

# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Dovegate

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

Published May 2021

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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 to the prison's records.

The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP Dovegate is committed to treating all with respect and fairness, regardless of race, colour, ethnicity, religion, belief, national origin, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

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 IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

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

HMP Dovegate is located near Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, and is a category B training prison holding male residents aged 21 and over.

The main prison consists of convicted residents, mainly serving determinate sentences, a remand facility and about 130 local prison places.

There is also a purpose-built therapeutic community (TC), which takes repeat and mainly violent offenders, who come from any prison in the country and volunteer to address their offending behaviour through group and individual therapy. All residents go through an assessment before being accepted as suitable for the challenges which come with the therapy on the TC.

The certified normal accommodation of the main prison is 960, and that of the TC is 200, giving a combined total of 1,160.

The number of residents held in the main prison over the reporting year has been at, or close to, the operational capacity.

The main prison consists of three houseblocks. The two original houseblocks (1 and 2) each have five wings, built around a central 'bubble'. Each wing has two floors, with each floor having 20 cells and four shared showers. A food serving area and a laundry are on the ground floor. There are fixed tables and chairs, a pool table and exercise machines in the recreation area, plus an outside exercise yard with outdoor gym equipment. Cells in these two houseblocks were designed for single occupancy and have an in-cell wash basin and toilet.

A further 20 cells are larger and can accommodate two residents.

The new houseblock (3) has its four wings built around a control 'bubble'. This block has a dedicated drug treatment wing. The cells are larger, complying with European Prison Rules standards, and have integral showers. All the wings have the same communal facilities as in houseblocks 1 and 2.

All cells have a telephone installed, and all calls are security monitored. The Board has access to a telephone whereby they can contact residents in their cells.

Houseblock 1	Category B trainer
A wing	Long-term sentences (over 10 years) and enhanced incentives and earned privileges (IEP) status
B/C/D/E wings	Sentenced residents engaged in employment/education
Houseblock 2	Category B trainer
F wing	Sentenced residents engaged in employment/education
G wing	Long-term sentences (over 10 years) and enhanced IEP status
H wing	Sentenced residents engaged in employment/education
J wing	Sentenced residents engaged in employment/education
K wing	Social responsibility unit (SRU)
Houseblock 3	Local prison
L wing	Sentenced/remand residents serving less than two years
M wing	Early days centre, and interventions and substance misuse team (ISMT) detoxification
N wing	Sentenced/remand residents serving less than two years
P wing	Vulnerable residents (those convicted of a sexual offence)

The TC, which is separated from the main prison by an internal fence, consists of three houseblocks, all having single occupancy cells, with in-cell toilets and showers. The fourth block houses the education department and a small TC visits hall with a family room.

It shares some of the main prison facilities – for example, the health centre and gym.

The care and separation unit (CSU) (segregation) is a separate block and has 18 cells and two special cells.

Automated teller machines (ATMs) are installed in all the residential areas, allowing residents to check their accounts, order meals, make medical and dental appointments, access the prison complaints system and arrange visits. Other functions are added on a regular basis.

The prison has its own kitchen and laundry.

The health centre has two waiting rooms and a range of treatment and consulting rooms for outpatient clinics. The inpatient facility has accommodation for 11 residents. Each room has a toilet and washbasin. There is one bath/shower room in the unit.

The prison has a large education and training facility (Dovegate College), four workshops, a recycling centre, a gym, and a multi-faith centre.

The library services are provided by Serco, in partnership with Staffordshire Library Services.

The prison kitchen produces all meals in-house for residents, as well as for staff in a small bistro.

The prison has a contract with Serco Integrated Services for facilities management.

The prison has well-maintained and attractive gardens, with productive vegetable and flower growing areas. These have been looked after well during the lockdowns.

As mentioned in last year's report, a hedgehog preservation scheme began in summer 2018. Constructed by residents, it was hoped that 'HMP Hog Gate' would help to increase the population of this endangered species, but unfortunately all the hedgehogs were thought to have escaped. They have since reappeared and have successfully produced a healthy litter while fending for themselves during lockdown.

### **3. Executive summary**

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

At the start of this reporting year the Board continued its 'normal' monitoring of HMP Dovegate with seven members and three probationers. Two of the probationers had left before lockdown and two experienced members left in the second half of the year. Most of the monitoring from March to September was done remotely, with only two members making limited visits, principally to attend CSU reviews and answer applications.

In February 2020, the Director left the prison with little warning, to take up the post of Director at HMP Doncaster. The Deputy Director filled the post until the new Director arrived in April. A new Deputy Director and several new Assistant Directors were also appointed.

Board members have had access to all areas of the prison. The Board has had full cooperation from the Directors and their senior management teams, both before and after the changes. We would like to express our thanks to them for their help, especially through the first difficult months of the pandemic.

We also greatly appreciate the guidance and support received from the controller and her team – again, especially during the pandemic.

