

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park

**For reporting year
1 November 2019 – 31 October 2020**

Published February 2021

Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Executive summary	4
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	7
5. Fair and humane treatment	10
6. Health and wellbeing	21
7. Progression and resettlement	26
The work of the IMB	34
Applications to the IMB	35

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.

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.

The Board at Eastwood Park is committed to treating all those with whom it interacts with respect and fairness, taking into account such factors as race, colour, ethnicity, religion, belief, national origin, gender, age, marital status, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Eastwood Park is a female closed local prison, situated mid-way between Gloucester and Bristol by the village of Falfield, South Gloucestershire.

The operational capacity of Eastwood Park is 442 prisoners. Based on a snapshot, 75% of the prisoners were sentenced, less than last year, with a 5% increase in remands. Sixteen per cent were sentenced to less than 12 months, down from 26% last year; 24% to between 12 months and less than four years, down from 28%; 22% to four years or more, up from 12%; 4% were on indeterminate sentences, the same as last year; and 9% had been recalled, which was nearly the same as last year.

The establishment has 10 residential wings. These include a mother and baby unit (MBU), two wings specialising in dealing with those with substance misuse issues, a personality disorder unit, an induction wing for new prisoners, a wing for those on an enhanced regime and a wing for prisoners with complex needs requiring significant mental health and other input. During this exceptional year, part of the induction wing was dedicated to the isolation, for 14 days, of new prisoners and another wing to the shielding of the most vulnerable prisoners.

Eastwood Park also takes remand and sentenced prisoners from local courts, covering a wide catchment area extending over South Wales, the South, the South West, and the Midlands. It is the local prison for 74 courts. Around a third of its prisoners come from Wales.

Healthcare was provided by Inspire Better Health until the company withdrew from the contract and ceased trading from 31 March 2020 and was replaced by a partnership of agencies including Hanham Secure Health (providing GP and nursing services) and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (providing mental health services). Education is provided by Weston College.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This year has been exceptional because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the way that prisons have been run and on the ability of the Board to carry out face-to-face monitoring. In this respect, it is difficult to make realistic comparisons with previous years. However, the Board at Eastwood Park has scrutinised what has been happening at the prison and continued to take and look into applications from prisoners, both on paper and from the national applications helpline.

The early release scheme had little impact on the population at Eastwood Park, and the Board was surprised that more prisoners in the MBU were not released early. There were many versions of the criteria applying to early re-

lease and it was disappointing that all of these revisions took managers' time away from other important tasks.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) did not carry out a full inspection at Eastwood Park during this reporting year. However, the establishment was inspected, along with other prisons for women, with a specific focus on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the report was published in June 2020. This was broadly positive, and six out of seven mentions of good practice related to Eastwood Park. There were some concerns, including the lack of separation of new prisoners in the reverse cohorting unit (the unit where new prisoners were quarantined for 14 days); this was addressed immediately by the prison.

Around a third of prisoners at Eastwood Park come from Wales. The Prison Reform Trust published a report in December 2020, having analysed 2019 sentencing data by police force area. In the South Wales Police Force area, the imprisonment rate per 100,000 was 62. This was 19 more than the next highest and 48 higher than in Devon and Cornwall, the lowest in Eastwood Park's catchment area. Although the Board does not report on sentencing, these findings are of great concern as they relate to the delivery of justice.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The Board would usually report that the prison is safe for most prisoners, most of the time. However, given the nature of the COVID-19 restrictions on social movement and the lack of time out of cell, the Board is of the opinion that this must have a negative impact on prisoners' physical and mental health. In common with all other prisons in these extreme conditions, Eastwood Park is as safe as the current situation allows. Staff have worked hard under difficult circumstances and significant pressure to support prisoners.

It was of great concern that levels of self-harm have risen, unsurprisingly, given the lockdown. Although prisoner-on-prisoner violence decreased, the Board remained concerned about the levels of violence towards staff.

We were also concerned that there continued to be an inflow of illicit substances.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

There were many occasions when Board members observed staff working in a highly professional and caring way. We have to stop short of saying that prisoners were treated humanely because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Being locked up for such long periods will never be a humane way of treating prisoners, albeit we understood the motivation to protect prisoners from the virus and its consequences.

The Board was particularly concerned about the plight of a brain-injured prisoner who has been segregated for well over two years and has, in effect, been in solitary confinement for this period. Little had been achieved to address her long-term needs.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

In general, prisoners' health needs were well met. The service adapted well to the challenges of COVID-19. Our main concerns were the increase in waiting times for the dentist and the rise in the number of women being sent to prison for their own safety owing to mental health issues. However, despite the best efforts of the prison and healthcare staff, prolonged lockdown had an inevitable impact on prisoners' physical and mental health.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Board carried out a monitoring exercise as part of a national project. The findings on resettlement were of concern and showed that there were still significant gaps in provision. Prisoners continued to be released without suitable housing, and where work had taken place within the prison, it was often undermined by the lack of support in the community.

As a result of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, resettlement staff worked remotely, and efforts were made to continue to assess and plan for resettlement needs. Education, work opportunities and offending behaviour interventions were less available as a result of the impact of lockdown. Short sentences allowed little time for rehabilitative efforts.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- In her reply to our previous annual report, the minister stated that the new offender management unit (activities centre) building remained a priority project, and that (subject to caveats) work on it was likely to start by the first quarter of 2021. Is this still the expectation?
- The IMB at Eastwood Park has raised concerns with the minister about a prisoner with an acquired brain injury who had been segregated in HMP Downview and HMP/YOI Eastwood Park for 827 days up to the end of this reporting period. While we understand that normal location is not a possible alternative in her case, because of her behaviour, is it acceptable to provide secure specialist establishments for men with brain injuries and highly complex needs but none for women?
- In her reply to our previous annual report, the minister stated that a funding commitment had been made to develop the first residential women's centre. Has this project progressed, and when does the minister think there will be an impact on the prison population?

- Will the minister address the differences in sentencing practice with the Sentencing Council as they appear to show that a prison sentence is partly determined by postcode?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- In response to our previous report, we were advised by the minister that the prison group director for the women's estate had contacted NHS England about co-commissioning a national needs assessment to improve the services for women with mental and physical health issues. Has this progressed?
- Is it considered to be best value for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to fund the manufacture of urgently needed replacement windows and fire doors by prison industries in 2018 and 2020, respectively, and then deliver and take them into store at Leyhill and Eastwood Park prisons, only subsequently to decline funding to install them?
- Due to the remote and opaque method of deciding which maintenance works bids will receive funding, can HMPPS be more open about how such decisions were arrived at?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Will the Governor look into the reasons for the small number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) being submitted?
- Will the Governor review the suitability of mattresses, especially for older prisoners and those with health needs?

3.4 Progress since the last report

- In previous annual reports, the Board has criticised the prison for failing to notify us of prisoners' segregation. This has improved considerably, as this year relevant staff have emailed the Board as soon as someone has been segregated.
- There was a significant reduction in outstanding minor maintenance jobs.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception area was clean and bright, and prisoners, when asked, nearly always spoke positively about their first experiences at the prison. Staff were praised by incoming prisoners for treating them with tact and sensitivity. Prison orderlies offered them food and a hot drink, and prisoners saw their overall

initial experience at Eastwood Park in a very positive light. One new prisoner expressed her gratitude and said that she was well treated in reception, and that a clean and well-equipped cell was ready for her on arrival on the wing.

There has been a significant decrease in throughput, with a five-year low in population of only 339 on 22 April 2020. This has had an impact on reception, with a monthly average of 343 prisoners onsite compared with 387 in the 2018/19 reporting year.

Induction was carried out by a team of orderlies, and new prisoners were presented with written information to support their induction session. First night and early days were usually spent on the induction wing. Orderlies were responsible for making sure that a cell was in a good state, which was important as many prisoners find their first night in prison to be a daunting experience.

