indiscipline on B wing. Six others were the result of incidents at height, and another was caused by the loss of the general alarm system.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

When prisoners arrive at Whitemoor, they are screened for any difficulties they may have: hearing or speech difficulties, mobility or coordination problems, learning difficulties or mental health issues. There were 16 declarations during the reporting year. Eleven prisoners have a disability and medical conditions which qualify for support under adult and social care legislation, and 16 are registered diabetics. There are 15 prisoners with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. This and autism

and Asperger's syndrome are managed and supported by healthcare staff and the mental health team.

4.5 Use of force

The use of force by officers is carefully monitored, as required by Prison Service Orders. During the period from June 2019 to March 2020, there was an average of around 20 occasions per month when force was used; many of these were planned and involved, for example, the use of standard handcuffs to move a prisoner from one location to another, something which will in future not be recorded as a use of force. A body belt was used on a small number of occasions to prevent a disturbed individual from harming himself.

The analysis of incidents by ethnicity and religion shows widely varying results month by month. There is no perceptible pattern of discrimination. Inevitably, a major incident such as the one in February, when it appears that a Muslim prisoner confronted a non-Muslim prisoner and groups of their peers joined in, led to a spike in numbers for the faith groups concerned.

The prison ensures that close to 90% of officers are trained in the basic use of control and restraint, with a commitment to about 40 with advanced training. There is a complement of 10 in the local response team. During the year, 122 officers were trained in the use of PAVA spray and 72 were issued with it. Before it was routinely issued to officers, PAVA was drawn on two occasions, one a large-scale incident; on the other, it was not actually used. A quality assurance procedure is to be introduced to review incidents when PAVA is used. Towards the end of the reporting year, the Deputy Governor issued guidance on how to mitigate the physical effects of the spray. Fifty-eight staff were trained in the use of rigid bar handcuffs and 46 were subsequently issued with the handcuffs. Training was disrupted by the COVID-19 crisis.

It has been decided to move away from the use of hand-held video cameras, as the cameras are getting old and have a rather poor range of view. Body-worn cameras will replace them, and generally staff are complying more readily in wearing them than was the case last year, although, disappointingly, the segregation unit is an exception; this must be remedied.

4.6 Substance misuse

Security staff took over drug testing from reception staff in the middle of 2019. The average number of random drug tests conducted each month from June 2019 to March 2020 was just over 20; achieving the targets for mandatory tests made it more difficult to respond to cases of suspicion. However, the number of intelligence-led suspicion tests increased from December to March, when there was also an increase in the number of prisoners refusing to be tested. The prevalence of new psychoactive substances and cannabis during this period is a concern.

The installation of an itemiser to check incoming mail for illicit substances has substantially reduced this as a route into the prison for 'spice'. The itemiser is also effective for checking clothing and property.

During the COVID-19 crisis, cell searches and the routine searching of people entering the prison through the gate had to be modified to ensure social distancing.

During lockdown, intelligence about, and finds, of drugs (as well as mobile phones and SIM cards) continued at a level similar to that experienced in normal conditions. As there were no visits and the itemiser was in regular use, it is likely that these items were brought in by staff.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

We have continued to see improvements in the appearance of the corridors, landings and some workshops as a result of prisoners being allowed to undertake painting and decorating alongside maintenance staff. The prisoners who carry out this kind of work show great pride in their achievements. Cleaning in some parts of the prison, such as the healthcare unit and D wing, has also improved for the same reason.

However, despite some superficial improvements in the decoration of the circulation areas in the segregation unit, the cells remain in poor condition, with toilets that appear dirty and have broken seats. However, electricity was installed in the two cells without it just before lockdown, something we have called for in the past. The cleaning materials available to prisoners make it difficult to maintain good hygiene; for example, toilets have to be cleaned with cloths, and rubber gloves are not supplied for security reasons. The segregation unit is very cold in winter, while the prison offices are frequently overheated.