Due to our shortage of active members and the lockdowns, many areas of the prison have been subjected to very limited monitoring. This is particularly true for the TC, where, if numbers allow, the Board would like to monitor in more depth. Having said that, on our weekly visits to the TC, the atmosphere on the wings is usually very calm and relaxed, and the communities seem settled. The Board receives few applications from residents there. A Board member was due to take the TC as an area of special responsibility in 2021.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The prison was generally calm and settled, and residents had good relationships with each other and staff. Managers actively work to address gang culture and be aware of vulnerable residents who may be taken advantage of.

Measures put in place by the prison and the healthcare team to address the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic were effective in preventing any outbreak in the prison up to the end of the reporting year.

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

Accommodation and facilities in Dovegate are good. The reporting system from the Board's weekly rota visits worked well, and issues of cleanliness or disrepair were generally acted on quickly.

Although these rota visits were much less frequent in the second part of the year, Board members found the prison to be well maintained and clean throughout.

Staff treated residents with respect and the Board saw generally positive relationships between them. This was helped by the successful key worker scheme and good communication between staff and residents.

As with last year's report the Board has ongoing concerns about apparent race disparity in the CSU. (see Section 5.2)

The lack of availability of body-worn cameras (BWCs) is a concern to the Board. This has been raised in previous reports and is highlighted in this report with reference to the CSU (see section 5.2) and SRU (see section 4.3).

A few BWCs were in use earlier in the year, but at the end of the reporting year there were none available in the prison. The Board is aware that Serco has a contract with a new supplier of BWCs, and looks forward to their rollout in the prison.

The food is of a high standard and residents have access to a wide range of products in the prison shop.

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

Health and social care are provided by Care UK, which subcontracts to Midland Partnership Foundation Trust for the delivery of mental health services.

The Board has found that good cooperation between the healthcare and custodial teams produces positive outcomes for residents' health, and any concerns that the Board raises are generally dealt with immediately.

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

'Through the gate' work is undertaken by the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP), under contract to the community rehabilitation company. RRP provides the seven resettlement pathway assessments and courses. These have continued during lockdown and, although group work courses had to stop, the courses were adapted for one-to-one work using booklets and in cell-telephone contact.

The RRP staff working in Dovegate have felt that it has been a safe environment and have stated that they have been well cared for by Serco managers and staff during the pandemic.

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

#### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- The Board asks the minister to encourage the government to continue the National Homelessness Task Force after the pandemic, so that resettlement departments have this additional help to provide settled accommodation on release to prisoners without strong family ties.
- The Board looks for positive timely action from the Prison Service in regard to the point raised below, regarding prisoners' property during transfer. This has been highlighted in at least our last three annual reports. Far more urgency needs to be applied to this problem.

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

- The Board still has to deal with a substantial number of property issues resulting from transfers from other establishments. More effort needs to be made to find a national solution to this problem, perhaps taking a lead from Dovegate's introduction of a computerised property log for residents.

#### ***TO THE DIRECTOR***

The Board would like to thank the Director for her availability and openness to them, especially as she took up her post barely weeks into the pandemic. We are hopeful that what we highlight here, especially the points raised in previous annual reports, will see action in the present reporting year.

- Upgrade the inpatient bath/shower room.
- Ensure that working body-worn cameras are available to every officer on the CSU and SRU, and that they are worn and visible outside clothing at all times.
- Resolve the ongoing issue of the inadequate and unhygienic toilet in the main waiting room in the health centre.
- Reinstate the provision of purposeful activity for residents in the inpatient healthcare unit.
- Continue to investigate the apparent race disproportionality in the CSU.

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

- The Board acknowledges the continuation of improvements made over the last three years to the fabric and general cleanliness of the prison, which impacts on the health and welfare of residents.
  
- An increase in intelligence-led searches, especially during lockdown, has resulted in finds of significant quantities of contraband.
  
- The ongoing improvements to healthcare provision in the prison which the Board has recognised in previous reports, and the cooperation between custodial and healthcare staff, undoubtedly contributed to the successful implementation of measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

All incoming residents have a consultation with a nurse and are given written information on the healthcare services available. This also covers the complaints and concerns system. Complaint forms specific to healthcare are available on all houseblocks and are dealt with by healthcare managers.

The induction process normally takes place on the wing and is led by well-established residents, known as Insiders. This system worked well but obviously ceased when reverse cohorting was introduced in response to COVID-19.

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

The number of incidents of self-harm increased from 450 to 775. Many of the incidents of self-harm were carried out by a few residents who were prolific self-harmers.

The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened increased from 697 to 874. This increase followed a response by Healthcare staff to an increase of low mood and depression amongst some residents. These were opened as a precaution and to allow staff to be able to monitor these individuals closely and decrease the potential of self-harm.

