



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HM Young Offenders Institution Aylesbury

**For reporting year
April 2019 – March 2020**

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Introduction sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board, appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

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

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison, and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison, and also to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

Aylesbury Young Offender Institution (YOI) is housed in a mixture of buildings, ranging in age from Victorian to early 21st century. It has seven residential units, of differing sizes and ages.

The three oldest wings are of traditional Victorian pattern but have been modernised over the years. The two wings which are the next oldest, dating from, we believe, the 1930s, were also modernised over 20 years ago. The two newest units date from 1997.

The care and separation unit (CSU), otherwise known as the segregation unit (or 'seg'), is nine years old and a modern healthcare building, including the reception unit, was also built at this time. There is a modern, well-equipped gym, too.

When fully operational, the prison has a capacity of about 430, with each cell designed for single occupancy.

A 'decant', or reduction, of the population (see section 3.1) took place in March and April 2019. This was in response to the 'special measures status' imposed on the prison by HMPPS. During our reporting year, the prison managed with four operational wings and approximately 209 prisoners.

The prison is a member of the long-term and high-security estate (LTHSE) and holds the longest-sentenced young adult males in the English prison system. Prisoner intake covers most of England and Wales. They do not come directly from court, having begun their sentences at other YOIs or secure institutions for children under 18.

The prisoners are some of the most disruptive and challenging young men in the prison system. For our reporting period, sentence length ranged between four years and 26 years, with about 37% of the young men serving 10 years or more, including approximately 21% serving life sentences. Prisoners are aged between 18 and 21. Under half of the prisoners are of white ethnic origin, fewer than in most other prisons.

The learning and skills provider, under the extended Prison Education Framework contract, remains Milton Keynes College.

The contract for maintenance of the prison fabric is held by Gov Facilities Services Limited (GFSL), and healthcare services are provided by Care UK.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This report draws on the daily reporting of the members of the Board. Points raised by Board members are often picked up, and dealt with constructively, by prison managers as we go along. Relationships between the Board and staff in the prison remained positive during the whole year.

Special measures

In February 2019, the establishment was placed in special measures, for performance reasons. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) gives a prison 'special measures' status when the Service assesses that the prison needs specialist support to improve to an acceptable level.

Aylesbury was therefore in special measures at the start of the reporting year (the end of March 2019). By then, the number of prisoners had been reduced from over 400 to 315. At the end of April, to improve the prison's performance from this poor position, the population was temporarily reduced further, to 209 prisoners (often called the 'decant'), and this stayed the same for the rest of the reporting year. Prison managers took three wings out of use for refurbishment. The planned period for improvements was one year. This allowed time for intensive training and development of new, and existing, staff and a long overdue investment in the systems and structure.

We often mention the reduction in prisoner numbers (decant) in this report. It is probably the most important factor in the entire reporting year. Staff numbers stayed

close to the numbers before the decant. This gave a much better ratio of staff to prisoners, of 1:12.5, and many of the improvements we recorded during the year resulted from this more favourable ratio.

The senior management team (SMT) worked cooperatively with the LTHSE strategy team. On 28 June, the SMT was able to share the full plan by which the prison would aim to get out of special measures. Among the initiatives was the adoption of the challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) process in May, to focus on some of the more disruptive prisoners.

In October 2019, HMPPS adopted a new Prison Performance Support Programme targeting the worst performing prisons. Aylesbury was not amongst these and had its special measures status withdrawn.

Inspection

There was an unannounced inspection of the prison by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) from 30 September to 11 October 2019. They published the final version of their report on 25 February 2020. By this time the prison was already, effectively, out of special measures. The prison had achieved the improvements in safety and operations which were needed to maintain its revised status. Despite this success, overall rating was a 2 (where 1 is low). The inspectors acknowledged that improvement in the regime at Aylesbury was higher than this average rating in several areas, but further improvement was still needed to move to a 3. The overall rating of 2, and, a little later on, a green rating for the security audit, confirmed the move out of special measures.

The inspectors noted the improved staff/prisoner ratio as a vital element in the prison's improvements.

Occupation, education and workshops

The IMB remains deeply concerned by the large percentage of young offenders staying locked in their cells each day, rather than taking part in education and/or work. Disappointingly, the reduction in prisoner numbers made little impact on this problem. The Board tracked the data relating to this, independently, during the year. (We include these results later in this report.)

Work options remain unexciting, seldom recognisably accredited and poorly related to modern life. The education provision has a stronger reputation. It is outsourced to Milton Keynes College.

On a positive point, in the autumn of 2019, the prison took part in the BBC programme, The Choir, under the direction of Gareth Malone. This showed a commendable openness on the part of the SMT and leadership in the LTHSE. It was an encouraging event for some prisoners, families, staff and the local community.

Fabric and Infrastructure

The change from Carillion to GFSLA in January 2018 facilitated a continued overall improvement in estate services, although some transitional problems arose. These were associated with unfulfilled maintenance contracts, managed by GFSL but established under Carillion. During the year, the Board logged numerous instances of non-functioning technical equipment in the kitchen, the laundry and other parts of the prison.

Change of governor

In January 2020, the Governor, Laura Sapwell, wrote to all staff to announce that she would be leaving to become Governor of HMP Bullingdon. Governor Sapwell was a leader that the Board respected and worked well with. She offered the establishment clear-eyed, determined leadership, steering it toward marked improvement. After she left, we worked well with the Acting Governor, Andy Routley. We look forward to working with the new permanent Governor in due course.

COVID-19

The first notification of possible impact of COVID-19 came on 14 February 2020. The SMT stopped any activity in education and workshops at the prison on 19 March. Following the national lockdown announcement by the Prime Minister, the SMT introduced a revised core day (timetable of daily activities for prisoners) from 24 March.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Data shows that the number of serious incidents was down by 50% this year. Taking account of the fact that there are now fewer prisoners than before, this reduction is only slight, but still a reduction. Serious assaults on staff were only down by a third.

A significant number of prisoners continued to report feeling unsafe in the prison, especially on their first night.

We observed that staff made serious and proper efforts to keep apart prisoners who were recorded as threatening to one another, usually through gang affiliation. This was even more difficult with only four wings operational.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The data showing that, on average, on any weekday, only 64% of the prisoners were out of their cells, is deeply worrying.

Committing to a regime which actively tracks, tackles and resolves more of the antagonisms between prisoners, the interpersonal threats and disagreements would allow other aspects of prison life, such as education and access to the gym, to work more effectively.

Having said this Board members often witnessed good staff/prisoner relationships, and instances of staff showing care and sensitivity. The embedding of the key worker scheme in the year, designating staff time, within their duties, to work consistently, on a one-to-one basis, with a prisoner was an improvement strongly endorsed by prisoners and staff. We considered this new scheme to be a highly positive development.

HMIP criticised the prison for lacking a systematic approach to equality across the nine characteristics protected in law. The prison is making swift improvements to this, which we document in detail later in this report.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The prisoners' life experiences often result in complex clinical and wellbeing needs. They have access to a full range of clinical services. The delivery of physical healthcare services might improve if shaped more consciously to meet the needs of young men, with difficult backgrounds, living under the close scrutiny of their peers. Prisoners will benefit from the ongoing integration of the clinical services in the prison.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Few prisoners are resettled directly from the establishment. Sentence lengths are such that helping prisoners adjust to the life and routine of prison is prioritised over resettlement. However, it is disturbing to hear this point made, occasionally, by prison authorities, as an excuse for the poor quality of meaningful, accredited work and training available at the prison.

3.3 Main areas for development

To the minister

- Share a clear set of nationally agreed priority improvements in young prisoner employment and vocational training, to ensure a much improved use of resources over a two- to five-year period. Back this effort with collection and analysis of appropriate data.
- Advocate across Whitehall for a stronger national commitment to prisoner rehabilitation, backed by shared best practice and suitable resourcing.

To the Prison Service

- Resource YOIs sufficiently well to secure decency in the prison and an improvement in life chances after release.
- Establish and deliver best-in-class training for senior officers in YOIs, based on up-to-date professional knowledge and research.
- Systematically grasp the opportunity to turn lives around early, and reduce repeat-offending rates, by demanding better educational and training outcomes in YOIs nationally, backed by professionally informed practice and proper data analysis.

