



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Springhill

**For reporting year
1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020**

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Contents

	Page
Introductory sections 1 – 3	
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	3
3. Executive summary	4
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	11
6. Health and wellbeing	14
7. Progression and resettlement	16
The work of the IMB	22
Applications to the IMB	23

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 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

2.1.1 HMP Springhill is jointly managed with HMP Grendon (located next door). A single Board monitors both prisons.

2.1.2 Springhill is an open establishment (category D) and accommodates up to 335 adult men. Springhill residents are those who are considered trustworthy in open conditions, including those coming to the end of their long sentences, as well as those serving shorter sentences. There is no segregation unit at the establishment.

2.1.3 One of the main aims of the prison is rehabilitation and resettlement. All prisoners who are not serving a short sentence are encouraged to join a resettlement scheme that allows them to carry out work for the local community, and to seek work experience and full-time work for the last months of their sentence.

- 2.1.4 Residents live in 13 huts. In 10 of these, they live two to a room. Huts have a communal lounge, kitchen, showers and separate toilets. There are three huts with 40 single rooms, which are allocated according to a structured incentive system and for medical, wellbeing or vulnerability concerns.
- 2.1.5 There is a single 16-bed unit, which is dedicated to those with substance misuse support needs. Office accommodation and the Springs restaurant (used by visitors and staff from Springhill and Grendon) are in the 'Big House'.
- 2.1.6 Certain facilities – for example, the dental suite in Grendon, offender management unit (OMU), business hub and security department – serve both prisons. However, the two prisons cater for different categories of prisoner and have quite different regimes.
- 2.1.7 The following health services are provided:
- Primary healthcare (Practice Plus Group, originally called Care UK)
 - Drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) (Inclusion)
 - Podiatry and physiotherapy (Premier Therapies Ltd)
 - Mental health services (Barnet, Enfield and Haringey MHT)
 - Dental (Time for Teeth)
 - Audiology (Specsavers)
 - Optician (Pen Optical Ltd)
- 2.1.8 Milton Keynes College provides education services.
- 2.1.9 MTCNovo provides resettlement services under contract with the Ministry of Justice. It operates in Springhill through the Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC).
- 2.1.10 Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) has taken over the maintenance and facilities management services from Carillion.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore covered as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail than usual and not all supporting evidence has been triangulated due to restricted access to residents. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

The prison's priority during the COVID-19 pandemic was to keep residents and staff safe. The Board commends the efforts of staff during these exceptionally difficult conditions. Two residents tested positive in April, followed by 18 in late December (see paragraph 6.1.2). There were no deaths. In the early stages of the pandemic, it was not possible to isolate positive cases (see paragraph 5.1.1), until temporary accommodation was supplied in October.

Actual levels of self-harm (see paragraph 4.3.1), the number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened (see paragraph 4.3.3) and the number of assaults (see paragraph 4.1.3) remained low or down on the previous year. The number of absconds (see paragraph 4.1.4), transfers (see paragraph 4.1.5) and adjudications (see paragraph 4.1.9) were also down.

However, intelligence reports (IRs) of intruders, drop-offs (see paragraphs 4.1.2 and 4.1.3), substance misuse (see paragraph 4.6.3) and threats to residents increased throughout the year, which suggests that the prison was less safe in these areas than last year.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board believes that residents were treated humanely through a difficult year for residents and staff alike.

Pastoral support was good (see section 5.6). The number of complaints was down on the previous year (see section 5.7), although property issues continued to be the single biggest issue. Due to restrictions on movements during the pandemic, Listeners were not as accessible to residents (see paragraph 4.3.5).

From April, effective communication between staff and residents (see paragraphs 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) proved a challenge, especially with the prospect of the return of release on temporary licence (ROTL) (see paragraph 5.1.2). A better organised community council should help to improve this, as well as a more direct line of communication to the Governor (see paragraph 5.4.3).

Analysis of equality and diversity issues did not function effectively due to staff shortages (see paragraph 5.5.1), and the Board found some evidence that there are issues requiring investigation (see paragraph 5.5.3). The process of handling discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) was improved (see paragraph 5.5.6).

The Board had limited access to the accommodation huts this year but noted issues with pest control (see paragraph 5.1.6), and also foul water systems, which are a recurring issue around the camp, requiring frequent repair (see paragraph 5.1.8).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The prison quickly identified those residents most at risk and was able to manage their food and healthcare requirements (see paragraph 6.1.1). The addition of 40 temporary single rooms meant that COVID-19 positive cases in December were more effectively isolated (see paragraph 6.1.2).

