



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

**For reporting year  
01 June 2019 to 31 May 2020**

**Published October 2020**



# Contents

<b>Introductory, sections 1 – 3</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.	Statutory role of the IMB	3
2.	Description of the establishment	3
3.	Executive summary	5
<b>Evidence, sections 4 – 7</b>		
4.	Safety	8
5.	Fair and humane treatment	13
6.	Health and wellbeing	19
7.	Progression and resettlement	21
<b>The work of the IMB</b>		<b>23</b>
Applications to the IMB		24

## **Introductory sections 1 – 3**

### **1. Statutory role of the IMB**

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

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

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

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

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

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

HMP Woodhill is a complex prison, serving multiple functions, that is part of the long-term and high-security estate. During the reporting year, the prison changed some of its functions.

Until the summer of 2019, the main function of Woodhill was as a core local prison holding adult male remands, those sentenced to less than 12 months from the south-east Midlands, some young offenders and some category A prisoners. It also received category B and C prisoners for their last period of custody for resettlement purposes, before release to their local area. It also held restricted status young prisoners (under 21), and provisional category A prisoners from across the Midlands.

From late summer 2019, this function was gradually changed as the prison was re-rolled to a training prison holding long-term category B prisoners serving sentences of four or more years. The transformation process took many months as local prisoners were slowly transferred out and replaced by long-term category B prisoners. The prison will also hold a small number of category A prisoners on remand and attending trial.

The main prisoner accommodation is made up of five house units, and there is a healthcare inpatient facility and a segregation unit. House Units 1–4 are each divided into two wings, A and B. Each wing was originally designed to hold 60 prisoners in single cells, with a total of 120. House Unit 5 holds 90. Until the prison re-rolled, some of the cells had been converted into doubles, so that each unit could hold 180. Following re-rolling, they now hold 60 prisoners each again, one to a cell. House unit 5 has 90 spaces. For most of the reporting year, one of the house units in rotation was closed for work to upgrade the fire alarm system.

Throughout the reporting year, the prison retained its other functions. House unit 6 has two close supervision centre (CSC) units, which are administered and managed under a national strategy through the security directorate. These units hold some of the most challenging prisoners in the prison system, requiring demanding efforts to achieve headway in rehabilitation. They can hold a maximum of 10 prisoners each. The prisoners spend almost all their time in the House Unit. There is also a separation centre, to hold extremist prisoners away from the general population, and a small discrete unit for other prisoners who need to be held away from those on normal location. The units on house unit 6 are self-contained, with their own gym, visits areas and other facilities.

The discrete unit was housed away from its normal location, in less satisfactory accommodation, until it was moved back to house unit 6 in March 2020. One small area of house unit 6 remained unused throughout the year.

At the start of the reporting year, the Separation Centre was open and held the minimum number of prisoners to operate. Part-way through the reporting period, changes elsewhere left the unit falling short of the minimum number required to operate and it was mothballed. It remained unused for the remainder of the reporting year.

The operational capacity of Woodhill before re-rolling was just over 800. It will be just over 600 when all areas are open, largely due to cells formerly occupied by two prisoners now returning to their original design occupancy of one.

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

The reporting year had three distinct periods. For the first three months, June to September 2019, the prison continued its function as a core local prison. From September 2019, the transition began to become a category B training prison for long-sentenced prisoners. This change was complete when the COVID-19 pandemic caused severe restrictions on prisoners' regime from late March 2020, which continued until after the end of the reporting year.

Owing to these phases, many of the issues in the prison were extant during only one of the periods. Nevertheless, there were some themes throughout the year. Staff shortages and inexperience among officers meant that the regime had to be curtailed regularly, and prisoners said that the implementation of the regime was inconsistent. There was too much reliance on supervising officers for knowledge and decisions.

The Board is pleased to note that there were no deaths in custody during the reporting year.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that few visits to the prison were made by Board members from late March until well after the end of the reporting year. The prison had high levels of operational and administrative staff absences. This report has been compiled from Board observations and reports, and information obtained from the prison staff during the year and provided by them after the end of the reporting year. The prison staff have been cooperative in sharing information and providing what they can on request. However, some information collection was suspended by the prison during the emergency. For example, there has been no prison performance report since December 2019. Information gathering for this report has inevitably been made considerably more difficult.

The assessments in this report are based on observation throughout the reporting year and information obtained from the prison where it was available. However during the Covid emergency it has not always been possible to triangulate the evidence to substantiate our observations.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The Board judges that the prison is reasonably safe, despite the following issues:

- a) The levels of violence and self-harm, and of assaults both by prisoners on staff and by prisoners on other prisoners, are too high.
- b) The quality of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes and documentation is variable and reviews under the procedure are not always held on time. The number of ACCTs was high for most of the reporting year.

- c) There is a large proportion of officers who are inexperienced, and the wastage rate of new officers is high and so is the sickness rate. The effect is that some officers mishandle delicate situations, officers do not have full knowledge of the rules and procedures, prisoners' safety can be compromised and the regime for prisoners is curtailed.
- d) Despite working proactively with the police, the prison has very high levels of psychoactive substance and other drug use, and mobile phones are available.