To the Governor

- Deliver a systematic, speedy and data-supported response to the recommendations of the last inspection.
- Focus management effort, and discretionary resourcing, on increasing the frequency, regularity and quality of out-of-cell occupation.
- Maintain the gains in prisoner experience, made since the reduction in prisoner numbers, as the prison population increases once again.
- Move out of COVID-19 lockdown protocols as swiftly and smoothly as possible, following guidelines as necessary.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The governing team and staff devoted significant resources to improving standards and performance across the prison during the year. This led to the prison being

removed from special measures and an improved HMIP report. Core inspection areas remained 'not sufficiently good' but the Inspectorate team noted the significant progress made. We have also witnessed these improvements.

Critical among these has been an improvement in staffing issues. The combination of keeping more staff, holding 50% fewer prisoners than before, and continuing recruitment has helped enormously.

The average period in post – and amount of experience – of officers has improved. The prison is also no longer dependent upon 'detached duty' officers (on loan from other prisons). These factors had, for some years, made good staff/prisoner relationships, and stability, difficult to achieve.

We were pleased to see increased use of body-worn video cameras (BWVCs) in many areas. We welcomed the new policy on the use of BWVCs mid-year.

The numbers of prisoners' complaints and requests by them to meet the Board ('applications') were down, in the latter case by two-thirds. This may, in part, be attributed to the success of the key worker scheme.

The decant of 200 prisoners to other prisons last year was managed very effectively, with little resistance from the prisoners who were transferred.

The average number of prisoners held in the segregation unit was down, reflecting key initiatives by the management team. With a technical capacity for 21 prisoners, we have seen numbers down to low single digits for much of the year. In parallel, the average time spent in the unit has been less, usually a matter of days. We still witnessed delays in prisoners transferring out to other prisons. This led to 19 prisoners spending at least three months in the unit. This is longer than is appropriate for prisoners in this age group.

We noted continued investment in the ageing infrastructure whilst there still remains more to do. New shower units were put in on two older wings. Investments were made in serveries (counters for serving prisoners' meals). There was a determined drive to promote 'clean and decent' with these, as well as other, repairs, and painting. In-cell telephony, with telephones in all cells, is a big improvement for prisoners and staff alike.

However, as reported elsewhere, the anticipated work on refurbishing the decommissioned wings was delayed by 12 months, to the end of the year.

The commissioning of a new and expanded automated secure system for the issuing of keys was most welcome. Last year, the shortage of keys was a significant issue.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception unit is in the same block as the healthcare department. The area includes secure rooms where some of the prisoners' property, which they are not permitted to keep with them, is stored.

Aylesbury received 187 new prisoners during the year. With the prison housing just half its normal population, this number is much lower than in other years. The establishment does not often have prisoners who attend local courts, so turnover is much lower than in local prisons where this service is provided.

Vans (provided by GeoAmev or Serco) bring new arrivals into the prison, to a secure compound behind the reception unit. We have inspected these vans from time to time and found them to be generally clean and decent. As may be expected, the individual compartments are rather small, with just a hard seat and a small window. There are no other facilities inside. Personal property is carried in an adjoining compartment.

Officers at reception check new prisoners in. They search prisoners and their property comprehensively on arrival.

Reception staff explain the rules about what property and clothing prisoners can keep with them. They place any non-permitted items, and any that exceed the quantity that the prison permits, into storage. HMPPS prescribes what a prisoner is permitted to have. Some prisons use discretion in permitting possessions that are not allowed in Aylesbury. A recent example was a stereo radio/CD player with Bluetooth capability which is not permitted here. Such matters can give rise to disputes. This variance aside, we have had no complaints about the reception process.

New arrivals initially spend a week or two on D wing. D wing staff have responsibility for creating the new prisoner's induction files and advising other departments of the new arrivals. We aim to meet new prisoners within the first week of their arrival, to introduce the Board and explain our role. We try to speak with them in person and then leave an explanatory leaflet.

After a week or two, prisoners may then move to other wings. Staff who decide which wing to move a prisoner to have to take into account whether there are, for example, members of opposing gangs ('non-associates') already on the wing.

Early in the reporting period, we missed seeing a number of new prisoners, as no one had told us promptly of their arrival. In August 2019, D wing started a new procedure, with an active, and shared, spreadsheet which records the completion, by each department, of the induction processes. This is helpful for us as it helps us to keep track of, and complete, all Board inductions.

A persistent matter of complaint to the prison, and to the Board, is the recovery, by prisoners, of property from their previous prisons. Occasionally, prisoners arrive in a prison before their property, which is then expected to follow within the month. The Board had nine such applications during the year, although, admittedly, four were submitted by one prisoner. This number is down from 15 in our report of last year, even though that covered only eight months. In some cases, our intervention resulted in property reappearing, and in others prisoners received compensation.

As far as we can tell, from a review of the prison's complaints database, there were very few complaints addressed to Aylesbury from other prisons following the decant of over 210 prisoners. We have traced just two. This is a credit to reception staff, and the staff in general, in ensuring that prisoners leaving Aylesbury left with their property in an organised manner.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

During the reporting year, there were no deaths in custody. However, in our 2018/19 annual report, which provided commentary up to mid-March 2019, there was no reference to a death that occurred in the closing days of that period.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's initial report on this incident, dated 16 September 2019, records the details of a suicide on F wing. The prisoner had been at Aylesbury for eight months. He was not on an active assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plan i.e. procedures for those who are at risk of self-harm. However he had been on and off ACCT plans several times during his period at Aylesbury. A persistent element in the report about this self-inflicted death is that of prisoner-on-prisoner bullying. This is an aspect of prison life which is almost impossible for a Board to monitor.

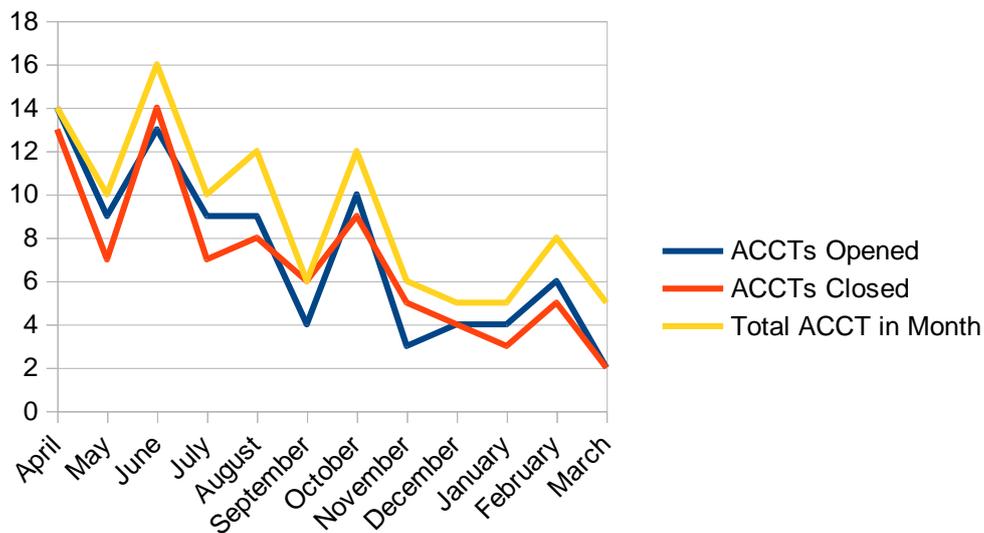
The Ombudsman's report makes recommendations regarding the management of vulnerable prisoners which the prison is paying attention to. This was the first death in custody of a prisoner at Aylesbury since November 2011.

During 2019/20, there were a total of 87 ACCTs opened and mostly closed. There were eight ACCTs carried over from the previous year and one which carried over to the following year. On average, the ACCTs were open for just over 12 days. The longest period for which an ACCT was open in the year was 107 days, and this was the one that continued into the next year. Of the total, there were only 19 that were open for longer than 14 days, and all bar 11 had been closed by 48 days.

The Board did not observe any hesitancy during the year to open ACCTs as necessary, or to close them too quickly. The audit on ACCT documentation and processes undertaken during the year was a positive sign of the desire to improve quality.

