



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Bure

**For reporting year
1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Bure opened on 30 November 2009. It is a category C prison with a certified normal accommodation of 604 and an operational capacity of 624. At the time of writing, the occupancy is 586. Prisoners residing there are male, with three transgender individuals. 45.7% of prisoners are over 50 years of age, 12.2% are over 70 years of age, and the oldest prisoner is 92 years of age.

The site consists of:

7 residential accommodation units

19 single residential accommodation units

Healthcare department

Care and separation unit

Multifunction building, including the gym, programme delivery and the world faith room.

Workshops

Learning resource centre

Administration block

Accommodation:

Residential units comprise mostly single cells; however, there are four cells in five of the units that are used as doubles, together with 32 cells on residential unit 7 that have been converted for double occupancy. There is one easy-access cell in both residential units 5 and 6.

All cells on residential unit 7 have integral sanitation and showers, and one is wheelchair accessible.

Each cell on residential units 1 to 6 has integral sanitation, with use of communal showers.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 19 self-contained single accommodation units have been added.

Reception criteria:

Normal reception arrangements apply. Bure accepts category C adult men convicted of sexual offences, including those who identify as transgender. Priority is given to East of England prisoners, although this cannot be guaranteed.

Regime:

The regime provides access to the following:

Education:

Education continues to be provided through a well-managed external contract with PeoplePlus. In April 2017, following an unannounced inspection by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, the overall rating of Ofsted was 'good'. The education provision reflects an emphasis on basic skills (literacy and numeracy), key work skills, social and life skills, and information technology (IT), all within the funding envelope of the new prison education framework arrangements. Education staff and the Norfolk County Council (NCC) librarian were not able to come into the prison from March, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workshops and programmes:

External contracts are undertaken in three workshops. Accredited offender behaviour programmes are also run, and these include programmes specific to the population of men convicted of sexual offences.

Bure provides a number of vocational courses in workshops, waste management and horticulture. Before the outbreak of the pandemic training for bricklaying was under way and the gardens continued to be diligently maintained to a high standard. However, owing to COVID-19, bricklaying has ended and the space now provides an area for temporary accommodation, to ensure that prisoners are in single cells. Although the civilian horticulturalists were absent for only a very brief period, the amount of time given to prisoners was seriously restricted, and remains so. However, despite the dry summer conditions, the gardens still produced a limited amount of vegetables and flowers.

Workshops have continued with reduced numbers of prisoners, to comply with social distancing. Work has been shared between prisoners, to allow more time out of their cells.

Healthcare:

The healthcare centre is open seven days a week, from 8am to 7pm on Monday to Friday, and 8am to 5.30pm at weekends. An out-of-hours service is not provided by Care UK, and the prison uses the NHS 111 service. GP visits take place three days a week; however, a telephone service to a GP is available to prisoners supported by healthcare staff. This is comparable to the provision in the community.

Gym and sports:

There is one gym, with programmes staffed by three physical education officers at the current time. The gym offers a range of accredited and recreational programmes. Working alongside the education department, gym staff continue to deliver 'Turning Pages' to improve reading and 'One to One' to improve mathematics skills. However, since March the gym has been closed following government guidelines due to COVID-19, with officers having to take on other duties.

Faith and religion:

There is one large multi-faith room, which is located in the multi-function building.

The following groups have ministers/representation:

- Anglicans
- Buddhists
- Free Church members
- Hindus
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Jews
- Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints members
- Muslims
- Pagans
- Rastafarians
- Roman Catholics
- Salvation Army members
- Sikhs