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

The Board judges that prisoners are mainly treated humanely, although there were significant issues:

- a) There are too many prisoners held in segregation for long periods. Despite the best efforts of prison staff, prisoners are held for months waiting for referral to the CSC system, for transfer to a special unit or for a progression plan to be formulated, or simply held because they cannot or will not go back to normal location and there seem to be no other options.
- b) Difficulties about prisoners' property during re-rolling. When new prisoners transferred in, a large proportion of their property arrived long after them and some was lost in transit; many had far more property than they should have had, and they had been inadequately searched before leaving their previous prison. The number of applications made to the Board about property increased from 54 in 2018/19 to 98. The Woodhill property section was understaffed to deal with the volume received, and consequently there were long delays in processing property. Many prisoners were found to have banned items on arrival at Woodhill. There are inconsistencies in which items of property are permitted at different establishments. Prisoners became very frustrated at delays in receiving their property, although many of the problems were due to the sending prison, rather than Woodhill.
- c) There were delays in repairing prison accommodation and equipment.

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

The Board judges that the healthcare services operated satisfactorily, despite:

- a) staff shortages, severe at times during the year
- b) an inadequate mental health service and long delays in transferring prisoners to secure mental health facilities.

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

The Board judges that the resettlement of prisoners was inadequate prior to the re-rolling of the prison. Since re-rolling, Woodhill does not discharge many prisoners to the community. The prison's offender management unit performed adequately, but:

- a) There are insufficient offender behaviour programmes to progress the long-sentence population now held.

- b) Particularly following the re-roling of the prison, there are insufficient workshops, rehabilitation programmes, and education and library services for the type of long-sentenced prisoners now held.
- c) Services provided by the community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) were slow and inadequate, primarily because of understaffing.

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

#### **TO THE MINISTER**

- a) To ask the minister to work with ministerial colleagues in the Department of Health to ensure that delays in transferring prisoners to secure mental health facilities are reduced.

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

- a) To ask the Service to review and reform the property system, to reduce delays in transportation, inconsistencies in entitlements and reduce losses
- b) To ensure that prisoners are properly searched and transferred from one prison to another without contraband
- c) To improve the management of long-term segregated prisoners
- d) To ensure sufficient funding for works and maintenance.

#### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- a) To reduce the supply of illicit items, specifically drugs, phones and weapons
- b) To manage more effectively the works maintenance programme
- c) To manage more effectively the distribution of kit
- d) To continue efforts already being made through the Woodhill Growth Project to create a culture where the wellbeing and progression of prisoners is the prime consideration for staff.
- e) To increase prisoners' time out of cell
- f) To improve the quality of use of force records

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

The Board's report for 2019/20 included requests for improvements to the following areas, and the resulting action has been:

- a) Improve maintenance of the fabric and equipment of the prison – there has been some small improvement but delays and deterioration remain
- b) Improvements to mental health facilities and transfer times to mental health facilities – there has been no change
- c) Restricted time out of cell – there was no change before the COVID-19 pandemic caused lockdown
- d) Improvement in the management of long-term segregated prisoners – there has been no improvement

- e) Reduce the supply of drugs and phones – the installation of a body scanner has increased the detection of items but there is no evidence of reduced availability
  - f) Deliver a full regime of meaningful rehabilitative work, training and activities – there has been no change
  - g) Improve the complaints system response times and quality – improvements were noted before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted staffing
  - h) Improve the quality of ACCT documents – some improvement was noted but inconsistencies remain
  - i) Return the discrete unit to house unit 6 – achieved in March 2020.
- 

## **4. Safety**

### **4.1 Reception and induction**

Prior to re-rolling, the perennial problem continued of prisoners being brought to Woodhill very late in the evening from court by the transport company. Late arrival meant that prisoners could not be processed, or their health assessed, in reception that night and they had to wait until the next day. The delay posed a risk to their health and safety.

The Rapiscan body scanner was operational in the reception area from the end of July 2019. Full use was compromised by staffing shortfalls. However, reports of psychoactive substance use and illicit items remained high. Over 18 and 19 September 2019, three staff were taken to hospital suffering from the effects of 'spice' inhalation.

The re-rolling of the prison involved changing the population almost totally to prisoners who were serving long sentences and had been in other prisons.

Many of these prisoners arrived at Woodhill saying that they had been promised improvements in property entitlement, facilities, regime, work and education. Prisoners arrived from other prisons having been inadequately searched before departure, and approximately 35% of them had items secreted on their bodies when scanned on arrival. A similar proportion had unauthorised items in their property bags. There are inconsistencies in property entitlements between prisons. This caused considerable resentment when items allowed at a previous prison were not allowed at Woodhill.

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

The Board is pleased to note that there were no deaths in custody during the reporting year.



Throughout the reporting period, Board members conducting on-site visits noted concern at the inconsistent and often poor quality of ACCT documentation. Missing next-of-kin details and photographs were common problems. Combined with frequently missing cell cards and large numbers of new and guesting staff, this is an area of unnecessary risk.

The Board had hoped to see a greater reduction in the number of open ACCTs with the reduction in the roll and the change to a long-term sentenced population. In August 2019, most of the Rule 45 (segregated) prisoners were transferred out of Woodhill, which accounted for a drop in long-term ACCT numbers.

