



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board At HMYOI Cookham Wood

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

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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

2.1 Introduction

Cookham Wood is one of five juvenile young offender institutions (YOIs) in England and Wales. It accommodates boys aged 15–18 years.

It has certified accommodation for up to 188 boys. Its actual population over the reporting period ranged between 120 and 178 boys. As there are usually several rooms out of commission, it is often working at or near full capacity. It is common for around 15 rooms to be out of action.

It has a wide catchment area, serving courts in London, the South East, the South West, Central South and East Anglia.

Its population consists both of remand and convicted prisoners. The normal length of stay for remand prisoners is four to 12 weeks. However, this changed once lockdown was introduced, as courts were closed and boys on remand remained in prison for considerably longer. The normal length of stay for convicted prisoners is about six months, although many have sentences of one or two years. There is an increasing number of boys with long sentences of five to 20 years. In January 2020, there were six boys serving extended sentences and seven boys serving life sentences.

2.2 Accommodation and facilities

Cookham Wood was originally built in the 1970s, but new residential accommodation and an education block were opened in 2014.

The new accommodation block has 179 single rooms, each with its own telephone and shower, spread over six landings (A1 – A3 and B1 – B3).

Two specialist units are housed in the old 1970s accommodation: the Phoenix care and separation (segregation) unit (CSU; seven single rooms); and the Cedar unit for boys who have proved themselves to be of good behaviour and are due for release in the near future (17 single rooms).

One of the residential landings, B1 – ‘The Bridge’, is dedicated to running a progression programme for boys who are persistently disruptive and violent, or self-segregating.

2.3 Agency support

Primary healthcare nursing services are delivered by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

Mental health services (health and wellbeing) are delivered by the Central and North West London Foundation Trust.

Open Road provides the substance misuse service.

The education provider is Novus.

Education support is provided by Kinetic Youth Work Services.

The resettlement team is a totally in-house provision.

A social work team provides child protection oversight and looked after children support.

Barnardo’s provides independent advocacy support to the young people and a proactive children’s rights service, educating boys in their rights and championing the most vulnerable.

The contract for maintenance and repair work management is under the direction of Gov Facility Services Limited.

CXK, an organisation of local Kent youth workers, provides youth work support.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Background to the report

This report presents the findings of the Board at HMYOI Cookham Wood for the period 1 August 2019 to 30 August 2020. Board members visited the establishment 188 times before lockdown was introduced in March 2020. From March onwards, members performed remote monitoring, contacting staff by email and telephone, and reading daily bulletins and prison documents.

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

3.2 Main judgements

3.2.1 How safe is the establishment?

- The number of boy-on-boy and boy-on-staff assaults dropped dramatically (to one or two a week) in the first two months of the lockdown.
- During their short time out of room each day, boys mixed comfortably in small 'family' groups; some said that they felt safer mixing in these small groups. They developed trusting relationships with their landing officers.
- Despite this, the protracted lockdown had many other negative impacts on their wellbeing – see sections 3.2.2 – 3.2.5 below.
- As restrictions on time out of room and the size of groups were eased from mid-May, the number of assaults increased (to around five a week in August). Staff are alert to the possibility of further increases. The Board would support the robust use of bullying reduction plans to identify and reduce risks.
- The Board is satisfied that the use of physical restraint by staff has been necessary, proportionate and tightly controlled throughout the year.

3.2.2 How fairly and humanely are young people treated?

Staff are caring in their work, with a sympathetic understanding of the boys' needs. We do not believe there is, and have not observed, any deliberately inhumane treatment by staff; however, certain aspects of life at the establishment are inhumane:

Physical environment

The Phoenix segregation unit is unfit for purpose. The Board has serious concerns about the impact of the segregation regime, including the accommodation and

facilities, on the boys who are held there. This was highlighted in the previous report by the Board.

There is a significant sub-group of the prison population who have endured extremely long stays in segregation (some for more than 90 days), with boys isolated in their rooms for up to 23 hours a day and, at worst, facing a three-officer unlock in full body armour/personal protective equipment (PPE) – so, even when their room door is opened, they experience the barest of human contact. (See section 5.2)

Treatment of prisoners

Staff are fair and their relationships with the boys are generally good, but:

The lockdown introduced in March 2020 meant that boys were locked in their rooms for over 23 hours per day – the most severe lockdown of any YOI nationally. (See sections 5.6 and 6.3)

As outlined above, staff are caring in their work, with a sympathetic understanding of the boys' needs. The Board has seen no deliberately inhumane treatment by staff. However:

- A boy was segregated in the CSU for more than 21 days on four separate occasions and was in the unit for a total of 126 days. It took an unacceptably long time for this boy to be transferred to another YOI.

The delay in organising transfers to another YOI in such cases is inhumane. (See section 5.2)

- A significant number of boys aged 18+, with long sentences and complex needs, waited months for their transfer to young adult YOIs. There are no agreed pathways for transferring 18-year-olds, and no central Youth Custody Service team charged with making judgements about when and where they should move. This has resulted in adult prisoners – including those convicted of sexual offences and those exhibiting high levels of violence or with strong gang affiliations – being held in segregation at Cookham Wood.

The delay in organising transfers to the adult estate in such cases is inhumane. (See section 5.4)

- The chronic lack of secure mental health hospital beds nationally for children has resulted in boys with significant mental health issues being placed in Cookham Wood for several months, which the Board considers inhumane. The boys do not receive the therapeutic treatment they need, and, at worst, they will be on a three-officer unlock with staff in full PPE.

The national shortage of suitable secure mental health accommodation for such boys is inhumane. (See section 5.3)

- Rooms in the Phoenix segregation unit become very hot in summer and very cold in the winter months; they do not have individual showers or telephones. The exercise yard is small, with no exercise facilities, and is lined with steel sheeting – and thus, in the hot summer sun, becomes a brutal, oven-like space.

The Phoenix segregation unit is an inhumane environment. (See section 5.1)

3.2.3 How well are young people's health and wellbeing needs met?

- At the beginning of this reporting year (late summer 2019), staff struggled to provide a consistent regime for the boys and there was insufficient time out of room. There was a steady improvement in the regime from October to March 2020.
- Following the March lockdown, boys were well protected from COVID-19 infection. ***But their welfare suffered because of the tight, protracted restrictions on their activity and social contact. Relaxation of the lockdown restrictions was very slow and cautious, and there appeared to be little scope for local management discretion or flexibility.***
- There was excellent multi-agency support for the most vulnerable boys, but health and wellbeing access to boys who had not shown clear signs of vulnerability was severely curtailed.
- However, officers' personal support for the boys during the lockdown cemented relationships, and individual welfare checks on boys were carried out daily by landing and safeguarding staff.
- All landings had dedicated health and wellbeing therapists. Their support and advice for officers was significant in maintaining morale and focus during the lockdown, and laid solid foundations for the full roll-out of the 'Secure Stairs' (the Framework for Integrated Care) model from September 2020 (see section 6.6)

3.2.4 How effective is the education provision for young people?

- Across the reporting year prior to lockdown, the average education provision was between 10.4 and 15.5 hours per boy per week. There were half-day education shutdowns on 10 days in December and 12 days in January. ***This was unsatisfactory.***
- As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, classroom-based education was shut down completely on 20 March and did not resume until 13 July. This was a national directive affecting all Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) establishments indiscriminately, both in the adult and children's estate.
- In late March, Cookham Wood managers submitted a fully risk-assessed plan to Gold Command, proposing a partial reopening of education classes. It was not approved at the time but proved very similar to the plan approved and successfully implemented four months later.
- The Board was greatly impressed by the hard work and creativity of Novus education staff in providing the boys with remote resources – including individual work packs, newsletters and prison radio podcasts – from March to July, during the lockdown.

- When classroom education resumed on 13 July, each boy had access to two hours 45 minutes of teaching (one to one or in groups of four) twice a week. Overall attendance at these classes was 92% – which is very encouraging.

3.2.5 How well are young people progressed towards transfer or successful resettlement?

- Frequent changes in the overall management of the resettlement and reducing reoffending teams hindered joined-up planning.
- Cookham Wood offers boys an excellent range of release on temporary licence (ROTL) opportunities.
- There was a highly successful education, training and employment fair in September, and two major companies have now pledged workshops, master classes and pre-apprenticeships for Cookham boys. The Board strongly believes that boys should be able to begin apprenticeships while still held in a YOI (this is not currently allowed).
- There was a ban on visitors from March to July. The resettlement team worked hard to maintain good working relationships with families, carers, youth offending team (YOT) workers and legal teams; **but these relationships were very seriously handicapped by Cookham Wood's lack of information technology (IT) and telephone capacity.**
- The COVID-19 lockdown seriously disrupted sentence planning; this was exacerbated by the very large number of boys held on remand and the number of 18-year-olds awaiting transfer to the young adult estate.