During the lockdown period, some aspects of the early days procedures had to be changed to reduce the risk of infection, but care was taken to ensure that prisoners were not disadvantaged as a result. Additional welfare checks took place.

In line with national instructions, the prison introduced measures to reduce the risk of infection. In the early days this included being in isolation for 14 days until it was established that the prisoner was not carrying the virus. During HMIP's inspection, the prison attracted some criticism because it was allowing some mixing of prisoners who had arrived on different days; this was quickly addressed.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Levels of self-harm decreased during the reporting year. However, because of the reduced prison population, this meant that the rate of self-harm was higher. Between January and July 2020, the number of incidents per month ranged from 94 in March to 196 in June. The totals were affected by the number of prisoners who self-harmed repeatedly. For instance, in June there were 13 prisoners harming themselves repeatedly, and accounting for 149/196 of incidents. Most incidents required no treatment.

Rates and trends of self-harm were considered at safety meetings. The data presented gave an excellent picture of the who, where and when of self-harm. As a result of the lockdown, there was a period when the multidisciplinary meetings were suspended.

There were two deaths in custody during the reporting year but neither has had the final inquest at the time of writing. There were two final reports from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman published during the year, concerning deaths that had occurred in the previous reporting year. It was of great concern that one was critical of the clinical care received by the prisoner for a pre-existing condition that resulted in a sudden decline.

The number of prisoners on assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) procedures fluctuated during the year – from around 33 to over 60. During a night visit, Board members observed that on one wing there were 18 ACCTs, requiring 34 observations per hour. A large number of ACCTs were

opened in reception, most by healthcare staff. Many of these cases were then closed at the first review. Cases were being opened on the basis of historical self-harm, even if it was a long time in the past and there appeared to be no current risk. Given that many self-inflicted deaths happen in the first few days in custody, it can be understood that staff want no risks to be taken. However, there is also a challenge because the more prisoners there are on ACCTs, the less time staff have to devote to those who really need the oversight and support.

During the year, there were issues with recruiting Listeners (prisoners trained to support those at risk of self-harm). During the lockdown, a telephone support service was introduced. There were around 75 calls per month to the Samaritans helpline.

Safer custody orderlies were a crucial support team within the prison, especially during lockdown.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

We are pleased to report that there has been a downward trend in violence at Eastwood Park, from an average of 22 per month at the beginning of 2020 to 12 in the last three months of the reporting period. The reduction was primarily due to the decrease in prisoner-on-prisoner assaults. This might have been due to less opportunity for bullying and intimidation because of the reduced amount of time in association. The number of prisoner-on-staff assaults was not reduced. In October 2019, there were six assaults on staff and 10 on prisoners; in October 2020, there were 10 assaults on staff and six on prisoners.

The most common reasons cited as underlying the violence were disputes between individual prisoners, arguments over vapes which were used as a trading item, and mental health.

The prison had a zero-tolerance attitude to violence and used various approaches to try to reduce it. The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) programme and its case management remained at the heart of this. Staff met on a weekly basis to discuss these complex cases, and also held weekly use of force meetings. Both of these multi-agency meetings created actions, including feedback and learning points.

Welfare and safety checks were also introduced to help reduce violence. This was done by exploring individuals' feelings and perceived problems, and trying to avoid incidents escalating by doing this.

There were few prisoners at Eastwood Park identified as being involved in gangs.

Periodically, the Board has looked at the CSIP files and spoken to the prisoners involved. Responses have varied, from prisoners saying that they were not aware they had a plan, to others who were very positive about the help that they had been given.

4.5 Use of force

Use of force is sometimes necessary in a prison, and there were 223 instances during the reporting period. This was 80 fewer than in the previous reporting year, and involved between 14 and 20 different prisoners in a month. Eastwood Park was in the top three prisons for use of force in the women's estate.

The most common reason for use of force was non-compliance, typically refusing to return to their cell when instructed to do so. The next most common reason was preventative action to avoid harm to another prisoner, a member of staff or to the prisoner herself. A high number of uses of force involved prisoners with mental health issues and those on ACCTs. There did not appear to be a disproportionality on the basis of race.

During the year, the Board has monitored planned use of force. On every occasion, we found the actions of staff to be proportionate and humane. However, given the high numbers of women entering prison with mental health problems it was the Board's view that use of force numbers might reduce if more women were diverted from the criminal justice system. Prisons are not equipped to deal with the level and nature of complexity arising from many of these cases.

4.6 Substance misuse

Over a third of women entering prison report problems in withdrawing from drugs and alcohol. Many of the prisoners with substance misuse problems also had multiple issues, especially mental health.

Progress on the strategy to address substance misuse was reported on at the safety, drugs and security meeting monthly. There was a continuous flow of illicit drugs into the prison, in common with much of the prison estate. Subutex, Buscopan, heroin, and spice were most commonly used by prisoners. There was also some evidence that methamphetamine was being used by a small number of women coming into the establishment. Even during lockdown, this flow did not stop, despite there being no visits. The prison introduced new technology to try to identify drugs coming in. The drug dog team did sweeps when there was intelligence to suggest that there were drugs circulating. There were also sweeps to look for illicit alcohol, which was produced by prisoners.

The supply reduction plan was reviewed and monitored through the monthly drug strategy meeting. It was also a standing item on the senior management team meeting agenda.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Staffing levels

In previous years, we have expressed concerns that shortages of staff have forced prisoners to be locked in unnecessarily to maintain a safe regime. This

year, the impact has been compounded, with additional demands and for different reasons, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Prisoners have been locked in for extended periods for their safety, but also to maintain social distancing.

Very high demands on staffing have been due to the underlying staff shortages; staff shielding; being classified as 'vulnerable'; absence due to home schooling responsibilities; 'normal' sickness; COVID-19 sickness and self-isolating.

Time out for all wings was taken on a rolling process, to allow cohorts of 15 (maximum) prisoners out at a time. This could take a whole morning and was then repeated in the afternoon.

The need to provide out-of-cell exercise and showering, and the supervision of mealtimes while keeping prisoners in small cohorts has been a huge challenge for much of the year. On occasions, the provision of exercise and showering opportunities has inevitably been reduced but staff have generally worked hard to minimise the inconvenience. At no time has this provision dropped below the recommended minimum levels.

5.1.2 Living conditions

In the Board's opinion, the accommodation areas were in a cleaner state than in previous years, and a large number of prisoner hours have been used to redecorate empty cells and enhance the common areas.

The most frequent reasons for applications to the Board about living conditions during the year concerned the heating and ventilation systems, access to showers, the state of the mattresses and broken cell safes.

The Board looked into the issues with the ventilation system and found that metal vents directly above the cell toilets on one wing were not working on the upper floor. These vents were subsequently repaired.

The issues with heating predominantly revolved around the accommodation blocks being too cold in early autumn and too hot in late spring. Eastwood Park has an old and binary heating system, whereby it is either on or off. If a cold spell occurs before the heating comes on it is uncomfortable, and the same applies if warm weather occurs before the heating goes off.

There were many more complaints this year about access to showers. This has been due mainly to limited staff availability and the need to allow only limited number of prisoners out of their cells at one time. Within the limited time out of their cells, some prisoners chose to exercise outside rather than shower on certain days. Very many prisoners accepted that limitations were in place for their safety, and appreciated the efforts made.

Many of the mattresses were old and in poor, lumpy, hard condition, as were the pillows. This was not good for the older prisoners, those suffering from ar-

thritis and those who were pregnant. The latter, in particular, were given an extra mattress when they requested it, but they were still old mattresses.

In-cell safes were reported as broken or with no key, but when the Board intervened, this was quickly sorted.