The chaplaincy is well run and supports prisoners and staff alike. A range of festivals and events are held each year promoting tolerance and diversity. Since the advent of COVID-19, normal services and meetings have not been held. The chaplaincy has 14 volunteer prison visitors, who have not been able to meet with prisoners since March owing to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on family visits.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This report presents the findings of the Board for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. Evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys and prisoner applications. The period from 18 March to 31 July has been extraordinary owing to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board has worked closely with staff and prisoners, using remote ways to monitor the safety of all those who live and work at HMP Bure. The Board communicates regularly with governors and staff, and, despite long hours of lockdown for prisoners, morale remained high. At the time of writing, we have resumed face-to-face contact with prisoners, who have been able to provide a comprehensive account of how they have been affected during the last five months of this reporting year.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Prior to the announcement and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, prisoners felt safe and morale was high, with low levels of violence. The impact of COVID-19, with lockdown of up to 23 hours a day, was difficult both for staff and prisoners. However, the recognition by both groups of the effect that the virus could potentially have on their families and friends led to greater understanding, and a reduction in complaints. Recent data has shown 75% of prisoners said that Bure is safe and decent. This represents a drop reflecting how prisoners feel about the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Overall, prisoners continue to receive fair and humane treatment in the establishment. The introduction of the residents council during the last reporting period has proved invaluable in the current situation. The council meets once a month and has been attended by governors, including the No 1 Governor. With prisoners being on lockdown for up to 23 hours a day, the council has made the wellbeing of all prisoners its priority, ensuring that steps are taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The mental and physical health of everyone has been a concern, and ideas to minimise harm were generated by both the residents' council and staff. Recent data collected by safer custody, 84% of prisoners said that they were treated humanely and fairly. Thirty-two cells in residential unit 7 remain equipped for double occupancy, which the Board believes is unacceptable and not compatible with decent living conditions.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

During the reporting year, there were three deaths in custody, including HMP Bure's first self-inflicted death since opening in 2009. The Board considers the Safer Custody Team is outstanding in their delivery of support both to prisoners and families. Listeners selected from prisoners by the prison staff and trained by the Samaritans have become a well-respected group, who have worked diligently to support those seriously affected by long hours of lockdown and increased anxiety for their families.

The healthcare department is fully staffed and has not needed to use 'bank' staff. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare staff, including the mental health team, have delivered a service equivalent to that expected in the local community. Clinics had to be cancelled but the healthcare team have had face-to-face meetings with prisoners, using the appropriate personal protective equipment in urgent cases.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the minister ensure that establishments such as HMP Bure operate at their normal accommodation level? The 32 cells on residential unit 7 were taken out in December 2019 but are currently single occupancy. However, the double bunks remain in those cells, continuing to make conditions cramped.

Will the minister continue to review the provision of pre-release resettlement facilities for men convicted of sex offences?

Will the minister ensure that resources are made available for urgent work to the ventilation system in residences 1 to 6, to improve the air quality and increase the level of ventilation, especially taking into account that prisoners are presently locked up for up to 23 hours a day owing to COVID-19 and the expectation that this situation will continue into next summer?

Will the minister investigate the delays, both pre and post COVID-19, in the provision of psychology reports, which are having an impact on offending behaviour programmes and delaying such necessary progression of prisoners?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will consideration be given to providing special accommodation and resources for palliative care at HMP Bure, and developing further cells to provide better conditions for the disabled?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will the Governor ensure that work is done on the ventilation system on residences 1 to 6 as a matter of priority?

3.4 Progress since the last report

The Board recognises efforts of the Governor, with support of all staff, to continually look for opportunities to improve conditions both for prisoners and officers. His personal commitment to establishing and supporting the residents' council has allowed prisoners a 'voice', which has been particularly beneficial during the current COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

All residences and some offices have been redecorated during the reporting year, and have been enhanced by the artwork and murals completed by prisoners, with the help of the education department.

Seven new boilers have been fitted to residences 1 to 6, which improved the heating last winter. Having found the engineering solution in Bure's own prison workshop with regard to the ventilation problem with windows in cells, all have now had the necessary adjustments.

Complaints about the loss or damage to property within the establishment have dropped by 33%. Complaints about loss of property during transfer remaining consistently low.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, morale has remained high among prisoners and staff alike.