The healthcare team was able to offer primary care through the pandemic and effectively triaged secondary care (see paragraph 6.1.4). From June, the Board noted the sharp increase in newly arrived residents needing mental health referrals (see section 6.2).

During the pandemic, the Board was surprised how decisions on early release on compassionate grounds and special licences did not defer more to the Governor's recommendations (see paragraph 6.1.6).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The prison was not able to offer some of its key resettlement functions for a good part of the year, with normal levels of activity in education (see section 7.1), training, employment (see section 7.2), and family contact (see section 7.3) severely interrupted. To offset the disruption, the college provided education packs (see paragraphs 7.1.5 and 7.1.6), family contact was maintained with additional telephones, PIN credits (see paragraph 7.3.1) and video calls (see paragraph 7.3.2). In September, some ROTLs for work and family contact restarted, although the latter stopped in December. Preparation for parole board hearings continued, as did remote hearings (see paragraph 7.4.1).

Evidence suggests that accommodation and employment prospects for a minority of residents on release (see paragraphs 7.5.3 and 7.5.4) were worse than the previous year. The Board noted good evidence of staff trying to support some residents with their resettlement plans (see paragraph 7.2.6).

The confusing implementation of the government's furlough scheme and associated repayments under the Prisoners Earnings Act (PEA) did not seem fair (see paragraph 7.2.7 and 7.2.8).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

In light of the pandemic, are processes about special licences and release on compassionate grounds to be reviewed, with more delegated authority to the Governor and consideration given to local risk assessment (see paragraph 6.1.6)?

Will prisons be able to resume processing refund requests on residents' furlough earnings where appropriate (see paragraph 7.2.8)?

TO THE GOVERNOR

The Board looks forward to:

- the prison re-establishing separate equalities and diversity meetings to review any emerging issues (see paragraph 5.5.2)
- ongoing improvements to effective communication with residents (see section 5.4).

3.4 Progress since the last report

This was a difficult year to assess any progress. Issues that were raised in 2019 about lodgers/transfers and diversity/equality have yet to be addressed.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 From March to the end of the year, the safety of residents during the pandemic was the prison's overriding priority. At the end of December, there had been no deaths from COVID-19; a total of 20 residents had tested positive, with 18 of those cases in the week before Christmas. Staff are to be commended for this effort under extremely trying conditions. Public Health England designated the prison an outbreak site in April and December.
- 4.1.2 COVID-19 restrictions resulted in more residents on camp, with increased levels of boredom and frustration with the lack of ROTL and limited purposeful activity in the prison. Reports of intruders and drop-offs increased significantly from the summer and raised the threat posed by drug use, illicit mobile phones and attendant bullying, and the potential for violence.
- 4.1.3 The number of assaults and fights remained low, with three instances for the year, but there were worrying increases (85%) in IRs covering threats to residents. Following an assault by intruders on one resident in August, several men reported to staff that they felt anxious and unsafe. Order and stability were recorded in December as a 'serious risk', having been a 'tolerable risk' throughout 2019.
- 4.1.4 There were eight absconds during the year, compared with nine absconds and five 'fail to return' for 2019. It is surprising, given the frustrations of the year, that the numbers were not higher, and a credit both to staff and the community that this did not happen. Three of the absconds were prisoners serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP).
- 4.1.5 Sixty-five residents were transferred out of Springhill during the reporting year, compared with 105 for the previous year. Transfers were affected by restrictions on the movement of prisoners around the estate. Twenty-six per cent of the transfers were residents with IPP or life sentences, reflecting the continuing difficulty that this group of men find in adapting to open conditions.
- 4.1.6 Drugs, mobile phones, risk levels and drink were recurring reasons for these transfers back to closed conditions. In December, two men were transferred having been assaulted, and one of them reported being in debt.
- 4.1.7 The following table provides information on incidents related to mobile phones:

	2020	2019	2018	2017
IRs	292	445	250	199
Finds (including accessories)	157	145	97	58

- 4.1.8 This year, security staff have been supported by the police, to disrupt criminal activity on the perimeter, explaining some of the increases in finds. Rising

levels of finds over the past four years indicate that this is an ongoing threat, with the accompanying risk of bullying and debt.

4.1.9 The following table provides information on adjudications:

	2020	2019
All adjudications	167	231
Proven adjudications	115	150

4.1.10 The number of adjudications charged dropped by 28% over the year. A reduction in population, together with a reduction in ROTLs and in drug and alcohol testing for several months might have contributed to this decrease. The independent adjudicator was available (remotely) from mid-June for referrals.