5.1.3 Food and kitchens

The quality and availability of food are important issues, about which the Board has received astonishingly few applications, with only seven in the year. The efforts by everyone involved in the catering, preparation and delivery of meals throughout the year, and particularly throughout the crisis, were outstanding.

A full menu was maintained throughout, with the major changes being:

- Communal dining stopped; food was collected from the dining hall or serveries.
- Prisoner meal preference sheets were discontinued, to prevent cross-contamination.
- Breakfast was delivered in a pack on the previous evening.
- Additional comfort packs, issued twice per week, were well received.

The delivery of food to accommodation areas and cell doors was a challenge but was accomplished with the minimum of inconvenience. One wing adopted 'doorway dining', whereby prisoners could collect their food and sit at their own small cell tables in their doorways, to allow conversations at mealtimes. This was carried out within social distancing parameters.

A nutrition-rich menu was trialled with 30 prisoners, from the end of November 2019, and was very well received. One prisoner working in the kitchen explained the criteria for healthy food and said that the current project was going well, and that she enjoyed using lots of spices in her tasks. Meals from this project were integrated into the standard prison menu. The expansion of this was curtailed as a result of the pandemic.

Prisoners had previously said that they would like more fresh fruit, and this year we have witnessed boxes of fruit available at the servery.

Five of the seven applications to the Board about food related to dietary requirements, and, following discussions, these were resolved. One instance concerned a prisoner who was a vegetarian and was not getting her meal. On investigation, the reason was that although the meal was provided to the servery, others fancied it before she arrived. This matter was easily resolved by putting her name on it.

5.1.4 Buildings and maintenance

The state of the residential and non-residential buildings has deteriorated over the years, exacerbated by an inadequate programme of maintenance and repair. Planned and necessary additions to the estate have been in a planning

blight for years. The Board has taken a close interest in this, as it contributes critically to the humane treatment of prisoners.

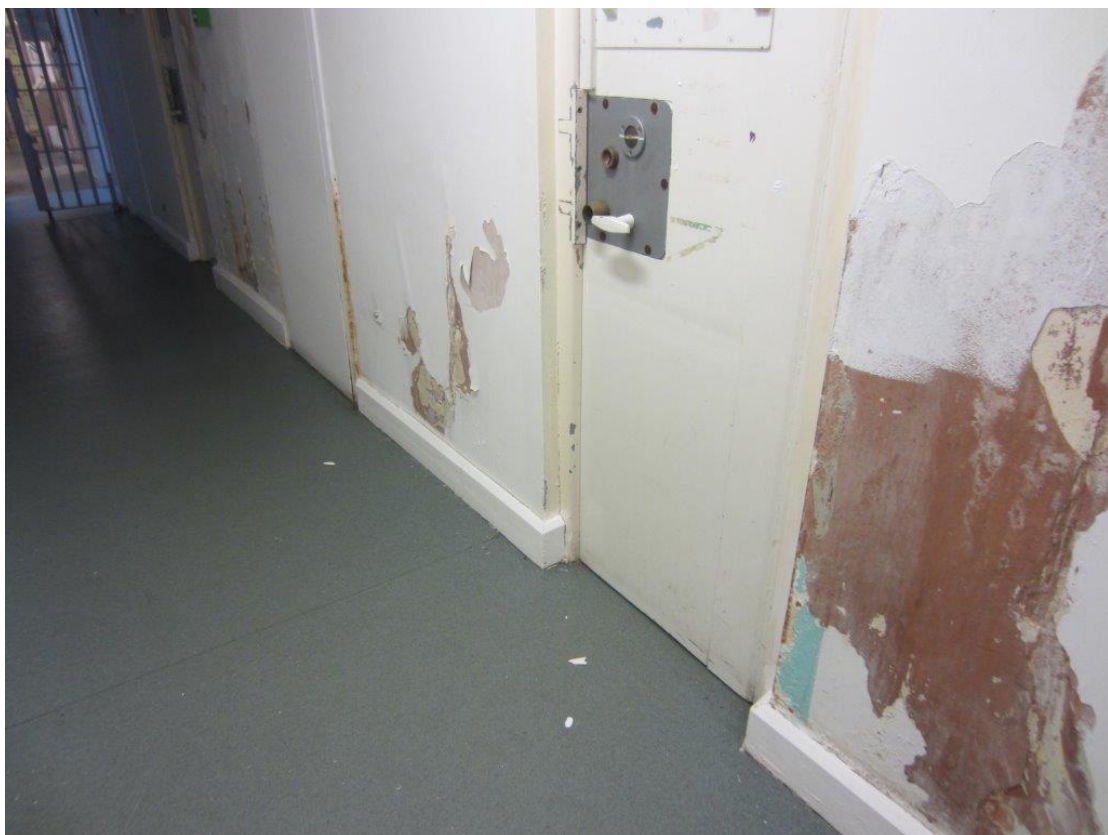
The following are some examples which were being raised on a monthly basis by the Governor with the prison maintenance group's service delivery manager for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire prisons:

- There has been a serious roof leak over the main corridor between residential units 1–4 and the main dining hall for several years. The photograph below shows the extent of damage caused by rainwater ingress. Despite repeated assurances that this problem was being resolved, buckets are on permanent standby to catch rainwater and stop the floor from flooding. Minor repairs have proved to be ineffective and the roof structure and wall finishes have deteriorated owing to constant exposure to rainwater. There were examples of prisoners slipping and falling as a result of the wet floor caused by the leak. At a recent meeting, the Governor was advised that tenders have been invited for remedial works.



- The perimeter security gate to the residential unit for enhanced prisoners has a defective lock back facility and has been permanently locked shut for a number of years. Despite repeated attempts to resolve this problem, residents on this wing are facing another winter waiting in all weathers for passing key holders to unlock the gate, so that they can gain access to their place of work or return to the house block.

- Approval was given to convert two single cells on one wing into a single cell for prisoners with a disability. Works started, in error, in 2018 on two double cells. Although demolitions had started, the works were stopped and it took several months for the cells to be reinstated. A new bidding process was then required to secure funding for the original project. New tenders for this conversion have been invited recently.
- Damp to cell and corridor walls on one wing has remained unresolved for a number of years – the photograph below shows the extent of dampness. Despite repeated assurances about funding bids being submitted, there has been no progress to date. The latest advice received was that a full structural survey was being arranged.



- Replacement windows and fire doors were manufactured by prison industries in 2018 and 2020, respectively, and then taken into store while a separate bid was made to determine if funding for installation was available. It was difficult to understand how HMPPS could deliver best value by funding the manufacture, delivery and storage of these badly needed replacement windows and fire doors but then refuse to provide funding to install them.
- There was a noticeable improvement in the standard of cleaning by Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) in non-residential areas over the past year.

- The number of outstanding minor maintenance jobs with GFSL has reduced from 600 to 205 during the past year.
- In response to our previous annual report, HMPPS advised that the eight-stage process to undertake works adheres to the commercial and financial rules, as well as complying with HMPPS and Ministry of Justice policy. When compared with procurement procedures elsewhere in the public sector, this appears to be over-bureaucratic.

To illustrate the scale of the frustration with larger projects, the following was the timeline for an unresolved issue with damp walls on one of the residential wings:

June 2018	Survey of the problem commissioned
24 September 2018	Survey carried out
30 October 2018	Survey report delivered
Nov 2018 – Apr 2019	Estimates sought and chased
May 2019	Bid submitted
May – Sep 2019	Detailed specification in development
3 September 2019	Detailed bid submitted
8 October 2019	Decision to reduce costs. New bidding process required
Nov – Dec 2019	Re-scoping of the project – still no clear timeline for completion
Jan – Mar. 2020	Various assurances about retendering, submission of bids, awaiting decision on funding, capital bid submitted, etc. Allocation made for scoping referral only
Aug – Oct. 2020	No progress – a structural survey is being arranged.

