



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP & YOI Deerbolt

**For reporting year
1 October 2019 – 30 September 2020**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

- A maximum of 513 sentenced male prisoners, aged 18–24, can be accommodated at HMP and HM Young Offender Institution (YOI) Deerbolt, near Barnard Castle in County Durham. Operational capacity was reduced to 387 from June 2019, partly to restore an acceptable staff-to-prisoner ratio, and also to allow residential wings to be taken out of service for major refurbishment. Deerbolt was established as a YOI (for 18 to 21-year-olds on sentences of up to four years) and has education, work training and activities to suit this prisoner group. It now takes men up to the age of 24. There is now no restriction on the length of prisoners' sentences, and the population currently includes lifers and those on long indeterminate sentences.
- The purpose-built establishment was opened in 1973. It includes an administration centre, nine residential wings with exercise yards, substantial industrial workshops and education classrooms, a gym, a chapel, a reducing reoffending unit and a visitor centre. The buildings have been reasonably maintained but are of an age to require continuing refurbishment and upgrades, to meet the reasonable expectations of today's prisoners, comply with current regulations for fire safety and meet modern standards generally.
- Recent and ongoing capital improvements include residential wing refurbishment, involving the installation of new windows and better showers, and asbestos removal. The gym, which is well used by prisoners and staff alike, has been fully re-equipped. Externally, closed-circuit television is being installed, to try to stop drugs being thrown over the walls, and a new car park offers more spaces and better access for staff and visitors.
- There are extensive areas of grass, and cultivated plots of flowers and vegetables, which are generally well kept and constitute an attractive environment.
- The main providers of services in the prison are Novus (education), Amey (works/maintenance), Spectrum (healthcare) and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (mental health). Visitor care and support are provided by the voluntary agency, the North East Prison Aftercare Society (NEPACS), which also offers provision for family visits and group work with young fathers.
- Prisoners are received from a wide catchment area, so that young adults from the local North East region are in a minority, and many prisoners find themselves far from home. Since the COVID-19 lockdown, new prisoners have mainly come from the local region. No face-to-face visits have been allowed, but visiting via video-link is now offered, which has been helpful for families who live a long distance away.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Regular Board monitoring visits to the prison were suspended from March 2020 owing to COVID-19. Since then, remote means of monitoring via teleconferencing have been used. Some Board members resumed visits in August and September. Although remote monitoring is believed to have been reasonably effective, the lack of visits has severely hampered the gathering of observations and data as a basis for this report. Furthermore, in October 2020, while this report was being prepared, there was an outbreak of COVID-19 among administrative staff. Several administrative sections had to be closed and others have been short staffed. As a result, it was not possible to collect all the statistics that are normally included in our annual reports.

As we reported last year, the establishment reached a low point in May 2019, at which time the Board escalated concerns that a shortage of staff, and particularly experienced staff, was threatening the stability of the prison. Staff sickness absences were increasing, putting even more stress on those staff left at work. The prisoners' regime was having to be restricted because of a lack of staff and there were signs that prisoners' tolerance of this was fading.

Fortunately, the Prison Service reacted decisively at that time. The prison capacity was reduced by about 20%, thus restoring the staff-to-prisoner ratio, and some experienced officers were seconded in from other prisons in the region. This produced a rapid turnaround in what had been a worrisome situation.

There has since been a change of staff in many of the senior roles, which at first caused concern for the Board, as many well-respected and experienced senior officers moved away to other roles in the Prison Service. However, our observation over the last 12 months has been that the new management team has brought new energy, enthusiasm and insights that have noticeably improved the performance of the prison. This is reflected in most of the prison's performance indicators, and one example of this is that equality and diversity management has been pursued with greater energy and effectiveness than in previous years.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

In January 2020, there was a serious incident of concerted indiscipline on one of the wings. There was significant fire damage, and the regional Tornado team was deployed. The subsequent external investigation concluded that the incident was started by the action of one individual, who had reacted impulsively and spontaneously on being told to return to his cell by staff. The Board is satisfied that the incident was not representative of the general level of violence in Deerbolt, so that it can fairly be regarded as exceptional.

Deerbolt has long had a good safety record relative to comparator prisons, but there are still many prisoners who feel under threat, often because of debts incurred or inter-gang rivalries [these are gangs based in prisoners' home cities with which they may have been in some way involved]. There are usually a number of prisoners who

either insist on being kept in the segregation unit, or who choose not to leave their cells. The Board monitors these prisoners carefully, and in most cases feels that their fear of violence is justified.

At the beginning of the reporting year, the numbers of fights and assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and on staff were lower than in the previous reporting period. After the COVID-19 lockdown, violence among prisoners was further reduced, probably because there were fewer opportunities for prisoners to interact, and many vulnerable prisoners said that they felt safer.