3.3 Main areas for development

Development is required in the following areas:

TO THE MINISTER

1. There is a chronic lack of secure mental health hospital beds for children nationally, and the time taken to transfer boys with significant mental health issues to hospital from a YOI is inhumane. (See section 5.3)
What urgent steps will be taken to work with ministerial colleagues in the Department of Health to provide more secure mental health services for children?
2. There have been several occasions when boys with long sentences, who have reached the age of 18 years, have remained at Cookham Wood for a period of months, instead of being moved to a YOI facility for 18–21-year-olds. This situation has been exacerbated when the boys have been kept in segregation for safety reasons. (See section 5.4)
The delay in organising transfers to the adult estate in such cases is inhumane. Sentence planning is required to ensure that young adults do not get stuck in YOIs pending transfer to the young adult estate.

3. The percentage of boys at Cookham Wood who are there while being held on remand has increased over the reporting year. (See section 5.5)

An urgent review of court procedures is required, to avoid children enduring long periods in prison while being held on remand – with the potential for at least some of them being found ‘not guilty’ at the end of their long stay on remand.

4. During the lockdown period, boys at Cookham Wood were subjected to a severe regime and were locked in their rooms for up to 23 hours a day. Such a period of segregation contravenes the Mandela rules. (See section 5.6)

A return to a full regime of time out of room for education, physical exercise, dining out and association must be introduced as soon as possible.

5. Currently, prisoners are not allowed to start an apprenticeship. (See section 8.2.3)

Will the Ministry of Justice allow boys who would like to start an apprenticeship to do so while they are still in prison?

TO THE YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE

6. The YCS should provide additional care plus end-to-end sentence planning and support for long-sentence boys - with regard to whether young adult institutions (specifically, Aylesbury, Deerbolt and Swinfen Hall) have the capacity to accept an increasing number of 18-year-olds transitioning from juvenile YOIs (See section 5.4)

What steps will be taken to arrange transfers to the adult estate for young adults who are aged 18+ and have long sentences and/or complex needs – some of whom have been held inhumanely for long periods in segregation while other institutions refuse to take them?

Additional care and support is needed for long-sentence boys (specifically those with extended or life sentences).

Violent and/or disruptive 18-year-olds in YOIs can become ‘stuck’ in segregation awaiting transfer.

Is there end-to-end sentence planning and support for these boys? Do they carry their sentence plan with them when they transition to a young adult institution? Or do they have to start afresh?

7. ***What will be done to either improve the inhumane Phoenix CSU, or remove it from use? (See section 5.1)***

8. The lockdown highlighted Cookham Wood's serious lack of IT facilities and telephone capacity. This greatly inhibited effective communication and planning with external agencies.

What will be done to increase IT and telephone communication facilities in YOIs? (See sections 5.6 and 8.4.3)

9. At the end of August, there were no plans to return to full-time education at Cookham Wood from the beginning of September – as has been deemed a national priority for all other children nationally. (See section 7.6)

When will the YCS allow full-time education to resume for boys in Cookham Wood?

TO THE GOVERNOR

10. As the lockdown eases and a fuller regime is offered, there will be more opportunities for boy-on-boy assaults and bullying. How will the behaviour management policy be developed to address this? (See sections 4.1 and 4.2)
11. When there is a full education timetable again, what will be done to maintain a high level of attendance at classes? (See sections 7.2 and 7.6)
12. What is the plan and timescale for the provision of full Secure Stairs support for all boys and staff? (See section 6.6)
13. The CSU is old and has inadequate facilities. What will be done to improve these facilities, or to relocate the unit? In particular, boys in this unit (unlike all the other boys at Cookham Wood) do not have in-cell telephones to speak with their families. Will in-cell telephones be provided in the CSU, and if not, why not? (See section 5.1)

3.4 Progress since the last report

- The Custody Support Plan (CuSP) programme was embedded on all landings this year. Although regular CUSP meetings were not possible during the lockdown, they resumed from mid-July. (See section 6.4)
- Multi-agency teamwork to support and care for the most vulnerable boys was coordinated and driven by weekly 'separation and Rule 49 management team' meetings; these were excellent. (See section 6.4)
- Throughout the lockdown, each landing had a dedicated health and wellbeing therapist, who advised and supported officers. This has laid firm foundations for a rapid rollout of Secure Stairs support systems for all boys and staff from September. (See section 6.6)
- Cookham Wood now appears to have had one of the best records for ROTL use in the entire youth estate, despite the challenges of the system. (Notwithstanding that the boys have not been out on ROTL since the start of

the COVID 19 pandemic.) (See section 8.2.2)

- The continued operation of the Woody's Barista cafe has given boys the opportunity to be trained in the skills required to prepare food and beverages for staff and visitors in the prison, and to earn a City & Guilds qualification. (Notwithstanding that the boys have been unable to work in Woody's since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic.) (See section 8.2.2)
- There was an excellent and creative extension of family days in the first six months of this year (prior to lockdown). (See section 8.3)

4 SAFETY

4.1 Violence

In the three months before the COVID-19 lockdown, there were between eight and nine assaults (boy-on-boy and boy-on-staff) each week. This was much the same level of violent behaviour as in the previous 12 months.

In the first two months of lockdown, with boys remaining in their rooms for more than 23 hours a day, the number of incidents greatly reduced. In April, there were only one or two incidents per week. During their brief time out of room, the boys mixed comfortably in their four-person family groups and with officers.

There were some advantages during the lockdown, as officers and some boys were able to build positive relationships. A number of boys said that they felt safer, and they had additional credit on their telephone accounts, so could call family and friends from their rooms. This allowed them to be assured that their families were as safe on the outside as they were in Cookham Wood. Boys in the CSU were at a disadvantage as they had access to only one telephone in the block, and this did not allow for truly private conversations.

From mid-May, as boys were gradually allowed more time out of room (see section 6.3), there was an increase in the number and frequency of violent incidents: four to five assaults a week in May, three to four in June, and five to six in early July. Violence increased in the last two weeks in July, with 10 incidents a week, including small group assaults and assaults on officers.

Thankfully, this increase was short lived; the number of assaults dropped in early August and remained relatively low throughout the month (five assaults a week, on average – one of them an assault on staff). A Board member visiting in the first week in August commented in his rota report:

'The prison had an excellent feel to it: it was very calm and all the boys were being respectful towards staff. All the boys I spoke to were very happy to be getting out of their rooms more. Indeed, they appeared 'chilled' as they returned from their hour-long morning exercise. Education classes all appeared very calm and purposeful. Boys were pleased to have real visits back'.

It is clear to the Board that officers have been successful in containing and minimising violence during the lockdown. Such violence and disruption as occurred has been by individuals and small groups.

However, it is essential to bear in mind that, because of the volatility of some boys, staff have to remain continually alert to potential flare-ups. This is well illustrated by an incident on 30 May, when three boys returning to a landing from exercise assaulted the officers accompanying them; seeing this, two boys who were having a mediation meeting in the light bay assaulted the officers with them. Five officers had to attend hospital with injuries.

That officers remained alert to this level of unpredictable risk, while at the same time encouraging and supporting the boys in their charge, is very much to their credit.

4.2 Bullying

Prior to the lockdown, there was intelligence and evidence that bullying by some boys was an ongoing issue, and bullying documents were opened. Documents were raised both for perpetrators and suspected targets, with, in some instances, one perpetrator posing a threat to several boys.

It was not easy to determine the benefit of the bullying document process. This may be helped by Secure Stairs staff (see section 6.6) and conflict resolution officers being proactive in their engagement with the boys and the landing officers.

The main issues are that suspected targets are reluctant to admit to feeling frightened or bullied by any other boy(s) for fear of being called a 'grass'. Standing up to bullies in an enclosed environment is very difficult unless boys feel confident enough to speak up, rather than feeling bullied into taking actions that they would not normally take. Alleged perpetrators deny threatening harm or encouraging others to cause harm to boys or officers.

Lockdown reduced active risks of bullying but already in July there were some cases identified, as the boys began to mix more.

The Board believes that more use should be made of the bullying reduction plan system. It understands the difficulties – victims are fearful of exposing themselves as 'snitches' – but believes that they can be overcome by a coordination of intelligence.

There have been times, pre-COVID-19, when there were incidents/ fights/ assaults and an increase in the amount of canteen acquired by some boys, suggesting that bullying and intimidation were happening, but this was not reflected in the number of bullying reduction documents.

4.3 Detention of boys on remand

The lockdown and lack of court activity has significantly increased the percentage of boys awaiting trial and sentencing (see section 5.5).

One boy was released by the courts after spending 10 months on remand.

All the boys are dressed in the same prison clothing, and, unlike adults, the boys on remand are not allowed to wear their own clothes. Despite not having been convicted of a crime, they are treated the same as boys with convictions.

4.4 Use of restraint

On average, in the three months prior to the lockdown, officers used restraint (to protect boys and staff from injury) 19 times a week.

The use of restraint during the lockdown matched the trend in assaults and threats outlined above (section 4.1). It dropped to five times a week in April, rose steadily as lockdown was eased, peaking at 15 times a week in late July, then reduced markedly in August.