Windows were replaced in the segregation unit during the year, to tighten security and reduce the opportunities for prisoners to throw objects (and worse) outside. The prison's attempts to improve the quality of accommodation on the unit are not helped by prisoners occasionally pushing towels and sheets down the drains in an attempt to pass contraband; one incident resulted in all occupants and staff having to endure insanitary and unhealthy conditions for several days. It would greatly assist prison managers if Government Facility Services Ltd had the capacity to respond more speedily to this kind of emergency.

The food provided to prisoners gave rise to various concerns during the year, with the kitchen manager making changes – for example, replacing the weekly breakfast-style lunch with a hotdog – in order to meet budgetary requirements. The number of prisoners requesting dry boxes and special diets (for medical and religious reasons), together with the availability of kitchen opt-out arrangements in the PIPE unit, have put the kitchen's finances under considerable pressure. During the COVID-19 crisis, the kitchen coped fairly well, but there were complaints on occasion about the temperature of the food (distributed to the cell doors in foil containers) and portion size. As usual, the kitchen went to great lengths to meet the dietary needs of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. We welcome the Governor's announcement of a review of food and her invitation to the Board to take part as observers.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

Throughout the reporting year, the segregation unit was once again at, or close to, full, causing continuous regime restrictions. Occupancy fluctuated between 18 (its allocated capacity, seldom adhered to) and a maximum of 32, with the overflow

occupying cells in the adjacent Bridge unit or the healthcare unit. At these times, the regime was compromised: prisoners had to choose between a daily shower and a telephone call; television and radios were frequently not available for all who were entitled to them; prisoners were locked up for in excess of 23 hours a day, with limited human contact; supplies of clean clothes and bedding were often limited; few prisoners could take part in corporate worship; and there were extremely limited opportunities for work or education. There were four incidents of dirty protest, one for an extensive period, and many complex cases involving the serious mental illness of individuals for whom segregation was not an appropriate location. The custodial manager and his staff team worked to provide a more supportive and humane regime than in previous years by, where possible, providing work or learning opportunities, and one-to-one conversations, but were seriously hampered by the continual large numbers of occupants.

During the reporting year, 98 prisoners were segregated for over 42 days (the point at which authorisation is required by the deputy director of custody (DDC)), 14 over 84 days and five over 126 days. These large numbers are, in part, attributable to the lack of transfers out during the COVID-19 lockdown; however, the Board was concerned throughout the year about the long periods that some prisoners spent in segregation, and the continual difficulty in arranging transfers to other establishments or specialist units. The report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons in 2017 noted that: 'the prison was not particularly well supported by other high security prisons, or by the long-term category B estate, in providing respite or a fresh start for these [segregated] men'; this continues to be the case. The prison's own specialist units, the Bridge unit and the PIPE, have not developed into the national resource they were intended to be, so Whitemoor itself is not making a significant enough contribution to solving the logjam in the system as a whole.

Segregation review boards (SRBs) were well chaired. Representation by psychology staff improved after the appointment of a dedicated psychologist for the segregation unit. As we reported last year, mental healthcare professionals were very frequently absent from segregation reviews, replaced by a nurse who had only brief notes on each prisoner and was unable to comment in a significant way on the appropriateness of continued segregation for an individual. A chaplain attended regularly but security staff were absent, sending a brief note if relevant. Care plans were not available at SRBs, and those that we saw were cursory. In January, the psychologist with a dedicated interest in the segregation unit attended and began to review the care plans. This work was interrupted by the COVID-19 lockdown. Progress for prisoners was frequently limited, with no change for many months; agreed actions were often not carried out, or no information on them was available; transfers to other prisons or hospitals were very difficult to arrange, with long waits even when agreed; and segregated prisoners housed in the healthcare unit owing to capacity constraints were not always reviewed. When the Board declined to concur with the outcome, it was most frequently because segregation had exceeded 42 days and was not authorised by the DDC, but also in a number of cases because of insufficient progress on an exit plan.

During the initial weeks of the lockdown, the SRB was not convened and, in the absence of the segregation governor and administrative clerk due to illness, no information was available to the Board. On the return of the segregation governor in

week 7, weekly telephone updates were provided, followed by scanned paperwork, and then the facility was provided to join a properly convened SRB by conference call.

