



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leyhill

**For reporting year
1 February 2020 – 31 January 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 also to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

- 2.1 HMP Leyhill is a category D open prison, located just off junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds with many attractive features. Its normal capacity is 515 prisoners, housed in three residential units. Most of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century.
- 2.2 The prison holds a highly complex population. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept those convicted of sexual offences irrespective of sentence. The number of those held who are convicted of sexual crimes varies over time but latterly has been above 60% of the population.
- 2.3 Just over half of its prisoners are aged 50+ and just over a quarter are 60+. About a fifth of all prisoners have some form of disability and some have two or three disabilities.
- 2.4 At the end of 2020, there were 144 serving a life sentence, 134 were on an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) and 203 were on a determinate sentence. Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.
- 2.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, during the reporting period a variety of support to prisoners was provided by the following organisations:
- Careers information, advice and guidance: in-house provision
 - Personal development, social and life skills, and work-related learning: Weston College and Somax
 - Benefits and appointments on release: Department for Work and Pensions – Jobcentre Plus
 - Qualification support: Weston College
 - Resettlement services: Catch 22, on behalf of Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire Community Rehabilitation Company
 - Specialist support: Talking Money
 - Bank accounts: Nationwide
 - Gym courses: Astara

- Healthcare services: Inspire Better Health
- Mental health services: Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust.
- Day centre for older prisoners: Resettlement and Care of Older ex-Offenders and Prisoners (RECOOP)
- Family service providers of visits and casework: The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Prodigal Arts
- Changing Tunes
- Hardman Trust
- Escort services to and from the prison: GEOAmev

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Since March, most of the Board's monitoring has been carried out remotely so that there has been less face-to-face contact with prisoners and staff. However, two members have been visiting the prison regularly since September and there has been weekly contact with the prisoner consultative committee.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

In a year dominated by the pandemic, Leyhill has responded swiftly and positively in order to implement the required protocols and to take its own initiatives. In keeping with its emphasis on community, a spirit of inclusivity has characterised the Leyhill regime. Whilst opportunities to speak with prisoners and staff have been limited it is noted that the atmosphere feels positive despite some obvious frustration with the restrictions of COVID. In the judgement of the Board the prison is a safe environment.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Fairness is much in evidence at Leyhill: in prisoner involvement in the regime (see sections 4 and 7.5); the new process for handling debt (see section 4.4); the establishment of drop-in surgeries for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) prisoners (see section 5.4); the use of mediation to resolve disputes between

prisoners (see section 5.4) and the initiatives taken by the chaplaincy to enhance the life of a caring community (see section 5.5).

However, unfairness continues to be evident in the shortage of approved premises (see section 7.3), which delays prisoners' release dates and which has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. The treatment of many prisoners subject to IPP regulations continues to be unjust (see section 5.4).

Humane treatment of the prisoners is a noticeable characteristic of the regime. It is exemplified in the prison's response to the challenge of the pandemic (see sections 6.2 and 6.7) and lockdown (see sections 5.1 and 6.7); in healthcare (see section 6.2); the work of the chaplaincy (see sections 4.4 and 5.5); the work of Listeners (see sections 4.2 and 6.3) and the work of the kitchen (see section 5.1).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Leyhill is an open prison and prisoners are encouraged to access areas of the grounds during their free time with subsequent benefits to both physical and mental health. Waiting times for healthcare services are in line with the community and it is noted that prisoner feedback gives more compliments than complaints.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Despite the limitations of lockdown, numerous opportunities have been provided for prisoners to play an active part in the life of the prison community and to prepare for their release. This is evident in the work of the Lobster Pot (see sections 6.7 and 7.3); the provision of purposeful activity during lockdown (see sections 6.5, 6.7 and 7.2); the maintenance of education in difficult circumstances (see section 7.1); the development of useful skills (see section 7.2) and the involvement of prisoners in identifying resettlement needs (see section 7.5).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- (a) What further action will the minister take to speed up the resettlement in the community of prisoners serving IPP sentences, many of whom have spent far longer in custody than recommended in their indicative tariffs?