Since the COVID-19 lockdown, transfers of prisoners between prisons nationally has been almost completely suspended. This has had two effects at Deerbolt. In reception, Deerbolt used to receive young men from all over the country, who might benefit from the education and training designed for 18–21-year-olds. Since the advent of COVID-19, almost all new prisoners have come from the local area, via HMPs Durham and Holme House. This has been a benefit, in that prisoners from the Midlands and South have tended to bring with them gang allegiances that have caused problems at Deerbolt. In addition, more of the local prisoners are 21–24 years of age, and show more maturity than some younger men.

On the other hand, Deerbolt has had great difficulty in moving out prisoners who are at risk at Deerbolt because of gang-related issues or mistakes they have made, who need a fresh start at another prison. Delays in securing a transfer have meant that several prisoners have remained in segregation for long periods at their own insistence.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

From Board observation, there is no doubt that the regime, and the vast majority of staff individually, do their best to treat the prisoners fairly and humanely. Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, the key worker system was becoming well established, with most prisoners having private one-to-one sessions with their key worker at least once a fortnight. One measure of the success of this is that the number of applications from prisoners seeking help from the Board has reduced significantly.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

In general, healthcare staff offer a service at least as good as that available in the community. A qualified nurse is on site between 7.30am and 8.15, seven days a week, but there are no healthcare beds. When necessary, prisoners are taken to the Darlington Memorial Hospital Accident and Emergency Department (18 miles away) or to HMP Holme House (30 miles away).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The policy of moving prisoners to a prison in their home area for their last three months never worked well, and was suspended completely with the COVID-19 lockdown.

The 'through-the-gate' team has arrangements in place to contact all prisoners due for release in the final three months of their sentence, to assess accommodation, employment, finances and referrals to the appropriate outside agencies. Resettlement plans are then put in place for each prisoner, and telephone contact is

established with the probation officer to whom the prisoner must report after release on licence.

Unfortunately, since the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, there has been no education or craft training, or any courses aimed at addressing criminal behaviour or improving anger management and thinking skills. In other words, there is practically zero rehabilitation.

Given that this may continue until at least March 2021, it seems, with the benefit of hindsight, that an opportunity has been lost to use the skills of furloughed staff to develop remote learning systems and materials to fill this gap.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

At Deerbolt, as throughout the prison estate, the COVID-19 lockdown has meant less violence and a better situation for some vulnerable prisoners, while most interventions intended to rehabilitate prisoners have been lost. Does the minister agree that lessons can be learned from this? Is any planning going on, to devise regimes and activities that can capture the benefits of lockdown, while restoring targeted activities aimed at reducing reoffending?

As the restrictions on classroom and one-to-one educational interaction with prisoners may be suspended for many more months, should not effort be made to develop more remote learning systems and materials? Not only could these enable the rehabilitation of prisoners to continue during lockdown, but they could also open up more opportunities for those prisoners regarded as too dangerous to join in group work.

Does the minister agree that the use of video-links for visits and funerals has shown benefits, and that it would be worth trying to develop these techniques with the best of modern technology for regular use in future, albeit not replacing all face-to-face visits, or funeral attendance?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Is any arrangement in place to identify gang issues immediately after sentencing, so that prisoners can be dispersed in a way that could avoid gang culture having an impact on prisons like Deerbolt?

The IMB at Deerbolt sees many instances where young men make a bad start to prison life, acquiring a reputation that makes them vulnerable, or a prisoner may be drawn into a group involved in drug distribution, debt enforcement and other undesirable activity. In either case, peer pressure in the prison makes a change of behaviour in that establishment improbable, and both the prisoner and the Prison Service will gain by allowing the prisoner a fresh start in a new prison. Does the

Service agree that there is a case for organising such transfers on a national basis, rather than relying on ‘trades’ between individual prisons?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Board members, except for those taking extra precautions because of age or medical conditions, want to continue to visit the prison and carry out their statutory duties while maintaining social distancing. To this end, we would ask again that consideration be given to finding a room in which Rule 45 and Rule 49 segregation reviews can be carried out, which is large enough to be used safely by all who need to be present.

3.4 Progress since the last report

With a restored staff-to-prisoner ratio and the refreshment of the senior team in autumn 2019, the Board observed a rapidly improving atmosphere and positive movement in performance indicators.

The COVID-19 lockdown kept prisoners in their cells for up to 22 hours per day, eliminated the interaction of prisoners from different wings and greatly limited inter-prisoner contact on each wing. This brought about a step reduction in violence which was very welcome, and many previously nervous prisoners reported feeling safer. It must be assumed that the reason for less violence was simply less opportunity.

The regime compensated for the extra in-cell time by ensuring that almost all prisoners have televisions, and extra channels were added. Additional telephone credits were allowed, and distraction puzzle packs distributed.