The CSC holds up to 10 prisoners, managed under a nationally coordinated strategy to provide a secure location for the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners (F wing). The mix of prisoners held there over the year has been such that it was often judged impossible to allow them all to mix freely. A decision was made at national level to withdraw funding from the violence reduction programme. One-to-one support provided locally by Whitemoor is available to the prisoners on this unit but this has been disrupted by a change of personnel in the psychology team. The lack of a nationally agreed, reliable intervention to reduce the risk that these very violent prisoners present to others is a major concern. It also became difficult to hold community meetings, either because not all prisoners would participate, or because some would seek to dominate the agenda. As in the previous year, the Board reported that there were few education and work opportunities for these individuals, and the outside garden area and greenhouse, which in previous years had been cultivated, had been neglected, reportedly for lack of a budget for seeds. An art and craft room is seldom in use. Provision for worship is limited. Association spaces are reasonable, but the Board has commented that the central recreation area is underused as an area to promote engagement between staff and prisoners as part of the intended enabling environment. We have also noted that visits by the duty governor are infrequent, and by the Governor or Deputy Governor rare.

During the COVID-19 period, one wing of the unit was cleared, with good cooperation from the prisoners, to become a safe area for individuals from main location who needed to shield, but all those who were eligible declined to move there.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

The Governor set out her vision for developing Whitemoor's people (both prisoners and staff) in a presentation to staff in September 2019. Early steps towards bringing the vision to reality included the establishment of a training committee and a peer support network. Classes on active citizenship were delivered by Rice University, Texas (this was disrupted by the London Bridge terrorist incident) and Milton Keynes College. Plans for the next stage include forming a prison council led by prisoners. Active citizenship will be a focus of further courses for staff and prisoners alike. We believe that the growth of a positive culture of engagement is an appropriate way to address the divisions and tensions that have too often prevented Whitemoor from achieving the community spirit it has aspired to.

A total of 358 staff have undertaken key worker training, almost all who were eligible. Newly recruited prison officers now do the training routinely as part of their prison officer entry-level training course. The expectation is that every prisoner will have a key worker who, under normal circumstances, will remain with him throughout his time in the prison. The national target is for 80% of potential key worker sessions to be delivered. However, according to national statistics, Whitemoor managed over 50% in only one month between May 2019 and January 2020, and there was no improvement after the sign-off for delivery in October 2019. Its own records show slightly better performance, but still reaching 60% or better in only three out of six

months. During the COVID-19 crisis, the key worker scheme was suspended nationally. Plans are in place to restart the scheme using the exceptional delivery model, targeted first at vulnerable prisoners. The scheme is essential to the culture that Whitemoor aspires to create and should be given the highest priority.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The number of prisoners over the age of 50 is now 19. The Board is concerned about the lack of provision for these ageing prisoners. Cell doors are not wide enough to admit a wheelchair, and little provision is made for those with hearing or sight difficulties beyond a hearing aid loop on one wing. An informal buddy system is in place, and buddies often show admirable commitment to supporting their fellow prisoners when they have mobility issues. A total of 101 prisoners have some kind of disability (using the wide legislative definition). A handful need adult and social care provision, which is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council and works smoothly (see also section 6.3).

The number of Muslim prisoners has continued to be high, at 177 out of a population of 457 (39%), and the management of such a diverse population has continued to be challenging.

Around a quarter of the prison's population are foreign nationals, excluding those with dual nationality. Before lockdown, the foreign nationals officer continued to organise a programme of visits and activities, such as the annual day visit for families of foreign national prisoners which took place in August. The basic operational problems with telephoning embassies, as we reported last year, cannot be resolved without a national initiative because the telephones available to prisoners, which depend on the use of personal identification numbers, are incompatible with embassies' switchboard systems. We are told that, when contact is made with embassies, they are generally unresponsive. It is very rare for an embassy official to visit the prison to talk to a prisoner. In the early part of the year, 'photo days' continued, and prisoners were able to send photographs home to their families. All work on repatriation and deportation was halted during lockdown. The prison has continued to provide a free five-minute telephone call (increased by 10 minutes during the COVID-19 crisis) each month if a prisoner has not had a visitor. Ironically, the COVID-19 crisis seems to have had a beneficial effect in accelerating the use of communication technologies to enable better contact with families overseas. Having acquired security agreement for video messages, at the end of the reporting year the prison was about to implement a scheme, with the help of a company called Purple Visits. This is very much to be welcomed.