- (b) In the light of the unfairness created when a lack of spaces in approved premises leads to a delay in release on temporary licence (ROTL) and thus the potential timing of release (see section 7.3), a situation now exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions, what action will the minister take to remedy this injustice?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- (a) What further action is planned to deal with the recurring problem of property lost or mislaid during transfer from other prisons, which is a source of intense and justifiable prisoner frustration?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- (a) The Board urges the Governor to improve the facilities for the storage of prisoners' property (see section 5.8).
- (b) The Board urges the Governor, when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, to reinstate and reinvigorate the teaching of the creative arts, which enhances prisoners' self-esteem, self-confidence and their chances of living purposeful lives on release.

3.4 Progress since the last report

The Board is pleased to report that, after years of delay, major investment has been made to improve the fabric of the prison, particularly in the refurbishment of the toilets and showers, and roof repairs (see section 5.1).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The safer custody group, made up of staff and prisoners, has met quarterly in the past year despite the COVID-19 restrictions. A small number of participants have attended the meetings in person, with the majority using teleconference facilities. Despite the challenges of ever-changing restrictions, the group has remained focused and aware of the impact on prisoners.

4.1 Reception and induction

Transfer to Leyhill during the pandemic has been challenging. Requirements have included testing and a period of isolation, known as reverse cohorting, before joining the general population. The installation of a 40-bed temporary unit in June proved to be a valuable asset in isolating incoming prisoners and thus preventing COVID-19 from spreading to the general population at Leyhill. Prisoners have commented that the accommodation is clean and comfortable.

The reception area has benefited from redecoration and refurbishment, making for a much brighter and more positive impression on arrival. Reception orderlies have continued to provide reassurance for new arrivals. Transfer and storage of property continue to be areas of frustration for staff and prisoners (see section 5.8).

Changes in reception have resulted in some induction delays and the process is being reviewed. New receptions have been provided with a letter from the chaplaincy giving contact details should they wish to speak to a member of the team during their period of isolation.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The numbers of self-harm incidents and of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened have remained very low. There were no worrying trends in the ethnicity and/or ages of the prisoners on ACCTs or the prisoners transferred to closed conditions. The paperwork monitored by the Board demonstrated the thoroughness of the process.

Suicide and self-harm prevention training was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 lockdown. It was restarted in October.

The Leyhill 'GOBOFF' scheme, which enables prisoners to talk with a Samaritan-trained prisoner (a 'Listener') for emotional support, was used 250 times per month, on average. A reduction towards the end of the year was experienced as the number of Listeners trained by the Samaritans fell to two. This was due to the release of prisoners and the difficulty in recruiting and training due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Two new Listeners have joined the team, with three more expected. There has not been a significant rise in the number of GOBOFFs due to the restrictions, but we noted that the subject matter had changed (see section 5.7) and, particularly towards the end of the year, there were more about lack of progression (see section 7.3).

The safety hotline was monitored on a daily basis. Earlier in the year, an 0800 number for prisoner applications to the Board was implemented. Very few calls were received from Leyhill prisoners.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents has remained low. There were no trends identified in the challenge, support and intervention plans.

4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities

Vulnerable prisoners are identified at induction and given a chaplaincy contact number on arrival, so that they can speak in confidence with a member of the chaplaincy team.

A new process for tackling debt in prison has been implemented, whereby the prison takes on the debt and the prisoner repays it to the prison on agreed terms. Among other benefits, the Board believes that this has helped reduce the amount of drugs being brought into the prison in order to pay off debts. This has been welcomed by the safer custody team.

4.5 Use of force

The use of force is unusual at Leyhill, and it has been used primarily when prisoners are being returned to closed conditions.

The installation of closed-circuit television on the units was welcomed by prisoners and staff.

4.6 Substance misuse

This year has seen a rise in the levels of drug use in the prison. This is believed to be partly due to the unsettling effect of a sudden influx of new arrivals in the first lockdown. Since October, it has become routine to administer urine tests for drugs on arrival at reception.

The extent of substance misuse has varied. Targeted searches and subsequent transfers to closed conditions have resulted in a more settled prison. The prison population has welcomed the attempts to deal with the supply and distribution of drugs and alcohol, and the impact of debt, violence and self-harm (also see section 6.6).

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The long-awaited refurbishment of the shower and toilet recesses is in progress. There have been several delays due to unforeseen problems and extra work required. Social distancing requirements have resulted in a reduced number of contractors being able to work in a confined area, resulting in further delays. Prisoners have accepted that the temporary sharing of facilities and the noise are necessary to achieve the improvements from which they will eventually benefit.