#### Number of ACCTs versus prison population

Month	Roll	No. of ACCTs	% of Popn.
April 19	593	34	5.73%
May 19	579	40	6.91%
Jun 19	582	34	5.84%
Jul 19	584	33	5.65%
Aug 19	591	35	5.92%
Sep 19	563	28	4.97%
Oct 19	520	28	5.38%
Nov 19	481	30	6.24%
Dec 19	454	23	5.07%
Jan 20	490	25	5.10%
Feb 20	503	30	5.96%
Mar 20	496	24	4.84%
Apr 20	497	22	4.43%
May 20	499	20	4.01%

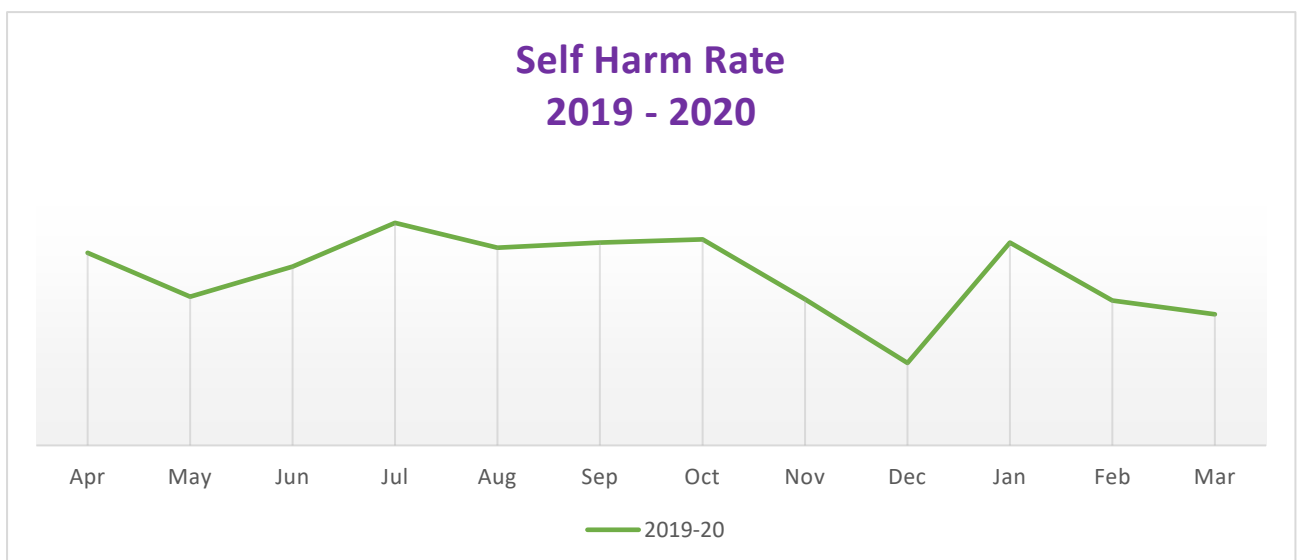
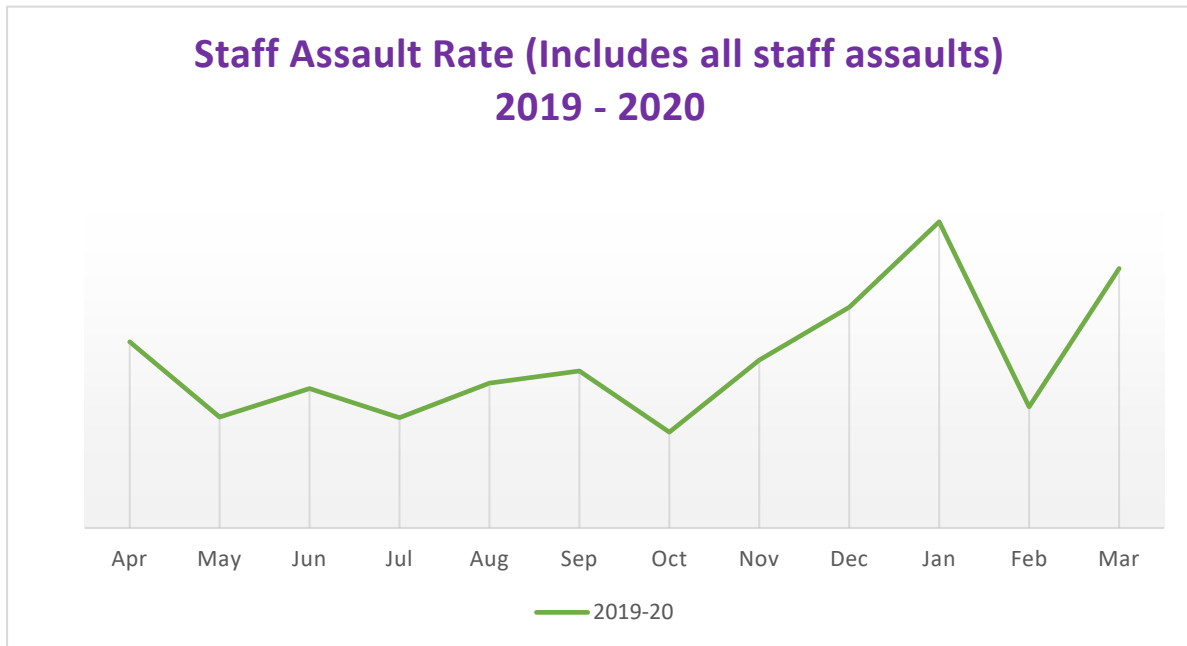
Throughout summer 2019, the safety team focused on training supervising officers on managing ACCTs. In August 2019, an ACCT guide was published for all supervising officers. In September, the single case manager model was adopted prison-wide. The average time in 2017 was 21 days opened to closed, for 2018 and early 2019 it was 19 days but in early 2020, during lockdown, it had increased again to 20 days.