Perhaps it should come as no great surprise that young men are content to lie abed most of the day watching television, but in the longer run there will be a price to pay in the failure to offer them the chance of education, learning a skill or getting into the habit of doing a job, all of which can contribute to better life prospects on release.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

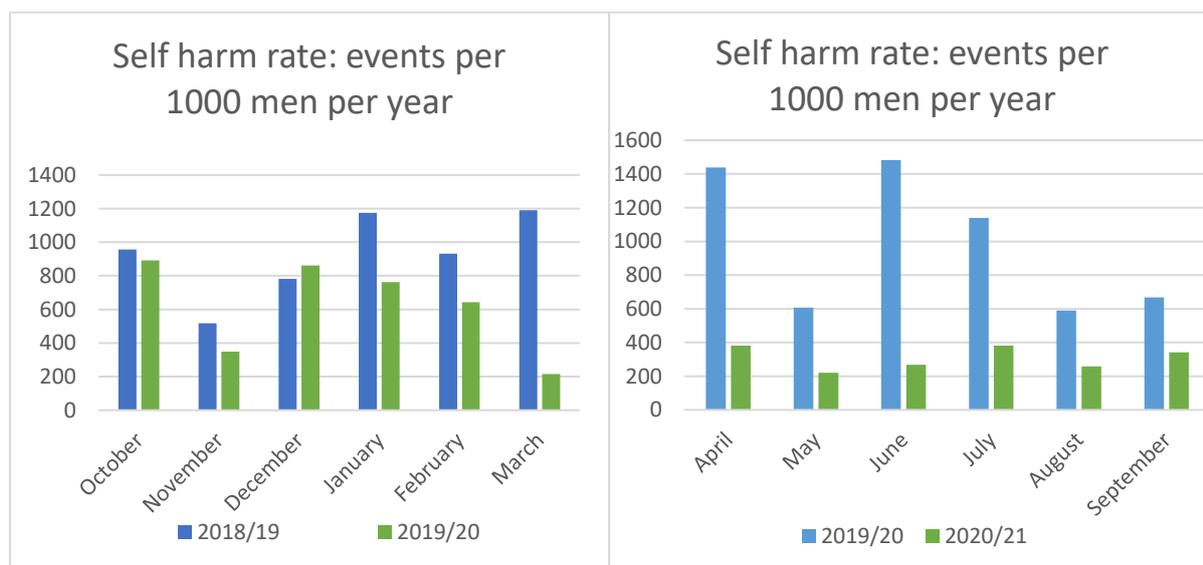
Under COVID-19 restrictions, induction has involved quarantining new arrivals in the induction wing for 14 days. The reception area has recently been refurbished, and now allows for greater privacy when personal details are discussed.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Thankfully, there were no deaths in custody and no suicides in the reporting year, but several suicide attempts were averted, including one where prompt action by staff definitely saved a life.

Incidents of Self Harm in 2019-2020 were 51% lower than in 2018-2019, a very pleasing improvement.

In the charts below, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 refer to the Prison Year which ends on March 31st.



4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Use of Force and Safer Custody meetings have been held regularly with positive and enthusiastic contributions by those attending. All the meetings have been informed by detailed statistical data showing marked improvements in Prisoner assaults, and Assaults on Staff.

Graphs supplied by the prison for Prisoner assaults, and Assaults on Staff are reproduced below.