Repair of the roofs to the workshops has been completed and work on the roofs of the kitchen and laundry is in progress.

Television reception, sound quality and the number of channels available has been the subject of numerous complaints, especially during the periods of lockdown. Contractors confirmed that the system was obsolete and required replacement. At the end of the year, over 90 reprogrammed televisions were issued to prisoners on Cedar unit. The remaining sets will be sent in batches of 75 per week for reprogramming until all have been updated.

Following the COVID-19 restrictions, the kitchen has been providing hot lunches in the dining hall and cold evening meals which the prisoners can eat in their rooms when they wish. This has been generally well received. The failures of kitchen equipment and delays in repairs have been a source of continuous frustration to

staff. Despite this, the quality of meals provided has meant that complimentary comments about the food have far outweighed adverse comments.

Kitchen staff were complimented by prisoners on the Christmas menu, the meal at Eid and meals provided on other festival dates.

5.2 Segregation

As an open prison, Leyhill has no segregation unit, although there are three holding cells which are occasionally used briefly when prisoners are being moved to closed conditions. The Board has no concerns about their use or about the minimal use of restraint.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

The personal officer scheme, in which each prisoner is offered one-to-one contact and the opportunity to build up a personal relationship, was suspended in March, in order to reduce physical contact during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. The reduced interaction between staff and prisoners was seen by staff as the cause of an increase in inappropriate behaviour, such as noise and smoking on the landings. The value of the scheme is acknowledged and it was reinstated in January.

Moves to involve prisoners more in the prison regime have been noted and appreciated by the prisoner consultative committee, as has the sharing of information on COVID-19 during periods of lockdown. The December publication of the Leyhill magazine was a significant example of a cooperative staff/prisoner venture. It contained a varied range of richly illustrated articles by staff and prisoners.

5.4 Equality and diversity

A total of 59 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) were submitted during the year, with religion, race, disability and age being the main issues. All were investigated, and in the sample viewed by the Board, all seemed fair. Where DIRFs have arisen out of complaints by one prisoner against another, the prison has used a mediation process (in effect, between 'perpetrator' and 'victim'). The Board believes that this has worked well as a form of restorative justice, and it has also had an educational value. One particular example was of mediation between Sunni and Shia Muslims, where disagreements were resolved and both parties were happy with the outcome.

Following allegations of racial discrimination last year, which continued this year, the prison established drop-in surgeries in which prisoners can meet the BAME lead and the diversity officer. Seventeen prisoners attended the three surgeries held this year.

In the complaints received, a significant number of BAME prisoners have said that they feel unequally targeted for mandatory drug testing (MDT) and/or for searches. However, analysis showed that all MDT was carried out on the grounds of suspicion. Documentary evidence shows that all searches were conducted on the basis of solid evidence received, although the Board has not been able to verify this.

Focus groups were reinstated after the first lockdown. The disability, faith and age awareness groups were well attended (also see section 5.5), but those on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and marriage and partnership less so. Awareness events continued, although with no speakers since the first lockdown, and several richly illustrated, well-compiled displays, with posters and other information, were displayed around the prison and included commemoration of Windrush Day, Asian Awareness, Disability Awareness Month, Black Lives Matter, Haile Selassie's birthday and Pride/LGBT.

The Board has had no first-hand evidence of adjudications since March, but has not seen or heard any evidence of allegations of unfairness in their conduct.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support. This has been particularly appreciated in times of lockdown. In the absence of religious services and classes during these periods, faith materials were made available to prisoners. In addition, one-to-one faith and pastoral support was provided. An additional budget to supply food items to celebrate particular religious festivals was made available. Information regarding faith activities has been delivered by personal contact letters rather than via the noticeboard.

In early autumn, the services of various faiths were resumed. All were socially distanced and required the wearing of face masks. Film nights were held in the chapel with pre-booked, pre-arranged seating for a maximum of 20. In this period, the chaplaincy reported that the mood was 'reasonably upbeat'. Before Christmas, there was carol singing outside the residential units, which involved prisoners, staff, the Governor and members of the local Salvation Army.