	ACCTs opened	ACCTs closed	Total ACCTs in month
April	14	13	14
May	9	7	10
June	13	14	16
July	9	7	10
August	9	8	12
September	4	6	6
October	10	9	12
November	3	5	6
December	4	4	5
January	4	3	5
February	6	5	8
March	2	2	5

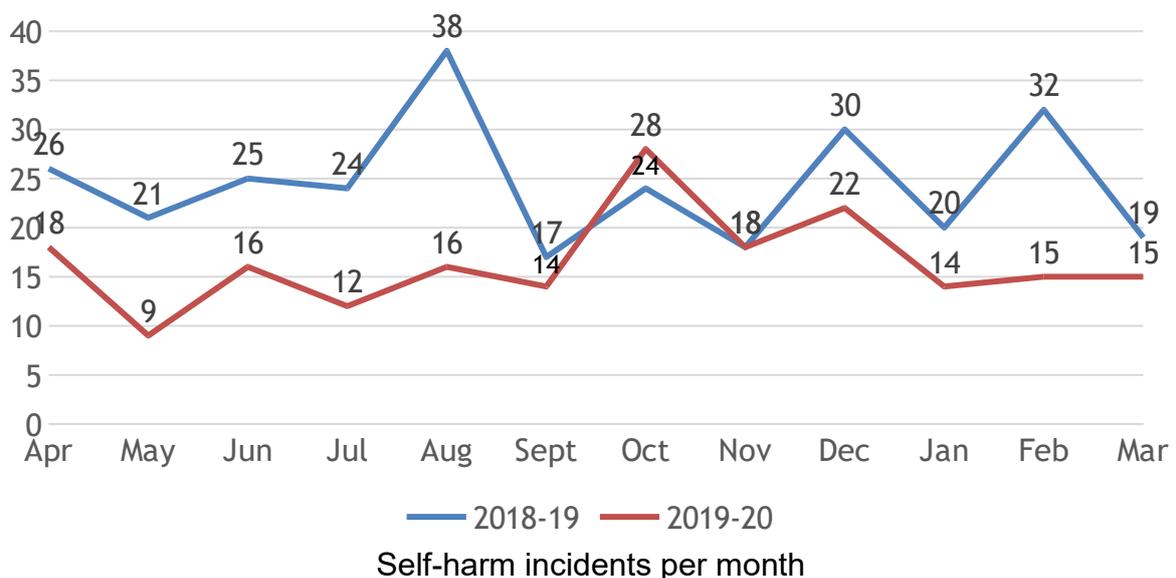
The chart below shows ACCT activity per month, and an overall decline in the need to use ACCT to protect vulnerable prisoners.



In line with the statistics on violent incidents (see section 4.3), staff in the prison have had to dedicate less time to the monitoring and management of the more vulnerable prisoners. However, looking after a group of relatively physically fit and healthy 18–21-year-olds with long, and very long, lengths of sentence which they have only recently been given will always be a challenge.

Self-harm

As self-harm is practised only by a subset of the population, it shows a smaller decline than the overall incidents of violence following the reduction in Aylesbury’s population.

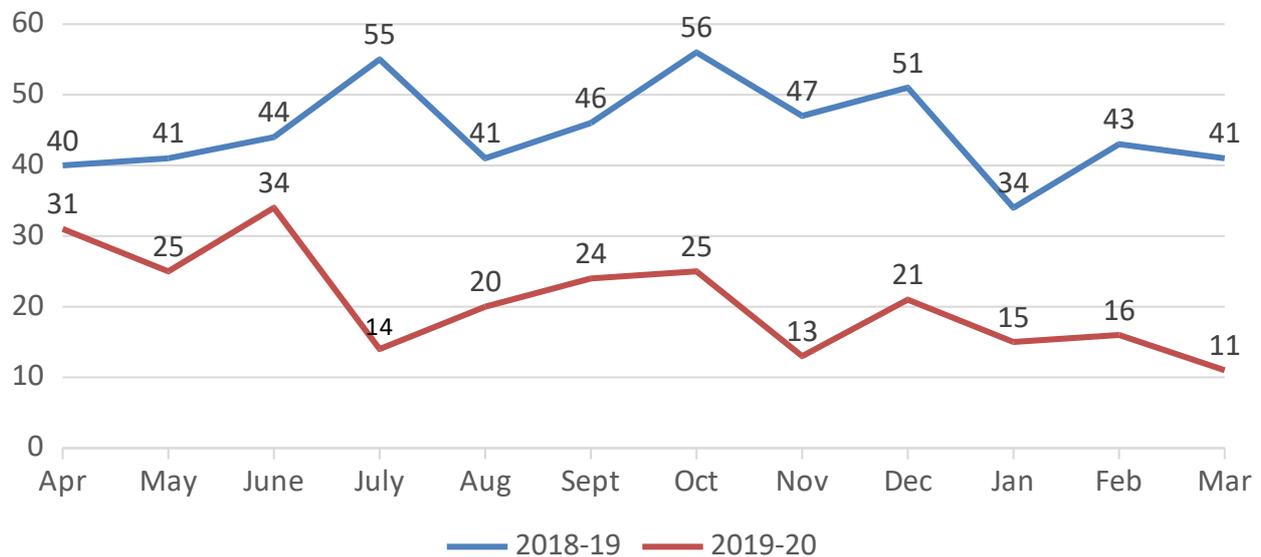


There were 197 incidents of self-harm in the reporting year, down from a total of 294 in the previous year – a reduction of 33%. A single prisoner, with a deeply embedded habit of self-harm, is strongly represented in these statistics. Staff from across the prison managed this case in a constructive manner, to some good effect.

The ACCT procedures for managing vulnerable prisoners can be triggered by anyone who has a concern about such an individual; they are used to manage prisoners' monitoring and care.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents in the reporting year has dropped significantly compared with the previous year. This graph of numbers of actual violent incidents per month is extracted from the internal monthly 2020 safer prisons report:



As mentioned above, the reduction in prisoner numbers was completed by the end of April 2019. The total number of violent incidents shows a commensurate decline through to the end of the reporting year.

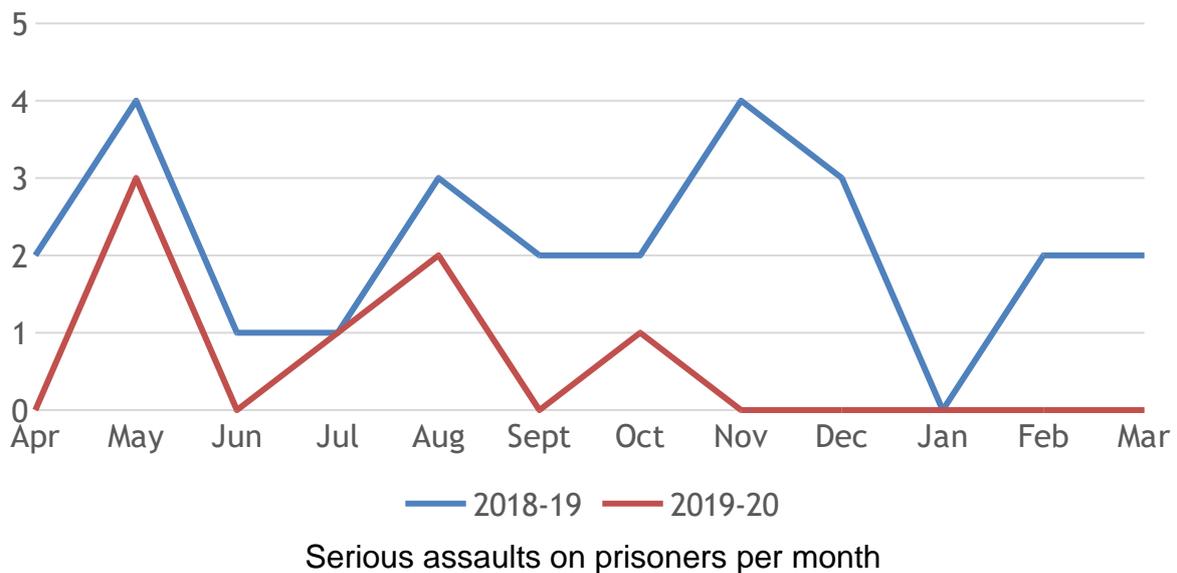
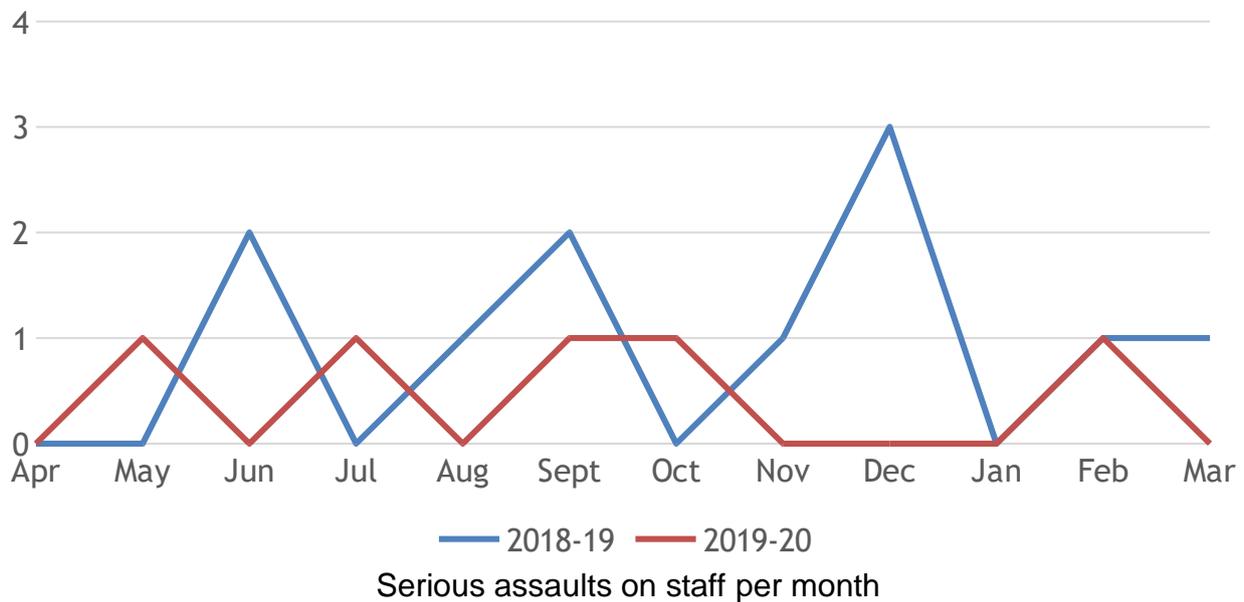
The CSIP process was introduced at the establishment on 1 May 2019. Alongside a zero-tolerance attitude to violence, the CSIP process helps the staff and prisoners recognise prisoners' triggers for violence, and helps them learn alternative means of expressing themselves.