Most of the increases took place after the COVID-19 restrictions were enforced and coincided with the prison receiving new residents from the courts.

There were three deaths in custody, one was apparently self-inflicted, and one was a resident who chose to remain in the health centre for his end-of-life palliative care.

As is the case for all deaths in custody, these are being investigated by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

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

The total number of violent incidents reduced by 43; resident-on-resident incidents reduced by 46 and there was a slight increase in resident-on-staff incidents, from 45 to 48.

Active violence reduction measures were in place and the SRU on K wing has been expanded to include the whole wing, and is used to capacity. The aims of the unit are:

- to address and manage all forms of antisocial behaviour and violent tendencies shown by identified individuals
- to increase responsibility for behaviour and build motivation to address individual problems through cooperation with others
- to raise and develop awareness of prevention of violence
- to create a safe and stable environment for prisoners and staff living and working in the prison.

#### **4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding**

Vulnerable prisoners, in particular men convicted of sexual offences, are housed on a wing in houseblock 3. They have access to education and all the other activities available to the rest of the residents, as well as a separate workshop in industries. The regime seems to work well, and few applications to the Board relate to any breakdown in this arrangement.

In addition to the initial screening in reception, the equalities team makes contact with new prisoners to try to identify vulnerabilities, such as mental and physical health problems (for example, autism and dyslexia). The prisoner may disclose these but there are cases where a diagnosis has not been formally made. A prisoner's family sometimes alerts the prison about their concerns.

Referral to the psychologist or mental health team will be made if necessary, or to the healthcare team.

The safeguarding needs of prisoners are also identified in the days following arrival, either through the prisoners carrying out induction (which is carried out in the same way as before the pandemic but socially distanced), or through the prisoner's contact with healthcare staff, health champions on the wings and equalities representatives. Wing staff and houseblock managers are also alert to the need to identify people with particular vulnerabilities.

#### **4.5 Use of force**

All planned use of force is video-recorded and available to be reviewed. The proposed rollout of BWCs and their use by frontline staff would enable all such incidents to be recorded and reviewed.

There were 323 use of force incidents during the reporting year, of which 119 were planned and 204 unplanned. Apart from in May (see section 5.4), there is no obvious ethnic bias in the figures.

PAVA spray has not been issued or used in the prison during this year.

The Board has been unable to attend use of force meetings this year because of the paucity of Board members, and COVID 19. It is hoped that more attention will be given to this in the next reporting year.

#### **4.6 Substance misuse**

The prison has a first night centre on M wing, which also houses the ISMT (see section 6.5), which aims to help with detoxification. Despite all the efforts to prevent

the ingress of illicit substances, substantial finds have been made over the year, and some residents have been found to be under the influence. Substantial quantities of 'hooch' have also been seized.

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

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

HMP Dovegate is now nearly 20 years old; natural wear and tear is inevitable. The houseblock managers now have a clear responsibility to oversee the cleanliness and decency of their areas, with the Director and Deputy Director making regular visits to the wings, to ensure that standards are upheld.

The prison is very clean and well maintained, with no evidence of damage or graffiti. The communal areas of the wings are impressively clean and tidy, and regularly painted. The external areas, with grass and flower beds, are attractive and litter free; prisoners comment that the grounds have a positive effect on their mental wellbeing. The exercise yards have seating and some exercise equipment.

The newest houseblock has showers in each cell. On the two original blocks, the shared shower cubicles are on both floors at the end of the wing, and residents are able to shower daily.

Cells are generally clean and in good condition. Prisoners have access to cleaning equipment and can obtain clean bedding weekly. In addition to the main laundry, they can wash their own clothes in the wing laundry facility – much appreciated by prisoners. Most prisoners wear their own clothes, but prison clothing, all of which is brand new, is available.

The Board receives hardly any complaints about food; the few received relate usually to special dietary requirements and are promptly resolved. Prisoners are usually positive about the quality of food on offer, as are the Board.

The kitchen is extremely well run and efficient. The catering equipment servicing company makes weekly visits to check for faults. The issue of the smelly drains has improved over the year but is still an intermittent problem, probably structural in cause.

Prisoners can order food, among other things, from the prison shop. The range of products has improved, especially for prisoners from a minority ethnic background.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

The CSU, which houses Rule 45 and Rule 55 residents, has remained calm and been managed professionally throughout the reporting year, despite the COVID-19 lockdown. There have been no significant increases in either ACCTs or numbers on the unit. The unit is clean and tidy but offers a very restricted regime. Books and reading matter have been available on request to residents, as have colouring and writing activities. However, given the ongoing lockdown restrictions, a wider range of freely available purposeful activities would be beneficial.

As mentioned in our previous report, the addition of a limited amount of outdoor gym equipment in the exercise yards, which are bare and gloomy, would also be beneficial to some residents.