It is important to recognise that these figures include all levels of restraint, from a guiding hand to a full 'high-end' restraint, with officers using approved holds and techniques.

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions on our visits, members were unable to monitor use of force weekly, and on a case-by-case basis, during the lockdown. However, based on our monitoring from August to March, and of 'daily bulletin' records throughout the lockdown, the Board is satisfied that, except in emergencies, forcible restraint was used only after attempts at de-escalation had failed, and was necessary, proportionate and controlled. No boys were injured as a result of restraint.

4.5 Self-segregation and keep-apart restrictions

A number of boys in Cookham Wood self-segregate and it becomes difficult to move them to other landings because they fear they will be attacked. Much of the boys' fear has to do with gang affiliation, grudges and intimidation. In these circumstances, there can be a long and complicated list of 'keep-apart' restrictions.

Before the lockdown, Cookham Wood worked hard to shorten the list and break down antagonisms between groups of boys. Boys from different landings moved to education classes, visits and religious services together. The conflict resolution team continued its trailblazing work with individuals.

The number of boys completely self-segregating reduced during the lockdown. Boys were grateful for opportunities to leave their rooms, and clearly felt safe mixing within a small 'family group' and with known landing officers.

Case study (pre-COVID-19):

A 17-year-old boy arrived at Cookham Wood with a short sentence. Within two days of his admission, he was seriously assaulted by several boys who believed that he was a gang member from a rival district. This was not the case, and he had no gang affiliations at all. A Board member visited him and requested to see him in a safe area outside of his room. He was clearly frightened to leave his room, and one of the officers encouraged him to come and have a chat about what had happened and how he could be protected. He told them that he was going to spend all his sentence in his room, so that he could stay safe and get released on time. He was given information about the opportunities available for education and exercise. He did not change his view about staying in his room for safety but agreed to come out of his room to talk with officers on a one-to-one basis when it was safe to do so. The officers on the wing spent time with him and he was next seen by the Board a few weeks later in Cedar unit, mixing with all the boys on the unit. He told the Board member that he felt safe and was looking forward to joining the boys training to be baristas in the coffee shop. He told the Board member that it was the officers on the landing who built his confidence and made him feel safe to move on.

4.6 Self-harm

As with the previous year, a small number of boys at Cookham Wood with very severe behavioural problems posed a significant risk of self-harm and harm to others, usually to officers who were trying to help and support them. This included boys who were moved from Feltham enhanced support unit (ESU) when numbers there had to be reduced. Some of these boys spent most of their time on Rule 49 or self-secluded when comprehensive therapeutic support was not available to them.

The following figures illustrate the number of incidents occurring:

MONTH	NUMBER OF CASES
December 2019	4
January 2020	9
February	4
March	26*
April	12
May	10
June	11

*(*20 of which involved 1 boy)*

From August 2019 to July 2020, 108 self-harm incidents occurred, involving a total of eight boys. In 71 cases, these incidents involved attempted hanging/strangulation.

4.7 Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT)

ACCT files were opened whenever there was any risk of a boy self-harming (including, for instance, following a heavy sentence at court). This is something that Cookham Wood does well. The quality of ACCT recording is good and has shown a steady improvement. Officers take care in recording why or what leads them to conclude that the boy is feeling better or remains distressed or agitated.

The number of ACCTs raised from August 2019 to July 2020 was 141. This was a reduction from the previous year when there were 178.

4.8 Health and safety

In one week in August 2019, several officers on the Bridge landing reported serious safety issues when a number of rooms had no working fire alarms because of vandalism. There were also boys in rooms with no working toilets, necessitating officers having to move boys around briefly to use a working toilet in a room with no working fire alarm. It was also evident that many of the name plaques beside rooms had been damaged, and some had no identified boy in the room owing to vandalism. This was an issue on other landings as well as the ongoing issue of boys blocking the viewing window in the room door.

5 FAIR AND HUMANE TREATMENT

5.1 CSU

The Phoenix segregation unit (which houses the CSU) is a depressing and inhumane environment. It is part of the old Cookham Wood buildings and falls well below the standard of the newer blocks, which are located elsewhere on the site. The block has poor insulation, so rooms become very hot in summer and very cold in the winter months. The rooms there are basic and do not have individual showers or telephones. The boys are isolated from each other and must be escorted individually out of their rooms to use these facilities. The exercise yard on Phoenix unit is small and basic, with no exercise facilities; it is lined with steel sheeting – and thus, in hot summer sun, becomes a brutal, oven-like space.

The thematic report, Separation of children in young offender institutions, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), which was published in January 2020, made the following recommendation, which is strongly supported by the Board: 'The current model of separating children in young offender institutions should be replaced with a new system that ensures a regime that is equivalent to their non-separated peers'.

The Board has observed that the staff working on the Phoenix unit have a supportive attitude to the boys located there and treat them humanely. However, the limitations of the facilities mean that the boys must endure an inhumane existence.

5.2 Long periods of segregation

Some boys have stayed segregated in the Phoenix unit for many weeks – including boys with complex needs who were also suffering from serious mental health difficulties.

The total number of days spent by boys in the CSU for the period from 1 August 2019 to 30 June 2020 was 970 days.

Some boys at Cookham Wood have had to endure long periods spent in the CSU.

Case studies:

Boy A spent a total of 86 days in the CSU. He was over 18 years of age for the whole of this time and was held there while his transfer to the adult estate was delayed. This situation was highlighted by the Board and raised with the deputy director of the YCS before it was eventually resolved, and he was transferred from Cookham Wood. He was 18 years and 10 months old at that time.

Boy B spent a total of 126 days in the CSU before he was transferred to another YOI. This included four separate periods of over 21 consecutive days.

A joint statement by the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health says that there is an ‘unequivocal body of evidence on the profound impact solitary confinement can have on health and wellbeing’.

It reads: ‘***Various studies indicate an increased risk of suicide or self-harm amongst those placed in solitary confinement. As children are still in the crucial stages of developing socially, psychologically and neurologically, there are serious risks of solitary confinement causing long-term psychiatric and developmental harm***’. The groups urged the government to take ‘immediate action’ to ban the policy, adding that until solitary confinement is completely abolished, the youth secure estate must ensure that the health needs of those in solitary confinement are met.

See:

www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/policy-and-research/equality/the-medical-role-in-solitary-confinement/our-joint-position-statement-on-the-medical-role-in-solitary-confinement

www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/solitary-confinement-young-offenders-ban-mental-health-children-prison-justice-department-a8308941.html

5.3 Lack of appropriate mental health provision nationally

There are insufficient secure mental health hospital beds for children nationally, and Cookham Wood has no ESU facilities for boys with exceptionally complex needs.

In reply to our previous annual report (August 2018 – July 2019), the Minister stated the following:

“The placement of CYP on a care and separation unit, such as the Phoenix unit at Cookham Wood, is not the only option to assist children and young people (CYP) with mental health issues to cope with custody. The YCS has recently introduced enhanced support units (ESUs) in both Feltham and Wetherby YOIs for CYP with exceptionally complex needs who indicate an inability to integrate or [are] unlikely [to achieve] successful reintegration into mainstream services.”

To our knowledge, the highlighted ESU at Feltham is not yet operational; therefore, Wetherby is the only YOI nationally with an operational ESU.

This raises the question of why boys with mental health issues are sent to Cookham Wood. This is only a small number of boys, but they are held for long periods without the necessary treatment and support until an appropriate placement can be found and negotiated. This process takes far too long and seems to have scant regard to the urgent needs of the individual boy.

The Board is concerned that Cookham Wood has been required to hold boys who need significant mental health support, who are often violent and thus can only be accommodated in segregation. It is unsuitable and inhumane to locate boys with serious mental health problems in such a location. While staff at Cookham Wood do their best for these boys, the ‘treatment’ they receive while located there is insufficient for their needs; a prison CSU is far from a therapeutic setting staffed by health professionals.

There is an urgent need for more suitable accommodation and treatment to be found nationally.

Mental health case study:

Boy C was moved between the main block and Phoenix unit four times during his time at Cookham Wood in 2020. He was moved out each time that his behaviour appeared to stabilise and it was felt that he could return to a regular regime, but he repeatedly showed disturbed behaviour, often attempting to ligature, and spent much of his time in Phoenix unit on constant watch. By allocating a team of three staff to work exclusively with this boy, some degree of success was achieved. This was a cost pressure that Cookham Wood was not resourced for, and it demonstrated that increased staffing resource is often necessary to support and manage particularly vulnerable boys.

In a period of less than four months, the boy spent a total of 78 days in the CSU. Upon release from Cookham Wood, he was arrested within days and was sectioned in an NHS mental health facility for 28 days. Sadly, and unsurprisingly, he subsequently breached his tag – and was returned to Cookham Wood’s Phoenix unit.

A full case study is being commissioned, with Cookham Wood working with the YCS central safety team.