Prisoners who have been enrolled in the CSIP process have their cases reviewed at the weekly safety intervention meeting. The multidisciplinary team attending works to support them in changing their violent behaviour. The COVID-19 lockdown stopped those on a CSIP from participating in the supporting programmes from around 23 March 2020. The expectation is that there will be little change from the level reached by that time, which we will monitor over the next year.

Aylesbury also introduced a violence reduction strategy in February 2020, towards the end of the reporting year. This formalises the approach to the management of

violence, coordinating all parties towards the objective of violence reduction. We shall monitor how this affects future behaviour.

The number of serious assaults reduced noticeably since the last report (see the graphs below, showing the numbers of serious assaults on staff and prisoners, respectively, bearing in mind the large reduction in prisoner numbers).



Serious assaults include incidents that:

- result in admission to an outside hospital as an inpatient
- require treatment for concussion or internal injuries
- involve fractures
- involve burns
- involve stab wounds or similar
- involve sexual assaults, and also any that involve bodily fluids.

The number of serious prisoner assaults follows the trend of the total number of assaults.

HMIP measured prisoners' perceptions of the regime at Aylesbury. This showed that prisoners experience Aylesbury as unsafe. Some mitigation processes have been introduced, such as mediation, and the establishment of wing representatives and wing meetings. The COVID-19 lockdown has slowed these positive moves.

Gang culture is perceived to be a driver for a significant number of violent incidents. Additional analysis, perhaps driven by the violence reduction strategy, would be useful in separating gang-related violence from the establishment of 'pecking orders' and the tendency of some prisoners to resort quickly to physical expression. The collection, and use, of better data would allow deeper understanding of the drivers of violence.

Prisoners with violent tendencies who are on CSIPs are reviewed regularly at the safer custody meeting. Attendance across the multidisciplinary team can be variable. The level of experience of officers, an issue highlighted in previous reports, is improving with time. However, the significant attrition rate affects this.

In summary, the prison appears to have put in place a number of actions that should have a positive impact upon violence next year and into the future. The Board will be watching with interest to see how these actions deliver, on top of the progress that has been made this year.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Aylesbury has a local safeguarding policy, which is dealt with by the safer custody team, and which has been clearly articulated to staff. The safer custody team is also in the process of establishing links with the safeguarding board of the local authority. The local authority board ensures that local companies and organisations comply with relevant legislation.

The prison received criticism in the most recent HMIP inspection for their management of equality and diversity, which overlaps with safeguarding and the treatment of vulnerable prisoners (see section 5.4 for observations by the Board).

As mentioned, during the reporting year only four wings were operational. Previously, the more vulnerable prisoners, including those convicted of a sexual offence, were generally accommodated on a single wing. With fewer wings, this practice was less practical, so more of the day-to-day burden of monitoring fell on staff across all wings.

A key tool for monitoring a vulnerable prisoner is to open an ACCT. This requires the wing staff to visit and speak with the prisoner regularly – for example, to do three observations plus one conversation per hour. Having a number of prisoners on ACCTs on a wing can take up a significant amount of officer time.

4.5 Use of force

Use of force reports record all forms of force used on prisoners. This includes low levels of force, including 'guiding holds', to higher levels of intervention, including control and restraint.

Officers have to record each intervention on a use of force statement. They have to submit this within 72 hours of the incident. The officer using the intervention technique will also add a case note on the prison's computer system.

There has been much less use of force at the prison during our reporting period, as shown in the table below. To an extent, this reflects the reduction in the number of prisoners to 209, with the same number of officers as there were before. As well as this higher ratio of officers to prisoners, improved de-escalation strategies and techniques have been introduced. The decrease in use of force also reflects the improved behaviour of prisoners and the overall reduction in the levels of violence during the year.

Use of force records for reporting years 2018/19 and 2019/20:

	2018/19	2019/20	Percentage reduction
Q1 (<i>Apr-Jun</i>)	228	254	(11%) <i>an increase</i>
Q2 (<i>Jul-Aug</i>)	294	142	52%
Q3 (<i>Sep-Dec</i>)	320	166	48%
Q4 (<i>Jan-Mar</i>)	260	114	56%
Totals	1,102	676	39%

The safer custody team convenes use of force committee meetings, to which the Board is invited, to review the statistics and video footage following intervention by officers. This gives members of the committee the chance to discuss techniques used and propose further training and development.

The committee also monitors the number of use of force reports which have not been completed. The number was at an historic high in 2018/19, but is now minimal.

The officers responsible for monitoring use of force are also responsible for making sure that enough officers have the right kind of training. This includes the advanced training required by members of the Tornado (specialist intervention) teams. The prison has met the targets for these.

At the time of writing, officers across the prison have not yet had training in the use of other methods, such as PAVA – a synthetic pepper spray – and SPEAR (Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response).

In parallel, owing to a shortage of qualified instructors, the prison has fallen behind in the numbers of staff and Board members who have completed personal safety training. We expect to do this later in 2020 (although COVID-19 may delay this).

We noted in last year's report that there was still some resistance among a small proportion of officers to the use of BWVCs. These are now more widely used (see also section 5.3). They provide valuable evidence, enabling the prison to adjudicate claims of undue force fairly.

Twice during the year, prisoners asked us to view video footage of incidents where officers were accused of heavy-handedness. We were unable to come to

conclusions as appropriate video footage was not available. We brought these incidents to the attention of the Governor. Fortunately, there are now few such incidents.

In one instance, a prisoner also asked us to review an incident in which he felt that unreasonable force had been used on him. The Governor, and her team, also reviewed the incident. They concluded that there was no case to answer, but that the officer involved would benefit from a refresher course on alternative courses of action. Having reviewed the case, we agreed with this conclusion. We were pleased to note that refresher courses are offered to ensure that high standards are maintained.

We noted that the National Tactical Response Group used the prison's decommissioned wings for intervention training of officers in the region. We understand that, usefully, they offered further training for Aylesbury-based officers in air bag and 'incident at height' training, as compensation.

4.6 Substance misuse

There is an up-to-date drug strategy, and a recent needs assessment has been carried out. The healthcare team is prepared for any new arrival who might be in need of opiate substitution therapy, but this has not happened for several years.

Regular mandatory drug testing picks up the use of 'spice' and cannabis. Officers occasionally detect stashes of 'hooch'. Last year, officers found hooch-making before Christmas in the cavity above the kitchen changing room.

Mitigation tactics to reduce the amount of illegal substances arriving in the prison are in place. For example, once it was clear that spice-impregnated paper was getting in via letters to prisoners, only photocopies of letters were distributed.