5.2 Segregation

Eastwood Park does not have a care and separation unit (CSU) and there are currently no plans to introduce one.

If segregation for good order or discipline (GOOD) or cellular confinement are awarded, prisoners are confined to their cells on their normal location, unless, for security or safety reasons, a wing move is indicated. Whenever possible during confinement, prisoners are allowed out of their cells twice a day for exercise, but it is up to the prisoner whether they go outside.

This arrangement has some advantages because prisoners feel less cut off from their peers – other prisoners will often talk to the prisoner through the cell door. Unfortunately, with numerous prisoners being segregated during the reporting period, this has resulted in considerable disruption for the wings affected, with the majority of prisoners being locked up while those segregated had exercise.

However, the establishment was in the final stages of exploring options to introduce a behavioural management unit. This would not be a true CSU but instead would strive to support and change the behaviour of prisoners who displayed actions that could put others at risk. This unit will have interventions involving other key stake holders and would be very proactive. Prisoners who are segregated would not automatically be put on this unit. The decision on the best location for them would be made at the time of segregation, and would consider the wider implications that this decision would have. The Board is fully supportive of this development, especially because of the proactive approach to behaviour change.

During the overall reporting period, there were 128 prisoners segregated under GOOD or cellular confinement, plus 272 segregated under Rule 53, making a total of 400. The total number of segregations was 15% lower than in the previous reporting period. Of these, 153 had open ACCTs, which was a considerable reduction on the 334 referred to in our previous report.

Segregation periods were normally between one and 28 days; there were two instances in excess of 42 days, which were referred to the head of the women's estate for authorisation. One of these prisoners remained segregated for 46 days, and one has been segregated since 16 July 2018 (837 days at the time of writing), and this is still ongoing.

Our concerns about this inhumane treatment continue, despite writing to the minister. Efforts by professionals to date have not, in the Board's opinion, improved her living conditions or addressed her plight. This prisoner exists from day to day in her cell, with little outside contact. While the Governor and staff ensure that the prisoner has the mandatory daily time out of cell, we cannot imagine the effect that such solitary confinement has on a person with an organic personality disorder resulting from a long-term brain injury. The prisoner has been referred to social care but nothing has been heard from occupational therapy practitioners. Support by a lead psychologist is also being considered. The responsibility for funding external support coming into the prison has also been raised.

The Board remains firmly of the opinion that, while specialist establishments are available for men who have brain injuries, there are no secure units for women with similar injuries. This is discriminatory and therefore unlawful. We have great concern about the length of time that it is taking to get the prisoner transferred to accommodation more suited to her needs.

Board members visited every prisoner on cellular confinement/GOOD when they were in the prison, and in the majority of cases had no complaints about their confinement. The Board is normally informed within 24 hours of a prisoner's confinement. Generally, segregation paperwork was of an acceptable standard, and the review panels we attended were conducted well and with sensitivity.

The adjudications attended by a Board monitor were conducted fairly, and care was taken to ensure that the prisoner understood what was happening and why. Punishments were proportionate.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships

Generally, it has been clear to the Board monitors that most staff put effort into establishing positive relationships with prisoners. Some staff have been observed carrying out their role in a very caring and professional way. This is especially true of the staff on the residential unit for those with complex needs. These staff have to deal with extremes of behaviour on a daily basis; for instance, for most of the year there has been at least one prisoner on a dirty protocol (contaminating a cell with bodily fluids) and others who direct their anger and frustration towards staff.

However, there have been times during the year when the pressure of low levels of staffing has been seen in the staff remaining. Board members have observed staff looking tired and stressed.

During the COVID-19 crisis, communication between the Governor/staff and prisoners was particularly good, with daily briefings at the beginning.

There were 41 applications to the Board on issues relating to staff/prisoner relationships and also bullying. This was the largest number of applications in any one category. Most of these applications complained about being treated unfairly by staff.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity was the specific responsibility of a custodial manager. A significant proportion of one officer's time was ring fenced for equality issues. The diversity and equality action team meeting was chaired by the Governor, took place monthly and included wide representation, including prisoner representatives. The equality officer, chaplains, bereavement counsellor and other vital staff have provided considerable targeted support for vulnerable and challenging individuals, including during a very challenging period of lock-down.

5.4.1 Foreign national prisoners

There had been a slight reduction in the number of foreign national prisoners at the establishment – 15 compared with 18 last year, based on a snapshot. Education packs have been produced in 10 different languages. A Home Office immigration officer visited Eastwood Park routinely.

5.4.2 Race

The population at Eastwood Park remains around 86% white, mirroring the racial profile of the catchment area. The prison was particularly proactive in support for prisoners who could possibly have been affected by the Black Lives Matter movement. Prisoners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities were each visited by the equality officer and encouraged to talk

to staff if they had concerns. The Board considered this to be an example of best practice.

During Black History Month, prisoners were encouraged to write articles, poems, quizzes and share personal experiences. There was a very positive take-up, and these were published and distributed in booklet form across the prison. A cook-off, focusing on food from alternative cultures, was arranged for five prisoners. Photographs from the event were taken and publicised.

5.4.3 Older prisoners

In November 2020, there were 42 prisoners over the age of 50 years, which is around 12% of the population, with an increasing number of women with dementia.

A well-regarded group called the Rubies ran frequent groups for prisoners over 50, and the Bluebells group was run for those in their 40s. The Board continued to be impressed by the dedication of staff running this service. The group is sensitively coordinated by the Rubies project manager. When not in lockdown, prisoners engaged in a range of activities – hats were made for patients undergoing chemotherapy, and distributed to the Oncology Department in Cheltenham General Hospital, and soft toys were made and distributed to Great Ormond Street Hospital's hospice for children and local refugee centres. During lockdown, the Rubies group achieved four awards presented by Koestler Arts awards for arts in criminal justice. Two were highly commended for fashion and needlework. One poem was recognised with a Silver award and another received a commended fashion award.

Bereavement counselling and support for older prisoners was provided by a skilled and committed coordinator. Over lockdown, a vital telephone line was set up for older vulnerable prisoners, and this was well used and valued. There was still a very long waiting list of prisoners trying to access the service. Many prisoners have profound issues in trying to cope with loss. Some have little sense of identity. After counselling, over a long period, one prisoner was able to say: 'I have found "I" again'. Another prisoner, who was 83, had a profound fear of dying in prison, and received vital counselling support from the coordinator prior to leaving prison. Unfortunately, there is no dedicated room for accessing confidential counselling.

Some older prisoners had difficulty in navigating busy open areas during free-flow periods, which caused anxiety and stress.

5.4.4 Younger prisoners

The number of young prisoners continues to remain small, with an average of 12.5%. In November, there were only eight prisoners aged 18–20 years, with three on open ACCTs. There were few activities and interventions specifically targeted at this age group.

5.4.5 Religion

The largest group of prisoners defined themselves as Christian. The pastoral presence of the chaplaincy was highly valued across the prison, particularly during the period of lockdown.

5.4.6 Disability

The number of prisoners with a recorded disability was 152 over, and 116 had an identified mental illness. This included 33 prisoners with learning difficulties, 28 classified as 'other disabilities', 16 with reduced mobility, 13 with visual impairment, 12 with hearing impairment, nine with reduced physical capacity, nine with progressive conditions, nine with dyslexia, four with a speech impediment, three prisoners with severe disfigurement, two prisoners with learning disabilities and one prisoner with hearing loss, who needed to lip read. This data includes prisoners with disabilities in more than one category.

5.4.7 Lesbian, bisexual and transgender prisoners

There were usually two to three transgender prisoners at any one time. The transgender policy was implemented at Eastwood Park, with local transgender case boards were held within 14 days of arrival, giving time to gain information about the prisoner in an advanced disclosure form. The Deputy Governor chaired the local boards.