4.2 Reception and induction

4.2.1 From May, any new arrivals were isolated at their sending prison prior to transfer, and were located directly to huts on their arrival (as opposed to one hut for all new arrivals). This was not ideal, as new arrivals could be vulnerable to pressures of debt and intimidation, especially in an environment of increased substance abuse. Staff reported that some new residents appreciated the support from more experienced residents, and the prison will review its reception policy once the COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

4.2.2 Inductions were delivered by healthcare, DART and chaplaincy staff only.

4.2.3 Healthcare staff reported some issues about the initial screening of new men, especially when they arrived 'late' in the day, but by December, they were reporting 100% compliance with both the arrival screening and the full screening 24 hours post-arrival.

4.3 Self-harm, deaths in custody

4.3.1 Figures for actual self-harm remained low, at four incidents. There were no deaths in custody.

4.3.2 On a night rota in June, the Board reported that all staff had completed suicide and self-harm training in all modules except for one, who had completed none. This was an improvement on last year's report.

4.3.3 There were nine ACCTs opened for the year, compared with six in 2019, and it is encouraging to see that the prison can manage vulnerable prisoners in open conditions. On one occasion, the Board observed that not all meaningful conversations were being recorded. There were 21 challenge, support and intervention plan referrals, but there was no record in safer custody meetings of how many of these were progressed.

4.3.4 From July, safer custody staff shared details of new arrivals who had a history of self-harm or being on an ACCT. This is useful information but there is a danger that this data could be unavailable until up to seven weeks after a resident's arrival date, just because of the time-lag in safer custody reporting.

4.3.5 During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were restrictions on movements between huts. Residents who wanted to speak to a Listener could do so if there was one on their hut, but with only five listeners (in June) covering 13 huts, there were potential shortfalls. The alternatives offered were for men to make an application, but feedback from Listeners was that this potentially breached an element of confidentiality.

4.3.6 Access to the Listeners' hut was also not available. The Board appreciates the requirement for restricting movements but access issues for men looking for support from trained peers were not resolved at a time of increasing tensions across the camp.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners

4.4.1 The Board has not monitored outcomes in this area due to the impact of COVID-19 but issues relating to men who were shielding are referenced in other sections.

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1 There were three incidents for the year, compared with six in 2019. PAVA (pepper spray) has yet to be rolled out, and night staff are not trained in its use.

4.6 Substance misuse

Drugs	2020	2019
IRs	374	488
Finds	80	94

4.6.1 The level of IRs and finds suggests that the threat posed by drugs had reduced from the previous year. Following the initial lockdown in March, fewer ROTLs restricted opportunities to bring back illicit articles. However, a full camp with limited access to work or education or other purposeful activity, combined with a cessation of all mandatory, risk and suspicion testing, created a perfect scenario for substance misuse.

4.6.2 Some risk, suspicion and mandatory testing restarted in November, with three positive tests for cannabis.

4.6.3 Reports of drop-offs and intruders in the camp increased significantly from May. There were frequent reports of the smell of cannabis on camp, and it was suspected that alcohol, LSD, cocaine, and ecstasy were all prevalent in the prison. In November and December, there were 122 IRs (33% of the total for the year) and 17 finds.

4.6.4 Alcohol was identified as an increasing problem through the year. Testing resumed in December, with no positive tests but finds of 18 bottles.

4.6.5 In anticipation of ROTLs being resumed in September, the DART and healthcare teams provided some steroid awareness training, including leaflet

drops to huts, information boards in the healthcare department, information on the dining hall television, and inclusion in the DART's induction talk.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation

- 5.1.1 The pandemic posed a serious problem of how to provide accommodation to meet conflicting needs. The primary requirement was to isolate symptomatic men, shield those who were vulnerable, and to reverse cohort (that is, isolate) any arrivals or men going out to work. It was not possible to create an isolation unit in the early stages of the pandemic, and it was not until early May that a dedicated hut (L) was ready to house isolating cases. In April, M hut (no single rooms) had four men isolating (two of whom tested positive). X hut (with its single rooms and showers) was allocated to the shielding group. Meals and laundry routines were altered to comply with infection control.
- 5.1.2 As restrictions eased in the autumn, some men were able to go out on ROTL as drivers, and for education, and full-time work but numbers were necessarily constrained by the available space required for them to reverse cohort on their return from work. This coincided with pressure to take in new arrivals, as well as contributing to the frustration of other men on camp who wanted to start or restart their ROTL.
- 5.1.3 It was not until October that additional new space in the form of 'bunkbed' accommodation of 40 rooms was delivered for full-time workers, prison drivers and men attending college, with some rooms left for isolation.
- 5.1.4 Other open prisons, with different accommodation profiles, were able to allow more men out on ROTL, which was a form of 'postcode lottery'. It also contributed to issues of communication, frustration on camp and several transfer requests, which themselves contributed to feelings of unfair treatment.
- 5.1.5 The national 'early release' scheme did not make any material difference to reducing the population at Springhill.
- 5.1.6 An infestation of rats became a serious problem in the summer, following initial reports from residents in June. Dead rats were found on rotas in September. The problem was exacerbated by faulty pest control procedures.
- 5.1.7 Funds were allocated to refurbish the showers in five huts in October, with a temporary unit provided. This work was interrupted with the second national restrictions.
- 5.1.8 In early November, the drains from one hut were blocked and overflowed with raw sewage and used toilet paper over a wide area adjacent to the hut. A month later, there was a similar issue, with the problem clearly not resolved.