The introduction of the 'HUBs' (help understand Bure) on each residential wing last year has proved valuable to prisoners, staff and the Board. These are operated by prisoners who can support and/or advise on a number of issues. The Board finds the HUBs a useful starting point to hear and discuss issues affecting the wing.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Owing to COVID-19, prisoners arriving at HMP Bure are immediately put into quarantine for 14 days on one of the residential wings, where they are inducted by experienced orderlies. All property arriving with prisoners is held for 72 hours; in-cell property is then given to prisoners and checked by officers working solely in the quarantine area. Upon release from quarantine, new prisoners visit the reception area, where they check their in-store property with reception staff. They are encouraged to make contact with their family at an early opportunity. Video-conferencing calls by computer link are made possible for those in quarantine, so that they can talk to family and/or friends.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

During the reporting year, there were three deaths in custody. One was apparent death by self-harm, the first such incident since the opening of the prison in 2009. There were 585 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews in the reporting year. There were 347 individual cases of self-harm, among 46 individuals. Two of these were repeat self-harmers and two were prolific self-harmers.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Levels of violence remain low. During the reporting year, there were 37 incidents – down from 45 last year. This could be expected, as a result of the long hours of lockdown for over five months of the year.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Prior to COVID-19, staff managed the needs of the elderly and/or vulnerable with the introduction of CAMEO ('come and meet each other'), which reduced isolation and helped prisoners' wellbeing. Therapy dogs with their handlers visited the establishment on a regular basis to help calm those feeling isolated and/or with mental health problems, although, understandably, this has now stopped owing to COVID-19.

Some prisoners are trained by the Samaritans to offer a listening service for all prisoners. However, owing to release or transfer from the establishment and the Samaritans not able to train replacements during the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers are seriously depleted. It is to the credit both of staff and prisoners that a full 24-hour listening service is still being provided. Listeners are dedicated to their role and ensure that officers are made aware of those prisoners who are feeling isolated but not asking for support. Safer custody and chaplaincy staff work closely with families to try to support prisoners. At the time of writing, the Samaritans have returned to Bure and been able to give one-to-one support to Listeners, which is important to their wellbeing.

4.5 Use of force

The level of use of force is low, with 72 recorded incidents, of which 14 were to prevent self-harm. There were no severe injuries to any prisoners or officers, and no batons were drawn. PAVA spray has been drawn but not used. One officer was sent to hospital following a blow to the head. The Board has observed and received training, to ensure that members have a full understanding of the control and restraint methods necessary to reduce the risk of injury both to prisoners and staff.

4.6 Substance misuse

Mandatory drug testing, security intelligence and substance abuse services indicate that there is very little availability of illicit drugs. There have been a few incidents of misusing prescribed drugs but this has reduced since the advent of COVID-19, with prisoners being able to associate with only a small number of other prisoners, to reduce the risk of infection. Healthcare and prison staff co-operate with the work of the drug strategy recovery team by monitoring prescribed drugs held by prisoners in their cells. This reduces the risk of bullying or trading of drugs.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation

Residential accommodation units are clean, bright and in a good state of repair. In recent years, the staff and prisoners have transformed the units with colour and artwork. Since the start of COVID-19, with long periods of lockdown, prisoners have diligently worked to ensure that in-depth cleaning takes place regularly, to safeguard prisoners, officers and staff.

During previous years, there had been problems with the heating system and windows not fitting properly. New boilers have now been installed and, following a local solution found by the workshop to repair the windows, this appears to have been resolved successfully.

Concerns have been raised with regard to the ventilation in residences 1 to 6. Despite the work done on improving the ventilation of the windows in each cell, the prisoners find themselves in very hot conditions during the summer months. The ducting which circulates the air throughout each wing has not had any deep cleaning since opening of the prison. Many of the filters need replacing as the existing filters are difficult to access for any maintenance. This needs to be done as a matter of urgency. Prisoners can be confined to cells for up to 23 hours a day because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has been agreed that the air quality is poor. Ventilation would be improved if the windows at the end of each spur could be opened to allow air through. Currently, they open only if there is a fire alarm, when noisy fans operate as part of the system to remove smoke.

Although the inhumane doubling-up in 32 cells on residential unit 7 ended in December 2019, the double bunk-beds remain in the cells, resulting in cramped conditions which are unacceptable with the long hours of lockdown.