The data from mandatory drug testing shows a decline in positive results over this reporting year. This is a greater decline than simply a correlation with the population decrease.

Data on mandatory drug testing and physical 'finds' of drugs are held by different parts of the prison. This makes it difficult to get a full picture, and harder than necessary to be sure what the trends are indicating.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

For many years, this Board has been worried about the poor state of the prison. Basic maintenance seemed to have low priority, resulting in the fabric of the prison decaying. This changed in January 2018, when factors came together to enable improvements.

The collapse of Carillion and the formation of GFSL changed some attitudes towards repair and maintenance. Some budgetary improvement came with the designation of special measures and with this came recognition of the very poor state of the prison's fabric. At the same time Aylesbury became part of the LTHSE. We have

seen welcome, if belated and limited, improvements at the establishment over the past 18 months.

Prison managers promised substantial additional improvements after the closure of three wings and the decant of half the prisoners in March/April 2019. We expected a significant refurbishment programme on the vacant wings, the wings in the worst state. Disappointingly, no contracts had been placed by mid-year and no significant work was done for almost 12 months, to the end of our reporting period (March 2020). Prison managers told us that crises elsewhere in the prison estate took priority. Resulting budget constraints meant that nothing material could happen until the new financial year, 2020/21.

With contracts now placed, and a new financial year begun, contractors began their tasks in early April 2020.

Some improvements happened elsewhere in the prison: significant improvements on F and G wings included new shower facilities on two floors on each wing. This work included the removal of walls, installation of new cubicles and floors, and improved ventilation. The facilities have been completed to a high standard, showing what can be done if budgets permit. The top floors of the two wings now include improved staff facilities.

The new showers contrast with the basic facilities on the other wings which we have recorded in previous reports as being in a poor state. Inadequate ventilation makes things worse. We hope that the investment in the refurbishment of the temporarily empty wings includes showers built to the new standard.

In May 2019, after three years, we finally saw the removal of the scaffolding and tin roofing in the quadrangle within the prison by the main entrance. This had been erected to protect pedestrians from an unsafe parapet, now repaired. The front of the building has been painted, creating an improved impression overall.

The year saw the repair and recommissioning of boilers on most wings. There has also been removal of the temporary boilers and fuel tanks, which had become an almost permanent feature over the past decade.

We were pleased that the new in-cell telephony system improved prisoners' opportunities to speak to their families and friends at times which are convenient to them. They no longer have to queue for the few public telephones on the wings. This sensible improvement got rid of an area of obvious contention which officers had to manage.

Although there have been improvements, we still see serious deficiencies on the estate as we make our rounds. This has an impact on the prisoners and on staff.

Some brickwork remains in a poor state. There is still a bush growing out of the brickwork on the main prison chimney stack, and some of the storm water drains are beginning to get clogged again. There is debris behind the cell window mesh, which may be a fire risk. Unserviceable and half-functioning kitchen equipment continues to be a problem. There were problems with one of the main freezers; a temporary facility was installed for several months.

One area we feel is inadequate is the G wing exercise yard. This is by far the smallest exercise yard in the prison. It is probably only half the size of the neighbouring yard for F wing, which has a similar number of prisoners.

We had a number of complaints about the state of the plumbing systems in cells, which are outdated and inevitably abused by the young residents. We had no complaints about the food, other than the size of portions; on observation, these do not seem mean. There were no complaints about clothing, other than the lack of blankets in the segregation unit during winter months, when the heating systems were unpredictable.

Finally, we should record that painting and decorating of the administration building (which includes the Governor's office) was completed during the year. There were various moves of staff within offices, and these meant that the Board could move to a more purposeful office with two desks, two workstations and improved lighting. We very much appreciated that offer of a move.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

Board members have attended a large proportion of prisoner reviews in the segregation unit this year. They have also made appropriate weekly rounds. (Representatives of other parts of the prison also attend reviews when essential.)

Relationships between staff and prisoners on the unit usually appear constructive. Prisoners engage freely and often prepare for their reviews. However, often the situation of a prisoner does not move on between reviews. This can set up frustration, even hopelessness, among the young prisoners.

A prisoner can spend up to three months in the segregation unit awaiting transfer to another prison. This is the same as in the previous year, and remains much longer than is appropriate for prisoners in this age group. It raises important concerns for their mental and physical wellbeing.

The SMT and segregation staff have concentrated their efforts on moving prisoners out of the unit as soon as feasible. They bear in mind prisoners' safety, and the safety of staff and prisoners on the wings to which they are intending to transfer them. With only four wings to accommodate prisoners, and problems of gang affiliation, prison managers have few options apart from transfer out of Aylesbury, when prisoners declare that they are not safe on any wing.

We note that central management in the LTHSE has helped with moving prisoners to other prisons when this has been needed. We remain disappointed to observe the number of prisons that have refused to take Aylesbury's most disruptive prisoners, lengthening their stay in the prison's segregation unit. There still seems to be no requirement for other prisons to accept a transfer; these too often depend on goodwill.

Once a transfer has been agreed, there is often a further delay before transport happens. The usual transport provider, GeoAmey, had responsibility for the transfer of prisoners from the segregation unit, and postponed arrangements on too many occasions. In a number of cases, the prison, in the interest of decency, had to make its own, expensive, arrangements to transfer a prisoner to his new prison.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

Following the reduction in prisoner numbers in 2019, there is a one to 12.5 staff/prisoner ratio.

Staff recruitment and retention remain problematic at Aylesbury. Housing costs locally are relatively high, unmatched by wage levels for many officers. Security clearance is still a lengthy process. Staff dropout rate has not reduced.

We note that there have been improvements. The numbers of basic grade wing officers are now closer to statutory levels. There are now more staff with more experience, and none has had to be borrowed from other establishments (see table below).

Basic grade wing officers	Current	Last report
Permitted by the Prison Service	116	116
Employed	101 June 2019 122 February 2020	92 June 2018 108 February 2019
Staff 'borrowed' from elsewhere	0	16
Years of experience of basic grade prison officers		
Less than one	36	46
Between one and two	36	19
Between two and three	14	8
Between three and four	7	7
Percentages re experience		
Under 1 year	30%	43%
Under 2 years	59%	65%
Dropout rate: new basic grade officers after full training	17% <i>since approx. June 2019</i>	15%

One noted success has been the 'Unlocked Graduates' scheme. Fifteen graduates in total were recruited in 2018 and 2019. Six out of nine of the 2018 group will remain after the end of their initial contracted period. One of the original 2018 group has been promoted.

As the focus at Aylesbury has moved towards rehabilitation, prisoners have been consulted more on many aspects of their lives. Causes of challenging/violent

behaviour – mental health, gang issues, family matters – have been investigated by staff working in multidisciplinary teams (particularly the safer prisons group), to identify the most effective courses of action.

In disciplinary reviews, we have been impressed by governors' suggestions of ways to help prisoners make the best use of their time at Aylesbury.

We understand that de-escalation techniques are used effectively. Our last report advised the use of BWVCs at an early stage in violent situations. There is now an increase in the use of BWVCs. This is being monitored, and refresher training is provided.

The change of staff culture is not yet complete. We occasionally observe some officers exhibiting attitudes indicating low expectations of the prisoners. Some prisoners have reported finding staff 'banter' offensive, and that staff have shown them a lack of respect. Many claim to have heard staff make racist jokes; one was called a terrorist. On the positive side, there has been an increase in relevant staff training.

The key worker scheme, officially started on 31 December 2018, has done much to improve officer/prisoner relationships. Each prisoner has regular 15-minute one-to-one periods with a specific officer – who does not work on their wing – allocated to them. A most important addition to the new scheme was that staff had allocated time, within their shift patterns, for this role.

A target of seeing 74% (= 155) of prisoners weekly was set; 40%+ was initially achieved, rising to 66% as the system became fully embedded.

Board members regularly, informally, asked prisoners and staff whether the key worker scheme was making a difference. The replies were almost always encouraging. The relationships fostered improve the lives of prisoners and staff alike. Many issues that would previously have been referred to the Board are being resolved by key workers.

We witnessed some friendly interactions. One prisoner embraced his key worker and told us he was a 'top man'. The challenge will be to keep up the initial momentum.

Some joint staff/prisoner events have been arranged, including football matches; Gareth Malone's BBC programme, The Choir, televised nationally (7 January 2020), was a success which fostered good morale in the prison. It has yet to be followed up with more opportunities for groups to work together in music or other forms of performance.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The HMIP report on the prison (published 25 February 2020) noted that 'Equality and diversity work [in the prison] was in disarray which [is] a significant concern in a prison holding such a diverse population'.