It has been a concern of the Board that segregation staff have not always been able to obtain BWCs. These were sporadically available until January 2020, but were non-functional for the rest of the year. New BWCs have been procured but had still not been issued by early January 2021.

The majority of good order and/or discipline (Rule 45) reviews were attended by a Board member until the lockdown. Residents were consistently asked if they understood why they were in the CSU. The decisions made have been reasonable at all the reviews we have attended. Any suggestions by a Board member for additional healthcare support for a resident have been taken on board and actioned promptly.

Overall, we have found the CSU staff to be open and accommodating to our visits. The relationships we have witnessed between staff and residents on the unit have been positive and proactive.

The staff work well as a team and treat the prisoners in a professional manner, in what can be a particularly challenging environment. They know the prisoners in their care well and can always inform the Board of the reasons for them being there and any problems they may be experiencing.

In the initial lockdown, the Board maintained contact with CSU staff by telephone on the days of the reviews and at other times.

The CSU is visited daily by a member of the senior management, healthcare and chaplaincy teams, all of whom speak to the prisoners on the unit.

Members of the Board try to attend all segregation reviews, held three times a week. In addition, a member of the Board speaks to all prisoners in the unit weekly. Reviews have a clear focus on trying to get prisoners back onto main location, or to an alternative prison if that is the only option.

Key data points for black prisoners in the first quarter of 2020:

- 15.2% of the prison population was black

- 24.4% of prisoners on Rule 45 were black; 29.4% of those on Rule 55 were black

Key data points for black prisoners in the second quarter of 2020:

- 15.2% of the prison population was black
- 27.5% of prisoners on Rule 45 were black; 21.1% of those on Rule 55 were black.

Black prisoners comprised about 15% of the population but almost 30% of those in the CSU under Rule 55. The number of prisoners involved is very low, so any difference may be statistically insignificant. However, the discrepancy remains, and the Board will be monitoring it closely in future.

Discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) do not give a clue as to why this should be the case but these figures warrant investigation. The Board pointed this out in last year's report.

<b>Dovegate Segregation (CSU)</b>									
<b>Definitions:</b>									
White: W1									
Asian: A1, A2, A3									
Black: B1, B2, B3									
<b>January, February, March 2020</b>									
	<b>Population</b>		<b>Adjudications</b>		<b>R45</b>		<b>R55</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	
White	693	60.0	246	55.5	47	54.7	52	51.0	
Asian	95	8.2	27	6.1	6	7.0	1	1.0	
Black	176	15.2	107	24.2	21	24.4	30	29.4	
Other	191	16.5	63	14.2	12	14.0	19	18.6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>May, June, July, August 2020</b>									
	<b>Population</b>		<b>Adjudications</b>		<b>R45</b>		<b>R55</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	
White	693	60.0	282	53.6	46	45.1	75	49.3	
Asian	95	8.2	36	6.8	9	8.8	11	7.2	
Black	176	15.2	90	17.1	28	27.5	32	21.1	
Other	191	16.5	118	22.4	19	18.6	34	22.4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### 5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

Overall, staff treat prisoners with respect. The Board often sees evidence of positive interactions between prisoners and officers, who usually show good knowledge of

the prisoners in their care. All staff are trained as key workers and the system appears to be working well.

Prisoners are consulted about matters through the prison council (PRIAC). Equalities representatives on the wings are also a helpful channel of communication and advice.

When Board members visit a wing with an enquiry, they are sometimes met with the response from the officer that 'this is not my wing', with the implication that they are unable to supply the requested information. The Board considers that staff on a wing should be adequately briefed to be able to furnish people going onto the wing with the information required. Nonetheless, officers are invariably polite, welcoming and helpful.

The disruption caused this year (half of the Board's reporting year) by COVID-19 has thrown into sharp focus the positive relationships between prisoners and staff. Prisoners have been kept fully informed of what is going on and the support available to them. Gestures like being given extra telephone credit and extras from the shop, in addition to exercise programmes, religious support and so on, have meant that prisoners have recognised that prison staff have done as much as possible to mitigate the stress that such long periods without activity and confinement to cells has created.

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

Equality and diversity are overseen by a dedicated equalities manager and her staff.

The diversity equality action team (DEAT) meets monthly, chaired by the Director, and is attended, among others, by prisoner equalities team leaders and, on a rolling basis, other prisoner equalities representatives, each of whom is allocated to a particular protected characteristic. A member of the controller's team is also present.

The meeting is run in a purposeful manner, with detailed statistics of adjudications, IEP levels, use of force in relation to ethnicity, and DIRFs in relation to ethnicity and other protected characteristics. The Board notes that, compared with last year, a more critical examination of these figure now takes place. The equalities team leaders report back from the forum meetings and feel, rightly, that their views are taken seriously at the DEAT. Their knowledge and professional attitude to their role is impressive.

Action plans are produced at these meetings, with individuals clearly given responsibility for implementing actions, and are monitored each month.