5.4 Retention of young adults and boys serving long sentences

There have been several occasions during the year when boys with long sentences who have reached the age of 18 years have remained at Cookham Wood for several months, instead of being moved to a YOI facility for 18–21-year-olds. This situation has been exacerbated when the boys have been kept in segregation for safety reasons.

On 13 December 2019, the number of 18+ boys at Cookham Wood was 30. At the time, this was 20% of the population. Of the 30, 12 were on short-term detention and training orders, two were on remand and five were due for release in January or February 2020. Of the remaining 11 boys, five had no release date and six had sentences of between one and nine years to serve. The boy with nine years left to serve was aged 18 years and four months.

The IMB noted its concerns regarding the delay in the transfer of 18+ boys in a letter to the Minister in March 2020, in which it stated:

‘... the Board has no confidence that the current delays in the transition of 18-year-olds can be resolved by the YCS alone. An effective decision-making mechanism will require joint commitment by both the YCS and the Prison Service. At present, they seem to be operating in silos. We do not believe that a “silo” approach can be effective in addressing the change in the sentencing demographic of young people in the juvenile and young adult estate.’

The Board has seen the toll that these delays have taken on:

- the welfare of the individual boy
- the impact that such boys’ behaviour can have on the other boys in Cookham Wood
- the staff who become drained, both physically and emotionally (especially when three-officer unlock in full PPE is required every time a room door is opened)
- the staffing resource that a three-officer unlock has on the rest of Cookham Wood’s regime – having an adverse impact on the regime available to all other boys.

In our last annual report (August 2018 – July 2019), we noted:

“A significant number of boys 18+, with lengthy sentences and complex needs, waited months for their transfer to young adult YOIs. There are no agreed pathways for transferring 18-year-olds, and no central Youth Custody Service team charged with making judgements about when and where they should move. This has resulted in adult prisoners – including those convicted of sexual offences and those with high levels of violence or strong gang affiliations – being held in segregation at Cookham Wood.

Delay in organising transfers to the adult estate in such cases is inhumane”.

- There had been a steady increase in the number of boys with long sentences at Cookham Wood. These boys would transfer to young adult institutions at age 18 and, in some cases, to adult prisons at age 21.
- There had also been repeated difficulties and delays in arranging the transfer of these boys to young adult institutions when they turned 18 – particularly if they had been convicted of sexual offences, or had a history of extreme violence, or self-harming.
- This delay and uncertainty are demotivating for boys awaiting transfer and, in some cases, provoked violent and disruptive behaviour, leading to their segregation.
- When ‘stuck’ at Cookham Wood awaiting transfer, and in segregation, this then can lead to unacceptably long stays in segregation.

There was some movement of 18+ boys from Cookham Wood during the lockdown period but there are still several present. On 8 July 2020, the number of 18+ boys at Cookham Wood was 18. At the time, this was 10.5% of the population. The oldest boy was nearly 18 years and nine months.

The Board strongly believes that long sentence boys need joined up support and sentence planning but do not receive this at present.

5.5 Number of boys on remand

The percentage of boys at Cookham Wood who are there while being held on remand has increased over the reporting year.

During August 2019, the average percentage of boys on remand at Cookham Wood was 38% of the total population. It was similar for the following months in this reporting period, until lockdown started in March 2020, by which time it had risen to 43%. From then onwards, the percentage increased as lockdown continued and courts were closed, to the following:

- April: 51% on remand (75 boys out of 145)
- May: 58% on remand (76 boys out of 131)

- June: 64% on remand (81 boys out of 125)
- end of first week in July: 67% on remand (82 boys out of 121).

Many of these boys do not know when their trials will take place and how long they are likely to remain remanded in custody. There are ‘custody time limits’ – set by Section 22 of the Prosecution of Offenders Act 1985; the Prosecution of Offenders (CTL) Regulations 1987; and subsequent Criminal Procedure Rules – to ‘safeguard unconvicted defendants by preventing them being held in pre-trial custody for an excessive period of time’. However, the COVID-19 lockdown has led to exceptional delays in the court system, and the Crown Prosecution Service has warned that breaches and extensions of custody time limits will be necessary.

The maximum custody time limit (for boys awaiting Crown Court trial) is 182 days (six months). It is now very likely that boys will be held on remand at Cookham Wood for longer than six months.

The Board wrote to the Secretary of State at the beginning of June 2020, highlighting this situation, among others, and requested that there should be an urgent review of court procedures, to avoid children enduring long periods on remand – with the aim of reducing the number of children on remand, and avoiding long periods held in isolation while on remand.

5.6 Regime during lockdown

During the lockdown period, boys at Cookham Wood were subjected to a severely restricted regime and were locked in their rooms for over 23 hours a day. Such a period of segregation contravenes the Mandela rules. As referenced above (section 5.2), there is an increased risk of suicide or self-harm among those placed in solitary confinement.

Equally, if there is no acknowledgement of the health and wellbeing implications of this severe segregation for such a prolonged period, without an emergency therapeutic regime to support their transition back to ‘normal life’, there is a potential time bomb of long-term mental health complications that risks staying with these boys when they are eventually released into the community and into their long-term adult life.

The boys in Cookham Wood endured 72 days of de facto solitary confinement (as at 2 June 2020).

The Board wrote to the Secretary of State at the beginning of June 2020 to express its concerns, as follows:

‘All children and young people in Cookham Wood YOI are being subjected to a regime that amounts to solitary confinement, with a serious risk of prolonged mental health concerns for the future’.

The Minister replied to the letter on 22 June 2020, stating that there has been a ‘**concern**’ at ‘*the limited time out of room, in comparison with other establishments*’.

Communal dining has not been a feature of Cookham Wood during lockdown – boys have eaten all meals alone in their rooms throughout. As at July 2020, they continue to do so.

Once lockdown was introduced, the only education available to boys was worksheets, which were pushed under room doors. This situation continued until 20 July 2020, when limited periods of face-to-face education classes for groups of up to four boys started. From that date, each boy was able to receive a maximum of five hours 30 minutes each, per week.

From the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, the boys were only able to communicate with their family members by telephone. A system called ‘Purple Visits’ was introduced, to allow online face-to-face communication, but this proved to be of limited popularity owing to its technical complexity and limited availability. Cookham Wood lacks modern technology facilities for online communications and has a limited number of telephone lines. Restricted family visits for a small number of boys and a small number of family members at any one time restarted in the second half of July 2020.

The promised piloting of in-room technology, referred to in the Minister’s letter of reply to the Board on 22 June 2020, ‘which will provide greater opportunities for boys to engage with a range of services and keep in contact with family and loved ones’, is still, sadly, outstanding.

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

6.1 COVID-19 risk management

The COVID-19 lockdown began on 18 March. At that time, there were around 150 boys held at Cookham Wood.

As boys left on completion of their sentences/detention orders and new arrivals slowed to a trickle (because of court closures), the roll dropped, to 140 by 1 May and around 120 by July.

None of the boys were judged eligible for early release under the Ministry of Justice schemes announced in April.

Throughout the lockdown, Cookham Wood adhered strictly to HMPPS ‘Gold Command’ directions on hygiene, social distancing and quarantine, the prime objective of the Prison Service being to minimise the risk of infection. There appeared to be little scope for local management discretion or flexibility. As a result, the lockdown was very comprehensive, and the relaxation of lockdown restrictions was extremely slow and cautious.

Boys were very well protected from infection. Only one boy contracted the virus. He tested positive on 23rd March but his symptoms were mild, and he recovered quickly.

Inevitably, however, the welfare of all the boys suffered because of the tight and protracted restrictions on their activity and social contact.

6.2 Daily life: before lockdown (time out of room, activities, amenities, family contact)

Social contact and stimulating activity are essential to young people's wellbeing. Cookham Wood boys need a full regime, with evening dining out and association as well as 'core day' education on weekdays, and 'half and half' association and PE at weekends.

At the beginning of this reporting year, late summer 2019, staff struggled to provide a consistent regime for the boys. Activities were regularly cancelled at the last minute. This was partly because the number of boys had increased (to 178, close to capacity) while there was a shortfall in the number of band 3 officers (and a temporary recruitment freeze). In September, HMIP found that 'children had about five hours a day out of room during the week and two hours at the weekend'.

It was clear that the boys' regime suffered significantly while the service put on hold any recruitment of officers, expecting movement from the closure of Medway Secure Training Centre (STC). However, there was a steady improvement in the regime from October to March 2020. The number of boys dropped to around 150 and, with the transfer of Medway STC officers from January, the number of band 3 officers rose. By December, four landings a week were dining out and enjoying evening association. By March, there was a full regime for all landings. 'Landing forums' were introduced, to discuss regime improvements.

Arrangements for family contact remained excellent, with four busy visits days a week and monthly family days.

There was also an impressive minor works programme to improve facilities: 11 projects for the financial year 2019/20, including new interventions rooms, music rooms, visits and gym refurbishment, and an updated room call monitoring system.