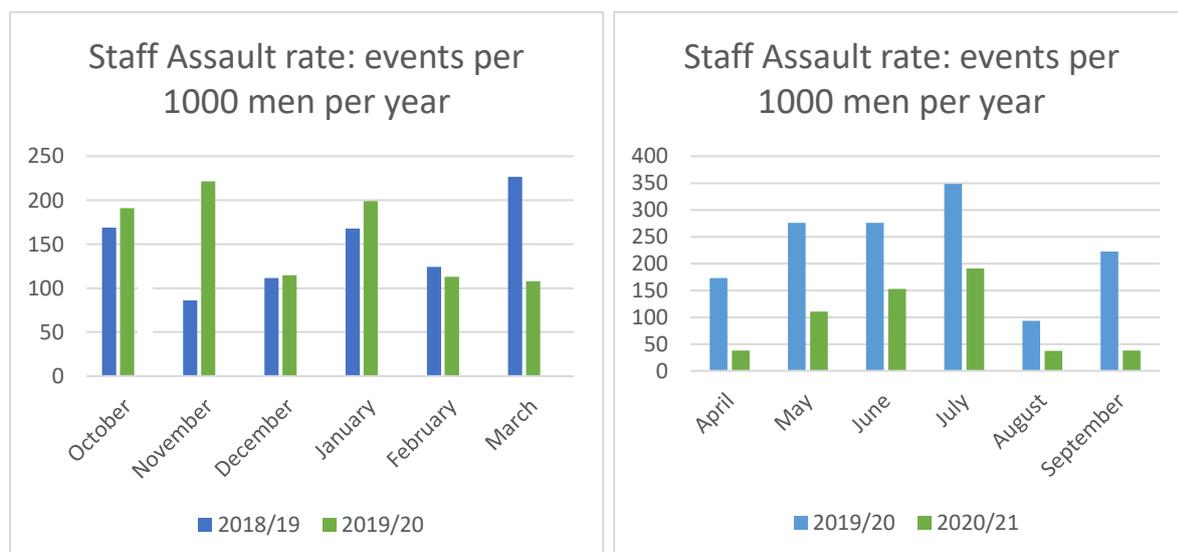
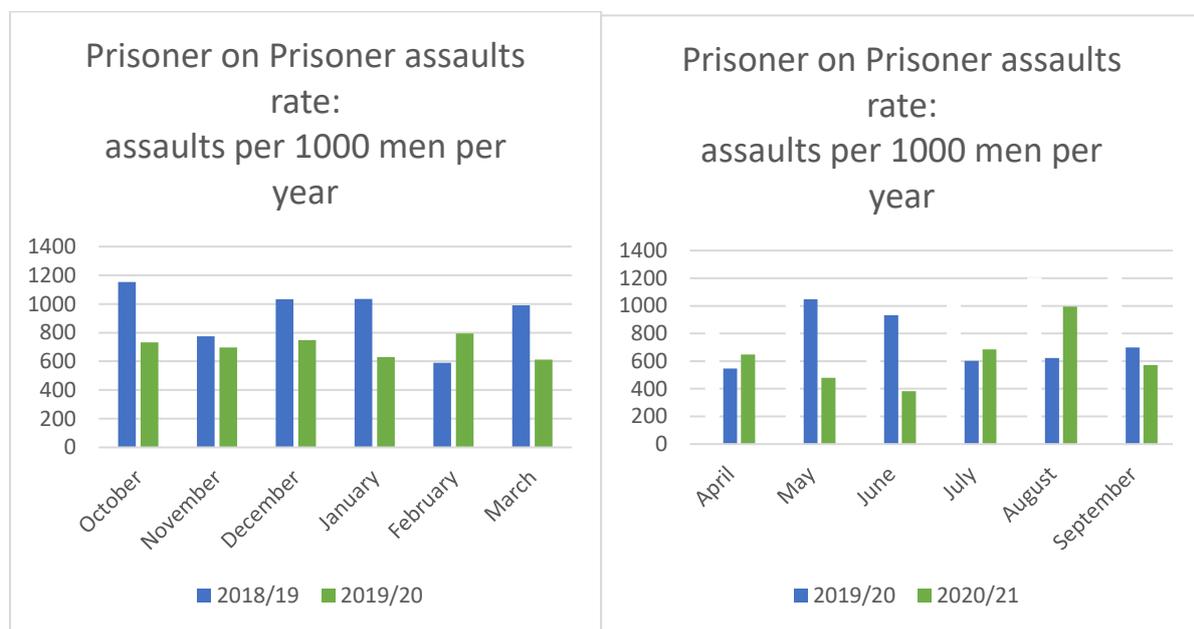
Comparing the 2019-20 reporting period the 2018-2019, Prisoner assaults are down by 21%, and Staff assaults down by 34%.

These are very good results, which the prison believes result from its initiatives to recognise each man as an individual. The Key Worker scheme is a major factor of this approach.

The reporting period 2019-2020, was very much a year of two halves, with COVID lock-down applied from late March 2020 and only partly eased in August/September.

Comparing April-September 2020 with the same period in 2019, Prisoner assaults are down 15%, and Staff assaults are down 59%.

In the bar charts that follow, the green bars relate to the reporting period October 2019 to September 2020 and the blue bars show the data for the previous year. The data is expressed as a rate per 1000 men per year, which is Prison Service standard and avoids effects from population change.



Looking at the graph for Prisoner assaults it is plain that violence decreased markedly as lock-down was imposed perhaps due to limited opportunity for prisoners to react, but seemed to increase again in the July-September quarter, perhaps linked to an ease of lockdown or general frustration. The improvement in Staff assaults which coincided with Lock-down seems to have been more sustained.

While it is tempting to conclude that Lock-Down made the prison a safer and happier place, this would be a simplistic view. The effect is likely to be unsustainable over a longer period, and lack of any rehabilitative activity may well have negative effect on reoffending after release.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Owing to concerns about how the COVID-19 lockdown may affect certain prisoners, a multidisciplinary, weekly high-risk and vulnerable prisoner meeting was established, at which the individual needs of each prisoner were carefully considered. The meetings have always been well attended, albeit remotely. The Board has telephoned in to these meetings regularly and found them valuable.