The kitchen manager and civilian staff, along with prisoners, work hard to provide three meals a day. As a result of social distancing and the number of prisoner orderlies allowed in the kitchen having to be reduced, some foodstuffs have had to be purchased from outside suppliers, which in the past orderlies were able to prepare, so quality and variety have declined. While on long hours of lockdown, prisoners were given additional snacks each day. Owing to the change in the regime within the establishment, orderlies have had reduced hours in the kitchen, and this has had an impact on the civilian staff. Nevertheless, kitchen orderlies have worked seven days a week, with very tight timescales, ensuring that meals have been provided on time. The staff and orderlies who have worked in the kitchen have shown exceptional dedication to the task and have continued to provide meals for the 600-plus prisoners, despite the concerns that they may have had for their own families' welfare.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

The care and separation unit (CSU) has 10 cells and has in the past taken prisoners from HMP Norwich for short stays, to support pressures experienced at that establishment. This has stopped since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. The number of cells occupied in the CSU is generally low, with some of the occupants returning on a regular basis because of behaviour, personality and/or mental health problems. Officers working in the CSU are professional and patient in their approach. No special accommodation has been used in the reporting year and there have been no 'dirty protests'. The Board visited the CSU regularly prior to COVID-19; since March, we have been in regular contact with CSU staff and a telephone link has enabled members to participate in reviews, adjudications and ACCT discussions, and to speak with prisoners.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

Relationships between staff and prisoners are generally good. There is a low level of violence and there are a number of prisoners with responsibilities in each residential unit, ensuring that prisoners' views are heard. Each unit has a representative on the residents' council, education orderlies and trained Listeners. Prior to COVID-19, the key worker scheme was in place, and was beginning to show opportunities for prison officers to support prisoners. Unfortunately, as a result of having to limit each prison officer and prisoner's number of contacts for everyone's safety, and the reduced access to the residential units, it was difficult to maintain contact with a key worker. This was addressed by officers on each residential wing having an individual responsibility for the wellbeing of a group of prisoners.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board has spoken with staff regularly and more recently face-to face contact with prisoners and members of the residents council. The award winning 'Wingspan' magazine, recognised for excellent content and good graphics along with the 'HUBS' (see section 3.4) led by prisoners and supported by officers, have given opportunities to share information and enhance cooperation and goodwill during the long hours of lockdown since March.

At the start of the pandemic the prison had 23 Listeners, who were available 24 hours a day to help prisoners who needed support. This has dropped to 10 at the time of writing. The group has taken on a very difficult role during the COVID-19 pandemic but has been supported well by the safer custody team and the Samaritans. At the start of the pandemic, the Samaritans were not allowed into the establishment to continue training prisoners in this important and demanding role. The safer custody team has supported the group by listening to their concerns and arranging resilience and wellbeing training opportunities with a prison psychologist. In addition, Listeners have been given opportunities to telephone the Samaritans, to ensure their own wellbeing while dealing with increasing number of prisoners who may feel isolated and fearful for their friends and family.

5.4 Equality and diversity

At the time of writing, there are 66 foreign national prisoners at the prison, from 35 countries and speaking 34 different languages, with one prisoner being recorded as 'stateless'. There are three prisoners identifying as transgender, and they are well supported by staff and other prisoners. The population of HMP Bure is 84% white and 16% black, Asian and minority ethnic. Black History information is shared by all, with thought-provoking artwork provided by prisoners, with the help of the education department.

The discrimination incident report form (DIRF) system works well, and all prisoners and staff are encouraged to use it. There were 74 DIRFs submitted, with 38% being received from those identifying as being in the BAME group, during the reporting year. The Board has observed the continuing changes toward a 'rehabilitative culture' which empowers prisoners and has been invaluable, allowing staff and prisoners to work together in dealing with the uncertainty caused by Covid-19.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team is respected by all who live and work at Bure. An understanding of diversity and equality is encouraged by all chaplains with music playing an important part enabling all to experience and enjoy the similarities and differences within cultures.