It was recently reported that the bereavement counselling services provided by Cruse have been withdrawn for financial reasons. Leyhill had been paying £1,000 per year for many years, which was not covering basic costs. The chaplaincy team can only provide pastoral care, not counselling support. However, the team has been considering alternative bereavement options. Prisoners were not able to attend family funerals as ROTL was not permitted, but the option to attend funerals virtually was made possible.

At Christmas, gifts donated by the charity Sixty-One were presented by the Governor to the prisoners. The gifts and hand-written personal cards were much appreciated by the prisoners, especially by those undergoing long sentences who have lost contact with family and friends.

5.6 Incentives Schemes (IP)

The fairness of the scheme has been questioned by some prisoners on several occasions, but the Board found no evidence that the scheme had been used unfairly or inconsistently.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints did not significantly increase through the year when the COVID-19 restrictions were implemented. However, the subject matter changed, with fewer complaints about the offender management unit (OMU) and more about food and residential matters. Complaints were dealt with efficiently, in accordance with the prisoner complaints policy.

5.8 Property

Property continued to be the subject of many complaints and applications, particularly about property lost or mislaid during transfer from other prisons. Storage at Leyhill and Branston has also generated complaints. Processing complaints and applications has been time-consuming, as it has generally required contact with other prisons, while failure to locate missing items has often resulted in compensation. The storage area at Leyhill would be adequate if each prisoner arrived with only the designated volume of possessions. However, transfer from other prisons regularly includes a greater volumetric amount than the allocated allowance. One prisoner recently arrived with twice the amount, while some items that do not comply with the latest standards, typically quilts and blankets, are retained in storage as they are deemed to be a safety hazard. The storage area has one box allocated for each prisoner, and there are numerous plastic bags stored on and above the racks to ceiling height. There is no specific area for extra plastic bags to be stored and it is easy to see how items can be misplaced or lost.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare: general

The healthcare department is fully staffed, for both physical and mental health, and staff are invited to attend ACCT reviews, helping with the multidisciplinary approach adopted by prison.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Prisoners have access to nurses, GPs and a wide range of visiting services. As a resettlement prison, the prisoners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health as far as possible – for example, by attending appointments on time and purchasing pharmaceutical items (except for controlled drugs) to hold in their rooms should they wish.

Specialist nurses treat those with long-term conditions and the effects of old age (more than 50% of the population in Leyhill is over 50).

The health improvement group, usually led by healthcare staff and involving representatives from the prison population, provides a forum for frank discussion of the service provided and for suggestions to be made for improvements, some of which can be acted on (for example, a request for privacy at the reception desk in the healthcare department). This group enables prisoners to take responsibility, thus enhancing progress towards resettlement.

Non-attendance for appointments continues to be a problem, and COVID-19 has exacerbated this. In addition, the waiting area could accommodate only two people at a time during lockdown, thus necessitating a reduction in the number of appointments. This is now much improved, with waiting times at more normal levels.

When two prisoners were identified as COVID-19 positive in January, an effective strategy was quickly implemented: the prisoners were accommodated in the palliative care unit, while 11 of those with whom they had been in contact were isolated.

The Board notes that, during the pandemic, compliments have outweighed complaints in healthcare, evidence of the prisoners' appreciation of the hard work of the frontline team during a particularly stressful time.

There have been four non-Covid-19 deaths from natural causes at the prison this year.

6.3 Mental health

The wellbeing team offers an open referral system for those with mental health and substance misuse issues, and this has worked well. The waiting time for an initial appointment is a week – far better than in the community.

Groups of prisoners have been available to their peers should they need to chat. Examples are the peer mentors who have been drug users, and the Listeners, who are supported by the Samaritans. Both groups have been widely used. This not only contributes to wellbeing, but also provides mentors and Listeners with valuable experience in taking responsibility for others.

6.4 Social care

South Gloucestershire Council has provided social care and assessments for the few prisoners who need it. Many non-personal needs are dealt with by the disability orderlies, such as for prisoners in wheelchairs. There is a purpose-built palliative care unit, which this year has seen one terminal case in March but otherwise has been used for symptomatic prisoners awaiting COVID-19 test results and, in January, for two prisoners who tested positive.