Since January 2020, a new team – an equalities governor, two part-time officers and an administrative support person – has worked to embed better equality and diversity awareness across the prison.

First, statistics were gathered:

Ethnicity and religions		Use of force		% in segregation unit		Incentives and earned privileges system (IEP) 'basic' level		IEP 'enhanced' level	
Black	34.5%	Black	48%	Black	48%	Black	40–60%	Black	18–28%
Mixed ethnicity	12.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	30%	White	27%	White	21%	White	0–10%	White	32–48%
Muslim	37%	-	-	Muslim	42%	Muslim	30–57%	Muslim	30–35%
Christian	41%	-	-	Christian	27%	Christian	32–48%	Christian	38–48%

Among other things, these show:

- use of force by staff on black prisoners and use of segregation were disproportionate
- numbers of Muslim and Christian prisoners are similar but 14% more Muslim than Christian prisoners spent time in the segregation unit
- relatively more black and Muslim prisoners were on 'basic' IEP level; more white, Christian prisoners were on the 'enhanced' level.

Other data shows that the number of black prisoners proven guilty in adjudications is not proportionate to the population of black prisoners.

The team investigated the reasons for disproportionalities. They sought prisoners' views via surveys. They also held staff/prisoner forums, on all topics needing investigation.

Many prisoners reported negative experiences of treatment by staff, and staff attitudes. Some black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and Muslim prisoners felt that staff use of the new incentives system (see section 5.6) was too subjective. Many BAME prisoners mentioned problems in accessing healthcare; some feared violence in the waiting room, and appointments were missed. Distrust in the complaints system was widespread; BAME and Muslim prisoners stated that 'all' prisoners felt that it had failed them.

Equalities officers liaised with other staff to determine actions – on a 'challenge it/change it' principle – at quarterly meetings. Managers acknowledged that staff

were still adjusting to the transition from a punitive to a rehabilitative mindset, and additional staff training was arranged, in, for example, unconscious bias. A diversity and inclusion policy was published (March 2020). There was staff training in producing information documents for prisoners in 'easy read' language. A diversity and inclusion staff newsletter disseminated new procedures and best practice. It is too early to tell if these efforts are changing the daily experience of prisoners.

We observe that access to many services at Aylesbury is via paper forms, which may disadvantage prisoners with literacy difficulties. The discrimination incident report form (DIRF) system is a case in point; this year, the system was completely overhauled.

The equalities team found that an accumulated backlog of 21 DIRFs had not been dealt with. They were too overdue to be dealt with, so letters of apology were issued and alleged perpetrators challenged if possible.

- Of 51 DIRFs received, 18% related to religion; staff are now encouraged to involve the chaplains at an early stage. It was also noted that 86% related to race; this adds up to over 100% because of intersecting characteristics.
- The team produced 'easy read' documents complementing DIRFs; these include pictorial flow-charts, with versions for staff and prisoners.
- The availability of forms has been reviewed. Wing staff must now make sure that prisoners can access forms without needing to ask for them; they check three times daily that sufficient blank DIRFs, and general complaint forms, are provided.
- Forms are now available in 19 languages.

Informed by a national diversity and inclusion calendar, the team organised special events, with activities, including quizzes, with prizes, for LGBT and Black History Months. It held a discussion panel on race and the criminal justice system, with speakers from the Prison Service and the local community.

Key workers are now informed of the nationality of the residents that they are supporting. Foreign nationals were recently given additional telephone credit.

Aylesbury's few non-native English-speaking prisoners receive no specific English for speakers of other languages tuition. The names of staff with language skills are available to other staff, but we experience that this help is seldom accessed when needed. Board members have not witnessed staff accessing the telephone interpreting service available to prisons.

Facilities for disabled people include: one accessible cell; a lift; ramps; and a hearing loop in the visits room. Equalities officers and others worked to better identify prisoners' disabilities, including 'hidden' ones, such as autistic spectrum disorders, and to improve staff understanding of these. Communication with prisoners is improving slowly, thanks to greater use of images and simpler English.

The degree of commitment and energy shown by the equalities team to make improvements is impressive. Embedding change in institutional attitudes takes time. More could be done, more quickly, if additional staff were available.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

There are 30 regular chaplaincy staff, a mix of two full-time paid posts and volunteers, including a bereavement counsellor. There are 30 additional volunteers who provide courses and join the team when needed. The managing chaplain is Muslim. The chaplains work well as a team.

Services are held regularly, and about half the prisoners of each faith attend:

Type of service	prisoners of this faith
Muslim	76 = 37 %
Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, etcetera)	85 = 41%

Buddhist, Hindu, Rastafari, Sikh, Bahai and Pagan services are also held regularly.

This year, one of the chaplaincy team visited all 187 new prisoners within 24 hours of their arrival. New arrivals are given the chaplaincy's own helpful, clearly written, induction booklet. Chaplains check that prisoners' faiths are correctly recorded on the prison's computer system. Prisoners are then visited again for a longer period.

Normally, a chaplain visits those on Rule 58 and segregation each day, regardless of their faith, or lack thereof. As part of the COVID-19 measures, chaplains are visiting all prisoners each week. They attend all the main prison management meetings, as well as disciplinary reviews.

Chaplaincy volunteers run the Prison Fellowship's 'Sycamore Tree' programme, an accredited six-week victim awareness course on restorative justice, three times a year (<https://prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/sycamore-tree/>). Twenty-three prisoners completed this course this year and received certificates.

It is clear to us that the prisoners much appreciate the team. Those who need help with reading and writing, which they may hide from their teachers or other staff out of embarrassment, often turn to chaplains for help. One volunteer provides, and sometimes teaches, music. On one occasion, a prisoner played the guitar for us on an instrument provided by the chaplaincy; on another, the team gave an artistic prisoner paper and pencils.

Chaplains helped prisoners and their families with 29 bereavements and 20 cases of serious illness (between January and December 2019). They liaised with family members, hospital staff and authorities. The chaplaincy facilitates 'father's days' three times a year for prisoners who have children. Owing to the updating of safeguarding parameters by the offender management unit (OMU), it is not possible to organise any such days this year.

There is growing awareness throughout the prison about the helpful role that the chaplains play. Staff are encouraged to involve them at an early stage in connection with prisoners' welfare.

Christian and Muslim chaplaincy staff told us that they appreciate the current improvements in the prison. The managing Chaplain has prepared faith awareness training for staff; training on faith-based dietary matters is in development.

The chaplains have good interfaith community links and visit schools, colleges, mosques, churches and elsewhere, to tell people about the prison. These links support a chaplaincy-run fund which is used to give £25/annum discretionary grants to prisoners who have no financial support.

Chaplains are also alert to extremist views and work to counter these, although they have expressed disappointment that they are not used formally more often in this regard.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges

The existing IEP regime had worked with mixed success at Aylesbury over many years. Although based upon a common standard, many considered it to be biased towards reprimanding negative behaviours rather than encouraging good ones.

The arbitrary timetabling of reviews was also a weakness; reviews were occasionally delayed and postponed for considerable periods, which gave rise to a backlog. Prisoners submitted complaints about these delays to both the prison and the Board.

A 2019 review by HMPPS promoted a change in the policy giving Governors latitude to develop alternatives. These had to keep some of the core principles and structure, including the links to pay and certain privileges. In January 2020, the prison launched its new incentives policy framework, a points-based regime which actively encourages a series of good behaviour, with certain penalties for poor behaviour. Prisoners earn standard and enhanced status on the basis of points earned. Failure to achieve sufficient points to gain standard status results in a prisoner being marked as basic.

Encouragingly, the performance of basic-level prisoners is remeasured weekly. The performance of those on the standard or enhanced level is measured monthly, unless an incident requires an earlier reassessment.

This points-based system is intended to be more detailed and transparent. The assessments are shared with prisoners, who can make submissions to support the assessments of their point totals. Supervising officers and custodial managers meet prisoners on the basic level, to discuss behaviour patterns and appropriate strategies to improve their status.

As with the previous policy framework, higher status levels enable the prisoner to earn higher pay, coupled with certain privileges. For example, basic-level prisoners earn less and lose the use of a television. Enhanced-level prisoners are on the highest pay levels. They can also buy, and use, games consoles and DVD players. The new policy is more nuanced than the old.

One consequence of the new policy, coupled with other strategies to reduce violence (see section 4.3), has been fewer prisoners on the basic level and more on the enhanced level. We welcome prison management plans to add further enhancements for higher levels of performance in the coming year.