4.5 Use of force

In January 2020, the prison had to manage a serious incident of concerted indiscipline involving a number of prisoners. A fire was started and caused considerable damage, and the regional Tornado team was called in. Unfortunately, the command centre could not reach the Board Chair by telephone, and did not try to contact other members. Thus, the Board did not attend the incident, but a member was present at a multiagency debrief. The subsequent external investigation concluded that the incident had been started by the action of one individual, who had reacted impulsively and spontaneously on being told to return to his cell by staff. The Board is satisfied that the incident was not representative of the general level of violence in Deerbolt, so that it can fairly be regarded as exceptional.

4.6 Substance misuse

COVID-19 restrictions, especially the cancellation of visits, seem to have reduced the drug availability in the prison. Nevertheless, 'spice' (aka NPS) remains a problem. The staff have intercepted a number of supposed legal letters from solicitors which were impregnated with spice, so they now telephone the solicitors, the names of which are on the outside of the envelope, to see that the mail is genuine. This can delay delivery of legitimate mail but seems to be a necessary move.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The incident on C wing in January 2020 caused substantial damage to the association area, servery and staff office. Many windows were also damaged. The refurbished wing reopened in May.

A rolling refurbishment of all the wings is under way. Asbestos is being removed and mesh put into the cell walls, to stop prisoners creating access between cells. The shower provision on the wings is being improved for privacy and safety, and work is being done to enable the provision of in-cell telephones. A number of cells on J wing are out of action owing to the continued problems with damp floors.

In addition:

- A review of all living areas was carried out, in line with Operational and System Assurance Group guidance, and each wing has an action plan, with a deadline to improve decency by the end of 2020. There is now a minimum specification for cell furniture. A quarterly inventory of cell furniture is also in place. The aim is to reduce damage to furniture and the fabric of the cells. Most cells now have a television. The provision of curtains is still a problem, particularly as the workshops are currently closed.
- During the year, the contractors, Amey, have painted many of the non-prisoner areas.
- The prisoner reception area has been refurbished, ensuring greater privacy for individuals.
- There have been continuing problems with the fire detection system. The prison is well aware of the risks that this entails and is closely monitoring the situation. The Board is regularly updated on the Governor's pursuit of this worrying issue.

Deerbolt has the only oil-fired laundry left in the prison system. At the beginning of the reporting period, two driers and one machine had been out of action for up to two years. During the winter, the heating failed and staff were bringing in appliances from home. Throughout the year, there have been ongoing problems with replacement parts sourced from as far away as Spain, but all major mechanical issues were eventually resolved. At times, laundry had to be sent to another establishment and a mobile laundry van was used.

Stronger toggle laundry bags for prisoners' clothing are being rolled out, replacing ones with plastic zips, which were easily broken or melted.

The external area around the kitchens and dustbin area is consistently clean and tidy. The fabric of the kitchen is observably shabby, and some repairs have been outstanding since 2018.

Monthly inspections of the wing servery areas, instituted in 2019, have been irregular since lockdown.

The shift working pattern of prisoners in the kitchen has changed. Part-time working was introduced during COVID lockdown so that more prisoners could share the few activities that remained available. Unfortunately this seemed to result in lower motivation to complete less popular tasks like cleaning. Recently, when a regular full-time cohort worked in the kitchens, an improvement in standards and cleanliness was noted by the manager.

Overall, the menus are varied and interesting, and have taken account of new legislation on allergens. There are also themed days, and all religious and dietary requirements are catered for. Despite the challenges, the kitchens provide a balanced and varied diet, and in addition, produced 'comfort packs' for the prisoners every day during lockdown.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

The prison has been very helpful in enabling the Board to monitor segregation reviews remotely by the use of a 'spider phone', whereby we have been able to telephone in to reviews from outside the prison. It is unfortunate, however, that when the Board started coming into the prison again in August and September, its presence at reviews has, on occasion, had to be compromised by the COVID-19 limit of four persons (including the prisoner) being in the small room where reviews take place. We have asked the Governor to consider whether it would be possible to use a larger room for these reviews.

Two prisoners remained in the segregation unit for in excess of 42 days towards the end of the reporting year. In both cases, this was at their own insistence because of fears for their safety arising from gang-related issues. The prison dealt sympathetically with both prisoners while they were in segregation, and in the end it was able to transfer them to other prisons.

Numbers in segregation varied through the year, and at one stage a prisoner was held under segregation conditions on a residential wing. The Board discovered that that this prisoner was not receiving the mandatory daily visitor from a governor, but this was soon rectified when we drew it to the attention of the safer custody governor.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

From Board observations, staff/prisoner relationships are very good, and Board members are always impressed by the way that staff can distinguish a genuinely vulnerable prisoner from a manipulative one, treating either one fairly and correctly.

Key worker sessions, which gave each prisoner a 30-minute one-to-one private meeting with his key worker once a fortnight, were successfully introduced in 2019. This was considered a very important initiative by the Prison Service at the time, and officer hours were increased to take account of the extra work. The key worker has to enter a report of each session in the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS).