6.3 Daily life during lockdown

The COVID-19 lockdown from 18th March, with its strict distancing rules, hit Cookham Wood like a bombshell. Despite the best efforts of staff, it drastically limited boys' opportunities for activity and human contact, effectively isolating them for most of the day.

Education classes shut down on 18 March. To minimise the risk of cross-infection, YCS/HMPPS directed that:

- boys should only be allowed to associate in groups of three or four
- boys should remain on their landings (an exception was made for exercise in the open air)

- so far as possible, staff should maintain ‘social distance’ from the boys and each other.

The outcome at Cookham Wood was that, from mid-March to mid-May, the boys’ time out of room was limited to only **two 20-minute sessions a day**:

- exercise, supported by PE staff
- activities (association) supported by landing staff.

This extreme response was put in place despite the willingness of staff locally to provide more time out of room and some face-to-face education (see section 7.5).

The sessions were in ‘family groups’ of four boys, and the short time allowed was the result of logistics; the layout of Cookham Wood is such that there are upwards of 20 boys on each landing (making five or six ‘family groups’), and it was considered unsafe for two landing groups to be out of their rooms at the same time.

Boys were given X-boxes, as well as televisions in their rooms and extra PIN credit for telephone calls, to maintain family contact. They were also provided with lots of in-room activity packs.

In mid-May, the total number of boys having fallen to around 130, extra time out of room was allowed. Each ‘family group’:

- collected their daily hot meals from the servery together (15 minutes)
- was allowed an extra 40 minutes’ exercise once a week
- was allowed an extra 20 minutes’ activity one evening a week.

From 8 June, daily time out of room was increased to 40 minutes’ exercise and 30 minutes’ activity.

From 16 June, the size of the ‘family groups’ was increased to six. This allowed more time for exercise and activity, and more face-to-face contact between boys and officers. Boys on the main landings now had one hour of exercise and one hour of activity each day, plus, an additional two 30-minute PE sessions and two 30-minute evening activity sessions a week.

Boys segregated in the CSU received equivalent daily time out of room to boys on the main landings, but with more one-to-one adult contact:

- exercise, with an officer
- activity, with a CXK youth worker
- ‘enrichment’ activity, with a CSU officer
- intervention work.

This increased adult contact was possible because of the small size of the unit. Boys on Phoenix unit also had a lot of support from health and wellbeing staff.

The Board expressed particular concern about the isolation and limited time out of room for boys on the A3 induction landing (those boys arriving new to Cookham Wood). In accordance with Public Health England directions, and on the grounds

that virus testing was considered unreliable unless and until symptoms developed, boys arriving at Cookham Wood were quarantined for 14 days. They received 40 minutes' exercise a day (generally by themselves, although those who had arrived together were allowed to exercise together) but no activity time with other boys.

Until June, boys who left the establishment for a day to attend court were also quarantined for 14 days on their return. They, too, were placed on A3, which became the quarantine landing.

By 21 May, there were 16 boys (new arrivals and court attenders) quarantined on A3. Landing officers and health and wellbeing staff did their best to help and support them, but they were particularly vulnerable.

A phased reopening of education classes began on 13 July. This gave each boy access to two hours 45 minutes of teaching (one-to-one or in groups of up to four) twice a week.

Although boys were given additional PIN credit to telephone their parents or carers, visits to the prison stopped from 23 March. This included parental attendance at sentence planning meetings. From mid-May, boys were able to make one 'Purple Visits' video call to their parents a month. Two laptops had to be acquired specifically for this purpose, but the system proved to be of limited popularity owing to its technical complexity and limited availability. Family visits resumed on 16 July, with each boy entitled to one 90-minute visit a month.

6.4 Relationships between officers and boys (day-to-day engagement, personal officer support, welfare checking)

In its September 2019 inspection report, HMIP observed that, although the boys said that officers treated them with respect, *'on most wings staff simply did not have the time to develop meaningful relationships with the children'*. By contrast, during its April 2020 'short scrutiny' visit, the HMIP team: *'saw staff interacting with children in a caring, patient and professional way. Staff we spoke to knew the children in their care, and the children, including those with experience of isolation, reported that there was a member of staff they could turn to if they had a problem'*.

The Board finds landing and unit officers to be consistently good humoured and sympathetic.

There was space for officers to develop their relationships with the boys as the roll dropped between September and March. Their support for the boys during the lockdown cemented these relationships and the boys' trust in them.

The CuSP programme was introduced on all landings by early 2020. It involves landing officers trained in motivational interviewing ('CuSP' officers) having one-to-one conversations with each boy each week. These meetings are structured, child friendly and designed to be fun. Regrettably, they no longer took place after the lockdown in March. However, there was a concerted effort to resume CuSP meetings in tandem with the partial reopening of education classes from 13 July, and

by mid-August the boys had regular CuSP meetings once again. This was very beneficial.

The NHS/YCS Secure Stairs integrated care project (see section 6.6) had been implemented on the Cedar unit and began on A2 and B2 landings. Its rollout was greatly inhibited, but not stopped, by the lockdown.

The thoughtful and considerate way in which boys and staff responded to the lockdown was remarkable and should be a source of great pride.

The overwhelming majority of boys, well informed about the need for restrictions, remained patient, understanding and good humoured, adopting an 'all in it together' philosophy. The landings remained calm and well ordered.

Credit goes first to the boys. It also goes to the non-uniformed staff members who helped and reassured them – notably, the primary care nurses, the health and wellbeing team and the chaplains. However, the adults who had the most daily contact with the boys, and who they looked to first for help and encouragement, were their landing officers – it was they who set the tone. Barnardo's staff were not on site (until 29 July) to offer face-to-face support and advice – although boys could arrange to speak to them by telephone.

Three officers (all from the same landing as the boys) accompanied each 'family group' for their daily exercise and activity sessions. This was a crucial opportunity for friendly, reassuring conversation. Building relationships between officers and small 'family' groups of boys was not new to Cookham Wood – it had been the stock in trade of Bridge landing officers for well over a year – but it was new on the main landings.

Landing officers also made individual welfare checks (albeit keeping social distance) on boys throughout the day. One told the Board: 'The important thing is to engage, engage, engage'. The readiness of landing officers to resume CuSP meetings with boys at the first opportunity (see above) was also greatly to their credit.

Members of the safeguarding and interventions teams also visited boys daily to check on their welfare. Safeguarding officers spoke daily to all boys subject to a STIR (information report), to any boy who:

- was on an ACCT or had self-harmed
- had been a victim of violence the previous day
- was on Rule 49 or self-segregating
- had refused exercise the previous day
- they thought might be vulnerable or needing help.

In May, they were making well over 230 such visits to boys a week.

The Board considers this policy of proactive welfare checking to be admirable.

6.5 Healthcare services: before and after the COVID lockdown

In September, HMIP and Care Quality Commission inspectors found that 'the quality of healthcare remained good and was delivered by a caring healthcare team'.

A comprehensive NHS England 'Health and Social Care Needs Assessment for Cookham Wood', published in November, stated: 'Health provision is appropriately child focused, and it is likely most need is identified and met as much as it can be while people are at Cookham Wood. The young people have generally positive views of most aspects of healthcare'.

The Board strongly endorses these assessments. The healthcare teams at Cookham Wood are well resourced, highly committed and very accessible to the boys. The health and wellbeing team has become particularly well resourced this year, both in the number of its staff (22) and their range of skills – clinical psychologists, a consultant psychiatrist, therapists, specialist child and adolescent mental health service practitioners and three 'MVP' (most valued player) resettlement coaches. This is in preparation for the full implementation of the radical YCS/NHS Secure Stairs (Framework for Integrated Care) programme (which the Board strongly supports).

Primary healthcare nurses provided full normal first response and triage services (7pm to 9pm on weekdays and 8am to 7.30 pm at weekends) throughout the lockdown. From the outset, they had sufficient PPE and no difficulties in accessing the boys in their rooms. They saw all boys daily, taking temperatures and dispensing medication at room doors. There is no doubt that their presence on the landings greatly comforted and reassured the boys.

The caseload of the health and wellbeing team ranges from 70 to 90 boys at any one time – about half the population. Many mental health difficulties are identified for the first time when the boys arrive at Cookham.

While, in August 2019, 42 boys were recorded as suffering from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and 17 from anxiety ('traditional' diagnoses), they and others also suffered from a wide range of emotional and conduct disorders – almost all of them attachment- and trauma related.

The work of the health and wellbeing team is increasingly holistic. Team members provide treatment and therapy for the boys, but also advise and support officers and other agencies – non-clinical staff – so that their support for the boys is psychologically informed. This advisory and staff support role will develop rapidly as Secure Stairs is rolled out.

The health and wellbeing team works closely with the forensic psychology department (which, very helpfully, has engaged a family therapist) and with the interventions and safeguarding teams. There is also a strong crossover between health and wellbeing work and Novus (education) support for boys with learning and communication difficulties.