Meetings of the equalities action team, which is responsible for listening to and responding to prisoners' concerns around equality, have continued to be erratic at best. It is still not clear that senior managers see this as a priority for the use of their time.

Ninety-six discrimination incident report forms were submitted during the reporting year, of which eight were upheld – slightly more than in the previous year.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy has continued to offer a range of programmes, despite a reported squeeze on its budget. The chaplains and imams worked hard to offer comfort and a calm presence during the time of the two terrorist attacks that involved members of the Whitemoor community. They are convinced that their interventions with all faith groups, and none, helped prevent an escalation of violence after these events, and that, as a community, most prisoners are now showing more respect towards, and acceptance of, those with a different faith.

The chaplaincy has run two new, well-received, courses looking at the issues around prisoners' experience of loss, and on dealing with guilt and forgiveness.

Links with local mosques and churches continue to bear fruit, with gifts of books and learning materials that help to offset the shortfall in funding that has reduced the chaplains' ability to replace some of their resources. Prisoners have supported a local food bank, providing around £4,000 of their own food over the year, and raised more than £600 for charity during Eid al-Fitr.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

A review of IEP had begun before the COVID-19 crisis, and there is a commitment to completing it once it is possible to restart prisoner forums. One idea under consideration is to introduce a 'super enhanced' level to incentivise prisoners who make a significant contribution to the prison and whose behaviour and attitude are good.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were advised to use IEP warnings and Prison National Offender Management Information System (P-NOMIS) entries instead of making charges that would require adjudications or actual IEP demotions. As lockdown proceeded, officers feared that some prisoners were taking advantage of the lack of sanctions. It was, therefore, decided that the sanction of downgrading should be available in exceptional circumstances, but up to the end of May it had not been used.

A national instruction to stop using the basic regime made it possible for televisions to be given to all prisoners, regardless of IEP level, with the number of channels being increased by five. Prisoners on the standard level were allowed access to games consoles that were stored in their property and would normally have been available only to enhanced prisoners.

5.7 Complaints

A total of 2,333 Comp 1s (the first level of complaint) and 508 Comp 2s (the follow-up) were submitted, of which 75% and 70%, respectively, were responded to within the time limit. These complaints were about a wide range of issues; the two most common were residential (18%) and property (14%). There were particularly long delays and unsatisfactory answers, causing anger and distress, when the complaint had to be sent to a previous establishment, often concerning missing personal property.

5.8 Property

The handling of prisoners' property in the early part of the year continued to cause the Board some concern. The Prison Service rules on the amount of property that a prisoner is allowed to hold are too often neglected in the wider prison system, causing problems for prisons which seek to abide by them. There is an almost wilful carelessness in the way that prisoners' property is handled when they are transferred between prisons, and this can lead to the loss of not only clothing and trainers, but also items of sentimental value. At Whitemoor, logjams developed because of the volume of property accompanying some prisoners, and also delays in replacing passive drug dogs when they retired or transferred with their handler to another establishment. This is particularly regrettable when prisoners need access to their legal papers or to lists of telephone numbers of family, friends and lawyers. The CM who recently took over responsibility for the management of reception is bringing about positive change, but the problem is wider than Whitemoor. The Prison Service should be capable of finding a solution to this nationally; it has been an issue for far too long.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

Healthcare services are provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

There continued to be constant pressures on the service because of staff shortages, but this improved over the year, with open vacancies reducing by 50% and cover provided by agency staff. Waiting times for routine (non-urgent) appointments with the GP and specialist services, such as those provided by the dentist, podiatrist, optician and physiotherapist, improved in the course of the year, and in many cases were shorter than in the community. The number of missed or cancelled appointments reduced through the year as the availability of specialist medical staff and also officers to accompany prisoners became more consistent and prisoners' compliance improved. After the onset of COVID-19, as in the community, specialist services were suspended, other than for emergencies.