6.5 Exercise, regime

During the pandemic, many prisoners have been able to maintain their physical wellbeing by walking in the prison's extensive grounds. Access to the gym has been restricted much of the time and, during the first few months of lockdown, outdoor sessions were provided by gym staff. Outdoor gym equipment was installed outside two residential units and proved popular. In the period between the two lockdowns, 20 prisoners participated in, and 15 volunteered to support the organisation of, a 'parkrun'.

Around 50 of the over-50s and some younger ones have been engaged, and kept active and healthy outdoors, in work on 38 allotments. The prison has supplied seeds and gardening equipment, and the prisoners have learnt new skills, growing produce to enjoy and share.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Group sessions such as Cocaine Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and SMART Recovery are not currently running but the wellbeing team has offered extra one-to-one sessions where appropriate. Prisoners being released with a history of opioid or poly-substance abuse, particularly those going into hostels, are offered naloxone (a drug which reverses the effect of an overdose, if taken in time) to take with them. There has been a significant uptake this year.

6.7 Soft skills

Various steps have been taken in order to maintain mental and physical wellbeing during periods of lockdown. The prison has offered a range of study courses, described as 'soft skills learning'. Distraction packs have included in-cell workouts, yoga, breathing techniques, logic puzzles, mentoring and giving peer support. Six Leyhill prisoners won awards from the Koestler Trust in recognition of their artistic talent; such achievement and recognition can give a big boost to rehabilitation.

The Lobster Pot is an indoor and outdoor area for the over-50s which has, during the pandemic, also catered for the under-50s, in order to provide support and purposeful activity. It is funded by RECOOP. It has made 90 winter coats available for loan; some are used for walks around the site in poor weather, while prisoners on resettlement overnight release usually receive a coat. Extra money has been provided by charitable donations, some of which have come from ex-Leyhill prisoners.

Throughout the year, RECOOP has acted as 'agents' for Fine Cell Work (FCW), a charity which provides embroidery kits for prisoners. At any one time, 25–30 prisoners have been engaged in purposeful activity with FCW kits and commissions. They have learnt and developed skills, and also earned money.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

In the period January to March 2020, nationally recognised qualifications were achieved in English, with nine achieving entry level (and two withdrew), 13 out of 16 achieving level 1 and five out of eight achieving level 2. In mathematics, four out of five achieved entry level, two out of five achieved level 1 and six out of eight achieved level 2. The level of engagement with mathematics and English functional skills has been low, partly due to previous failures in formal education. However, despite limited tutoring in these functional skills since March, progression has not been significantly restricted.

It was hoped that classes on a one-to-eight basis would start in November, but further COVID-19 restrictions prevented this. The necessary delivery plans were all completed effectively, but external work placements could not take place.

Thirteen prisoners have been studying a variety of subjects with the Open University. Their work has been facilitated by laptop computers provided by the prison when Weston College could not offer these. All of the above are indicative of Leyhill staff's commitment to education.

The library has continued to provide a limited service, staffed mainly by the prisoners who usually work there. It has functioned as an order-and-delivery system for books and DVDs.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Vocational courses are part of the learning at Leyhill and have included:

City and Guilds: painting and decorating; barbering at levels 2 and 3; catering at level 2; and barista work. National vocational qualifications: portfolios have been completed and moderated in laundry work and catering. Eight prisoners have been enrolled on a new information and communications technology course in digital skills.

Four prisoners started gym instructor qualifications: two were discharged during the course and two completed the course early. Five of the six prisoners enrolled on the first aid at work level 3 course successfully completed the qualification.

The prison continued to encourage hard work in learning by offering a financial incentive to those who completed their courses satisfactorily. In November, seven prisoners were given Hardiman Trust awards, totalling £4,100.

At the start of March, 50 prisoners were working outside the prison daily, with many working in the community clearing paths and drains, and in cemeteries. With lockdown, all external work was cancelled and some prisoners were assigned to

internal work. This was made harder when the print and woodwork shops had to be closed for around two months while roof repairs were carried out. Despite COVID-19 restrictions and the need to maintain social distancing, some internal work opportunities continued: in recycling, the kitchen, DHL warehouse, mentoring, the chapel and reception.