5.4.8 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) prisoners

There were three prisoners who self-identified as GRT on the Prison National Offender Management Information System. It was thought that this was an underestimate, as some chose not to identify themselves.

5.4.9 Discrimination incident report forms

The number of reported incidents recorded on DIRFs reduced considerably during the period of lockdown. Since April 2019, there had only been only 19 DIRFs. By December, there would normally have been more than 70 DIRFs. One possible reason offered for the reduction was that prisoners may have felt more secure during the restricted association because they were spending longer in their own cells. Equally there might also be more significant reasons, which could usefully be examined and kept under review.

DIRFs are reviewed annually by an independent reviewer from Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI).

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The pastoral presence of the chaplaincy was highly valued across the prison, and particularly so during the period of lockdown.

There was consistent leadership in difficult and challenging circumstances. There was still not a full staffing complement but, in spite of this, the chaplaincy maintained a strong and regular presence across the prison. During lock-

down, in-cell materials were provided when requested. Work with individual prisoners had significantly increased and crucial support was provided for prisoners who had recently been bereaved. A planned 'Living with Loss' course was to be established, working collaboratively with the wider prison bereavement counselling service. Individuals on ACCTs were also to be prioritised. A vital telephone helpline was established and this has added an important strand of care.

Religious festivals were celebrated during the year, and festival food produced in the kitchens. The equality officer arranged for publicity to be disseminated across residences.

The chaplaincy supported residents prior to release. However, decisions made independently by external offender managers had an impact on resettlement plans and support opportunities.

5.6 Complaints

The Board received copies of reports on complaints, except for a gap from March to July 2020, when the lockdown prevented Board meetings at the prison.

The number of complaints received from prisoners had been on a downward trend over the last two years. The number of complaints per month ranged from 35 to 65. Usually, fewer complaints were upheld than not. The issues most likely to be complained about were property, the physical environment on the wings (such as heating or access to showers) and staff. Canteen, visits and food also attracted at least one complaint per month.

From August onwards, data was also broken down by protected characteristics. Nothing stood out as a specific problem in this respect.

The quality of the complaints procedure received recognition from HMIP.

5.7 Property

The number of applications to the Board about property was quite high in the early part of the year but from March almost stopped. The main reasons for issues with property are: items lost in transit, items withheld at reception or items lost on the wings. With the reductions in sentencing, the near stoppage of transfers and prisoners being confined to their cells for longer periods, problems have all but ceased.

The baggage storage area is cluttered and somewhat chaotic; some of this is because of a backlog of property that is waiting for inter-prison transfer. In addition, the space available for storage has not kept pace with the increase in the prison population. The other reason is that although reception staff have had fewer transfers, they have been redeployed within the prison to cover for staff shortages.

A positive move has been in the sourcing of simple mobile phones to give to any prisoner released from prison who does not have one. Most prisoners

have a mobile phone when they come in but these are now available, just in case.

Several complaints were received about parcels not being delivered. On investigation, this was due to there being a compulsory three-day COVID-19 quarantine applied in reception.

One issue identified during the year was that prisoners were being released with their chattels in clear flimsy bin liner-type bags. Reception staff asked for a reasonable opaque bag to be provided which they could hand out for the prisoner's departure. As a result of excellent efforts by staff, prisoners are now issued with a basic commercially available opaque bag.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

Bristol Community Health (BCH) was the prime contractor of the prison healthcare service until they served notice on the contract and ceased trading as of 31 March 2020. From 1 April 2020, the remaining partner agencies continued to provide the health service with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust ('AWP'). Additional services continued to be provided by Time for Teeth; Homecare Opticians; North Bristol NHS Trust – Midwifery; and GP Care – Sonography. The service continued to be commissioned by NHS England health and justice commissioners.

Within the contract, AWP, in addition to being the prime contract provider, also provided the mental health and substance misuse services and medication management, with its primary pharmacy serving the prison being based at HMP Bristol. The GP service and physical nursing team is provided by Hanham Secure Health.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, services continued to run at capacity, providing a range of both clinical and non-clinical interventions. From March 2020 until October 2020, the provision of face-to-face interventions reduced owing to COVID-19 restrictions.

Pathways, the primary care centre, continued to operate an equivalent service to a GP practice in the community. It was open from Monday to Friday and was operating up to eight clinics simultaneously, seeing between 60 and 70 prisoners a day. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a reduction in the number of face-to-face clinics, and the use of the prison telephony service to triage patients was increased. This enabled patients accessing the service to have contact with clinicians while also maintaining social distancing and preventing the possible spread of COVID-19.

Prisoners were seen by healthcare staff within 24 hours of arrival at the establishment. The prison has 24-hour nursing care and 24-hour on-call GP cover. Prisoners are able to access female clinicians across all specialties. Patient care is tailored to clinical need, including escorts and bed watches at outside hospitals.

Access to medication to support prisoners who are not able to have this in possession has continued to improve, through changes to the way they are risk assessed on arrival and reviewed while they reside in the establishment, along with additional medications being made available through patient group directions.

The previously held service user focus groups had been running up until March 2020; however, because of the COVID-19 restrictions, these were put on hold. These were due to restart in October, to support the development of the service; as an interim measure, smaller groups were planned to be held on individual residential units, as set out in the exceptional delivery model agreed with the prison and NHS England.

Waiting times for the dentist increased as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions and the reduction in the service being provided. Prisoners used the telephony service for triage, and the dental team was responsive in providing the appropriate treatments.

The healthcare service continued to use the 'Listening to You' forms as the mode of contact with the healthcare provider. It was noted in the 2018/19 report that prisoners did not like this method of communication, as they felt that the response time was too long. There have been no formal changes to the response time on these applications. A steady volume is received each month, with the main focus being on medication requests.

There were 40 healthcare-related applications to the Board during the reporting year. Of these, 25 concerned complaints about medication – usually delays in prescribing or changes made from the medication they were receiving in the community. Eight related to access to treatment – typically, delays in referral. The latter was a considerable reduction on the number of applications received on this theme last year.

The head of healthcare has continued to respond promptly to enquiries by the Board about specific prisoners, which has helped to resolve many of the issues raised in applications.

6.2 Mental healthcare

In their annual report for 2019/20, HMIP reported that 71% of women coming into prison reported having mental health problems, compared with 47% of men. Of these, 56% of women reported having depression, compared with 36% of men.

During the year, there were 28 Mental Health Act transfers. However, 11 referrals were declined by the outside hospital providers as not requiring a transfer, and five civil mental health assessments were convened for women who were civil prisoners and who had been sent to prison for their own safety in the absence of suitable facilities in the community.

A mental health crisis team operated 365 days a year, with an 8am to 8pm service. The team operated across all wings of the prison, providing support to first-case ACCT reviews, assessing prisoners who were in crisis and implementing intervention plans to support those who were acutely mentally un-

well, being transferred to a psychiatric hospital or self-harming. This included the prisoners on the complex needs unit.

The mental health team provided mental health assessment by practitioners who had the additional qualification of being a non-medical prescriber, and so could prescribe, adjust and review medication. The assessments could also consider non-pharmacological interventions which might be appropriate for the prisoners.

Last year, the service introduced a new band 5 registered nurse role to the primary care model, aiming to process the routine referrals more quickly, reducing waiting times. Unfortunately, during the year, the member of staff left and recruitment has been unsuccessful.

Waiting times for the Mental Health Act transfers varied, and were certainly exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 on the availability community-based secure mental health services.

During lockdown, group work had to stop. The psychiatrist continued to see all relevant prisoners to complete assessments and reviews, with the support of a number of junior psychiatrist colleagues.