Prior to the pandemic, the chaplaincy was able to provide services for all faiths and recognised festivals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the chaplaincy dedicated themselves to supporting prisoners and staff by remaining in the establishment, helping to contact friends or family, and providing reading material, books and DVDs to help prisoners deal with the long hours of lockdown. Staff and prisoners alike lost friends and relatives during the COVID-19 pandemic but the chaplaincy team supported everyone in their grief and arranged opportunities for prisoners to observe funerals via computer-link.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

There has been an improvement in ensuring that individual incentives and earned privileges are not delayed. There are currently 432 prisoners on the enhanced level and 154 on the standard levels of the IEP scheme. No prisoner is currently on basic level due to the impact of long hours of lockdown since March and the increased anxiety of some prisoners.

5.7 Complaints

A total of 149 applications were received by the Board in the reporting year, which is a drop of 56 from last year. There were increases in only two areas: purposeful activity and time out of the cells. Concerns were initially raised with regards to family contact due to government restrictions. A recognition by prisoners of the risk to their families and subsequent video links gave assurances that family contact could be maintained although to a lesser degree.

Since March, there has been a significant drop in applications, but those we received related to the frustrations that prisoners felt while on longer hours of lockdown, and unable to attend education, the library and their usual places of work because of social distancing. The Board was able to reply quickly to applications but not always able to resolve problems created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.8 Property

The Board is pleased to report a significant drop in complaints regarding property within the establishment. Reception staff have looked at ways to ensure that property and parcels can be collected during exercise. This system was working well prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added to the pressures for staff as a result of the significant volume of catalogue orders allowed to prisoners in order to support them during the long hours of lockdown. Items have to be held for a period of 72 hours to safeguard staff and prisoners from the virus. Some suppliers have not been able to deliver items or collect returns which added to delays. Business hub staff looked at alternative methods, which resolved some of the problems, but they had no control over the pressure put on outside suppliers by the general increase of online shopping in the community.

Property transfer between establishments has been a problem in the past but items are now forwarded quickly and not being retained or lost at the level of previous years. Delay in property arriving at Bure from other establishments has improved. This may be the result of fewer transfers taking place, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare: general

Since our last report, good staffing levels have been maintained by Care UK, despite the isolation of the prison and the reluctance of potential candidates not wishing to work with men convicted of sexual offences.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The number of GP visits has increased, and there are currently six nurses and a pharmacist (shared with another prison), supporting five pharmacy technicians.

A dentist attends two days a week but, because of the COVID-19 restrictions, the full range of procedures is not available. An optician attends one day every other week and will repair spectacles. Healthcare staff have been trained to do minor repairs to hearing aids, and video-calls are available, using a special camera, for advice on skin conditions. There has been a drop in the number of complaints sent directly to healthcare. However, the Board has raised concerns about the replies received by prisoners, which lack some necessary information. The healthcare manager has been made aware of this and has agreed to address the matter. Those who are currently shielding are seen twice a day for their physical and mental wellbeing.

Since the start of the pandemic, the healthcare team has maintained low levels of staff absence, and witnessed a number of more serious incidents involving the intervention of the Air Ambulance Service. They have dealt with the situations in a professional manner, and the safer custody team has provided officer support to ensure the wellbeing of all healthcare staff.

6.3 Mental healthcare

The mental health team consists of three experienced full-time staff and a learning disability nurse. There has not been a significant increase in the workload during the COVID-19 situation but they have been unable to do face-to-face reviews, for the safety both of prisoners and staff. As the prison moved to a less restricted regime, the mental health team was able to speak with prisoners in the open air, until a dedicated COVID-19 safe room was prepared.

6.4 Social care

Norfolk County Council (NCC) assesses, and provides aids and support for, those with disabilities. Prisoners are trained as 'buddies' to support the needs of those with mobility problems, and healthcare staff provide personal care.

The establishment is not able to offer palliative and end-of-life care. Prisoners requiring this are sent to HMP Norwich, local hospices or the local Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. With an ageing population, Bure would benefit from

such a facility. The Board has found that prisoners who have served long sentences would rather stay within the establishment during their last days.