- 5.1.9 Before the pandemic, the 'cleanest hut' competition was held weekly, and the winners received a vegetable goodie bag, replacing the less healthy bag of crisps and chocolate. This was well received by residents.
- 5.1.10 Huts are currently referred to by a single letter, and the names that were added as part of the enabling environment plan in 2018 have been dropped. The plan is to rename huts with ones that will match the hut letter, and to refer to these accommodation blocks as something more humanising than huts.
- 5.1.11 The Board notes that Springhill's capacity is to be increased by two additional blocks, for an additional 120 residents, for delivery in 2022. The Board looks forward to receiving details about additional developments for supporting activities, possibly in education, industries or external business contracts.

5.2 Food

- 5.2.1 Generally, food has been reported as 'good' (community council meeting, June 2020). There were 21 complaints (nine in 2019) and one application to the Board, mainly from men who had not been supplied with their requested diet.
- 5.2.2 Following a survey of residents, the kitchen reverted in September to serving a cold meal at lunchtime and a hot meal in the evening during the week. For weekends, a hot meal was supplied at lunchtime and a cold meal for the evening.
- 5.2.3 To complement the overused microwave cookers in the huts, a stock of slow cookers will be distributed, once social distancing restrictions allow.
- 5.2.4 There were 34 complaints about the canteen during the year. The community council queried the quality, price and selection of items, especially fresh items such as eggs and butter, the supply of which had dropped by 30% in April, due to restrictions at HMP Bullingdon. The situation improved but there was still reduced choice on some items.

5.3 Segregation

- 5.3.1 There is no segregation unit at Springhill.

5.4 Staff/resident relationships

- 5.4.1 In June, the Board became aware of an issue with how residents were hearing about and processing communication from the prison. Some men insisted that they had not seen a relevant notice or had not heard any feedback from the community council, or were getting inconsistent messaging from staff. Some of these comments echoed feedback from staff and residents in a February survey, highlighting a communication challenge for an open prison which was exaggerated during the pandemic.
- 5.4.2 The distribution of notices on the huts was reorganised and the display of information in the dining hall was considerably improved. However, communication issues clearly went beyond notices. In August, safer custody representatives reported that fewer governors were seen around camp, and

there was a thirst for news on any developments, predominantly on ROTL. Staff were understandably anxious not to give false hope in a rapidly changing environment of exceptional delivery models (EDMs), but this did not reduce the ‘rumour mill’ or the suspicion that staff were withholding information, which they clearly were not.

- 5.4.3 By October, the community council was better organised, and more effective at redistributing important updates via the minutes. Whether these communications are read and digested better than the rather formulaic ‘notice to prisoners’ remains to be seen. The dining hall also had a ‘Governor’s questions box’, which was cleared each Monday.

5.5 Equality and diversity

- 5.5.1 The prison’s system of analysis and process, hampered by reduced staffing levels in the safer custody team, did not function effectively this year.
- 5.5.2 The quarterly diversity and equality team (DEAT) meetings were merged with the monthly safer custody meetings in March, but from the February DEAT meeting onwards there was no data shared to evidence issues, instigate investigations or organise any follow-up plans.
- 5.5.3 Last year, the Board commented on the over-representation of black residents on adjudications charged. The Board is not aware of any analysis of adjudications charged or proven for evidence of discrimination. The Board’s analysis of just one month’s adjudications in October showed that 39% of those charged were black residents, which suggests that this requires some investigation, given that black residents represent 22% of the prison’s population.
- 5.5.4 Separate DEAT meetings will restart in January 2021.
- 5.5.5 There were six DIRFs raised in 2020, compared with six from April to December in 2019. The low number is encouraging but it could also reflect a similar attitude towards complaints that the Board has heard from residents – namely, that complaining damages ROTL prospects.
- 5.5.6 The DIRF process was amended in September to include the following:
- Forms are collected and stored by safer custody staff.
 - Each complainant will be spoken to.
 - Comp 1s (complaints) with the discrimination box ticked will be treated as a DIRF.
 - Staff will not submit DIRFs about residents’ behaviour and will issue behaviour warnings instead.
- 5.5.7 The Board welcomes this new process, which is likely to increase the number of DIRFs. The Board will monitor the process, and the number of Comp 1s not followed up as DIRFs.