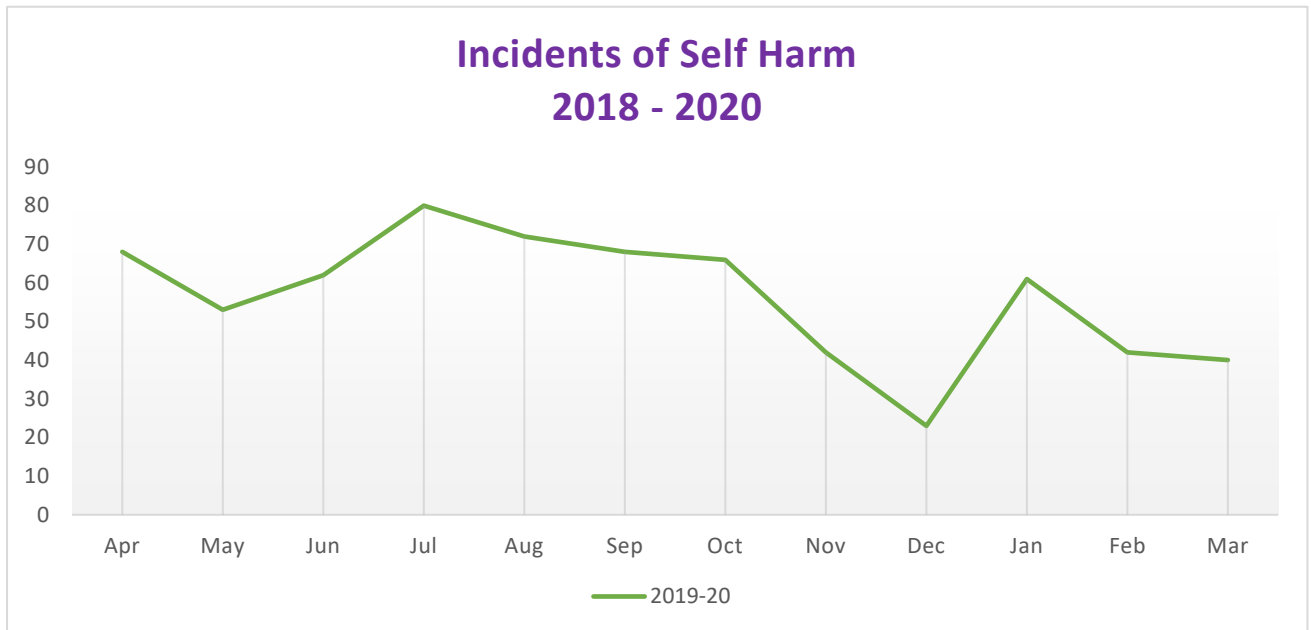
The number of self-harm incidents remained high throughout the reporting year:

	Incidents	Individuals
Apr 19	68	29
May 19	53	26
Jun 19	62	38
Jul 19	80	28
Aug 19	72	32
Sep 19	68	32
Oct 19	66	31

Nov 19	42	16
Dec 19	23	10
Jan 20	61	28
Feb 20	42	22

The following graphs indicate that, even with a smaller prison population, after re-rolling the rate of assaults increased but the self-harm rate and number of incidents of self-harm declined slightly.





### 4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The relatively high levels of violence in the latter part of 2019 continued into 2020, despite the fall in population and the introduction of the lockdown regime in March due to COVID-19.

While the prison collected significant amounts of data, there is little evidence of interventions being developed that result in improved outcomes for prisoners.

On 30 March 2020, the prison had identified 12 prisoners as non-medical self-isolating. The time ranged from 133 days to three days. This number showed a minor reduction, to nine, by 14 May 2020 and further reduced, to six, just prior to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) short scrutiny visit. On 29 May 2020, cases included prisoners who had been self-isolating for 67, 90, 140 and 192 days, respectively. On some occasions, Board members identified prisoners who were self-isolating but were not on the prison's list.

Following an Insider and staff forum in September, it was established that a common reason given for violence and self-harm was lack of decency. The safety committee asked, 'can we fully furnish all cells, do we have enough clothing and bedding for all prisoners and are we putting prisoners in debt as soon as they arrive?'

### 4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Prisoners who self-isolate are supported by the safety team. After two weeks, they go onto an open challenge, support and intervention plan. A complex case meeting is held each week to track complex cases, including any prisoners who have been on an open ACCT for one month or more, who will be managed by band 5 managers.

There was concern about the shortage of Listeners towards the end of 2019, with only six in the establishment in October. The previous policy was not to use prisoners who were category B, and as a result most had been or were to be transferred out in the re-role.

#### 4.5 Use of force

From June 2019 to February 2020, the first item on the use of force meeting minutes was that, 'Prisoners should be de-briefed after an incident involving UoF [use of force], they should be interviewed by a member of staff not involved, a debrief form will be kept with the UoF paperwork'. This was also the lead item in the meeting minutes prior to June 2019. Despite reports of lengthy conversations taking place at every meeting for over 12 months, no decision was taken as to how this could be actioned.

The reviews of use of force are consistent in their findings: August 2019 completion of F213 papers remained poor, with only 58% completed; 69% were completed in September 2019; 56% were completed in November; 59% were completed in December; and 50% were completed in February 2020.

From the August 2019 meeting, the following paperwork was reported as missing: one annex A form from June, 19 still outstanding from July and 33 from August, plus 13 annex B forms. From the October meeting, the following paperwork was reported as missing: 16 annex A and four annex B forms still outstanding from July; 20 annex A and 10 annex B forms from August; and 29 annex A and 21 annex B forms from September.