6.5 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

Prior to lockdown, staff provided many opportunities, both for prisoners and staff, to improve their health and wellbeing. Gym staff took on other duties during the initial lockdown period, which gradually increased because of requirements for staff and officers to enable the physical distancing of prisoners.

At the time of writing, prisoners have spoken of their appreciation of the efforts made by gym staff to offer a range of activities in the open air, in all weathers, which have helped them deal with the long hours of lockdown. Circuit training and bowls were organised. It was interesting to hear how much the younger prisoners enjoyed the opportunity to try playing bowls with the older prisoners.

6.6 Drug rehabilitation

Thirteen per cent of the population of Bure are monitored for drug-related issues. Members of the drug strategy recovery team have continued their work although some were shielding during March and April. No programmes have been run since the outbreak of COVID-19 but staff have maintained one-to-one contact with prisoners and given the more vulnerable prisoners regular welfare checks.

6.7 Soft skills

Prisoners and staff have enjoyed opportunities to engage with local community groups. Representatives from the office of the Lord Lieutenant, county and district councils and military veterans' groups have attended a prisoners' art exhibition and taken part in two awards events for staff and prisoners.

In September, a family day for officers and staff was organised to mark the 10th anniversary of the opening of Bure. A memorial garden, designed and created by staff, with a water feature made in the workshop, was dedicated to officers who have died while serving at the prison. The event was clearly enjoyed by everyone, and recognised the importance of family support for all those who work at the establishment.

A range of charities has benefited from sponsored activities by prisoners and staff alike, including the Macmillan nurses, East of England Air Ambulance, Spurgeons Families and the Happisburgh Volunteer Inshore Lifeboat. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted all further contact with local community groups since March.

Prisoners successfully submitted a range of paintings and other crafts through the Koestler Arts Trust, which were exhibited at a well-attended event in Snape Maltings, in Suffolk. There has been an increase in interest this year, with more prisoners entering their work.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Norfolk County Council (NCC) is responsible for the library, which is a full and cramped room, but essential to prisoners with limited access to computers. Prior to the pandemic and lockdown, the library was used often, with many initiatives encouraging further education, music and opportunities to learn a foreign language.

Owing to COVID-19, NCC closed the library in March, but prisoners collected and shared books with each other. Residential unit 3, the 'enabling wing', now following the necessary sanitary controls, had already set up its own library, which has been invaluable during the pandemic.

Education and NCC staff did not attend the prison at the start of lockdown. At the time of writing, staff have returned to working inside and are preparing for face-to-face contact in the near future.

There has been a steady stream of learners applying for distance learning, and the desire for higher learning has not dropped off.

Before COVID-19, the academic year was going well. Education had embedded the new functional skills standards in mathematics and English, and started delivery of level 3 food safety and hygiene, but numbers were lacking in some classes throughout the year.

The overall achievements for the year April 2019 to March 2020 were:

- Functional skills 93.63 %from 391 qualifications
- Vocational skills at 100%, from 452 qualifications
- Personal and social development at 99.45%, from 182 qualifications
- Other short courses at 99.62%, from 264 qualifications.

The year was shortened by a couple of weeks when the lockdown was implemented. This caused considerable issues, and it took a month for education staff to be able to start the delivery of in-cell learning packs because the delivery had to be coordinated from outside of the prison. Education staff have attended the learning resource centre and developed subject-specific in-cell learning packs for almost all of the subject areas covered. To date, staff have sent out around 200 stand-alone in-cell packs and 200 subject-specific packs, without any direct contact to learners. Staff were able to mark the work once education staff were allowed back into the prison.

COVID-19 restrictions have highlighted what would have been possible if Bure had more of an IT infrastructure in prisoners' cells. The lack of IT equipment has highlighted the additional learning subjects which could be offered, and that some prisoners have been unable to continue with their studies without access to it.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Up to the start of the pandemic the prison was making good progress with a wide range of vocational training leading to employment opportunities. Course retention and success rates were good. Workshops have continued through the COVID-19 pandemic but the number of prisoners with purposeful activities has dropped owing to civilian staff not being allowed into the prison and social distancing in the various workshops.