To counter the lack of external placements, the prison created additional internal workplaces for painters, window cleaners and association orderlies, thereby keeping as many prisoners in work as possible. DHL expanded their operations and employed 64 prisoners working in two shifts. An additional initiative involved prisoners, in the woodwork workshop, producing panels for affordable homes. The Agile Homes project aims to support the government's policy of reducing homelessness using renewable materials. Such developments have enhanced the numbers engaged in purposeful activity.

The Board particularly commends the work of the recycling workshop. The prison has been recycling five tons of waste weekly, thus reducing carbon levels and the cost to the prison. Another significant operation is the recycling of CDs, the plastic from which is being used by Express Polymers to produce homeless shelters. The recycling department is well managed, highly enterprising and develops skills and experiences which undoubtedly enhance prisoners' chances of securing employment on release.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The Board remains deeply concerned about prisoners who are serving IPP sentences. In her response to the Board's report last year, the minister wrote of her dedication to 'supporting indeterminate prisoners who are struggling to achieve release via the usual routes'. However, Leyhill still has 144 such prisoners, constituting 29% of the prison's population. The Board recognises the overarching importance of public protection, yet believes that the case of a Leyhill prisoner who was given an indicative tariff of 11 months and is still in prison after serving 14 years, is just a particularly egregious example of a policy that is highly disproportionate and grossly unfair.

With COVID-19, many prisoners have been unable to take the first step in the ROTL process of an accompanied half-day local visit. This has caused frustration for the prisoners and adds to the backlog, with 150 waiting for the accompanied half-day local visit in October. The OMU continued to process ROTL applications and prepare licences for when the situation improves and prisoners can start to work externally. It is to OMU's credit that they continued with this work throughout the year, despite seeing the impact on prisoners' lack of progression and, in some cases, their release dates shift. The Board recognises the significant work done by the OMU in helping to establish a fairer and more humane prison.

There remains a shortage of places in approved premises, now exacerbated by the pandemic's impact. Such premises are needed for prisoners who require a higher level of monitoring, whether on ROTL or eventual release. This applies to men convicted of sexual offences and those serving life sentences, who make up about 60% and 30%, respectively, of the Leyhill population. The difficulty in acquiring a place in approved premises has led to delays in release on licence, typically of two to three months but longer for those needing disabled access. One prisoner has been waiting nearly a year for a place. This is evidently unfair and has understandably added to prisoners' frustration.

Parole board hearings have continued to take place via telephone and video-conferencing. Just before Christmas, four new video-links were installed, enabling hearings to progress at the same rate as before the pandemic. Unfortunately, there have been situations where prisoners have been granted parole but have had to remain in custody due to the lack of approved premises (see above).

The work experience team has remained busy throughout the year, contacting external employers to discuss how work placements may go forward at the end of lockdown. However, many previous employers have had fewer spaces available, due to redundancies among their regular staff, and this has impacted on the availability of work placements.

At the start of December, external placements were restarted, albeit on a very limited basis. In January, there were just seven prisoners working outside the prison as essential workers, with seven more employed as drivers to transport them and to support hospital visits. Arranging external placements has been very challenging under 'tier 3' restrictions, coupled with the requirement for daily telephone checks, weekly support checks and a monthly Governor check to provide the additional assurance required during COVID-19.

Progress towards resettlement has been enhanced by the work of the Lobster Pot (see section 6.7), which has had to adapt its working pattern during this period. Group activities have stopped but one-to-one conversations were conducted outside when prisoners came for advice and support. The Lobster Pot has contributed to prisoners' wellbeing as well as helping towards resettlement in several ways (see section 6.7). Indicators of the continued good work of the Lobster Pot, and expressions of appreciation for support in preparing for resettlement, have included Christmas cards received from ex-prisoners and telephone calls to (and from) the Lobster Pot from ex-prisoners who are in approved premises. Often, these calls ask about support and guidance and, at times, report on how well the individuals concerned are handling outside living. One ex-prisoner, who died in a hospice, cited Leyhill Prison as his next of kin.