Prisoners are able to attend a number of forums (focus groups). These monthly meetings have a staff lead, relating to the protected characteristics of equalities legislation (age, disability, race, sexual orientation and gender identity, and religion and belief) and in addition veterans in custody, foreign nationals, Romany/Travellers, and care leavers. New staff leads are now in place.

The Board was of the opinion last year that the chairing of these meetings was sometimes rather weak. The Board has not been able to attend any of the forums this year either because of Board numbers or because of COVID-19.

The forums are a very positive way of facilitating communication between prisoners and managers, and as soon as COVID-19 regimes made it possible, these forums met during the year.

DEAT meetings resumed after the first lockdown, taking place in May, June, July, August and September. A member of the Board has not been able to attend.

The figures by ethnicity for prisoners segregated in the CSU (on Rules 45 or 55) are collected but are not presented at the DEAT meetings; the data suggests that perhaps they should be (see section 5.3).

The DEAT meeting considers the use of force figures each month. In May, there was a significant increase in the use of force used against some ethnic groups: A1, A9 (Asian) and B1 (black British) represent 9% of the prison population but 20% of the use of force incidents; B2 (black African) represents 3% of the population but 17% of such incidents; and M1 (mixed race) represents 4% of the population but 17% of these incidents. Fortunately, this appears not to be part of a long-term trend, but it is pleasing to see that some investigative work is to be done into violence and its causes.

In September, 226 prisoners identified as having a disability – 86 physical, 103 mental and 37 both. These prisoners pose particular challenges for the prison, but the equalities team is to be commended for its consistent efforts in assisting these men, keeping close links with reception, considering reasonable adjustments for sensory-deprived prisoners, use of Helping Hands (a charity that helps people with disabilities), and so on.

Various activities involving prisoners have taken place this year: Black History Month, an informal day for foreign nationals, and religious services during December. Armed Forces Day, although taking place during lockdown, raised just over £935, most of it through donations by prisoners (£870.50), the rest through a cake sale. On the anniversary of the Windrush arrival, prisoners could access information via their televisions.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The prison has a multi-faith centre with good facilities. The grubby carpet commented on in the last inspection was replaced in April.

There have been changes in the chaplaincy team this year. The coordinating chaplain left earlier in the year; his post as managing chaplain will be taken by a full-time Roman Catholic deacon. In addition, a full-time Anglican chaplain is to arrive in January 2021. There is also a full-time and part-time Muslim chaplain, a full-time Free Church chaplain, supported by representatives of the other major faiths that come into the prison on a part-time basis (weekly/monthly).

Prisoners have good access to religious services in normal times. During the COVID-19 regime, prayers and services have been sent out via Dovegate TV, and prisoners have been issued with leaflets.

Chaplains normally see all new arrivals within 24 hours and continued to make contact during the COVID-19 regime, either by telephone or, if possible, at a social distance. They also contribute to ACCT case management, attend DEAT meetings and attend meetings held by the security department to manage prisoners sentenced

for terrorism offences. They also liaise closely with residential staff, to ensure that arrangements can be made for the celebration of the main religious festivals.

Every effort has been made to celebrate festivals occurring during the tightening of the regime during the pandemic. For example, Muslim prisoners were supported during Ramadan. There were prayers, sermons and messages on Dovegate TV, and special food was provided at Eid.

Over 25% of the prison population state that they have no faith; many more are non-practising members of the faith they grew up with. An obvious omission, required by Prison Service Instruction 05/2016, is provision for the many prisoners of no faith. There is no Humanist representative in the prison, although there are prisoners who would prefer their emotional and support needs to be met by someone who is not religious.

It is pleasing that this issue was raised at the September DEAT meeting. The Board is unaware that any action has been taken about this matter.

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges**

In accordance with the incentives policy framework of last year, an IEP incentives forum was set up, and a new IEP policy/facilities list created. The forum meets two-monthly. The Board has no more information on this matter.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The prison complaints procedure works efficiently, on the whole, with replies answered politely. The Board notes that it is to the frustration of the prisoner that complaints sent out to another prison from which the prisoner was transferred are not answered within an acceptable time. It then becomes easy for the complaint to be overlooked; the Board is then involved.

Between January and September 2019, the number of monthly complaints ran between 110 and 185. At the beginning of 2020, there were signs of a decrease (113 in January, and 91 in February) but with COVID-19 regimes in place and the consequent lack of movement, these figures dropped significantly.

Property was the commonest subject of complaint to the prison from January to the end of September in both 2019 and 2020. No other subject of complaint stands out.

## **5.8 Property**

As observed above (see section 5.7), complaints about property remain stubbornly at the top of the list. The Board has not been able to undertake a full investigation into the causes of this, but problems arise when a prisoner is moved to another houseblock or taken to the CSU.

Details of property, both in possession and in store, were held on card property cards in reception.