5.6 Faith and pastoral support

- 5.6.1 In the absence of shared religious services, chaplains from the major faith groups supplied residents with service sheets, tracts, and newsletters, which were displayed on the faith table in the dining hall, with a chaplain available to talk at the mid-day meal. In the lead-up to the Eid festival, Muslim residents were provided with daily teaching instruction.
- 5.6.2 At least two residents were able to make use of the iPads provided by the prison, to support them in communicating with relatives at the end of life, and for funerals.

5.7 Complaints

Selected complaints	2020	% of total	2019	2018
Property	97	27%	126	139
Canteen	34	9%	90	43
Food	21	6%	9	N/A
OMU/ROTL	13	4%	45	38
Staff	9	2%	10	13
All complaints	358		439	421

- 5.7.1 Overall complaints fell by 18% on the previous year, which is encouraging. However, property issues are a recurring theme, accounting for nearly a third of all complaints and 23% of Board applications. In the last four months of the year, property issues featured regularly in the 31 complaints forwarded to other prisons, and the 34 received from other prisons. The Board looks forward to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's framework policy on all aspects of handling property, to improve outcomes for residents.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

- 6.1.1 During the pandemic, healthcare staff worked with prison managers to deliver a safe environment for residents and staff. Eighty-four residents were quickly identified as either vulnerable or requiring shielding. Of these, 20 were rehoused on X and Y huts (single accommodation). Others opted to stay on their existing huts.
- 6.1.2 There were two positive COVID-19 cases among residents in April. Levels of infections in December were more serious, with 17 positive cases. At the end of December, 30 members of staff across both Grendon and Springhill were off (a combination of isolating, shielding and two testing positive for COVID-

19), which affected some delivery of the regime, particularly in supplying food to isolating huts. Unlike the positive cases in April, all December cases were effectively isolated in single accommodation in the newly installed bunkabins (see paragraph 5.1.3).

- 6.1.3 From April to June, no routine dentistry appointments were possible, and an average of 62% of residents waited over six weeks for their appointments. Urgent cases had to wait, on average, three days. Non-urgent physiotherapy services were also interrupted but no residents waited over six weeks for an appointment.
- 6.1.4 At the end of September, there were no breaches of the six-week appointment time for dentistry and physiotherapy, reflecting an effective triaging of cases. One resident waited longer than six weeks for podiatry, and the six-week breach for opticians was 35%, which was due to a 100% increase in receptions at the end of the month. Non-attendance levels were below 10% for all services except the optician and physiotherapy (11%), and cancellations for all reasons were considerably reduced during the periods of lockdown.
- 6.1.5 Any cancelled hospital appointments (from April to June, there were 38) were tracked on the healthcare database; residents were kept informed and follow-up appointments made, none of which required escalation by healthcare staff.
- 6.1.6 In the early stages of the pandemic, the Board was struck by the centralised and bureaucratic processes in regard to compassionate and special licence release. Three men were released on these grounds but there were at least two others who were not, and the process did not take into account any local risk assessment.
- 6.1.7 On a night visit in June, it was clear that it was hard for any meaningful social distancing to be observed by staff and Board members.
- 6.1.8 In December, medicine dispensing lockers were installed in reception, allowing men returning late from ROTL to access any dispensed medication.
- 6.1.9 No residents' forums were held during the year, but these were scheduled to start monthly in 2021. Residents' experiences from healthcare surveys record positive comments.

6.2 Mental healthcare

- 6.2.1 There was a marked increase in the number of new arrivals identified as requiring mental health referrals. In normal times, the highest figure was 2.7% of new arrivals; in June this figure was 27%, in September 20% and in October 17%, reflecting the mental health pressures that men had been under during closed conditions prior to their arrival at Springhill.

6.3 Exercise, gym

- 6.3.1 Use of the gym was stopped at the end of March 2020. During the warm spring weeks, some residents set up their own gyms with adapted equipment,

together with music to accompany the circuits. Residents were positive about what they had created themselves and said that it was just as much for their mental as their physical wellbeing.

6.3.2 Staff also organised some fitness classes and circuits, and these proved popular. In June, men could use basic gym equipment that had been sent in.