7.4 Family contact

During lockdown, a combination of telephone, social and virtual ('Purple Visits') visits has been implemented, to enable prisoners to maintain family contact. Five pounds per week was added to each prisoner's telephone PIN account for this purpose. The regularity of social visits fluctuated, in order to comply with the latest Government instructions. Virtual visits were instituted during the spring lockdown but had to be scaled back to facilitate social visits when the lockdown rules eased. More visits were made available before the Christmas holiday period. Then, when all social visits had to cease, those who had a social visit booked were offered a virtual visit in its place. There has been a limited take-up of virtual visits due to minor technicalities (now resolved), some security concerns and a lack of confidence, especially among older prisoners, in using online communications. As of early January, 36 slots were available per week.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Catch 22, on behalf of Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), has been operating throughout lockdown with its full team of six. Adhering to social distancing, they have continued to conduct face-to-face meetings with prisoners. These meetings are particularly important for the older prisoners, those with learning difficulties and those with poor literacy skills. All prisoners who are 12 weeks from release are automatically contacted and meetings are arranged. The meetings cover accommodation, finance and establishing contact with the Department for Work and Pensions for help with Universal Credit, and have ensured contact with families, doctors and potential employers. The Catch 22 team has maintained its close relationship with the OMU, so that it has almost been 'business as usual' throughout most of lockdown. Prisoners have continued to engage well and releases have been continuing, despite little or no ROTL.

A significant initiative has been the introduction of 'resettlement champions', about 12 prisoners who engage with fellow prisoners, helping to identify opportunities for internal and external work, and additional education and training, and to advise on resettlement needs. Much of the work provided by the resettlement champions has enabled prisoners to engage in more purposeful activity and has been much appreciated.

The chaplaincy continues to be involved in resettlement by mentoring prisoners and providing links to outside churches and faith groups. This has meant that, following release, prisoners have made contact with churches in their resettlement area. This has helped to build up their support networks and self-confidence. Some released prisoners have gone on to work with faith-based charities supporting other released prisoners (also see section 5.5).

The reducing reoffending department has introduced a number of additional services and support initiatives. These are covered in a document which outlines nine pathway services which support and enable prisoners to 'transform' their lives. The

pathways include accommodation, education, employment, finance and mental health issues. Each pathway is assigned to a member of staff, with input from charities and volunteer groups. Towards the end of the year, a questionnaire was sent out to the prisoners, in order to gauge their needs. A needs analysis is currently ongoing and, by the end of the reporting year, resettlement champions had helped to secure 115 responses. Key to the overall process is prisoner involvement in identifying their needs, prior to their parole board hearing and to their release. Sound foundations have been laid and the Board is confident that it will be able to report significant development in prisoners' progress towards resettlement next year.

8. The work of the IMB

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visits to the prison made by the Board dropped from 267 in 2019/20 to 42 in 2020/2021. During the period March to August 2020, the Board monitored remotely. Since September, two members have visited on a regular basis while the rest of the Board continue to monitor remotely.

The Governor, senior members of the team and staff have all been cooperative and supportive of the Board. The Board also benefited from the knowledgeable assistance of the clerk and the business hub where necessary.

Board meetings were held remotely. The annual team performance review was also held remotely, on 25 November 2020.

A weekly rota has been maintained throughout, with members in regular contact with staff and each other. A weekly report is prepared, with a copy sent to the Governor. Weekly telephone contact has been facilitated with a member of the prisoner consultative committee and there has been regular telephone contact between the Governor and the Board Chair.

One member retired having completed his tenure, while a second completed his probationary period.

Board statistics

| | |
|--|-----|
| Recommended complement of Board members | 11 |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period | 11 |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period | 10 |
| Total number of visits to the establishment | 42 |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended | N/A |

Applications to the IMB

| Code | Subject | Previous reporting year | Current reporting year |
|------|---|-------------------------|------------------------|
| A | Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions | 2 | 5 |
| B | Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions | 5 | 3 |
| C | Equality | 1 | 0 |
| D | Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell | 2 | 1 |
| E1 | Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions | 3 | 1 |
| E2 | Finance, including pay, private monies, spends | 5 | 1 |
| F | Food and kitchens | 1 | 3 |
| G | Health, including physical, mental, social care | 4 | 1 |
| H1 | Property within this establishment | 8 | 2 |
| H2 | Property during transfer or in another establishment or location | 15 | 2 |
| H3 | Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s) | 0 | 1 |
| I | Sentence management, including home detention curfew, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation | 12 | 3 |
| J | Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying | 1 | 2 |
| K | Transfers | 2 | 0 |
| L | Miscellaneous, including complaints system | 0 | 0 |
| | Total number of applications | 61 | 25 |



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