During the year, the Board's main contact with mentally ill prisoners was through regular monitoring of the complex needs unit. This unit dealt with prisoners with the most serious mental health concerns. Prison and health staff worked closely together to address the health and social needs of the prisoners. For much of the year, the unit was full, and often there were prisoners on normal location who would have been suitable for the unit but a priority system had to operate. It was often the case that cells in the unit were out of operation as they required repairs because of the behaviour of the previous resident. Many of these cells remained out of operation for long periods waiting for repairs.

The behaviour of some of the residents in this unit is highly challenging and confrontational. The staff team face daily challenges to maintain order, deal with hygiene issues and violent behaviour, and provide for the needs of the prisoners at the same time. Their professionalism and commitment are always impressive.

Since 2015, Eastwood Park has had a specialist unit and service, called the Nexus service, for prisoners with a personality disorder. This was commissioned by NHS England and HMPPS, and forms part of the national offender personality disorder pathway.

The Nexus service consists of the following components: a day service on the unit that provides assessment, formulation, pathway planning and one-to-one and group therapy; a psychologically informed planned environment with 16 residential places; and an outreach service to the wider prison.

The prisoners on this unit felt that they had an experience that was very different from that on the other wings. They had more access to talking about problems rather than acting on them. It was of note that the reoffending rate of the prisoners receiving such intensive help was lower than for the rest of the prison.

During the lockdown, the service had to adapt – for instance, in relation to the day service, group work had to stop but content was adapted and presented in individual work-pack format.

6.3 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

Before the COVID-19 crisis took effect:

- The gym was well used, and offered sessions to all wings across the prison, and so operated at full capacity. Early morning sessions were also offered to the prisoners on the least restrictive wing.
- Prisoners approached the Board requesting additional gym time, which could not be facilitated as the gym was operating at full capacity.

Since Eastwood Park has changed the regime to reduce the risk of infection:

- The regime has been severely restricted, with about 80% of prisoners spending 23 hours a day in their cells. Staffing levels were sufficient to ensure that the restricted regime was run consistently. In addition to time out of cell, there were opportunities to have showers. Approximately 20% of the prisoners who were on specialist, less restrictive wings received two hours' exercise a day.
- Initially, there were no gym sessions and no formal exercise classes because of social distancing needs. Subsequently, some fitness sessions were held outside, in groups of six, weather permitting. These sessions took over 40 minutes, 20 minutes in activity and the rest of the time in sanitising duties; thus, the number of active sessions offered was severely reduced.
- Subsequently, the PE team worked hard to ensure that the gym and fitness suite were COVID-19 secure, although additional remedial work was still required in the fitness suite. When these were both operational, it would be possible to offer opportunities to 20 prisoners per session. It was hoped that this work would soon be done, given how important PE was to the regime during lockdown.
- The Board received applications regarding the lack of showers immediately after a gym session. This was due to the lack of staff at particular times. However, showers were made available when staff numbers facilitated this.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

As previously mentioned, over a third of women entering prison report problems withdrawing from drugs and alcohol. Avon and Wiltshire NHS Partnership's substance misuse psychosocial team (SMPT) continued to provide both harm minimisation and abstinence support alongside other professionals at

Eastwood Park prison. They focussed on providing as much support as possible bearing in mind the resources available and the constraints of the lockdown.

There were fluctuations in treatment admissions but these had normalised by the end of the reporting year. Around half of all admissions to treatment had an opiate dependence. There was also a surge in alcohol use, both in combination with other substances and as a standalone issue.

The team manager reported that a benefit of a reduction in resources was a drive to innovate, and as a result the SMPT was developing clearer and more robust treatment pathways for substance misusing prisoners.

Everything within substance misuse that occurs between reception and release is defined as a 'treatment pathway'. The challenge to creating effective treatment pathways was time, as many of the prisoners were serving short sentences – and were often 'revolving door' clients, some of whom had been recalled.

Effective treatment pathways in substance misuse featured three primary objectives:

1. Establishing personal safety for the individual and safeguarding those around them;
2. Raising awareness as to the perils of substance misuse;
3. Achieving longer-term health objectives through sustained behavioural changes.

In the traditional way, the substance misuse service has usually focused on key-working relationships, harm minimisation advice and information, and psychopharmacology.

Both group work and one-on-one counselling have been the convention on which effective substance misuse interventions have been reliant.

The pandemic had a profound impact on the SMPT's ability to deliver in-person interventions. The team made very good use of the technology available and used the in-cell telephony as a key way to deliver the service. The service was delivering in excess of 170 interventions per quarter.

The drug recovery unit was established as a therapeutic treatment modality at Eastwood Park in April 2013. The programme was recognised as offering a vital opportunity for prisoners to learn skills associated with the resilience necessary to live a drug-free lifestyle.

The programme focuses on the first five steps of the 12 Steps programme, and seeks to offer all prisoners who complete it ongoing links to established communities of recovered substance misuse individuals who seek to support each-other through established programmes of mutual aid.

In April 2020, the Detox to Drug Recovery Community (D2DRC) was initiated, in order to continue offering a service to prisoners who were confined for

longer periods because of the measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. These restrictions abruptly put a stop to therapeutic groups and face-to-face counselling, and the D2DRC initially responded with a comprehensive telephonic service. Later it evolved into something of a hybrid telephone, group-work and face-to-face counselling service.

The programme immediately reached out to prisoners who held on to a vision that they could use their prison sentence to best effect if they could be supported to detoxify with resilience training.

Using the in-cell telephonic system, D2DRC delivered core therapeutic interventions. Patients were clearly happy with the telephone appointment system, and the long-term viability of the programme was immediately apparent.

The team maintained close links to organisations in the community. When interviewing prisoners due for release, it was frequently the case that those with substance misuse issues had been put in touch with organisations in the community that could help them on release. It was sadly the case, however, that the failure to identify suitable accommodation for prisoners being released continued to undermine work done with some prisoners to address their substance misuse problems.

The Board received very few applications concerning problems with drug rehabilitation, except occasional concerns about levels of prescribing. Considering the challenges faced by prisoners with drug and alcohol habits when coming into prison, we took this as a sign that the service was working well. However, we noted during the year that the SMPT had a high level of staff vacancies, adding an additional level of challenge.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education and library

The range of education provision has been seriously limited by the physical space available. Additional facilities have not kept pace with the 20% expansion of the prison population since 2016.

The lack of classroom/workshop space and specialist staff has also restricted the diversity of learning opportunities available for all prisoners.

Before the COVID-19 crisis took effect:

- On average, 100 prisoners were engaged in education each day; this was very similar to the situation in 2019. However, there were 36 (38 in 2019) teaching sessions lost because of operational staff being deployed to bed watches, constant watches and early lockdown of the daily prison regimes. This equated to over a month's worth of teaching that could not be delivered. This had a severe impact on the prisoners' progress and affected completion rates of courses and targets.
- Education attendance of over 80% (unchanged from 2019) was good, but if the regime had functioned without curtailment, this would have approached 98%.

- The education department was fully staffed by teachers and contracted staff but delivery was erratic due to shortages of operational staff. Courses were being undertaken for level 2 English and mathematics.
- Distance learning was popular with learners taking Open University courses and other distance learning opportunities.
- The library was well stocked and heavily used. It was staffed by community librarians, who managed the book ordering system.