All of this information has been transferred to electronic property 'cards'. Anecdotal evidence from some staff suggests that the new lists contain inaccuracies. The new

lists are not as detailed as the old ones, as previously the brand of items of clothing was specified (these may or may not have been genuine). When tracing lost items, it is now more difficult, as it is not as easy to match up an item with the property list.

The rationale for the change has been to prevent prisoners making inflated compensation claims for designer wear when lost.

Applications about property represent the largest proportion of applications to the Board.

The number of complaints relating to property in another prison are generally higher than those relating to property within Dovegate. These applications usually concern property or cash that has failed to be transferred with the prisoner into Dovegate.

On occasion, the prisoner has moved twice in a short time and property has failed to keep up.

These applications have often been difficult to resolve and frequently require assistance from Board members at other establishments.

After lockdown, applications decreased overall and there were few internal property applications, at five, whereas there were 14 external property applications.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

In the first months of the reporting year, the improvements to waiting times for GP and dental appointments and mental health assessment reported in last year's report were maintained.

An increased number of escorts continued to be available for external hospital appointments.

The collaboration between healthcare and custodial staff had a positive impact on the reaction to the COVID-19 crisis. Dedicated cohort areas were put in place to shield and assess residents, and special measures were taken to protect and support high-risk and extreme-risk residents.

Nursing staff were available 24 hours a day. Most GP consultations were telephone appointments, but face-to-face consultations took place when necessary with GPs and nurses.

Hospital and dental appointments were emergency only.

Healthcare staff and kitchen staff work closely together to ensure that all dietary requirements are covered. Any issues that the Board raises in this regard is responded to promptly.

The inpatient unit has benefited from the updated kitchen area and bright redecoration; however, it still has a very dated bath/shower room, where the showers do not allow wheelchair access. Plans have been drawn up for refurbishment to enable access, but changes were needed to the original specification and these improvements have not taken place.

The Board has commented in previous reports about the lack of purposeful activity on the inpatient unit, especially for residents with mental health issues, who frequently have prolonged waits to be transferred to appropriate secure accommodation. A start was being made at the beginning of the reporting year to provide some activities for inpatients, but the member of staff involved moved on and no one took on the role. In the months preceding lockdown, the Board saw no evidence that anything other than television was available.

For many years, the Board has reported that the toilet in the main waiting room in the health centre was not fit for purpose. We have found it frequently blocked and filthy. Despite some improvements to the waiting room itself, the toilet continues to be a concern and we question whether it needs to be there. Alternative toilet facilities are available in the corridor.

### **6.2 Mental healthcare**

#### **Referrals**

All individuals entering HMP Dovegate have a screening assessment, and if mental health concerns arise, a referral is made to the mental health team. Other disciplines

within the prison can complete a referral to the team, and residents have the ability to self-refer.

All referrals receive an assessment, and routine referrals are seen within five working days and urgent referrals within two working days.

The team attends all initial ACCT reviews which support referrals for those not currently known to the team, and attends or sends contributions to ACCT reviews for those on the team's caseload.

### **Staffing structure**

The team's vacancy rate fluctuated in 2019 to 2020, which created pressure in attempting to achieve targets. During this time, contractual obligations were not always met with the target time to see routine referrals within five days but those who were urgent were prioritised.

There are five visiting psychiatrist sessions per week (one session = a half-day clinic). These are covered by three visiting psychiatrists.

### **Caseloads**

The average caseload is 27, and approximately half of these are secondary care programme approach service users (residents with severe or complex mental health problems). These numbers have fluctuated during the year.

Referral rates have been at around 100 per month, and of these less than 50% are deemed appropriate for mental health services. Having said this, it is seen to be helpful to assess all referrals, as the team can signpost to other services in the prison or provide self-help information.

### **Secure hospital referrals**

On average, there were three residents waiting for a hospital transfer, and these would generally exceed the expected wait time of 28 days.

There is now a coordination of hospital transfers centrally, including a biweekly escalation call to commissioners, which has improved the waiting time for transfers.

The team has found that the incidence of acute psychosis increased over lockdown, with a consequent increase in the number requiring transfer.

### **COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 lockdown, all urgent referrals have been seen within the required timescale.

To support contact with residents, the team has been able to use the in-cell telephones when lines are available, with staff working on late shifts and at weekends to enable quieter times to access telephone reviews and assessments.

All service users have been offered self-help material and distraction tools. The television system has been used to facilitate a question-and-answer session that is aired to all the residents. (Question cards went out to all cells, and mental health staff were then filmed alongside safer custody staff, discussing and answering the questions.)

Due to COVID-19, the team had to disperse into areas that were consultation rooms, which then, in effect, became office space. This has left residents, when lockdown is eased, being seen within these office areas.

The mental health team frequently must conduct confidential assessments and interventions in communal areas on the wings. The lack of a therapeutic space on the wings means that the ability to conduct group interventions with appropriate teaching materials is limited, as is the ability to conduct sensitive one-to-one therapy confidentially.