Healthcare complaints remained at a consistently low level, and the data provided suggested that they were responded to in a timely manner and within the contracted timescale. However, in the last few months, and as a result of other pressures on the service, the response time lengthened, with up to 50% (in any month) of complaints received not being responded to within the stipulated period.

6.2 Mental healthcare

Whitemoor has a large number of prisoners with mental health needs, and this provision has been a consistent issue. However, in the past 12 months staffing levels improved, with mental health assessment and triage visits generally taking place with fewer delays. In the period since the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions, the response time and coverage appeared, judging by the data provided, to have improved and overall referrals reduced.

The attendance of mental health team or healthcare personnel at ACCT reviews was noticeably low, with their attendance at less than 5% on average, although this increased during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The presence of suitably trained personnel would provide substantial support to prison staff during these reviews.

6.3 Social care

The prison managed the arrival of new prisoners appropriately, seeking their declaration on arrival of any needs that would require additional support beyond that routinely provided by healthcare staff. In the past year, only 16 declared existing conditions, all relating to long-term, chronic needs. Cambridgeshire County Council is the responsible provider; its relationship with the prison is good and the service operates smoothly.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

During the normal regime, prisoners had sufficient time and access to facilities for exercise, and the equipment was in good condition. The COVID-19 changes to the regime had an impact on time out of cell for socialising, and exercise was at first severely limited.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

The integrated substance misuse team provides a valuable service to prisoners who voluntarily seek support to stop taking illicit substances, using innovative approaches, from art therapy to acupuncture. The team did not attend the prison during lockdown so we were unable to obtain data on their work during the reporting year.

6.6 Soft skills

On a day-to-day basis, the development of soft skills is led by the education department and the chaplaincy. Conversations about social, moral and spiritual issues were frequently heard in classrooms; in the first half of the year, the University of Cambridge's staff and students made a remarkable contribution through the Learning Together programme. Music, singing, the writing of poetry and plays all encouraged prisoners to reflect on their experiences and express themselves in ways that are new to them and very powerful. The construction of gardens for A and D wings, undertaken in partnership with a national charity, Greener Growth, has offered a valuable opportunity for some prisoners to experience the satisfaction of tending plants in the open air; efforts should be made to extend this privilege to more prisoners who can demonstrate that they have earned it.

Peer support from Listeners, who are trained by the Samaritans, continued to improve after it became wing based. It is a good example of prisoners taking responsibility for helping themselves and their neighbours. Initiatives like the Toe to Toe reading scheme encourage quiet study and reflection. Fathers in Custody allows prisoners to record themselves reading stories for their children.

The chaplaincy ran regular programmes of restorative justice for both Christians and Muslims, which were very well received. Chaplains of all denominations visit and spend time regularly with prisoners.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Milton Keynes College won the contract for education provision in April 2019. Its Careers in Custody initiative made some progress, with good links built between the prison's industries department and the staff member leading on employability at the college. The prison commissioned a range of new courses before lockdown, including academies in music and art, levels 1 and 2 in business and citizenship, plus GCSE psychology. However, some of these opportunities were impaired by the provider's staff shortages.

The regular education programmes continued to be subject to closures as a result of shortages of staff, evenly split between teachers/instructors and prison officers. The percentage of class closures was 52%, a significant increase over last year; the attendance levels were at 72%, with a retention rate of 93%. It is imperative that the prison and provider alike address the lamentable performance in delivering the basic education programmes, which are an essential component of a healthy prison regime, particularly when the retention figures suggest that prisoners value these opportunities.

The City and Guilds Award in education and training (level 3) was introduced, and six out of the seven prisoners who started qualified as learning mentors. LSA basic English was taught, with support offered on a one-to-one outreach basis. Eight prisoners engaged with this programme, and between them achieved 15 awards for reading and writing; some prisoners progressed by two levels in the year.