The transition from the old policy to the new regime was reasonably smooth. A few minor adjustments were made in the early days. The governors admit that the policy is still being tested. Just two months into the new regime, the COVID-19 lockdown potentially brings another dimension. We will all learn more in the coming year.

The table below shows the numbers of prisoners, on average, at each status level during the last two reporting years, along with the total average roll for the year.

	Basic	Standard	Enhanced	Total*
2018/19	55 14%	200 51%	137 35%	392 100%
2019/20	22 11%	97 47%	86 42%	205 100%

* Total above refers to average number of prisoners in Aylesbury during the reporting period.

5.7 Complaints

Analysis of the number of complaints logged by the prison over the reporting year shows a decline. There is no significant evidence of tardy response times.

The falling number of applications received by the Board over the reporting year also suggests that the prison deals with complaints adequately. By contrast, the recent HMIP inspection report (published 25 February 2020) notes that, 'complaints are not always dealt with effectively' (see also section 5.4, for the views of BAME and Muslim prisoners).

As a rough average, a quarter of complaints in any month refer to loss of, or damage to, property. This same pattern is seen in applications made to the Board. A second category, marked 'confidential' in the logging system, makes up around a seventh of complaints monthly. After that, the range is wide, including finance, residence and staff.

When talking to the prisoners, one occasionally encounters frustration about responses to complaints but they are seldom irritated or frustrated enough to take matters further.

5.8 Property

It is clear that property is a recurring problem in the lives of prisoners in the prison. The prisoners are young, and young people, in all settings, can be very careless about property.

However, the Prison Service could reduce its own problems – complaints that need to be answered, shoes needing to be traced between prisons, sweatshirts lost between wings – by thoroughly following the simple protocols about property.

As noted in section 4.1, there can be small differences in items approved as 'in-possession property' between prisons.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

Healthcare services are commissioned by NHS England and provided by Care UK Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd ('Care UK'). During the reporting period, 140

prisoners visited the doctor, 53 visited the dentist and there were 46 hospital referrals.

A GP visits the prison three times per week, and the dentist visits once a week. There were no waiting lists until 20 March 2020, when COVID-19 became a factor.

Although all necessary physical care is available to the prisoners, it is not always offered in ways which might best suit this vulnerable population. For example, prisoners walking across the yard to the health centre are visible from many angles of the prison. This factor alone may deter prisoners from accessing the health centre or attending appointments once booked.

The prison is taking the important step of integrating the clinical services: physical, mental, social programmes and substance misuse treatment. This project is still in progress. Once achieved, prisoners will no longer need to make choices themselves between different services. They will be able to refer themselves without pre-selection, using a single clinical referral system, and have guidance from the cross-disciplinary team about which mix of care and support might best address their needs.

Our last report highlighted the length of time that prisoners were spending in the healthcare waiting room, waiting to be escorted back to their wings – sometimes a whole morning or afternoon. This issue has been addressed by assigning two officers to assist; one officer remains at the unit, and the other escorts prisoners to and from their cells.

6.2 Mental healthcare

Primary care is provided by Care UK, which refers complex cases to the NHS in-reach team. It was impressive to see how the integrated clinical services moved into action together to support the most vulnerable prisoners during the early days of the COVID-19 crisis. Cross-disciplinary action planning, with weekly exchange of information and updating of plans, was thorough and effective.

Further psychology support is provided by a team drawn from the HMPPS psychology service, which contributes to health and wellbeing, offers offender behaviour programmes and leads on risk-focused work for rehabilitation purposes and for the parole board. Some of the latter work might be categorised as soft skills (see also section 6.6). During the reporting period, the psychology team completed 151 pieces of work with 126 prisoners.

6.3 Social care

The prison has a young population. Special social care, for example for older or disabled prisoners, is not something that the monitoring board has made note of through this reporting year. However there is extensive provision for promoting better mental health and improved quality of life covered in section 7.3.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

There are not enough activities, whether education, programmes, work, PE or training, to keep prisoners out of their cells for the entire working week.

The working week comprises 4.5 days (nine sessions). Assuming an average prison

population of about 205, this means that there need to be at least $9 \times 205 = 1,845$ prisoner-sessions per week available for full employment of all prisoners.

The table below shows the approximate availability of the various weekday activities offered by the prison:

Weekday activity	Prisoner-sessions per week
Programmes	66
Industrial work	741
Class education	209
Cell education	85
Cleaning	286
PE	88
Pathways	120
Off-wing orderlies	171
Total	1,766

In practice, the number of sessions which actually take place is often much lower than this. In the last year, most prisoners have been locked in their cells on Wednesday mornings, to allow for staff training. The prison has effectively been running a four-day week. Interviews with various agencies; external visits; healthcare needs; a lack of staff to run workshops; refusal to attend; and the suspensions of normal activity due to the alarms which are inevitable in a prison all reduce the number of sessions which prisoners attend for scheduled activities.

Nevertheless, the data above leads one to expect that it could be possible for prisoners to be out of their cells for 96% of the time during the eight work sessions of the week. The Board has recorded the numbers of prisoners out of their cells, for whatever reason, on 35 sessions spread evenly across the reporting year, both mornings and afternoons, when the prison was not in lockdown. The percentage of prisoners out of their cells ranged from 54% to 74%, with an average of 64%. This is extremely disappointing when there is apparently capacity for 96% to be out.

When questioned about this, staff in the prison also refer to the need to keep prisoners away from their non-associates; a prisoner is prevented from participating in an activity if those with whom he has a conflict are part of it. Additionally, an occasional shortage of staff available to escort prisoners to different parts of the prison can limit attendance.

Solving the scheduling issues and the provision of additional activities, sufficient to create an excess for the population to be employed, would lessen the probability of non-associate exclusions and decrease reasons for non-attendance.

Voluntary PE sessions in the evening have been fairly consistent over the reporting year, with sessions from Monday to Thursday, for only one wing each evening, to avoid fights. On average, each prisoner gets 3.2 hours of evening PE each month; this is much better than the previous year's accomplishment, which was only 1.1

hours of evening PE per month. Weekend voluntary PE sessions are also much improved. In the previous reporting year, each prisoner received only 1.9 hours of weekend PE per month, mostly because of cancelled sessions resulting from staff withdrawals to the wings. For this reporting year, the figure is 4.9 hours of weekend PE per month, an improvement of 360%.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

Inclusion, part of Midland Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, is subcontracted to provide psychosocial services, delivered by the drug and alcohol recovery team (DART).

Prisoners in need of drug rehabilitation are identified in three ways. The DART actively engages with new prisoners within a week of arrival; other parts of the clinical team can refer prisoners; or prisoners can refer themselves.

The team offers a range of support. The most intensive is the 16-session course called the Inclusion Recovery Programme (IRP). It is delivered over a five-week period. IRP is certificated, and sustained success is recorded and forms part of the prisoner's ongoing profile. Over the reporting year, five groups of eight prisoners have been through IRP, with about a 75% success rate. Parents are invited into the prison to celebrate successful completion of IRP.

As the integration of clinical services in the prison goes further, the specialist skills of the DART will be made more widely available to prisoners themselves, perhaps more focused on education and prevention, and to staff, particularly when they are designing the best mix of interventions for individual prisoners with complex needs.

6.6 Soft skills

There are few instances in the normal prison routine, education and employment where the development of soft skills is a clearly defined priority. The Redemption Coffee café, where prisoners learned to be baristas, and served staff and prison visitors, provided a real-world environment for developing customer service skills. Disappointingly, the coffee roastery has been moved elsewhere. There are plans to maintain the café but it will no longer have the stamp of a real enterprise.

Some prisoners take Duke of Edinburgh awards. Five prisoners were successful in achieving Bronze Duke of Edinburgh awards during reporting year. This takes a lot of effort on the part of the prison.

Around 5% of the prisoners are fathers. There is a provision for them to record stories for their children. There is no hands-on training for them in basic childcare or communicating with a child. It was disappointing that the father's day events usually arranged by the chaplaincy (see section 5.5), were not held this year.

Many soft skills are developed more informally, in the interchange between staff and prisoners. Prisoners will attest to the support they have received, and the positive changes in thinking that they have subsequently achieved. Equally, one finds small situations where swifter action by staff would embed the trust needed on which change is built.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The table below summarises the courses that Milton Keynes College provided for prisoners during the reporting period.