As an example of the quality of the reports during the year, a 10% check of September 2019 paperwork found the reports looked at to be very poor. As in August 2019, it was apparent that annex A forms written by new staff are particularly poor and too brief. There were some recurring themes similar to the previous six months: electronic signatures with no email cover, little evidence of debrief. These are common issues which are now being focused on during control and restraint refresher courses.

The statistics for the year were:

Month	Incident where prisoner had possession of/used a weapon	Use of force	Number of different prisoners	Staff requiring hospital treatment	Prisoners requiring hospital treatment	Located to special accommodation
June	0	64	50	6	1	2
July	0	66	53	2	0	2
Aug	0	61	41	2 staff attended hospital	0	1 prisoner on 4 occasions
Sept	0	62	47	9	0	1
Oct	3	65	47	3	0	3
Nov	5	52	38	6	0	5
Dec	2	55	40	3	0	1

Jan	7	58	49	14	1	3
Feb	4	62	49	6	0	0
Mar	11	96	59	2	0	5
Apr	6	65	42	0	0	4
May	5	44	35	3	1 – smoke inhalation	1

#### **4.6 Substance misuse**

The rate of substance misuse remains high. Prior to the introduction of the COVID-19 lockdown, including the re-rolling period, there appeared to be plentiful supplies of psychoactive substances in the prison, and the presumption is that the drugs were being sent in by relatives in property or letters, or brought in by new prisoners. There had been virtually no drugs (or phones) thrown over the prison walls.

The prison introduced photocopying of some prisoner mail, to deter impregnating the paper with drugs. There was an increase in letters allegedly coming from solicitors (which have privileged status) arriving with banned substances impregnated on the paper, but the majority are from bogus solicitor companies.

Following the COVID-19 lockdown regime, the normal routes for supply and distribution were cut off as there were no visits, few new prisoners and no association. The exercise yards were used for longer periods, by fewer prisoners in each period.

The prison then experienced very large numbers of items thrown over the walls, intercepting many of them. There was an initiative asking local residents to contact the prison if they saw anything suspicious. The prison, working with Thames Valley Police, has caught several people, and this is showing a reduced frequency of throw-overs.

Referrals for drug abuse have reduced dramatically since re-rolling to category B, as the population is more stable. The number of incidents of psychoactive substance use has reduced in the last few months. In January 2020, there were 38 incidents in which healthcare staff provided advice to patients on substance misuse, compared with 15 in May 2020.

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

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

Prior to the prison re-rolling, house units 1–4 had half of their cells originally designed for one prisoner holding two, which caused shortages of furniture and space. Following re-rolling, and to implement the COVID-19 regime, the prison's operational capacity was reduced, so that all cells became single occupancy, except for approximately six.

The Board continued to note poor maintenance of, and access to, facilities including showers, washing machines and dryers, in addition to shortages of cell furniture. Many prisoners reported shortages of bedding and prison clothing. The laundry stores are often in poor condition, with very little in reserve. Some laundry is completed on the

wings, with these areas, again, varying in condition. Larger items are sent to the prison laundry. Often, there is a shortage of items returned from the laundry. Excess items in possession by some of the prisoners appear to go unchallenged by staff, causing increased shortages.

The Board remains concerned that the number of cells out of action (OOA) remained high throughout the reporting year because of the high levels of violence, and continual incidents of damage to cells is a contributory factor.

Date	Operational capacity cells OOA	Operational capacity spaces OOA	Cell sharing risk assessment lost cells
29.3.2020	9	10	27
30.4.2020	15	19	11
6.5.2020	14	18	14
1.6.2020	7	9	10

The main house units have been going through upgrade works for the fire alarm system over the past two years. One house unit has been closed in rotation, to allow for the works. After completing this work on a number of units, it was discovered that some of it had not been completed as required. This will now require a couple of the units to be re-closed for a second upgrade.

Regrettably, the chance to repair or replace showers and/or lights was not taken. Most of the showers on all units are in a very poor condition, with damaged tiles, flaking paint, damaged lights and covers, mould spores and damaged drain covers.

General housekeeping quality varies between units, but the core central areas are always poor. The units could be improved visually by using different colour paints as other prisons have done. The current paintwork is in poor condition. Landings are often dusty and/or dirty, with only the bare minimum done to keep them reasonably clean. In the main association areas, lights are frequently not working and take a long time to be repaired. Staircases often have rubbish, laundry, wing supplies and furniture stored at the bottom of them. These are fire exits.

The wing serveries vary in condition. Frequently, heat lamps and serving decks have parts that are not working, affecting the food serving temperature. Despite work requests, these often go unrepaired for long periods. The serveries appear tired and dated, and need to be improved.

During the reporting year, all cells were fitted with in-cell telephones. Prisoners are able to call relatives and other approved numbers at all times, apart from at night. The system proved particularly useful during the COVID-19 lockdown regime, as staff could contact prisoners quickly by telephone.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

The segregation unit has been full for most of the reporting period. The staff group has been more stable, with less cross-deployment than in many areas. Staffing shortfalls had a significant negative effect in autumn 2019. Closures of education classes, workshops and resettlement courses were a regular occurrence. At the end of October

2019, the staffing group for segregation was reduced from five to four. This created a problem if any prisoner needed three staff and more to unlock.

Rule 45 reviews are consistently supported by the mental health team and psychology staff. Good use has been made of reintegration plans. There are too many prisoners still in the system for whom there is no progression, and the longer they remain in segregation, the more difficult it is find a route forward. The Board finds it unacceptable that, with all the combined skills and resource available in the long-term and high-security estate, there are still prisoners who have been in segregated conditions for over 400 or 500 days, as is the case with two individuals at Woodhill at the end of the reporting year and beyond.