6.3.3 Indoor gym restarted on 22 November and was restricted to 12 men per session, only to be suspended again on 31 December. Some older men talked of difficulties in booking sessions:

‘It’s my only complaint, the new gym booking session, I can’t get there quick enough, the younger ones fill the spaces, we (older patients) don’t stand a chance. This needs to change’. (December 2020 equality and health inequality assessment report, section 4.12.)

6.4 Drug rehabilitation

6.4.1 During the pandemic, the DART was only able to operate remotely, offering books and leaflets, with very few one-to-one meetings, based on a red, amber, green system.

6.5 Soft skills

6.5.1 Over three days in May, residents participated in a charity event for the NHS, with circuits of the exercise field as well as sponsorship options for men who were shielding. A total of 1,031 laps, 1,289 km and 258 ‘parkruns’ were completed, as well as £239 raised for the NHS. Staff reported healthy rivalry, and the winning huts were rewarded with vegetable packs as prizes.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 There was no face-to-face education from March to December. Although accredited learning packs were available (see paragraph 7.1.6), the lack of classroom interaction and support did not help many residents looking to progress, especially those men at functional skills levels.

7.1.2 In the academic year ending March 2020, allocations and efficiency against planned classes and actual attendance remained on a par with 2018/19, which is a good outcome, given the ROTL rule changes and residents’ focus on getting out to work. Interruptions were 13% up on the previous year, due to clashes with OMU and healthcare appointments. Better communication between departments helped to reduce these interruptions.

Key indicators	2019/2020	2018/19
Allocations against planned classes	84%	85%
Efficiency against planned classes	78%	78%
Attendance against planned classes	93%	92%
Hours of absences	684	644
Hours of interruptions	620	546

7.1.3 Course achievements over two academic years:

All courses for year	2019/2020	2018/19
Completed	876	244
Achieved	853	238
Success overall	97%	96%

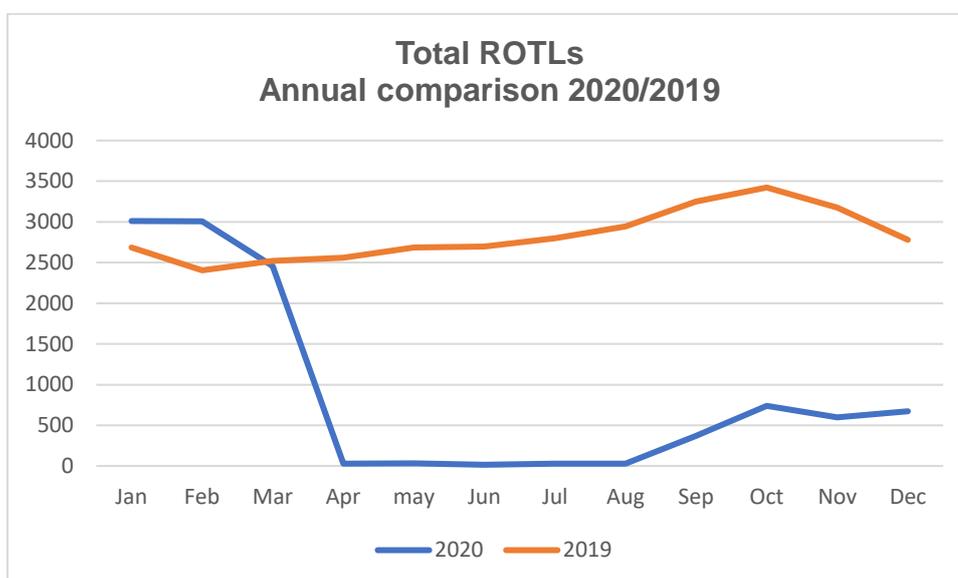
- 7.1.4 A total of 876 courses were completed, which was an encouraging increase as a result of better monitoring by staff and keeping to expected completion dates. The 97% overall success rate is the second highest score in the country, with the majority managing to take exams by being released from their work commitments.
- 7.1.5 From March to September, Milton Keynes College provided generic, unaccredited packs which were not continued learning from a previous course. Take-up was voluntary and only approximately 20 residents used them.
- 7.1.6 From September to December, the college offered AIM-accredited work packs, with qualifications following examinations once COVID-19 restrictions are eased.
- 7.1.7 There were 12 professional social development (PSD) courses, including employability skills, environmental sustainability, and health and safety in construction and building industries. The latter courses are popular because of the qualification, which goes towards a licence to work on building sites.
- 7.1.8 There were also curriculum-based packs for use in-room, including six functional skills courses in English and mathematics (levels 1 and 2), principles of business start-up, plumbing and carpentry (levels 1 and 2).
- 7.1.9 A total of 259 courses were started by 89 men. By the end of December, 201 courses had been completed, with 103 achieved to date and the balance waiting for certification following their examinations. Some men completed several courses (especially on PSD).
- 7.1.10 A college champion was appointed, and this helped to get new residents assessed and resources quickly allocated.
- 7.1.11 From March 2020, most of the Open University (OU) students were deferred, with several becoming disillusioned. In October, there were 12 students registered with the OU and three with Oxford Brookes University (21 and eight, respectively, in October 2019). Men did not have access to computers in college for coursework, but were able to submit written work to be forwarded to the OU.