Subject	Number of planned teaching sessions	Number of delivered teaching sessions	Number of students attending
Functional skills English	80	39	95
Functional skills mathematics	78	44	166
Education and training level 3	18	9	49
Art	8	5	22
Barbering levels 1/2	40	22	133
Barista levels 1/2	13	5	22
Business level 2	26	13	79
Gardening club	3	2	2
Horticulture levels 1/2	18	5	9
Hospitality level 1	33	18	49
Information and communications technology	8	4	19
Money management	6	4	13
Peer mentoring level 2	5	5	20
Positive parenting	1	1	7
Totals:	337	176	685

Each session, referred to above, generally comprised a period of one and a half hours. The College consider this the optimum time for engagement by the students.

The College also supported distance learning and cell-based courses for prisoners who were studying for Open University, A-Level, AS-Level, GCSE and several other level 2 courses, for a total of 187 student courses.

HMIP, together with Ofsted, reviewed the performance of Milton Keynes College as part of their inspection in October 2019 and rated the College as 'Good'. This was much better than in previous years. Among other measures, this reflected the success rates in English and mathematics, which were above the national average.

The attendance rate of 87% was considered good, against an overall target of 80%.

The recruitment and retention of staff remains an issue. Staff absences due to sickness and staff shortages sometimes disrupt courses. Inevitably, other disruption occurs from time to time because of the prison environment.

In April 2019, the management of the library transferred from Buckinghamshire County Council to Milton Keynes College. It is staffed full time on weekdays by a librarian and a library assistant.

Prisoners have used the library more during the reporting year than in previous years. There is a pre-agreed timetable for each wing and certain courses during the week.

In addition, the prison was the recipient of an award of funding from the Rothschild Foundation, via a bid to the National Literacy Trust. This award of £125,000 over three years (from 2019) has enabled the prison to set up wing libraries, with a cross-section of books for those prisoners who do not have the opportunity to visit the main library. It has also provided for a programme of speakers and literary events based in the library.

Finally, during the course of the year, prison managers arranged for outside speakers to come to the prison and talk to an audience of prisoners about their lives and experience. These ranged from heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua to former prisoner Michael Maisey, who talked about his path to success.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The table below outlines the various work activities on offer for prisoners at Aylesbury.

Workshop	Sessions per week	Prisoner capacity
Kitchens	12	16
Bicycle repairs	9	10
Laundry	9	4
Gardens	9	12
Recycling	9	6
Sign printing	9	6
Estates party	9	6
Print finishing	9	6
Coffee roasting	9	3
Industrial cleaning	9	8
Total	93	77

In addition to this, there are 49 jobs as orderlies, and in cleaning, painting and general helping out, 30 of which are wing based. This means that there is a total of 126 jobs for prisoners, 61% of the population.

The Board has observed that prisoners taking part in the occupations listed above are often disengaged. They may spend time chatting, playing board games or resting. It is good that they are out of their cells but this, in itself, does not amount to vocational training.

There is a poor match between the work activities available to the young prisoners and the types of knowledge and experience they need to accrue for successful resettlement post-sentence. To compound this, few of the activities are assessed systematically, or certificated.

7.3 Offender management, progression

There are four full-time probation officers and three offender managers in the OMU, which is appropriate to manage the total of just over 200 prisoners. This staffing level was achieved during March 2020, the end of our reporting year.

The key worker programme was 'signed off' by the national project team in October 2019 and is working well.

Aylesbury offers a range of accredited programmes and other interventions which promote better mental health, better quality of life and successful rehabilitation. A needs analysis, at the point when the population was reduced, determined the programmes on offer this year. These included specific courses to help those at high risk of violence, and courses to support those with low motivation or willingness to engage.

The Aylesbury Pathways Service (part of the contract for the national offender personality disorder framework) offers a broader set of interventions. This is an outreach and day centre service for prisoners who are at high risk of harm, or who have emerging personality disorder traits. The Pathways team creates a warm, enabling atmosphere to support vulnerable prisoners, many of whom have had great trauma in their lives.

Through the reporting year, 66 prisoners engaged with the Pathways service. On average, at any one time, 36 prisoners are engaging with the Pathways team and with the courses. Here is just a short selection of courses offered: 'Anger Plus', 'Mentalisation-Based Therapy Introduction', social skills, one-to-one psychological therapy, art therapy and music production. Many of these courses are certificated and recorded as part of a prisoner's ongoing profile.

Prisoners have attended the following offending behaviour programmes during this reporting year, with numbers indicating how many successfully passed each course:

Resolve	6
Kaizen	10
Choices and Changes	14
Identity Matters	2
Individual Engagement	4
Total	36

The prison is part of the LTHSE, and does not ordinarily cater for prisoners who are due for release. However, 25 prisoners were released during our reporting year. They were helped by the enhanced 'through-the-gate' service, and Trailblazers mentors, which are both outsourced.

There is some concern that the current staffing level in the OMU will be under pressure dealing with caseloads and offender assessment system (OASys) reports

once the prison is repopulated. Staff use OASys reports to complete a risk and needs assessment for each prisoner. The analysis helps staff understand why a prisoner offends, how his offending could be reduced or stopped, and how to assess his associated risks.

7.4 Family contact

The prison facilitates family contact. The in-cell telephone system is a notable improvement, supporting prisoner-controlled contact with family and friends.

The system recording family contact reveals if a young prisoner is not maintaining contact with his family. The OMU, the key worker or other professionals in contact with the prisoner will follow up and agree action as needed.

Families are welcomed into the prison to celebrate prisoners' successes, such as completion of the drug recovery programme, IRP (see section 6.5). It is not clear that this inclusion of families in the lives of prisoners is as systematic as it could be.

In September 2019, the prison ran a 'Family Forum' consultation. Overall feedback from families was positive. Family members consulted also offered constructive suggestions for improvements. It was good to read that family members saw some good relationships between prison staff and prisoners during visits.

The visitors centre is run by the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). It is kept tidy and welcoming, although hardly lavish. Information is available there. Families report that once they are over their first impressions, they are comfortable in the centre outside the prison walls, and also become used to the visits hall inside. The 'traditional' prison door built into the imposing front gates can be daunting.

The concert which was the culmination of the BBC programme, The Choir (see section 5.3), was a high point for some families, especially those in the audience.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As mentioned above (section 3.2), the prison has relatively few prisoners leaving the prison system. Therefore this has not been an area that the monitoring board has focused on.

8. The work of the IMB

The Board aimed to have a member visit the prison most working days of the week, with the occasional visit at a weekend, for a total of 355 visits. This compares with 206 last year (for the shortened reporting period of approximately eight months). During the year, we attended most, but not all, segregation review boards and a cross-section of prison committees which monitored areas of special interest – for example, safer prisons.

Each of our members assumed oversight of an area of special interest, but if he/she was unable to attend a committee meeting, we took the opportunity for one of our other members to substitute if they were available.

Following a general concern of the Board, and led by the Board's development officer, we systematically monitored and recorded out-of-cell occupation across the reporting period.

In this reporting period, we ran two recruitment campaigns, resulting in seven new members joining our Board. However, four members resigned, including two who joined and left in the same 12-month period. It is disappointing to record, but a reflection of the reality of volunteer work, that all four of these members were younger career individuals who left after relatively short periods on the Board, for family and career reasons.

We held a Board meeting each month, for a total of 12 during the year. Each included a training subject for discussion and development, as well as a focus on the key areas. Each benefitted from the attendance of the Governor or her designated alternate, a member of the SMT. We are grateful for her openness and honesty during a difficult year for the prison.

During the year, we received a total of 72 applications. This was down dramatically from previous years and reflects the reduced number of prisoners (halved to 209 prisoners) and the highly successful introduction of the key worker scheme by the prison. The officers who undertook much of this key worker role clearly answered many of the queries and complaints that were often previously directed at the Board.

We note that the key areas of complaint to the Board remained property, both at Aylesbury and at previous prisons, and staff/prisoner relationships. However, we also note that three prisoners submitted eight of the 14 applications relating to the latter. None of the accusations of assault were proven.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	355
Total number of segregation reviews attended	198

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year*	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11*	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	-	7
C	Equality	-	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	8*	-
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	17*	4
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6*	5
F	Food and kitchens	1*	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6*	3
H1	Property within this prison	52*	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another prison or location	22*	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	7*	-
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorization	20*	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	50*	14
K	Transfers	12*	3
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	-	1
	Total number of applications	212*	72

** Our previous reporting year was shortened to just under eight months, as previously explained. The numbers shown for comparison have been ratio-ed up by a factor of approximately three-halves to take account of this fact.*



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