Locally, it is concerning that in so many cases prisoners prefer the restricted regime of segregation and/or a transfer out to returning to normal location at Woodhill.

At the end of November 2019, segregated prisoners complained of the cold after the boiler had broken some months previously and only a partial repair had been possible. A governor bought all the prisoners hot water bottles. Staff were also complaining about this. Owing to the still partial repair, in May 2020, during hot weather, the heating was still on because without it there would have been no hot water.

In March 2020, national policy changed, so that prisoners who are housed in the inpatient unit and are removed from association with other prisoners must be segregated under Rule 45 processes.

Throughout the reporting year, the number of adjudications has been high and there have been severe backlogs in dealing with them. In June 2019, there was a backlog of 116, including 40 which were waiting to be investigated by the police to; 13 to be heard by the independent adjudicator; and 13 pending requests for closed-circuit television (CCTV) records to be produced.

One of the unintended consequences of the introduction of body-worn cameras is that more governors are asking for camera evidence. This, in addition to requests from static CCTV cameras, has greatly increased the number of requests. It takes many hours to go through tapes and causes additional delays.

The number of charges laid increased after the prison began re-rolling, possibly due to the new population jockeying for hierarchy. There were 736 in the October to December 2019 quarter, compared with 642 in the July to September 2019 quarter. Between June 2019 and May 2020, adjudication figures were:

Proven	1,330
RX (outstanding)	232
Dismissed	331
Not proceeded with	227
Referred to police	102

Time expired	319
Total	2,541

Comparison with the previous year is difficult because during the COVID-19 regime staff were instructed to process a reduced number of charges. Therefore, 2020 figures are much lower than in the corresponding period in 2019 – for example, there were 234 charges laid in April 2019 but only 128 charges in April 2020. Time limits have been suspended for natural justice reasons, so adjudications were not being dismissed for this reason during the COVID-19 regime.

The prison's Crime Clinic is operating again but, as of early June, no adjudications have yet been returned by the police.

As of early June 2020, there were 317 adjourned adjudications.

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

The key worker system was introduced gradually during the year and improved the interaction between staff and prisoners. The system was beginning to work well but the COVID-19 lockdown regime interrupted the operation of the scheme, which was replaced by weekly welfare check telephone calls.

The prison still had a large proportion of inexperienced officers, resulting in complaints of inconsistencies, lack of knowledge by staff, over-reliance on senior staff and lack of challenge of poor behaviour. A comprehensive key worker handbook was issued, helping with consistency of application and helping inexperienced staff.

Cross deployment of staff, i.e. moving officers at short notice from their normal assignments to cover for staffing shortfalls in other areas, occurred very frequently. It made it much more difficult to treat prisoners consistently and staff frequently did not know the prisoners or the routines of the unit to which they had been deployed.

The prison had introduced the Woodhill Growth Project, designed to create a culture whereby staff/prisoner relationships and the prisoner experiences are grown positively.

The process of re-rolling the prison to house long-term category B prisoners was difficult. A new core day was introduced on 19 September 2019 but high levels of confusion and dissatisfaction were reported. Staff and prisoners alike took some time to adjust to the new ways of working, and there were numerous teething problems with implementation.

For example, the 'mini-prisoner moves' time slot was abandoned as unnecessary in September 2019 because all work in a category B prison is full time. However, the prison was not yet fully category B, most work was part time and prisoners were struggling to get to where they needed to be on time. Staff also seemed confused. There were reports of late unlocks (for example, 5.15pm slipping to 6pm) and regime slippage. One wing was told that their evening exercise could not happen as it was too



dark. In addition, there were numerous complaints about mail not being delivered; staff said that it should be done by night staff but the policy is that prisoners are not given mail at night when they are locked up, as mail may contain bad news. One Insider was given an 'email-a-prisoner' letter on 19 September which had been dated 6 September.

House unit 6 generally has been well run but has suffered from staff shortages on occasions. It is particularly important that the CSC units have consistent trained staff, to maintain relationships with volatile prisoners. In order to maintain a good routine, the CSC units try to preserve an established staff base, which allows a weekly risk assessment meeting to take place with each prisoner. This reviews their progress and needs, and takes decisions on allowing association and activities.

However, staff shortages across the prison has meant house unit 6 officers being redeployed to other areas of the prison and non-specialist staff being used in the unit. Weekends, in particular, seem to have been an issue. The behaviour of prisoners on the CSC units can change quickly, and over the reporting period high control cells have been used 15 times.

The introduction of the COVID-19 regime in late March 2020 involved most prisoners being given only 30 minutes' exercise a day, plus about 15 minutes for showers etcetera. Great efforts were made to relieve boredom by issuing DVD players, in-cell education, in-cell exercise and in-cell information. There was less indiscipline than might have been expected. House unit 6 prisoners, in particular, responded very well to the restrictions. There was a short scrutiny visit by the HMIP in late May 2020, which was generally complimentary about the operation of the prison's COVID-19 regime.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

During re-rolling, and against a background of significant staff shortages, many of the services designed to support prisoners did not function.

Disabled and older prisoner liaison officer forums did not run from the beginning of the reporting year until September 2019, with the reintroduction of Gypsy, Traveller and Romany (GTR)/black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and foreign national prisoner forums.

Equality meetings did not run until August 2019, when equalities representatives were reintroduced. In October 2019, it was reported at the equality meeting that wing forums were not being held on a regular basis on all wings.