Since the change to the regime, to reduce the risk of infection:

- The current conditions have required a substantial revision of norms.
- Since March 2020, approximately 160 learners were not engaged in formal courses of education. No new assessments were completed for prisoners coming into the prison during this time.
- Courses were being undertaken for level 2 English and mathematics; however, no exam could be taken as lockdown was activated before prisoners were ready to take them. Some prisoners were awarded the qualification based on teacher assessment for the completion of content to date.
- All staff worked from home and provided in-cell work packs covering foundation and vocational subjects. Initially, there were 25 packs, and this increased with time. A weekly activity pack was also provided by Weston College; these were provided for interest and research and were not aiming at any specific qualifications. These packs were delivered to the wings.
- The returned work packs were sent out for marking to the staff working at home. Apart from being marked, the packs also identified individuals' specific learning gaps or needs. From this, the education manager working in Eastwood Park was able to provide extension packs or further work targeted at specific needs or reinforcement tasks. From an unfamiliar beginning, this proved to be an unexpected diagnostic tool from which additional needs could be identified, and attempts made to meet them.
- The type and scope of the in-cell activity packs expanded, with over 100 packs a week sent to all wings in June 2020.
- Staff from Weston College standardised all work packs by levels of difficulty, resulting in five progression packs for each of English, mathematics, information technology (IT) and all vocational subjects. This resulted in 120 differentiated work packs.
- While the prison was in stage 3 of recovery, teachers were allowed to go on to the wings and work with the same groups of prisoners every day. This maintained consistency between teacher and learner, and enabled progression.
- Distance learning for those with level 2 English or above was progressed by the education manager. It was predominantly in-cell study, although some

restrictions were lifted to allow access to IT as required. This was overseen by the education manager.

- The 18 Open University students (10 in 2019) and 20 distance learners (16 in 2019) managed to maintain their learning. Eastwood Park had the highest number of distance learning applicants among the women's estate during lockdown (six more than the next ranking prison).
- The library remained open throughout this time, predominantly being run by the education manager, who took boxes of books to all the wings. The boxes were changed weekly. When the library staff returned, they changed the books on the wings and ran a request service. In October, there were 180 requests for library books.
- Information and guidance staff ran a remote telephone service. They returned to working on the wings, offering work packs on preparation for release in October 2020.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Before the COVID-19 crisis took effect:

- As has been stated in previous annual reports, the development of this area was greatly impeded by lack of space and skills-specific areas in which to expand and offer additional opportunities for prisoners. The lack of space precluded continuation of local contracts for assembly and packaging, and also any potential additional sourcing. It would have been advantageous to offer skills/qualifications providing access to less stereotypical female careers/roles (for example, construction, engineering) but this was also prohibited by a lack of specialist accommodation, staffing and facilities.
- In January 2020, employment was available for orderlies in the chapel; the education, reception, physical education, equality and diversity, and safer custody departments; the kitchen and serveries; and as wing cleaners.
- The café, run by prisoners, expanded its range of refreshments. All prisoners stated that they had acquired skills for employment and gained self-esteem while working in the café.
- The resource management area expanded, but problems remained with the accrediting body for courses in this field, as with those associated with industrial cleaning (biohazards training being the priority). It was disappointing that the establishment was unable to offer work opportunities tailored to these qualifications that would have improved entry into local job opportunities.
- There were some opportunities for release on temporary licence (ROTL) but these were restricted by travel needs and a local hourly bus service.
- Work coaches from the Work and Pensions Department were present in the prison, helping prisoners prepare for work and/or familiarising themselves with the current financial/benefits system.

- Research and some planning had started for a project to link education and activities into rehabilitation/resettlement, but this was curtailed by lockdown.

Since the change to the regime, to reduce the risk of infection:

- Areas of employment within the prison were reduced considerably. Approximately 15% of prisoners employed in key worker areas (kitchen, servery and cleaning) had more time out of their cells to perform their tasks.
- Several work areas (including resource management and gardens) had to reduce the number of placements available. Subsequently, the work of the resource management had to stop when the contracted collectors were locked down.
- All ROTL stopped, with doubts about this area resuming until there is confidence that the local and national lockdowns have ended.
- Plans to fund qualifications in the kitchen and resource management areas are under consideration as part of next year's education contract.
- There are plans in place to develop a charity clothing shop on site, which will create some roles and offer prisoners a different experience, in terms of being able to visit a 'shop'. It is possible that this development might also offers some repair work and perhaps some hairdressing, but plans have yet to be formulated.

It was the Board's view that the education team had done everything in their power to ensure that learning opportunities continued for prisoners at Eastwood Park, in very difficult circumstances.

6.7 Soft skills

Before the COVID-19 crisis took effect:

- The Nelson Trust delivered courses addressing domestic violence and trauma, Pattern Changing and Beyond Anger. The Restore and the Nurturing programmes, based around parenting, were also offered.
- In the Nexus unit (see section 6.2), specific therapeutic sessions were held. The planned rolling programmes were of one year's duration and covered a range of themes.
- In January 2020, staffing difficulties based on uncertain funding hindered the work of the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), as the team was reduced from three to one member of staff.
- The Women's Institute group was dispersed in January 2020 owing to a lack of staff to run the sessions.
- All prisoners were encouraged to participate in the Koestler prisoners' art competition (40–50 prisoners entered the competition in 2020).

Since the change to the regime, to reduce the risk of infection:

- The Nelson Trust was present throughout lockdown. It resumed small group delivery after a suspension of activities due to the lockdown, although this was limited as it could only take prisoners from one wing for each group. The Trust developed a course that looks at relationships in the community and how these affect women when they are in custody. Sources of funding for this course are now being sought.
- The personality disorder services in Nexus were suspended for some time but restarted in November 2020. During the interim, some prisoners were released without completing their courses. At the time of writing, group deliveries started 'back at square one', to ensure that all prisoners (new and continuing) had equal opportunities to benefit from complete programmes.
- PACT staffing improved and they began working remotely. Staff returned to the site and were a source of support to prisoners, although personal contact remained limited. A Board application was received in October, asking when the staff would be back to full capacity; this was resolved by the end of the month.
- Work started with the South West reducing reoffending board on a project that looks at recalls and planning for release. It is a 12-month pilot and, although progress was curtailed during lockdown, some interesting themes arose from the work done so far.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Offender management at Eastwood Park has, for some years, faced a number of challenges from being under-resourced with staff, an under-performing community rehabilitation company (CRC), woefully inadequate office accommodation and a large volume of work due to the nature of the population. On top of this, the delays to the development and implementation of the new model for offender management in the women's estate have meant that the hoped-for benefits of a new model are still not touching the population at Eastwood Park.

Although, COVID-19 notwithstanding, it should be possible to implement the new model, starting with the introduction of a full key work operation, the Governor has taken a stand and refused to implement the model until the inadequacy of office accommodation for the staff has been addressed. The Board has sympathy with this position, as we have raised these issues for some years (since 2016/17) in our annual reports and noted the glacial progress being made.

Prior to lockdown, we noted that there had been some progress with increasing the number of prisoners going out to work on ROTL.

The government started an early release scheme, with the intention of reducing the prison population during the pandemic. We noted that there were at least nine iterations of the scheme, and that it was complicated and, therefore, potentially easy to misinterpret. It also resulted in only a handful of prisoners being released – a lot of management effort for not much effect. Under an adjunct of the scheme, two women with babies were released on special purpose ROTL.

During lockdown, the CRC staff worked remotely for part of the time. They still managed to complete the basic custody screening tool part 2, in order to assess and plan for resettlement needs.

The Board received a small number of applications in relation to sentence dates and eligibility for home detention curfew (HDC) during the reporting year. Often, the applications were made because the prisoner had not been able to get a speedy answer from the offender management unit.

7.4 Family contact

The maintenance of family contact has always been a strong focus at Eastwood Park. This has been hampered by the distances that many prisoners' families have to travel to make visits, as a result of the prison's huge catchment area. The installation of in-cell telephony has helped with family contact, and prisoners make good use of it.

For many years the voluntary organisation, PACT, has offered a family support service at the establishment. Towards the end of last reporting year, HMPPS withdrew funding for two of the three PACT workers, without consultation or explanation. The remaining member of the team was concerned that they could not give the support needed.

Visitors complained at the loss of support from PACT, and they praised and appreciated its work and support. They had particularly appreciated PACT staff taking festive family photographs in the visits hall during Christmas visits.