### **Telephone lines**

Use of the in-cell telephones has enhanced the team's ability to contact service users, but this has been restricted due to the number of telephone lines available and their maintenance.

All of the healthcare departments have had similar experiences with the in-cell telephones.

The Board feels that it would be helpful to have more telephone lines available, and for these to be more reliable.

### **6.3 Social care**

Social care assessments are provided by Staffordshire Social Services, with a triage between healthcare nurses and occupational therapists where necessary. Practice Plus Group manages and delivers social care to residents. There is a robust process in place for referral, assessment and feedback.

All residents can apply for social care.

If the assessment concludes that care would need to include mobility aids and the supply of special equipment such as shower chairs, special mattresses and commodes, then occupational therapists will assess individual needs and supply the necessary equipment.

All healthcare assistants who deliver social care within the prison are at level 2 Social Care. Each qualifying resident has an individual care and support plan.

During the reporting year, there were seven social care packages in place. Two were for residents who needed stroke rehabilitation support, two were end-of-life support and three were for rehabilitation post-surgery.

There is a good working relationship between all agencies to ensure delivery of the required services for the residents, either on the wings or on the inpatient unit.

The Board has received no applications or verbal complaints about this service during the year.

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

There are spacious exercise areas and outdoor gyms in the prison. The gym is large and well equipped, and popular with the residents. Each wing has use of the gym on a rota basis. The Board rarely receive complaints about access to the gym.

As the purposeful activity figures indicate (see section 7.1), great effort was made to maximise time out of cell to the full in the first part of the year.

Obviously, with the COVID-19 lockdowns in the second half of the year, these activities were curtailed, although the outdoor gym equipment was brought into use again as soon as it was deemed safe.

#### **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

All arrivals at Dovegate have an immediate healthcare assessment, carried out by healthcare staff. Any residents who arrive needing stabilisation or detoxification are transferred to a dedicated area on M wing for continuous monitoring.

Further tests are carried out, and contact is made with previous pharmacies to ensure the continuation of regular medicines. Residents are also assessed by a GP for further prescribing, and by the ISMT, together with the psychosocial team.

In addition to the specialist teams, Healthcare assistants attend M wing twice daily to check on these prisoners' general health.

The team consists of one prescriber, two healthcare assistants and six nurse practitioners.

The ISMT actively challenges residents who misuse drugs, and works with them to address their addictions with recovery programmes and interventions. Care plans and training programmes are in place to support and enhance recovery. There are group sessions, along with one-to-one support. There is a hotline number available, and a 'safer Dovegate' meeting takes place weekly to discuss support for vulnerable residents.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

Purposeful activity in 2019/20 was a year of two halves: the first half of the year saw great effort in achieving over 95% of target for at least three weeks in the beginning of 2020; and, of course, the second half of the year saw the significant impact of COVID-19 on purposeful activity.

The education centre put great effort into all prisoners achieving level 1 qualifications from the beginning of the year. Unfortunately, the centre did not reopen for the remainder of the year due to virus restrictions and concerns for safe reopening. After the initial provision of distraction packs, as it as soon became apparent that lockdown was going to continue for some time, in-cell education was provided to any prisoner who was interested, not just those registered on courses, and tutors telephoned prisoners weekly to help with any problems encountered.

Mathematics at entry level 3, and levels 1 and 2; and English at levels 1 and 2 are offered via portfolio rather than an examination-based qualification. Qualifications below entry level 3 have not been offered as learners at that level would require more support. In-cell English and mathematics have been offered at all levels for functional skills; these learners will be ready to sit their examinations as soon as lockdown ends.

Also on offer is business enterprise and art, with the focus on those prisoners who were already in the class when lockdown began.

Distance learning and Open University courses have seen a rise in numbers, with Open University coordinators visiting the wings to ensure that materials are received by learners, and assignments submitted on time.

A library trolley service has operated throughout lockdown, with requests made via an application. One of the library orderlies and the Prisoner Advice Line Service visit the library and the wings to ensure continuity of service.

Education tutors have made use of in-cell telephones and the ATMs to keep in contact with their learners.

During the lockdown, education staff have also created content for Dovegate TV on a variety of topics, including yoga, geography, history and cell exercise workouts.

Education staffing has remained consistent throughout; although some staff had to self-isolate or were COVID-19 positive, this affected exceptionally low numbers at any one time.

There were also staffing changes in key positions relating to purposeful activity.

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

Much effort in the first part of the year was put into getting all prisoners placements in purposeful activity and chasing up those who failed to attend. The call centre was a new initiative, which was popular with the prisoners who worked there, and working well. In February, the number working in the call centre was set to increase but unfortunately this centre closed on 23 March 2020, along with all education classes and workshops, because of the lockdown. The prison was no longer required to meet the 95% purposeful activity quotas from this date for the remainder of the year to 30

September 2020, and all prisoners continued to be paid as if they were working. Essential workers continued to work during lockdown, in areas such as the kitchen, laundry, grounds party, recycling, shop and maintenance.