As a result of the change in the population, in January 2020 the prison recorded 31.7% prisoners as being of the Muslim faith and 54.6% as being of BAME and GTR ethnicity. Both proportions are higher than in the previous population of the prison and needed the chaplaincy to refocus its activities. The chaplaincy department has 1.5 full-time-equivalent imams, and concern has been raised at the large number of prisoners wishing to attend Muslim Friday prayers.

By March 2020, the proportions had increased to 36% of the Muslim faith and 59% of BAME and GTR ethnicity.

In April 2020, there were 15 prisoners whose mobility problems were so acute that they required a PEEP, and there were 46 individuals identified as being on the autistic spectrum and/or having learning difficulties.

Board members reported on a weekly basis that staff were unaware of/could not find the paperwork for prisoners classified as needing personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs).

The January 2020 equality data showed that 7% of the population was over 50 years old. There were no remedial gym classes for those over 55 years old. It was difficult to identify prisoners who needed additional support because information from the Early Days in Custody booklet was not being forwarded to the equalities department.

In 2019, the number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) submitted was 83, which was half the number in previous years. It was hoped that the reduction was mainly due to regular forums being held, along with the introduction of key workers. However, in an external review done in early December 2019, discounting December's DIRFs, which had not yet been processed, of the 74 DIRFs which had been submitted, three were missing.

In 2019, over 60% of DIRFs had not been investigated at all, and only 14% had been answered in time, despite the fall in the number being submitted.

None of the DIRFs had been upheld, which was the same situation as last year. It was reported that there was little evidence of problem solving or using the balance of probabilities in deciding cases. On some replies, a template had been used without replacing the previous respondent's name, which is unacceptable.

Woodhill had officially registered for Autism Accreditation, and held its first meeting on 28 January 2020.

### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

All faiths are served at the prison, with Muslim prayers being well attended. New prisoners receive a visit (or a telephone call during the lockdown regime) to the cell from one of the pastoral care team, backed up by a call/visit from the main chaplain of their faith within a week.

The head of the service post was vacant from November 2019 until after the end of the reporting period.

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

Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown regime, the IEP scheme operated effectively, although there were complaints of delays in reviewing prisoners who had been placed on basic regime.

During the early part of the lockdown, the Board was concerned at the large number of prisoners who were listed as being subject to basic status, despite a national instruction that the basic IEP level should not be used except in extreme circumstances.

The listing system was changed just prior to a one day HMIP scrutiny visit carried out at the end of May 2020 and the number of prisoners listed as being on basic was drastically reduced. The reasons for any prisoner being on basic should have been detailed in the prison's defensible decisions log.

The numbers of prisoners on the basic and enhanced levels of the scheme during the COVID-19 regime were:

Date	Basic	Enhanced
17.3.2020	50	200
25.3.2020	46	202
28.3.2020	40	199
31.3.2020	31	203
26.4.2020	44	199
30.4.2020	51	201
12.5.2020	52	206
18.5.2020	38	213
21.5.2020	5	215
26.5.2020	3	213
1.6.2020	2	212

## **5.7 Complaints**

Throughout the reporting year, the prison failed to meet its target to respond to 95% of prisoner complaints within the deadline of five working days. This is despite managers making efforts to improve the quality and timeliness of responses. In January 2020, only 69% of complaints were responded to in time.

Response times to healthcare complaints had been far too long in previous years. During the reporting year, action was taken and response times have improved significantly.

During the COVID-19 regime, response times understandably slipped further owing to staff shortages.

## **5.8 Property**

There were difficulties concerning prisoners' property throughout the reporting year. Prior to re-rolling, the perennial problems of lost and mislaid property, inconsistencies

of property entitlements between prisons, and prisoners arriving without their property continued.

Property problems became much more severe during the mass transfers of prisoners into Woodhill, as the population was changed almost completely over a period of about four months in the latter part of 2019.

Approximately a third of transferred prisoners arrived with more than their entitlement of two large bags of property. Several prisoners arrived with over 15 bags. Frequently, some or all of a prisoner's property did not arrive with him, partially as a result of a lack of space on the transport because the prisoner had more than their entitlement.

Despite no more than seven prisoners transferring to Woodhill each working day, processing this larger volume of property caused significant delays, often weeks, in getting a prisoner's property to him. It was understandable that this resulted in considerable frustration and resentment, causing some discipline problems on the wings.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare: general**

A new healthcare contract, with all healthcare services brought under Central and North West London NHS Trust (CNWL), started in April 2019 and was in the early days of implementation as the reporting year began. As a result of the impending but delayed re-role of the prison, an interim contract was implemented.

Healthcare staffing was unstable throughout the reporting year. Delays in security clearance meant that new staff could not start as early as required. The staff shortage was at its worst in August and September 2019, when the Board reported issues with late medication times. Residential case managers were carrying out ACCT reviews ad hoc during medication times, so healthcare staff were not available to attend them. Complaint response times were poor. The pressures eased in early 2020 as a result of increased staffing. Healthcare staff attendance at ACCT reviews and complaint response times improved significantly. Staff were retrained to participate fully in ACCT reviews.

During the COVID-19 regime, healthcare services continued to operate almost as normal, apart from groupwork activities.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

The system of dispensing routine medication on the house units continued and worked well. Waiting times for GP and dentist appointments have been reasonable.

Healthcare reported that because of staff shortages, the pharmacy service was unsatisfactory for much of 2019, with delays in dispensing and prescribing errors. There were some discipline problems as a result. 2020 saw considerable improvements.