7.1.12 During lockdown, access to the library was facilitated by the activities hub. Residents selected titles from indexed stock. There was also a trolley service offering a random collection of titles.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 There were 10,986 ROTLs for the year, compared with 33,927 in 2019. These figures include all men going out on resettlement day release, resettlement overnight release, and to work or training.

7.2.2 The chart below shows a comparison of ROTLs over two years, with numbers this year determined by EDMs set nationally. The first three months of 2020 indicate that increases in ROTL numbers were near the levels of the last three months of 2019, when changes to ROTL rules were taking effect.



7.2.3 From April to September, the pandemic effectively halted resettlement activities based on training, full-time and community work, and education.

7.2.4 The table below details what was achieved, excluding the period of seven weeks from 1 September, which were not recorded. These 89 residents represent approximately 30% of the camp. Placements included Clipper Ltd (Logistics), Chef Direct and Pret a Manger, as well as construction and haulage companies. Community work placements included Sobell House, Sue Ryder shops and Age UK. Education was principally with Oxford Brookes University.

1 Jan-23 Mar and 20 Oct-31 Dec	Total days worked	Total residents
Full-time work	824	27
Community work	634	24
Outside education	449	8
Training	97	2
Agency	440	28
Total	2,444	89

- 7.2.5 ROTL was restarted in early September, prioritising men with pre-existing work placements, provided that the latter had confirmed that their locations were compliant with COVID-19 rules. The numbers were small (12) and reliant on residents being able to reverse cohort in one hut.
- 7.2.6 One resident approached the Board in August, anxious that unless he was allowed out on ROTL he would lose his (unpaid) carpentry apprenticeship with a national builder. He said that he was struggling with many different pressures, and was clearly keen to progress. The Board was pleased to hear that he did manage a ROTL in September, and noted the contribution that staff made in helping achieve this.
- 7.2.7 For men who were in full-time work before all ROTL stopped, the communication of furlough was, in the Board's opinion, poorly handled. The initial response from the government in April was that payments for prisoners did not apply as they were not employees. This was revised in June, giving the prison one day to sort out applications before the scheme closed. The perceived message, however, was unhelpful to prisoners preparing themselves for continued work on their release.
- 7.2.8 For the 30 residents who were successful, all 13 weeks' lump-sum payments were subject to the full 40% repayment under the PEA. About half of these residents were able to get varying refunds applied for by the prison before the Ministry of Justice stopped all such locally requested refunds. This treatment seems unfair for those residents who might have been eligible for refunds if their weekly net earnings were below the minimum threshold for PEA to apply.
- 7.2.9 The prison put on an employment event in early March, attended by 120 men and with support from companies offering good training opportunities, most of which were aimed at men who were able to commit to full-time work on their release. Firms offering agency work were not invited (in line with the prison's policy of limiting agency work). It was good to see the public sector represented by the Cabinet Office, with options for employment in the civil service on release as well as Going Forward into Employment – a government-led initiative to match residents with public sector opportunities. The economic prospects nine months after this event are much more uncertain.
- 7.2.10 The land-based team normally employed 25 residents but was greatly reduced during the pandemic, but the introduction of hens was a welcome initiative, and there is the potential for adding pygmy goats and bees.
- 7.2.11 In the waste management area, sleeping bag covers were made from reconstructed crisp packets and then distributed by Oasis to rough sleepers.

7.3 Family contact

- 7.3.1 Before the pandemic, visits continued to be less popular, especially on Fridays, as ROTL numbers increased. From April to July, all social visits

stopped. To help with family contact, an additional £5 weekly credit was added to residents' telephone PIN allowance. In addition, residents were allowed access to telephones on the lawn in the front of the Big House. About 220 residents were able to make three 30-minute calls a week. This local initiative was welcomed by residents.