The level 2 hospitality and catering qualification has been able to continue throughout, as the kitchen workers continue in employment.

In July 2020, Gold Command approved a restricted regime to start in industries, along with other areas, with 20 prisoners per workshop per day in wing bubbles allowed to work in workshops 1, 3 and 4, but only 15 allowed to work in workshop 2 as it is smaller. Work has been restricted, to keep workers in a work area and not moving around the workshops as previously, and a prisoner could only attend a workshop once a week, on a rota basis, to give more of them a chance to attend. The call centre has not reopened, as the company has furloughed its staff, but the head of industries has used this workspace for alternative employment, to give more work opportunities in these challenging times.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

The offender management unit (OMU) is staffed by non-operational staff, rarely deployed elsewhere, so they are able to dedicate their time to their role. During the changes necessitated by the pandemic, the shift patterns of staff in the OMU were modified, to create the necessary social distancing in the office. However, the overall number of hours worked remained the same.

Video-links to courts worked and hearings took place for remand prisoners. Although, during the first lockdown, all movements of prisoners between establishments ceased, when possible, category C prisoners were moved on. National protocols relating to prisons during COVID-19 governed prisoner movement for most of the reporting year.

Offender assessment system (OASys) assessments have continued to take place, as has the preparation of prisoners for their parole hearings, with contact being made by telephone. Parole hearings have been conducted either by telephone or video-link.

### **7.4 Family contact**

Every resident has access to an in-cell telephone, and the extra free credit they have received has been a lifeline in enabling family contact during the restrictions.

In the first part of the reporting year, family days took place as normal; these are well supported by the long-term residents and are popular with their families.

For the short time that visits were allowed with social distancing and screens, they were unpopular with the residents and their families. Complaints were made that they could not hear each other, and there were frustrations that children were unable to have proper interaction with residents.

Methods were being looked at to improve the sound issue before visits were once again cancelled.

'Purple Visits' (a secure virtual calling platform), where residents have family contact via computer tablets in the visits hall, had not been implemented at the end of the reporting year but are now in place and working well.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

Resettlement planning is carried out by the RRP. Assessment and the seven pathway courses within the 12-week timeframe have been carried out both before and after lockdown.

In-cell technology was used when group course had to be discontinued.

Face-to-face delivery was rare but was put in place for some very vulnerable residents. Some of these vulnerable residents were also provided with a mobile phone and some phone credit on release.

During the year, 505 residents were released, of whom 85% had accommodation to go to. The National Homelessness Task Force became effective in June 2020, so was only able to be accessed by the resettlement team for the last months of the reporting year. It is expected that continued access to this resource will result in an increase in the amount of settled accommodation found for residents on release.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board started the reporting year with seven members and three probationers. Two of the probationers were students and left the Board only months into the year, and before the outbreak of COVID-19.

Before the lockdown, the small number of committed members worked well together on a rota basis, their core duties being applications, segregation reviews and a weekly rota round. The board development officer (BDO) spent a considerable amount of time on training, and members of the Board acted as mentors to the new recruits. The probationer who completed her training during lockdown has become a valuable member of the Board. A member of the Board always gives a presentation detailing the work of the IMB to the ITC for new officers. The Board is grateful for the support of the IMB clerk, and to her replacement during her maternity leave. This we found vital for applications during the first national lockdown.

The Board has an open and constructive relationship with prison managers and staff, including healthcare staff, and feels welcome in all parts of the prison. A new Director and Deputy Director took up their posts in April and continued to ensure that the safety of staff and residents was a priority. Senior managers made themselves available to the Board and joined our meetings by telephone.

The Director responded promptly to the Chair of the Board when issues had been raised by residents via confidential access applications.

The Board valued the frequent contact with the controller and her team, and for their overview of the stability of the prison.

From April to July, monitoring was done remotely, and, for health and family reasons, regular visits in August and September were carried out by only two members.

A recruitment campaign was started at the beginning of lockdown. Two members were able to conduct two tours of the prison safely for five applicants to the Board in September.

The number of applications to the Board from residents was lower than expected after lockdown. However, there had already been a noticeable reduction before lockdown, in the first five months of the year, which the Board attributed to the success of the key worker scheme.

**Board statistics**

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	248
Total number of segregation reviews attended	164

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year 18/19	Current reporting year 19/20
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	15
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	6	6
C	Equality	5	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	39	14
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	16	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	15	9
F	Food and kitchens	6	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	44	34
H1	Property within this establishment	42	24
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	79	26
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	15	0
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	15	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	27	17
K	Transfers	4	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	41	7
	Total number of applications	371	180



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