Data prior to COVID-19 showed a success rate of 50%, with a predicted rate of 68% once all the results were in. Class closures prevented a large number of learners from completing courses by the end target date, with only 78% able to complete on time.

The Learning Together programme organised by Cambridge University, which brings together prisoners and those in higher education 'to study alongside each other' in equal partnership, was accessed by over a quarter of Whitemoor prisoners, with future applications and enrolments looking very healthy. The programmes cover a wide range of subjects, from social studies to philosophy and play writing, with celebratory events featuring photography, poetry and music-making; family members are often invited. During the reporting year, one of the prison's workshops was refurbished as a Learning Together study centre, with much of the work being undertaken by prisoners; the opening celebration was an inspiring event, attended by many prisoners. It is a tragedy that the development of this scheme was jeopardised by the terrorist act at London Bridge, which took place during a Learning Together conference. The organisers are committed to restarting the programme as soon as possible, after review of the arrangements to ensure the safety of all participants. Sadly, the COVID-19 emergency prevented progress.

The partnership with the Britten Sinfonia culminated in a remarkable music festival, with prisoners and families celebrating alongside each other. There will be further work in the future with the Britten Sinfonia and with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Whitemoor hosted its first art exhibition during the reporting year, involving external exhibitors, which was well received by the learners.

During lockdown, education classes were suspended and staff worked from home. A staff volunteer from Milton Keynes College distributed education materials to collection points for wing staff to take to prisoners, who were told that work could be submitted for marking. We do not know the take-up. The annual education needs survey was distributed.

The Prison Service has committed to ensuring that education providers are financially supported to remain viable, and this is necessary and to be welcomed.

The library continued to operate successfully under the management of Milton Keynes College. The inter-library loans scheme was reintroduced, but with such restrictions on the number of books and the length of the loan period that it seemed unlikely to prove sustainable. During the COVID-19 crisis, a volunteer from Milton Keynes College helped prison staff distribute books and DVDs. The prison spent nearly £2,000 on DVDs during the lockdown, and the College has undertaken to keep book stocks fresh.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There was little change in the work opportunities during the year, but discussions are under way with an employment broker from the New Futures Network about the potential for new initiatives. The existing industrial contracts proved stable and we are told that the businesses concerned are well satisfied with the output from Whitemoor; in some cases, they have chosen the establishment as the sole contractor, based on its performance.

The prison has been waiting for the British Legion to complete its rebranding work, in order to extend the working opportunities in the Poppy Appeal workshop. The prison continually makes an effort to bring in work which would require a higher level of skills, as is the case with the Max Spielman (photographic restoration) Academy, where eight prisoners are employed and two are in training; the Academy offered regular opportunities for upskilling workers to deal with more challenging tasks.

Workshop instructors remain committed to developing prisoners' sense of work ethics; discipline, teamwork and task focus are emphasised, and prisoners are paid by results. Relationships between prisoners and instructors are generally very good.

Where possible, prisoners in the CSC and the segregation unit are given work to do, but the need for tools and an industrial environment severely restricts opportunities.

Unfortunately, the education-led workshops were often closed owing to staffing issues. The viability of the painting, decorating and plastering courses came under question, as they take only eight prisoners at a time and were frequently unable to run because of staff shortages. It is to be hoped that a solution can be found because they provide prisoners with the potential for visible achievement and have had a positive impact on motivation; they were highly rated by Ofsted in its last inspection.

The industrial projects team, planned last year to secure a better balance between skilled and unskilled work opportunities, resulted in prisoners working on the refurbishment of Workshop 8 as a classroom for Cambridge University-led courses. This model of prisoners taking responsibility for improving their own environment should be followed whenever the opportunity presents.

The main laundry was refurbished to operate on cool water, and now takes in work from three establishments, providing sustainable employment; however, during lockdown it had to be staffed by officers.

Progression pathways and job descriptions were put in place in all workshops, sometimes accompanied by displays, to give the prisoners a clearer understanding of the skills they are gaining. These also enable the instructors to assess workers' progress more meaningfully.