One-to-one sessions were suspended during the COVID-19 lockdown. Wing staff now aim to keep a check on individual welfare by brief chats conducted while unlocking, or escorting for telephone calls and showers. To the extent there is anything to report, staff enter details of these chats in the key worker section of NOMIS, so that the number of interactions is reported in key worker statistics. The Board is concerned that this exaggerates the extent to which staff are aware of prisoners' concerns and problems. For example, one prisoner, who was about to be released, had no clothing or footwear of his own because the police had confiscated it when he was arrested. In this case, staff rallied round and helped the prisoner very well, but it showed how a prisoner could be 'under the radar'.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Equality and fairness are addressed at diversity and equality management team (DEMT) meetings. These are chaired by a governor grade, supported by the strand leads for the protected characteristics. In 2019/20, these meetings were held much more regularly than in previous years, which encourages the Board to believe that Deerbolt is at last taking the issues more seriously.

The frequency of the meetings throughout the year has been encouraging, especially having regard to staff shortages and unavoidable disruption due to COVID-19. With strong and positive leadership, the five DEMT meetings were generally well attended. There are black and minority ethnic, and diversity champions on every wing, who met several times across the year, in addition to a Travellers forum. There have also been two equality and fairness prisoner representative meetings.

The discrimination incident report form (DIRF) system appears to work well, and there has been an increase in the number of DIRFs submitted by prisoners and staff. At the time of writing, there have been 25 submitted since September 2019. The DIRFs are generally well investigated but there were a few delays and inadequate responses, which were highlighted through quality and assurance reports.

Data on equality and fairness is compiled centrally by the Prison Service on their hub system. It is regrettable that there is a long delay in reporting collated information on the hub, so that the data is out of date before it can be seen. In addition, some relevant staff members at Deerbolt who need the data cannot access it because of hardware restrictions. The recent hub data shows that at Deerbolt:

- 6.9% of prisoners were foreign nationals
- 21.08% of prisoners were Muslim
- 23.19% of prisoners had a recorded disability, including learning disability, learning difficulties and mental illness.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy is a multi-faith team, catering for the faith needs of all under their care and pastorally supporting all prisoners at the establishment. Prior to COVID-19, corporate worship was taking place for all faiths, and prisoners also had an

opportunity to attend weekly study groups. Chaplains were available to carry out basic chaplaincy duties, seeing all new inductees, talking to prisoners on ACCTs and visiting the segregation unit daily.

At the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown, all chaplaincy services and groups were suspended, but chaplaincy staff continued to attend the prison to support staff and prisoners.

The following has continued to be delivered:

- All chaplaincy statutory duties, segregation unit visits, new inductions, ACCT visits continued.
- A rota was introduced for all prisoners, of all faiths or none, to have a weekly visit by a member of the chaplaincy.
- Faith-based sermons were distributed to prisoners who would normally attend weekly corporate worship.
- Bereavement support took place.
- The chaplaincy team began to deliver group work, with social distancing, from 1 September.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

The contract for healthcare passed from G4S to Spectrum on 1 April 2020. Spectrum already provided GP services to the prison, and with the new contract took on physical healthcare, mental healthcare, and drug and alcohol services.

The provision of all healthcare is overseen by a local delivery board, chaired by the Governor, to which the Board is invited.

The Board has continued to be satisfied with the standard of healthcare services provided. Prisoners have access to services which are equivalent to those in the community. The level of healthcare complaints received is very low.

In response to the pandemic, the healthcare team adapted their working practices to minimise the movement of prisoners and contacts. Prior to COVID-19, work was being undertaken to reduce the number of prisoners failing to attend clinics, primarily by giving them the responsibility for booking their own appointments, rather than making these for them. Following lockdown, the decision was made to move to wing-based clinics, to reduce movements. It was found that this also had the effect of improving attendance, so the healthcare department intends to continue with wing-based clinics when lockdown restrictions are eased.

Other measures included reassessing whether the prisoners on medication should keep their medicines in their own possession, known as 'in-possession' medication use. All the prisoners on medications were risk assessed, and the number with in-possession medication use increased from 10 to 40.

At the start of the lockdown, a reverse cohort unit was established, for new arrivals to isolate. Some healthcare screening and vaccinations were initially reduced but the staff were able to get back to their targets by taking the opportunity of any contact with the prisoners to include vaccinations and healthcare screens.

The dental service, provided by Burgess and Hyder, has been badly affected by the national policies restricting procedures in the pandemic, so only emergencies are being seen. There are 60 patients on the current waiting list, and the longest wait has been 30 weeks.

There has not been an ophthalmology service in the prison since the start of lockdown. Anyone with a current prescription can have replacement spectacles supplied.

A programme to introduce health peer mentors, with an accredited programme, had been planned before the lockdown, and this is being taken forward.