Multi-agency teamwork, to support and care for the most vulnerable boys, is well developed. From February 2020, it was coordinated by a weekly 'separation and Rule 49 management team meeting', to:

- 'demonstrate Cookham Wood's commitment to a whole-prison approach to dealing with young people who are separated'

- 'provide a clear positive lead on the operational management of separation'
- 'ensure full engagement from all agencies in the individual's care'
- 'ensure correct management oversight'.

These meetings continued during the lockdown, and Board members, who attended by dialling in, were full of praise for their understanding, compassion, creativity and professionalism. The meetings considered weekly individual reports on boys' progress and needs, agreed individual action plans for the coming week and assigned clear responsibility for their implementation (including, in the case of the most high-risk boys, to enhanced support teams).

As a result – and because of the excellence of staff working with boys in the CSU – the Board is satisfied that support for Cookham Wood's most vulnerable boys was not reduced by the COVID-19 lockdown; indeed, it increased.

By contrast, health and wellbeing support for the great majority of the boys, who had not shown clear signs of vulnerability or distress, was severely curtailed by the COVID-19 lockdown. This was because of the national HMPPS direction that, other than in exceptional circumstances, boys were only to leave their rooms in 'family groups' and were not to move off their landings.

Each landing had a dedicated health and wellbeing therapist (in preparation for the rollout of Secure Stairs) and there were eight health and wellbeing staff on site each day. They did important work advising and encouraging landing officers, but, on all the main landings, apart from A3, they had extreme difficulty in accessing the boys. They could telephone the boys in their rooms but not meet them there (as the rooms are too small to allow social distancing). The only other available spaces for one-to-one conversations were the landing 'light bays', which lack privacy (anyone can look in through their big windows) and which every agency was competing to book. There were suitable rooms for socially distanced conversations elsewhere in the establishment, but they could not be used because of the restriction on movement. Health and wellbeing therapists and psychologists were reduced to snatching a few minutes with the boys as they moved to their daily exercise and activity sessions.

The intervention team's programmes were suspended from the beginning of the lockdown, for the same reasons.

6.6 Current and future requirements: Secure Stairs

Lack of access during the lockdown has led to therapy for many boys being interrupted and delayed. Given the health and wellbeing team's high caseload pre-lockdown, there is a very substantial backlog of one-to-one therapeutic work to be done with the boys to reassess their needs and renew their care plans.

There is also (in the Board's view) a golden opportunity, and a pressing need, to fast-track the Secure Stairs programme. The Minister noted in her response to the Board's 2019 Annual Report that:

'This work began in November 2018 piloting on the Cedar Unit. Due to recruitment delays, other residential units at HMYOI Cookham Wood are at varying stages of operating. Still, progress has been very encouraging as the roll out continues.'

However, key elements of Secure Stairs have been on hold since March, when lockdown started.

The Secure Stairs model recognises that all the boys are, to some degree, 'high harm, high risk, high vulnerability' and need individualised help to conquer their fears and demons. It also recognises that landing officers are among the boys' key helpers but need advice and support from other agencies (particularly health and wellbeing therapists) to make sure that they help the boys in an informed and useful way. These officers also have a right to confidential personal support and guidance to help them manage the many day-to-day pressures of their work. Secure Stairs addresses these crucial needs by building new 'joined up' relationships and support systems at grass roots, landing level. The Board believes that this approach will prove genuinely transformational. It has the power to turn landings 'from warehouses into greenhouses'.

Prior to the lockdown, Secure Stairs was being rolled out in phases, landing by landing. First, a landing support team was established (health and wellbeing therapist, forensic psychologist, case worker), and landing officers were given tailored training in trauma-informed practice. Then, 'formulation' meetings for the boys and one-to-one support meetings and group reflective practice meetings for officers were introduced and timetabled.

By March 2020, Secure Stairs systems were operating on the Cedar unit, and A2 and B2 landings – although with some slippage as trained officers were transferred to other landings to meet operational demands. Three landings were not yet ready for Secure Stairs.

With the lockdown, it was immediately apparent that this systematic approach to implementation was no longer viable. There was no scope for officer training or group reflective practice, and boys were not available for formulation meetings. The priority shifted to supporting and advising officers on all landings (not just Cedar, A2 and B2). This was possible because each landing already had a designated health and wellbeing therapist. The change of focus fostered experiential learning and built trust and confidence between the landing therapists and landing officers. It was strongly supported by residential custodial managers, and the Board believes that it was significant in maintaining morale and focus during the lockdown. However, it inevitably postponed direct involvement of the boys in Secure Stairs support processes.

In August 2020, the state of play regarding the key components of Secure Stairs was as follows:

- **Multidisciplinary teams**

Secure Stairs calls for landing-based multidisciplinary teams (health and wellbeing therapist, caseworker, forensic psychologist, education representative), supporting the boys and landing officers through day-to-day consultation and regular timetabled

meetings. There have been health and wellbeing therapists for each landing throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. They have built a good relationship with their landing officers and are the 'go-to' people for officers seeking psychologically informed advice. They have worked in partnership with the residential custodial managers to develop a more therapeutic culture. They are trusted and liked by officers. The resettlement team designated caseworkers for each landing in November (anticipating the rollout of Secure Stairs); this has been a big success and made caseworkers much more accessible.

- **One-to-one support for officers**

Under the model, all custodial officers should be offered monthly one-to-one personal support sessions with a member of the health and wellbeing team (in most cases, their landing therapist). These sessions are not mandatory, but by August 25% of the officers had either started or booked to start them. The Board is greatly impressed by this level of take-up and expects it to increase as word spreads. Officers have told Board members how much they value the sessions.

- **Group reflective practice**

Secure Stairs requires staff on each landing to be offered fortnightly reflective practice sessions, chaired by their landing therapist, for open and thoughtful discussion. These sessions have not been possible during the lockdown, although there have been many ad hoc small group discussions. They will be reintroduced in September.

- **Dynamic 'formulation' plans for boys**

This is the most important of all the Secure Stairs deliverables. Each boy should have his own 'formulation' (assessment of difficulties). He should draw it up himself, at a formulation meeting with his landing therapist, CuSP officer, custodial manager and caseworker, and review and update it monthly at further formulation meetings. It should inform, and be aligned with, his care, CuSP and sentence plans. Except for the most obviously needy boys, there were no formulation meetings between March and August. From September, there will be formulation meetings once a week for each landing. The Board thinks it essential that all boys have regular formulation meetings – not least because many of them may have hidden their difficulties during lockdown.

The Board believes that Secure Stairs has won the hearts and minds of the staff at Cookham Wood, and that it could and should become the 'new normal' post-COVID-19. We are well aware of all the other pressures at Cookham Wood at present (in mid-August, managers were juggling nine separate 'exceptional delivery model' recovery plans for different aspects of prison life), but we consider the full implementation of formulation and group reflective practice to be profoundly important. We believe the time is right; the roll is still low, boys and staff have got to know each other better and built trust during the lockdown, and there is a positive can-do spirit. Space and time must be found to push ahead with Secure Stairs before inertia sets in.

7. EDUCATION AND PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

Education in Cookham Wood is provided by Novus, which provides the boys with both classroom- and workshop-based educational pathways, as well as basic skills for those who have received little formal education prior to coming into custody at the establishment. They also provide training and work-based opportunities, as well as outreach, which is available for boys who have not engaged with education for various reasons and are on the fringes. A peer mentoring pathway enables boys to become peer mentors among the population, to support learning across a range of settings. In recent years, the number of boys succeeding on their various educational pathways has been very high.

7.1 Movement to/from education

Education provision is typically restricted by the length of time it takes to move boys from the residential block to the education block, which eats into their time in class, and also prison staffing availability, which often results in prison lockdowns.

In January, prior to lockdown, the average movement from the residential block to the education block was 31 minutes in the morning and 35 minutes in the afternoon. In the first half of February, movement times varied between 20 and 45 minutes.

The issue of movement times is discussed at the monthly quality improvement group and YCS performance review meetings.

7.2 Attendance at education

In last year's annual report, the Board noted: 'Boys in Cookham Wood consistently do not receive the full core day to which they are entitled'.