- 7.3.2 The popularity of social visits appeared to suffer from the necessary but non-user-friendly health and distancing measures in the gym (as opposed to the dining hall). There were some initial teething problems with the 'Purple Visits' (video call visits) but take-up remained surprisingly low, even after the second cancellation of all social visits in early December (see figure below).



- 7.3.3 ROTL for family ties on day release restarted in September. Restrictions were applied depending on the families' local tier, so for some this meant meeting outdoors in local towns. Restrictions were imposed following the prison's move to tier 3 in late October. With all men having to go through the process of being reassessed (re-boarded) for ROTL, the Board expected a backlog, resulting in applications and complaints about fairness and process. It is a credit to the OMU that this did not happen.

7.4 Offender management, progression

- 7.4.1 OMU staff went onto camp, rather than waiting for residents to visit them as part of the normal drop-in sessions. Despite the rumours on camp, offender supervisors confirmed to Board members that parole board hearings (via video) were taking place, preceded by one-to-one sessions between the resident and their offender supervisor.

- 7.4.2 Interdepartmental risk management team reviews of restricted cases were thorough from an OMU perspective but lacked consistent attendance and reports from some other departments. This will be addressed in early 2021.

- 7.4.3 Offender Management in Custody changes for the open estate are being rolled out in 2021.

7.5 Resettlement planning

- 7.5.1 Springhill's enabling environment accreditation was renewed in September, although many activities that would be associated with developing an enabling environment were delayed due to the pandemic.

- 7.5.2 The CRC's delivery contract had to be adapted because of the pandemic, with face-to-face inductions being substituted with a basic custody screening tool

questionnaire that was posted back to the CRC. The virtual campus office was altered, to allow for interviews and telephone assessments.

7.5.3 Accommodation outcomes on release:

Releases	2020	2019	2018
Settled accommodation	218	206	270
Transient accommodation	27	12	11
No fixed abode/unknown	3	11	1
% of men in settled accommodation	88%	91%	96%

The above data is supplied by the CRC (based on self-disclosure by men on release). In 2020, the percentage of men declaring themselves in settled accommodation dropped to 88%, from 91% in 2019. This year, the Board has not compared this with the data supplied by the Probation Service 24 hours post-release, which in 2019 showed more negative outcomes; it is possible that the increase in transient accommodation this year is understated. The data suggests a deterioration in the prospects for positive resettlement for some men.

7.5.4 Employment outcomes on release:

Type	Releases 2020	% against releases 2020	% against releases 2019	% against releases 2018
Employed	143	58%	74%	73%
Unemployed	78	31%	14%	16%
Full-/part-time education	7	3%	5%	3%
Other retired/carer	19	8%	5%	8%

The above data is supplied by the CRC at Springhill (based on self-disclosure by men on release). In 2020, the self-declared unemployed rate as a percentage of all releases increased to 31%, from 14% in 2019. The Board has not compared this with the data supplied by the Probation Service six weeks post-release, which in 2019 showed more negative outcomes; it is possible that in 2020 the increase in unemployment is understated. The data suggests a deterioration in prospects for positive resettlement for some men.

7.5.5 The CRC assesses job readiness using four levels (gold, silver, bronze and not job-ready). Over the year, 51% of released men were gold and 12% not job-ready, compared with 56% and 15%, respectively, in 2019.

7.5.6 The CRC facilitated 147 new bank accounts (229 in 2019) and 67 credit checks with Experian (64 in 2019).

7.5.7 In March the CRC, Ixion and Adviza created a CV and employment workshop designed to help men who have never had to complete a CV or work on disclosure details. It is hoped that this service can be resumed post-pandemic.

7.5.8 The current CRC contracts have been extended from 1 April 2020 to June 2021. The Board looks forward to seeing how the services they currently offer will be maintained in the future.

8. The work of the IMB

The Board did not visit the prison during April and May, and rotas from March to December were a mix of actual visits and remote calls. From March to June, there were weekly calls with the Governor, which were critical to keeping in touch. Members were also able to dial in to some prison meetings.

Only two Board meetings were held in the prison, with all other meetings held online. Two new members started the year and most training was carried out online; some elements of this training will be used for future training. One new member was unable to continue and one other existing member resigned. The Board successfully recruited a further three new members, who will start their training at a difficult time during the pandemic.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	55 (186 in 2019)
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

Applications to the IMB (including one from the free national 0800 call centre which was not correctly forwarded to the Board due to a technical error).

Code	Subject	2020	2019
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives and earned privileges, sanctions	0	2
C	Equality	1	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	0	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	0	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	1
F	Food and kitchens	1	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	1
H1	Property within this establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	3	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	1
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorization	2	3
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	0
K	Transfers	2	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	1	0
	Total number of applications	13	15



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