7.3 Offender management, progression

During the period March 2019 to March 2020, 190 prisoners were transferred into Whitemoor, and 175 transferred out; 60 of the latter were progressive moves.

During the same period, the offender management unit (OMU) completed a total of 92 offender assessment system (OASys) reviews. This was slightly down on the year before, although it is probably a fair reflection of capacity, given the loss of five band 4 offender supervisors from the unit.

Phase 2 of the OMiC model was implemented in October 2019, although the actual transfer of responsibility from community-based offender managers to prisoner offender managers (POMs) was not completed until February 2020. The difficulty of recruiting probation officers across the south-east and eastern divisions led to an agreement that all OMUs could run at 90% capacity. Five former offender supervisors were moved to operational roles, and replaced by only one full-time probation officer. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, a further two full-time probation officers were due to join the team. This would have taken the OMU up to its OMiC benchmark of 6.5 probation officers and two full-time uniformed officers. Those officers have been deployed in the community for the foreseeable future, as the community remains the most critical area for offender management.

Whitemoor appointed a dedicated categorisation advocate, who deals directly with prisoners and issues relating to re-categorisation. It is hoped that this will help to ensure that the process is more transparent, and that prisoners are supported along the way in collating their representations.

In the year to March 2020, Whitemoor achieved a total of 16 downgrades from category A to category B, the first step towards a prisoner progressing outside the LTHSE.

Whitemoor facilitates a wide range of offending behaviour programmes which are primarily aimed at addressing violence. In addition, the Identity Matters programme, which looks specifically at gang-related issues and offending, is due to be added to the portfolio of interventions, along with the Healthy Identity Intervention, which is already facilitated on an individual basis.

The psychology department is exploring data and information relating to the current cohort of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP), to establish avenues for progression. One role for the new POMs is to liaise with the complex case team in cases where it is evident that the IPP prisoner is stuck or experiencing barriers to progression. Strong ties were developed with counterparts in other dispersal sites, therapeutic communities and the offender personality disorder pathway, which help to widen the availability of interventions/treatment.

7.4 Family contact

The prison promotes and encourages family contact, and during the year demonstrated excellent visitor/staff relationships.

The establishment allows for four regular visits days per week, with a monthly family day and other specific days for children, foreign nationals and adults only. Funding was secured to allow up to 12 additional days to be booked to celebrate achievement within the establishment, be it in the community, or academic or offending behaviour programmes; these are normally extended events that are run over the course of the day, allowing families to share meals prepared by prisoners over the lunch period.

Staff/prisoner relationships were excellent, both within the visitors' centre and externally with the Ormiston Trust who offer support for visits by providing refreshments, entertaining children and generally making relatives feel welcome. The visits hall provides a welcoming venue for families, but the play facilities for children in the outside visitors' centre are poor. There is a small grassed area outside the centre which could be put to good use if funding were available to fence it off and improve the surface for the safety of the children playing there.

Whitemoor is in a rural location, and many visitors travel all day to get there. However, due to the poor size of the tea bar and facilities within the visitors centre, there is no provision to supply hot food, which is often requested.

Telephone provision is via telephones located on the spurs, as in-cell provision is not yet available.

As part of the COVID-19 regime, an opportunity was created on two occasions for families to send in items from approved suppliers, and this was well used. Items were also provided for those without families, and foreign nationals were able to buy items with private cash.

Although family visits were suspended during the COVID-19 lockdown period, good efforts were made to optimise access to telephone and email contacts with the use of video clips and some face-to-face links.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As an LTHSE establishment, HMP Whitemoor does not generally release prisoners directly into the community; therefore, it has no direct resettlement function.

Resettlement work is primarily focused on the completion of offending behaviour programmes and providing education and skills through work.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	292 (June 2019-February 2020)
Total number of segregation reviews attended	44

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	20	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	21	17
C	Equality	5	9
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	16	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	19	21
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	6
F	Food and kitchens	9	9
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	36	13
H1	Property within this establishment	26	27
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	20	23
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	2	1
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	12	8
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	40	18
K	Transfers	7	13
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		
	Total number of applications	237	181

Data affected by lockdown caused by Covid-19.



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