6.2 Mental healthcare

Mental health services are sub-contracted by Spectrum to the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust. A new contract moved the service to a seven-day-a-week model. The service has expanded to cover this, and now also includes a

speech and language therapist. A registered nurse is on duty every weekend and bank holiday. This means that ACCT reviews at weekends can now be covered.

Mental health groups were stopped at the start of lockdown, but the intention is to restart them when it is safe to do so. The team continues to provide one-to-one care, seeing new referrals and existing patients. The lockdown has created some logistical problems at times, but the team continues to be resourceful and resilient.

Counselling is now provided by Rethink, and the counsellor is a shared resource with two other establishments. However, the counsellor has been able to come into the prison two days a week, which is reducing the waiting list.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell

Time out of cell has been severely reduced since lockdown, to less than two hours daily. This includes time to collect meals from the servery, make telephone calls and shower, as well as have time on the exercise yard. A limited number of work activities continued, and these were split, to allow more of the prisoners the opportunity to leave their cells. While the gym was closed, new equipment was delivered and installed. The first organised activity to restart was outdoor PE, with a return to the indoor gym in September.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

Drug and alcohol services are supplied by Humankind, through the Spectrum contract. Services were severely curtailed at the start of the lockdown. No face-to-face work could be undertaken, so the number of staff on site was reduced to two. The staff responded to the challenges that this posed, and maintained contact with most of the prisoners using letters and in-cell workbooks. However, prisoners with learning needs, vulnerable prisoners and new receptions were seen at cell doors or in rooms which allowed social distancing. New receptions were also given induction paperwork to complete and return, and this was followed up by the staff. Wayout TV was introduced to Deerbolt, and the staff have started to use it to post harm reduction advice and key messages. Those clients being discharged are offered the chance, and encouraged, to engage with community services, although take-up is low, except for the few clinical clients continuing with substitute prescribing.

6.6 Soft skills

One of the effects of lockdown has been to curtail most of the activities which contribute to the building of soft skills. However, the Listener programme is in place and a Listeners' training course, to be run by the Samaritans, has been booked.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

At the beginning of the reporting period, shortages in officers to escort prisoners to vital education activities had been rectified and the prison seemed to be identifying issues with low visitor numbers to the library, and to course sessions. The prison was beginning to make real progress with the delivery of accredited programmes, although there remained difficulties in providing material for all, particularly within the new cohort of adult prisoners (aged 21–24 years).

The outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown could not have happened at a more frustrating time for education services. All outside contracted Novus education staff were removed from the site, and the prison regime was governed strictly by exceptional delivery models (EDMs).

Initially, the prison was not allowed to do any classroom-based activity or offer any wing-based education programmes. The prison still maintained some education activities through in-cell packs, but one-to-one teaching stopped and all accredited programmes have been curtailed.

At the very end of the reporting period, constraints were being eased, but progress was limited by the outside education contractor's availability, health guidelines and the time needed to apply successfully for new EDMs.

With lockdown at various levels likely to last for up to another year, the lack of any real education or training has serious consequences in the preparation of prisoners for release and for reducing reoffending.

Compared with schools and universities, which have largely and successfully moved education online during the COVID-19 lockdown, the paper-based arrangements in prisons seem antediluvian. Prisoners are not allowed access to the public internet, for obvious reasons, but it should still be possible to make screen-based learning available from outside sources, including the Open University, via a secure private network.

7.2 Vocational training, work

In autumn 2019, work and vocational training seemed to be going reasonably well. Horticulture and the bicycle workshop were particularly successful, and it was not unusual for prisoners to comment to the Board on their attainments in these areas.

For example, prisoners could be proud of the high-quality floral displays they produced for Barnard Castle town centre, which received a favourable public response. In addition, in the bicycle workshop, the prisoners felt good about creating a useful end-product, having refurbished a discarded bicycle into 'good as new'.

During lockdown, 'industry' training was suspended, but some gardening work continued and there were still work opportunities in the laundry and kitchen, as well

as for cleaners. These were made into part-time jobs, so that more prisoners could participate.

7.3 Offender management, progression

At the start of 2019-2020, the establishment appeared to have taken very positive steps in improving offender management. Staff shortages were less severe and the staff available were no longer being distracted by having to cover prison officer roles. Deerbolt was not supposed to be a resettlement prison, but as it was apparent that up to half of prisoners were in fact being released from Deerbolt, a pre-release programme had been re-established, with liaison with probation officers and help with accommodation and benefits.

With the COVID-19 lockdown, these improvements took a backwards step. Transferring prisoners to their local home prison for resettlement became completely impossible. Classroom or one-to-one work on release preparation was suspended and staff absence due to COVID-19 isolation and shielding limited productivity in offender management.