The gardens are the pride of Bure but they have been difficult to maintain without the horticultural staff being able to come into the prison during the pandemic, and the notably dry summer experienced in Norfolk.

Despite the reduction in the number of prisoners able to work in the workshops due to social distancing, the prison was still able to fulfil the contract for the production of filing cabinets, catering equipment and other items.

The lockdown and social distancing have reduced the number of opportunities for work places by 66%. Those unable to go to work through no fault of their own still receive a payment.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Prior to the pandemic, the training of key workers had been completed and the scheme had been implemented and was working well. However, since March it has been impossible to continue this work because of the need to restrict the number of contacts between staff and prisoners, to ensure their personal safety. Prisoners have been allocated a personal officer working in the same residential accommodation unit, to liaise with them and document their records accordingly.

7.4 Family contact

The family centre is managed by Spurgeons, which, in the first half of the reporting year, was involved in improving all aspects of visits, and engaging prisoners in parenting classes. Unfortunately, the manager resigned just prior to the start of lockdown. Staff were furloughed and some have continued to be so.

Contact with families via computer video-link is arranged by Spurgeons, but prisoners are limited to 30-minute sessions only. The visitor centre allows families to have a 60-minute face-to-face visit on Fridays, with reduced numbers because of social distancing requirements. Before the pandemic Spurgeons had achieved very high standards in the food and drink available to families, who may have to travel long distances to rural Norfolk. At present, no food or drink is served. There has been a significant drop in the number of visitors, averaging a mere 36% of available spaces at this time. Prisoners feel the impact of the loss of family visits but recognise the risks to their relatives of using public transport to travel to the prison.

7.5 Resettlement planning

During the reporting year, there has been a significant shortage of staff within the offender management unit (OMU). Figures have shown that it has been as low as 67%. Despite the turbulence caused by the pandemic, there has been strong commitment by the newly appointed head of offender management services, supported by an experienced senior probation officer and diligent OMU staff working within the establishment.

Although Bure is not funded for resettlement, it has community rehabilitation company staff working within the OMU. However, hours were lost when they were absent for a four-month period because of the pandemic. This was further exacerbated by staff shielding and two prison offender managers being redeployed to the community. Despite the commitment OMU are not able to deliver a full resettlement package owing to a lack of funding and to pending national changes, and there is a limited resettlement pathway to support men convicted of sexual offences.

Parole has been generally maintained, and the backlog completed remotely or paper based, with an increase in prisoners recommended for release during the pandemic.

Serious concerns were raised about the significant delays in psychology reports prior to March, and these have now been delayed further owing to COVID-19 restrictions. The Board understands that there has been an increase in the demand for psychology reports, further assessment reports and/or addendums, particularly in the East of England, leading to the service having to prioritise the most urgent work. More complex reports require essential face-to-face interviews, which have proved difficult to arrange with the COVID-19 restrictions in place. This is further exacerbated by the acute shortage of a range of psychologists nationally, and not likely to be resolved in the near future. As a result, the offending behaviour programme delivery is delayed, leading to a lack of progression through programmes and resulting in frustration, which has an impact on the wellbeing of prisoners and staff alike.

Despite the offender management in custody model being nearly four years old, the National Probation Service has failed to entice and recruit the number of probation officers required for it to function. The training of recruits is under way but 18 months behind schedule.

The work of the IMB

This year has been a challenging year for the Board at HMP Bure. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on our level of monitoring, as we were unable to enter the establishment while safeguarding ourselves, prisoners, officers and other staff. However, we have embraced ways of monitoring remotely, and at the time of writing we are able to listen and speak with prisoners and staff utilising teleconferencing equipment, and meet with prisoners and staff in prearranged areas while following the strict COVID-19 safety and hygiene guidelines.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	241
Total number of segregation reviews attended	14

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	32	14
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	2	1
C	Equality	4	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	4	12
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	15	11
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	11	8
F	Food and kitchens	5	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	42	33
H1	Property within this establishment	32	21
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	9	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	4
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	9	4
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	18	24
K	Transfers	18	2
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	0
	Total number of applications	205	149



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