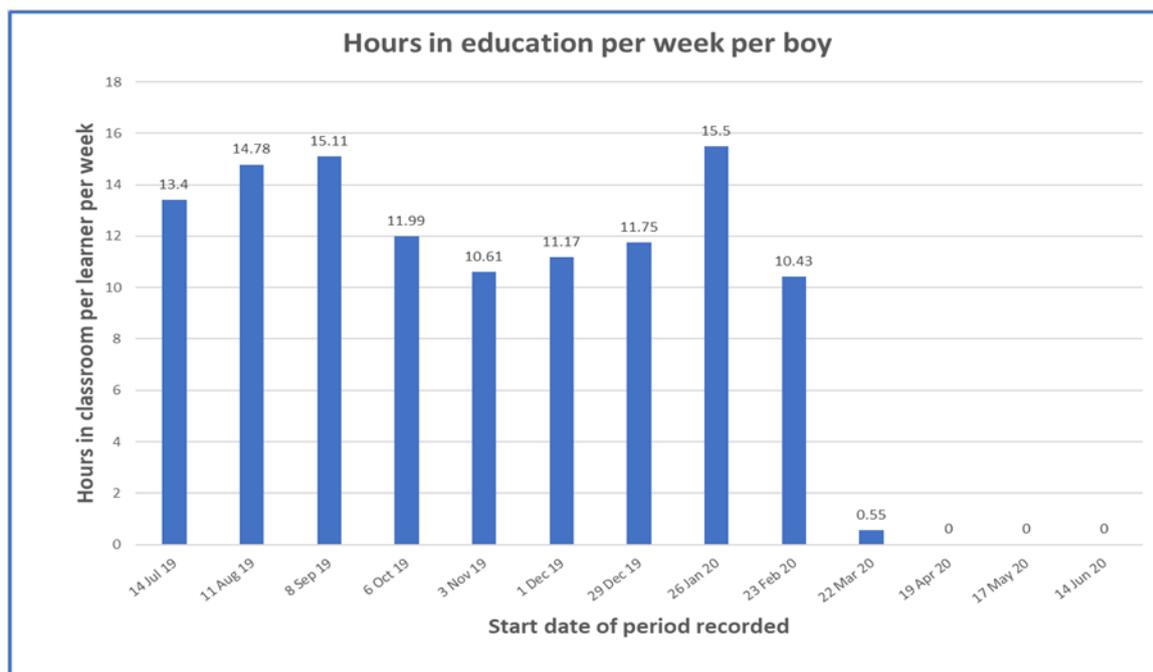
Education classes are cancelled whenever there is a shutdown. There were 12 shutdowns in January, which was an increase on the 10 shutdowns in the month prior.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns had a significant impact on the ability of Novus to deliver its education service, as work within the establishment was limited and future work was also curtailed owing to the national lockdown.

However, Novus education staff remained on site to provide education work through a range of work packs created weekly. Feedback and contact continued through telephone contact.

The following graph illustrates the average time attended in education, per learner, per week, during the reporting year. As evidenced in the graph, prior to lockdown the boys averaged between 10.43 (February to March) and 15.5 (January to February)

hours in education per week. **Boys received no classroom-based education during the lockdown period** (March to July).



7.3 Notable successes in pre-lockdown period

A Novus performance review published in February, prior to lockdown, provided an illustration of service delivery over the preceding six weeks, and the following areas of good practice:

- 22 children completed a level 2 award in coaching, in conjunction with the Sports Connect Partnership, and the Cookham Wood gym and education departments
- Novus secured a partnership with Willmott Dixon Interiors to provide training and development to boys in Cookham Wood. Willmott Dixon Interiors is a national construction company, which has previously worked with the adult estate, and which offers mentoring for children on release as it teaches key skills of employability, sub-contracting and owning a business.
- A partnership was secured with Kent Owl Academy (to start after the pandemic)
- A new drama pathway was up and running
- There had been a decrease in health and safety incidents during the hours of education.

7.4 Ofsted inspection report

In September 2019, the Ofsted inspection report noted the following:

- Punctuality – movements to class from the residential block had an impact on the time children spent in education

- Too many children spent too little time in learning
- Only half of children who started a course completed it
- The effectiveness of teaching mixed-ability classes in English and mathematics required improvement
- Outreach did not meet demand across the establishment
- The quality generally of teaching, learning and assessment required improvement
- There were no areas of concern regarding ethnicity, learning difficulties and disabilities.

7.5 Education during the lockdown period

Classroom-based education was shut down on 20 March and did not resume until 13 July. This was a national directive affecting all HMPPS establishments indiscriminately, in both the adult and the children and young people's estate. It was binding on Cookham Wood, Feltham, Werrington and Wetherby YOIs, although Parc (operated by G4S) was able to continue providing two hours of face-to-face education every weekday.

Within two weeks, the Novus local management team and Cookham Wood's governors submitted a fully risk-assessed plan to Gold Command, proposing a partial reopening of education. This plan identified nine rooms, each fit for use by one teacher to deliver a three-hour class to two boys, morning and afternoon. Over the course of a week, this would have allowed each boy at Cookham Wood to receive three hours of education at minimal risk.

The Board studied the detailed risk assessment and strongly supported this plan. Novus teachers volunteered to teach the classes, and Cookham Wood officers agreed to move the boys to classes (although both their unions' National Executive Councils strongly opposed anything short of a complete cessation of teaching).

The plan was not approved. However, it proved to be very similar to the plan that was eventually accepted by the national team and implemented nearly four months later (see below).

In its short scrutiny of Feltham and Wetherby YOIs (7 July), HMIP said:

'... our main concern during these visits was the extremely limited time out of cell for all children. The primary cause of this was the decision to stop face-to-face education. ... The government's guidance is that children who are deemed vulnerable should continue to attend education. Children held in custody meet this definition, meaning education should have continued once the required safety measures had been put in place.'

The Board strongly agrees, and, indeed, wrote to the Secretary of State with our concerns.

Although the children spent zero hours in classroom-based education during the lockdown period, the Board was impressed with the efforts and persistence of Novus

staff to provide for them during this time – despite the difficulties posed by the boys spending 23 hours per day in their rooms, and the logistics of delivering and collecting work packs to each boy.

In addition to producing and marking the work packs, Novus provided an excellent newsletter and a podcast over the prison radio, and demonstrated creative thinking, with further initiatives in lieu of being able to provide a normal education. During this period, and in preparing for a return to classroom attendance, Novus staff were, at times, working up to 15 hours a day. ***They are to be highly commended for the extra time and effort that they put in during this period.***

The determination and creativity of the Novus team is well illustrated by analysis of 2 education surveys conducted during lockdown:

The HMPPS Intervention team supported the delivery of two independent surveys. They were completed either through face-to-face engagement on the landing or by telephone. The two surveys were undertaken to establish if the content of the packs engaged individuals to learn; and to improve the quality of the content based on interest and needs. The progress was measured in terms of **Engagement** – completing parts of the work and **Completion** – completed returned work. The results were summarised to demonstrate the engagement through the lockdown period. As a result of survey 1, work was adapted and the amount of telephone contact increased to provide children with more support and encouragement to engage, prioritising those with additional needs. It was apparent that the children were accessing work that they felt comfortable completing. Maths and sport were the most popular subjects. In the first four-week period, there was an average 22% completion of education packs and work provided to complete education pathways. The key reasons children gave for not engaging was that they had their TV and X Box and the team had to work hard on calls to promote engagement. The Deputy Governor gave permission for the Novus Team to incentivise work completed with Green Cards.

Engagement increased to above 50%. The pathway work required teachers to engage with children via the telephone where help was required as they were unable to visit the landings. From week 4 to 8, **completion** was up to 30% with a further survey indicating that the **engagement** was above 50% with varying degrees of engagement. To ensure the momentum Learning Support Practitioners, Engagement & Resettlement team members and teachers continued with calls and produced a range of packs on music, music festivals, calendar maths, Fitness/In room workouts, car and trainer design. There were also competitions including reading the John McAvoy book, *Redemption: Iron Bars to Iron Man*. Four entries were sent to John as finalists for the site.

A small number of children requested additional individual work which was accommodated, marked and feedback given.

As lockdown progressed a decline in completion was noticed and despite best efforts the initial engagement could not be maintained. This appeared to be the effects of the pandemic and the long hours spent in their rooms.

7.6 Education post-lockdown

Classroom attendance resumed on 13 July 2020, giving each boy access to two hours 45 minutes of teaching (one to one or in groups of up to four) twice a week. Segregated boys on the CSU were each given up to seven individual sessions of approximately 45 minutes as an equivalence.

The resumption of education provision was largely positive, with an overall average attendance of 92%. The lowest attendance was from the Bridge/B1 landing (79%), due to refusal from boys who were self-isolating.

The increasing regime and further opening of the education block were dependent on planning and processes for the use, risk assessment and sanitising of tools.

The following table illustrates the percentage of attendance in education for the week starting 20 July across the landings:

Landing	Date	Session	Allocated	Attended	Percentage attendance
B1	20/07/20	AM	14	11	79%
A2	20/07/20	PM	21	21	100%
A2	21/07/20	AM	20	19	95%
B3	21/07/20	PM	20	20	100%
A1	22/07/20	AM	20	18	90%
B2	22/07/20	PM	22	22	100%
B3	23/07/20	AM	20	20	100%
B1	23/07/20	PM	14	12	86%
B2	24/07/20	AM	22	20	90%
A1	24/07/20	PM	20	19	95%
Total			193	182	94%

The following table illustrates movement times from the residential block to the education block for the week starting 20 July:

Date	AM			PM		
	Start	Finish	Time taken	Start	Finish	Time taken
20/07/20	8.45am	9am	15 minutes	1.50pm	2.10pm	20 minutes
21/07/20	8.45am	9am	25 minutes	1.54pm	2.13pm	19 minutes
22/07/20	8.59am	9.24am	25 minutes	1.45pm	2.05pm	20 minutes
23/07/20	8.45am	9.15am	30 minutes	1.50pm	2.03pm	13 minutes
24/07/20	8.45am	9.04am	19 minutes	2pm	2.11pm	11 minutes

7.7 Library

The main library facility is situated in the education block. It is run by Medway Council library services and offers a range of fiction, non-fiction and graphic novels, which are popular with the age group of those held at the establishment. There are also audiobooks, books with larger print and foreign language books available, as well as a service to source books on request. Groups of boys in education are

allocated 30-minute time slots from Monday to Thursday in which to use the library. The library is managed by education staff if Medway library staff are unavailable. Access to library materials was very limited during the lockdown period. A plan to support the service to allocate books through a catalogue service has been implemented.

8. RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

8.1 Casework staffing and workload

The casework team, which, with the family strategy team, reports to the head of resettlement practitioners, is responsible for the development and coordination of sentence and resettlement planning for all the boys who come into Cookham Wood. Early in the reporting year, the resettlement team was combined with the reducing reoffending team. There were frequent changes in the overall management of the teams, resulting in changes in the focus and lack of continuity in their work.

No resettlement meetings were held after May 2019 until July 2020, when they restarted under the chair of the recently appointed head of resettlement practitioners.

A transition planning meeting, to address the issues relating to the increasing number of boys aged 18+ with long sentences who will transfer to young adult establishments, started in July 2020. On 22 July 2020, there were 18 boys over the age of 18 who needed to be moved to an alternative provision.

The team consists of six operational and seven non-operational staff, holding caseloads of 17 (optimal 15).

8.2 Pre-COVID-19

The work of the resettlement team continued during this period, despite the frequent changes of leadership.

8.2.1 Rule 49

Caseworkers regularly attended Rule 49 meetings.

8.2.2 Release on temporary licence (ROTL)

A large amount of ROTL took place before lockdown, with Cookham Wood offering many more opportunities than other YOIs. HMIP noted that despite this, the number of boys involved was relatively small.

An excellent range of ROTL opportunities was arranged by the communities engagement manager, and the engagement and resettlement (E&R) team.

From August 2019 to March 2020, there was an average of 75 ROTL episodes a month, involving six to 10 boys. The range of ROTL activities included attendance at

college, Timpson Academy, social ROTL, various outdoor activities, family therapy, charity work, and trial sessions, then paid work, at Channel ports.

8.2.3 Education and employment opportunities

The E&R team worked to maintain high levels of engagement with education, and less than 2% of boys refused or disengaged from this.

In September, Novus hosted a successful education, training and employment event. Thirteen employers, charities and training providers across a range of industries participated; 130 boys accessed the event, which offered the chance to learn about future opportunities and choices.

External employers were able to link with boys who could become eligible for ROTL and build on the links with the E&R team. Sports Connect, a sports-related training provider, was able to identify boys interested in catering or construction and offer support. The organisation also provides sporting qualifications, including level 2 coaching. Sports Connect has an extensive ambassador programme, with links nationally in football, youth work, mentoring and coaching.

Willmott Dixon, a national construction company with a strong social responsibility ethic, is now working with Cookham Wood. It has pledged future workshops and master classes in a range of construction, employability and business skills.

Select Service Partner also pledged, pre-COVID-19, to support pre-apprenticeships at Cookham Wood. At present, the Ministry of Justice does not support boys (or adult prisoners) who would like to start an apprenticeship while they are still in prison.

Skills training in employability, customer service and City & Guilds level 2 barista skills were delivered in the successful Woody's cafe. Some of the boys were aspiring to work in cafes on their release, as a result of their barista training and experience.

The E&R team supported boys applying to further education colleges.

8.3 Family contact

There were regular family days on the Cedar enhanced unit, including a highly successful Christmas event. Families were able to exchange gifts, tour the unit and meet with staff from a range of agencies working with the boys.

The casework team ran family days once a month during 2019, until lockdown in 2020. Staff from agencies and teams working with the boys were encouraged to attend and spend time with families and carers. The days were run from 11am to 3pm, and a freshly cooked hot lunch was provided. Just before lockdown, family days were for boys from specific landings, aligning with the work being undertaken in Secure Stairs. This created a relaxed atmosphere as the risk of conflict was reduced. Games and activities were available, and families and boys were encouraged to use the visits positively.

Additional family days were held during December and the Christmas period. Casework funded gifts for boys to give to younger siblings. A festive meal was supplied, along with lots of games and prizes.

Between August 2019 and February 2020, 51 families took part in family days.

8.4 Impact of COVID-19

8.4.1 Staffing

Once lockdown was introduced, the staffing in the resettlement team was depleted by the need for several staff to shield, and absences for other reasons. The reduction in the number of boys in the prison meant that the caseload numbers were not excessive, but the absence of several staff members necessitated the reallocation of boys to a different caseworker. This had an impact on the delivery of Secure Stairs. The staffing in July 2020 included six operational staff, two of whom were on long-term sick leave; seven non-operational staff, one temporarily promoted and one long-term absence. Caseloads averaged between 10 and 17.

8.4.2 Rule 49

Either the team managers or the duty caseworker attended Rule 49 meetings, to ensure representation at these.

8.4.3 Family and external contact

There were no family visits following lockdown, until July. The team worked hard to maintain relationships with families, carers, YOT workers and legal teams. The lack of IT and telephone capacity had a significant impact on this. Resettlement reviews held during lockdown had to be conducted over the telephone, with attendance often limited to the boy, resettlement practitioners and YOT. This is still the case.

The lack of available rooms on the landings in which to meet with boys resulted in several services competing to use the same space.

Restricted family visits restarted during July 2020, with each boy allowed a maximum of three visitors and entitled to one visit per month. Prior to this, the Prison Service facilitated video visits using a system called 'Purple Visits'. Two laptops were purchased specifically for use with this system. However, this was not widely used by boys, or their families or friends, owing to its technical complexity and limited availability.

8.4.4 Partnership working

Relationships with some YOTs were good, but others were more difficult, including some London teams with several boys in the prison. Many YOT teams struggled to comprehend why the prison could not facilitate video-conferencing meetings during the lockdown period. This was a recurring issue at Cookham Wood, with only two systems available, and these being almost entirely used by courts and solicitors owing to the impossibility of legal visits.

Lockdown had an impact on the approval of PIN numbers for boys.

8.4.5 Resettlement and sentence planning

Resettlement and sentence planning for all boys, including those who will move to a young adult establishment before the end of their sentence, starts at their first review. Planning includes boys who are on remand in the prison.

The lockdown severely disrupted sentence planning. This affected all boys, in that it removed their sense of direction and opportunity to achieve, and it particularly affected boys nearing their release date. The lack of ROTL and interventions meant that boys could not evidence progress and were therefore in danger of being denied early release.

Delays to court proceedings resulting from COVID-19 had a significant impact on the profile of the population in the prison. As of July, two-thirds of the boys at the establishment were on remand. No boys over 18 who are on remand are transferred to young adult prisons.

8.4.6 Transition

The head of reducing reoffending and the head of resettlement practitioners had regular conference calls with the YCS head of placements, at which the planning for transition to young adult establishments was discussed.

The large increase in the number of boys on remand and the increasing number of boys with long sentences presented significant challenges for the resettlement and casework teams, and also E&R staff, all of whom have developed flexible responses to the needs of a diverse population.

Induction and support were delivered by telephone tutorials and written communication during lockdown.

9. THE WORK OF THE IMB

9.1 Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	189
Total number of applications to the IMB	14

9.2 Comments

Two board members resigned this year and no new members were appointed. Five of the remaining six Board members are aged over 65 years. There is an urgent need to recruit new, and more diverse, Board members. A recruitment campaign will be organised in October/November.

The Board decided to stop visiting Cookham Wood, for fear of introducing COVID-19 to the establishment, at the beginning of the lockdown, in March. There were no Board visits to the establishment from 19 March to 3 August. Three Board members began visiting again in August. The remaining three Board members are still unable to visit because of their personal and family circumstances (shielding). Monthly Board meetings, with the Governor taking part, have been held by Zoom.

Channels remained open for the boys to make applications to speak to the Board, but there were no applications between March and August. Throughout this period, monitoring was carried out remotely, by weekly telephone calls and emails to governors and staff, and by dialling in to conference call meetings. The Board Chair also telephoned the Governor each week for an update and to raise any issues of concern.

Through the Board clerk (without whose sterling support effective remote monitoring would have been almost impossible), the establishment gave members complete access to all documents and reports, including all the daily bulletins. This enabled them to prepare weekly rota reports, which were discussed by the Board Chair and the Governor in their weekly update conversation and at the monthly Board meetings.

The judgements in this report relating to the period from March to July are therefore based on regular discussions with key staff and analysis of documents. The Board believes that they are well founded and valid. However, it is important to recognise that, throughout the lockdown, members had no direct contact with the boys and were not able personally to observe life at Cookham Wood.