In October 2020, the Board was told that a social worker was being recruited to support the sole PACT worker. As a result of the COVID-19 situation, the PACT worker did not attend the prison for significant periods, and so family support has suffered as a result.

At the beginning of lockdown, a scheme was started for mothers to record reading bedtime stories for their children, and they greatly appreciated this.

Prison social visits have been one of the biggest changes this year, with most visits suspended between March and July. When visits restarted, they were very different, with new precautions in place. In order to reduce the risk of infection, children were not allowed to have physical contact with their mothers, or play with the toys. This, combined with sitting at a table for the hour's visit, was not child friendly. Unfortunately, in early November 2020, these visits were once again stopped as the prison entered 'lockdown 2'.

The visits room and toilets were always clean and well maintained. The food and beverages on offer in the Busy Bean café, run by the prisoners, were always appetising.

During our observations, the visits hall was not very busy but all staff wore masks and good social distancing was observed. Families and prisoners did not like these visits as, after sometimes long and expensive journeys, the en-

vironment was too clinical and children had to remain in their family bubble during the entire visit, having no contact with the prisoner.

In June, Eastwood Park was fortunate to be chosen as a pilot site for 'Purple Visits'. This system allows the prisoner to make a video call to a nominated family member and see people, items and events in their own homes.

Visits are booked from outside and cost £9.60, which is usually a saving to the visitors of transport costs. This system is more relaxed, with children and visitors in their own homes. It has been popular and welcomed by most prisoners, although a few have said that they do not want officers to see their home conditions.

As the popularity of this system ramps up, there will be a need to increase the hardware for these links, and to provide a permanent venue to accommodate them. New booths have already been installed.

Some prisoners said that this was their preferred method of keeping in touch, as it felt more personal and easier for their family/friends than coming up to Eastwood Park, as many lived so many miles away. The prison aimed to offer one session per prisoner per month.

Before lockdown, the MBU introduced overnight children's visits for women with children under 12. This was a great success but sadly had to end because of COVID-19. In addition, the MBU hosted children's day visits for those with children under 16. This excellent 12-bedded unit remained sadly under-used, with an average of three mothers during the reporting year. Mothers in this unit were full of praise for the unit and its staff, frequently saying that they had access to better treatment in Eastwood Park than on the outside.

At the end of the reporting year the Governor informed the Board that the 'email a prisoner' scheme and 'prisoner voicemail' should be available by the end of October 2020.

7.5 Resettlement planning

In February 2020, 10 out of 12 prisons in the women's estate carried out a monitoring exercise focusing on resettlement. The findings were published in August 2020. At Eastwood Park, we interviewed 10 prisoners, all of whom were being released in the same week. They had all been in Eastwood Park for a relatively short time, from a few days to two months.

Four out of 10 had lost their accommodation because of their imprisonment, and only three had suitable and permanent accommodation to go to on release. Most said that they had received some help regarding their release. At a minimum, this involved help in sorting out benefits, and one prisoner told us that the resettlement officer had helped her secure her tenancy, so she would not be homeless on release. Three prisoners said that they had received no help and one said: 'No, I have just been passed from person to person and now it's too late'. Only two prisoners could remember attending a course to address their offending.

Resettlement staff said that their main challenges were that the length of stay at Eastwood Park was too short to do any meaningful work on resettlement, and that the catchment area for the prison is so large that it makes it difficult to stay in touch with what support is available in all the different communities. In addition, locating suitable housing was always a challenge.

The CRC reported that the percentage of those released with no suitable home to go to ranged from 24% to 40%. Additional help was made available for the homeless during the COVID-19 crisis. However, when this ends, there is no indication that the levels of homelessness among released prisoners will improve.

Staff also identified gaps in provision, including ROTL, vocational training leading to work on release, women's centre provision in the community, the lack of supported accommodation, the lack of domestic and sexual abuse services, places in mental health facilities, counselling and bereavement services and the reduction in resources for family support was also highlighted.

Prisoners' views were sought on resettlement services, and they said the following:

- Once in Eastwood Park, prisoners need more communication and need to feel that services are working in coordination to help address women's needs;
- Prisoners asked that Eastwood Park staff respond to resettlement applications in a reasonable time in order to be effective, and not within 48 hours of discharge;
- Feelings of nobody listening generated concerns that spiral and are demonstrated as bad behaviour or dealing mental health.

Staff continued to describe resettlement as 'an uphill struggle every day'. This is not helped by the lack of suitable office and interview space for the resettlement team.

The Board received a steady flow of applications in relation to release arrangements, with prisoners expressing their concerns about not knowing where they would be living on release.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	226

Our work during this period was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

During periods of lockdown, we kept our visits to the prison to a minimum. Board meetings have been held either in the prison's training centre, which is outside the main gate. or via teleconference.

The Governor attended monthly Board meetings or joined teleconferences, to keep the Board aware of all developments within the establishment.

We normally received copies of notes following the daily operations meetings, which included details of segregated prisoners, issues that had arisen and general statistics. During periods of remote monitoring, we normally received weekly updates from individual wings/departments throughout the establishment, which enabled us to prepare weekly reports.

As direct monitoring visits were kept to a minimum, we were a pilot Board for the introduction of a national freephone IMB applications helpline. This highly successful service for prisoners has been run by volunteer Board members throughout England and Wales, with coordination by the IMB's national Secretariat.

The facility for prisoners to make written applications has also continued. Due to the exceptional circumstances, such applications have been submitted via wing complaints boxes, rather than the normal IMB application boxes, which have been sealed off for the time being.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend our Board clerk, who scanned all written applications received and coordinated all letters to prisoners in response to helpline and written applications received. All communication in respect of applications between the Board and Eastwood Park has been via CJSM (secure email).

Two probationary members joined the Board in January 2020. Unfortunately, their training was severely affected by the lockdown, and the normal national training courses were suspended because of the pandemic. National 'online' training was developed urgently, and worked well. Both members made visits to the establishment as often as possible, and, following successful completion of their probationary period, they have been appointed as full members of the Eastwood Park Board.

The Governor, her management team and senior staff have been accessible and extremely helpful to the Board during this difficult time. We are confident that information provided remotely by the prison accurately reflects conditions in Eastwood Park. Our enquiries are dealt with promptly, and satisfactory responses received.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	33	36
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	8	2
C	Equality	15	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	11	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	21	17
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	6
F	Food and kitchens	12	10
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	51	40
H1	Property within this establishment	32	21
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	4	0
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	5	3

I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	29	21
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	65	41
K	Transfers	2	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	0
	Total number of applications	289	217

Applications by month

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
18/19	38	30	21	24	20	18	14	29	28	19	22	26
19/20	21	18	22	14	27	9	12	6	32	18	11	26

Time taken to deal with applications

	Within one day	Within one week	Longer than a week
2018/19	45%	41%	14%
2019/20	35%	52%	13%

Analysis of applications

This year has been exceptional because of the COVID-19 situation. There were periods when we were not making visits to the prison during lockdown. At the end of April 2020, a national applications helpline was introduced and the Eastwood Park Board volunteered to be part of the pilot. There was a significant dropping-off in applications from April to June. Perhaps the prisoners were getting used to a new way of doing things. Since the introduction of the helpline, about 60% of applications came through this route, and 40% through the traditional paper application route.

The volume of applications to the Board was lower than last year. It was the Board's view that the complexity of applications remained high. There were few changes in the distribution of subject matter. Issues relating to prisoners' immediate environment were higher and those relating to staff/prisoner relationships were lower. There were more applications in relation to transfers – typically, prisoners wanted to be closer to home during a time when inter-prison transfers had stopped, in order to reduce transmission of the virus. It was pleasing that 87% of applications were closed within a week of receipt, despite the fact that the Board was operating remotely or at a reduced level for most of this period.



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