### **6.3 Mental healthcare**

Prior to re-rolling, the mental healthcare service operated as well as possible, given that the staffing was insufficient to meet the needs of the population.

A mental health nurse is allocated to each wing, to attend all ACCT reviews.

For psychosocial patients, there was around a 21-day wait from referral to assessment. There have been no staffing concerns in the last few months. At the start of the contract, there were some mental health staffing gaps that were covered by agency staff or support from the wider healthcare team, but the team was fully staffed for the last four months of the reporting year.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, in-cell programme packs were offered and welfare checks were carried out via in-cell telephones. Prisoners in the isolation unit had weekly welfare checks. Face-to-face consultations with patients, including by the psychiatrist, continued, adhering to social distancing instructions and using personal protective equipment when needed. The in-cell telephone system was used to complete psychosocial assessments, key work and welfare checks. The only services not offered during the COVID-19 pandemic were group work and ADHD Clinic for new assessment

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

Until the introduction of the COVID-19 regime, time out of cell was regularly restricted owing to staff shortages and training sessions.

During this severely restricted regime, many prisoners were locked in-cell for 23 hours a day, having only 30 minutes of exercise outside, although in-cell exercises were broadcast on the prison television channel. This remained in force from late March 2020 until the end of the reporting year.

### **6.4 Drug rehabilitation**

The Addictions team had transferred to CNWL in April 2019 and was still short of staff for much of the reporting year, although CNWL covered the shortage.

The population change meant that the need for alcohol and class A drug treatment reduced.

### **6.5 Soft skills**

Before the COVID-19 regime, the prison offered a rolling programme including relaxation and sleep hygiene; monthly yoga sessions; and weekly health and wellbeing

sessions, which include mindfulness, relaxation and meditation. There is a waiting list for these.

In addition to these groups, there is in-cell material on both yoga and health and wellbeing.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

At the beginning of the reporting year, a new contract for education services, delivered by Milton Keynes College, was in place. The prison now commissions services from the College and determines the curriculum. The new contract involved a reduction by almost 25% of the previous budget and a consequential reduction in the number of classroom places. During the course of the year, the number of prisoners has also gradually reduced by around 25%. The new contract has worked well overall.

Although the prison focused on the provision of education for a population with low literacy levels, there were insufficient places for prisoners who did not have basic entry-level English and mathematics in the early part of the reporting year. The previous requirement for prisoners to complete these courses before they could be allocated to other work was suspended, as there were not enough classroom places. Prisoners were reluctant to give up better-paid activities and return to education, even when places became available. Some prisoners never reached the basic educational level required in English and mathematics, which has an impact on their preparedness for release.

The large number of prisoner transfers meant that prisoners were often not at Woodhill long enough to complete even short courses.

The allocation of prisoners to education classes improved through the reporting year, from 69% in June 2019 to 103% in February 2020. The efficiency was 50% and the attendance 63% when measured against contract capacity.

When the normal regime was suspended because of COVID-19, in-cell education was provided on request. Take-up was just over 10% of the population. In addition, prisoners already enrolled on courses were offered additional work for their course.

In house unit 6, both in-cell work and education are offered to the prisoners but this often falls short of what should be on offer to match the rest of the prison. Staffing issues in all areas of the prison result in house unit 6 feeling left out.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Re-rolling involved planning for 427 full-time work places by September 2019. However, the works needed to provide these places had not been carried out by the end of the reporting year, partially because of the impact of COVID-19.

The limited information available indicates that the prison exceeded its targets for prisoners working in industry. However, the tiling, painting and catering workshops

were not included in the figures, and the Board found that they were under-utilised throughout the year.

Library services were provided throughout the year, and directly to the house units during the COVID-19 regime.

### **7.3 Offender management and progression**

The prison's offender management section and probation section in general performed well, dealing with prisoners' issues on time and correctly. However, there were some delays on occasion, as a result of staff shortages.

Requests for transfers on compassionate grounds were limited throughout the reporting year because of a lack of spaces in the prison system.

### **7.4 Family contact**

The visits centre and hall operated until the implementation of the COVID-19 regime, when all visits were stopped. In the early part of the reporting year, improvements were made to the visits booking system which increased the use of available visits spaces.

### **7.5 Resettlement**

Prior to the re-roling, the resettlement services provided by the CRCs at the prison continued to perform poorly, owing primarily to a lack of staffing. There were considerable delays and inadequacies in preparing prisoners for release.

Before re-roling, the employment rate of prisoners six weeks after release was only 12% and settled accommodation on the first night following release was only 59%. These figures do not provide reassurance that resettlement planning was effective or that future reoffending rates would be low.

Since the re-role of the prison, few prisoners have been released from Woodhill, so resettlement activities have been reduced.

## **8. The work of the IMB**

### **Board statistics**

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	360
Total number of segregation reviews attended	161

Notes

- The number of visits from mid-March to the end of May 2020 was reduced severely by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Segregation reviews were attended by telephone from mid-March to the end of May 2020

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	4
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	3
C	Equality	6	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	7	12
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	36	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	13	1
F	Food and kitchens	7	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	17	36
H1	Property within this establishment	25	29
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	54	98
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	7	5
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	19	16
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	43	47
K	Transfers	18	31
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	32	23
M	Not classified	19	34
	Total number of applications	319	364*

\* Note – Number of applications includes 102 by the telephone system introduced at the end of March 2020 in response to lockdown measures due to the COVID-19 outbreak.





This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [imb@justice.gov.uk](mailto:imb@justice.gov.uk).