The establishment now has a cohort of long-sentence prisoners, already over the age of 21, who would like to be able to progress to being eligible for a move to a lower-risk or open prison. They are unable to complete the courses addressing offending behaviour which would be a condition of transfer to a less secure prison. This might not have mattered if COVID-19 restrictions had only been in place for a few weeks, but now that the situation could continue for a year or more, it becomes serious.

As in the Prison Service generally, offender management at Deerbolt is in the process of a radical reform. Previously, offender management and sentence planning for higher-risk and long-sentence prisoners were carried out by probation officers in the community. Now, senior probation officers have been brought into prisons as probation managers covering the higher-risk prisoners, working alongside prison officers working as offender supervisors for medium- and lower-risk prisoners. The COVID-19 lockdown has affected the implementation of this reform but the Board will monitor its progress in the coming year.

7.4 Family contact

NEPACS runs a visitor centre outside the prison. The staff provide a warm and welcoming environment for visitors. Special father and child days, and new father and family visits are held throughout the year. Board attendance at a family visits day enabled us to talk to prisoners and their families in an informal setting. Visitors Voice meetings are held, providing a forum for NEPACS and prison staff, to help improve the visits experience. The Board has attended these meetings. Although few visitors have attended, they have all been very keen to engage, and their suggestions have been taken on board by prison staff.

Social visits were suspended at the start of the lockdown, and restarted in mid-August. There was very clear guidance on the NEPACS website on what the COVID-19 visitor experience would be like, regarding social distancing, the wearing of masks and the facilities available. The NEPACS visitor centre remains closed, and all checking in of visitors is done by prison staff. Board observation of social visits was very encouraging, with temperature checks on arrival and a very detailed

briefing about wearing masks and the 'dos/don'ts' during visits. In the visits hall, all prison staff were wearing masks, aprons and gloves, and significantly reduced visitor numbers enabled social distancing.

A NEPACS helpline was launched in September 2020, to support individuals and their families from arrest, at court, throughout a prison sentence and on release.

Deerbolt took part in the pilot for digital visits – 'Purple Visits', by video-link. This has continued throughout the reporting year and is proving very popular. Board observation of Purple Visits showed that the technology was working well and providing a welcome alternative to social visits. Some prisoners seem to prefer these visits, given the restrictions on physical contact during social visits. The Board would very much like to see such visits continued once a normal regime is resumed. Although initially introduced as a temporary measure during lockdown, we believe that this is a valuable way of enabling contact with family members who, for reasons such as geographical distance from the establishment, are not able to visit in person. We were pleased to know that the prison has supported video-links to funerals during lockdown, enabling prisoners to have family links during these difficult times.

The increase in telephone credits during lockdown has enabled contact to be maintained with family and friends. Work is under way to provide in cell telephony, which will further enable prisoners to keep in touch.

The establishment has recently been awarded a £9,500 innovation grant, as part of Deerbolt's green credentials, to maintain a bat colony residing in the visitor centre.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The through-the-gate team has arrangements in place to see all prisoners due for release in the final three months of their sentence, to assess accommodation, employment, finances and referrals to the appropriate outside agencies. Resettlement plans are then put in place for each prisoner.

As reported last year, few prisoners are transferred to a local prison within three months prior to release. With the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, there have been no transfers to local prisons for discharge. Only transfers for security reasons have been allowed in exceptional circumstances, and all are approved by Gold Command. However, in addition to the above, additional support for cash and travel is in place, and pre-release meetings with probation staff are being held by telephone. We understand that there has not been a problem in finding approved premises for those in need. For the year ended 31st March 2020, GOV.UK statistics show that of 128 releases from Deerbolt 84.6% had first night accommodation planned.

There were no eligible prisoners at Deerbolt for the COVID-19 early release scheme.

For the year ended 31st March 2020, GOV.UK statistics showed that of 129 prisoners released from Deerbolt only 3.8% were in employment 6 weeks after release. This is not the direct responsibility of any prison but suggests there is a mountain to climb

in providing rehabilitation and training for young men 18-24 which would improve future lives and reduce re-offending.

8. The work of the IMB

The Board would like to take the opportunity to thank the Governor, and his staff, for all they have done to help Board carry out their monitoring role safely, but still effectively, under the challenge of COVID-19.

Since lockdown, the Board has developed methods of remote monitoring, with the help of the prison regime. Board members telephone in to take part in the Governor's daily briefing, segregation reviews and a number of prison management meetings. Instead of a monthly Board meeting, we have a fortnightly teleconference, which either the Governor or a deputy, appointed by him, joins for 30 minutes. Prisoners can still submit applications to the Board on the normal paper form, which is then scanned and emailed to the Board.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the establishment	xxx
Total number of segregation reviews attended	xxx

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives and earned privileges, sanctions	0	
C	Equality	5	
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	6	
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	
F	Food and kitchens	3	
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	2	
H1	Property within this establishment	21	
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	10	
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	10	
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	12	
K	Transfers	18	
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		
	Total number of applications	99	



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