



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Highpoint

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

**Published June 2021**



# Contents

<b>Introductory sections 1 - 3</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	3
3. Executive summary	5
<b>Evidence sections 4 – 7</b>	
4. Safety	8
5. Humane treatment	11
6. Health and wellbeing	18
7. Progression and resettlement	20
<b>The work of the IMB</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Applications to the IMB</b>	<b>25</b>

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

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

HMP Highpoint was originally opened as a prison in 1977 and has undergone a number of estate reconfigurations over the years. The prison is sited on a former Royal Air Force base using many of the original buildings and is split over two adjacent (North and South) sites. It is situated some 10 miles south east of Newmarket in rural Suffolk.

HMP Highpoint is a male category C training and resettlement prison for London and Essex. The operational capacity for the reporting period was 1325.

Accommodation at the prison varies considerably in terms of fabric and facilities. On the South side there are ten residential units and on the North there are five. Most units have in-cell sanitation except for Vickers and Halifax on the South and Lysander, Hawker and Dominie on the North, which have 24-hour access to lavatory and shower recesses. Three units with en-suite cells are available on the South. Most cells are single occupancy; however, there are some doubled up single cells on

both the North and South sites. In-cell television was available to all prisoners with the exception of those on basic regime, but has been available to all during Covid.

#### Units 6 and 7

Due to these units being constructed principally of timber and being a fire hazard, they will be demolished. At the date of this report, a timetable has not yet been agreed.

When the units are demolished, there will be a reduction of 40 prisoners.

#### Unit 5

During the reporting year, newly arrived prisoners to HMP Highpoint spent the first fourteen days on K spur isolating. (The spur was acting as a reverse cohort unit in line with national HMPPS policy.)

After the fourteen days isolation period if no Covid 19 had been detected, they were transferred to other units around the prison.

#### Unit 9 (Protective Isolation Unit)

Prisoners who are designated as shielding due to Covid or other medical issues can be located on this unit alongside other prisoners.

#### Units 7A (enhanced)

The 24 individual units are mainly constructed of steel. The interior of each unit includes a sleeping area and a bathroom area. The units were brought in by HMPPS to provide a temporary solution to the use of overcrowded accommodation.

The dynamics of HMP Highpoint with its split site, large population (with some 80% coming from London or Essex) held some distance from home and in a remote and rural location, continues to create significant performance challenges for the prison and makes Highpoint a complex establishment.

Agencies and contractors for the prison include:

- Resettlement providers - London and Essex Community Rehabilitation Companies
- Drugs rehabilitation services - Phoenix Futures
- Services for families and children - Ormiston Trust
- Healthcare – Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd
- Escort contractors - include Serco and G4S
- Learning and skills, education and training - People Plus
- Maintenance - GFSL
- Resettlement housing- St Mungo's

- Resettlement support (including debt advocacy etc) – Ipswich Housing Action Group
- Information, Advice and Guidance – Forward Trust
- Gambling Support - Breakeven
- Job Centre Plus left the prison in March 2020 and the Resettlement Department has had no input from any Job Centre since that date.  
*See also 7.5.3 resettlement planning*

### **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 tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison’s response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

There has also been a turnover of Board members, with a number of experienced members resigning shortly before, during, and at the end of, the reporting year. A new cohort has been unable to fully train, visit, and take over their roles. (See *section 8*). This has contributed to the annual report not attaining the standard the Board would wish.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

On the whole, prisoners appear to have adapted well to the Covid regime, and accepted new restrictions. It must be highlighted that every attempt has been made by the governor and staff to reduce the stress created during this period. Time out of cell has been curtailed as little as possible for prisoners.

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

There has been a marked decrease in violent incidents during the reporting year, and a slight decrease in self-harm. The incidence of drug misuse has fallen, but there has been an increase in the use of illegally brewed alcohol.

Support systems have been maintained, albeit sometimes in different formats, due to Covid restrictions. A key worker system has been introduced, but the Board regrets it has not been possible to monitor outcomes for prisoners, due to Covid restrictions.

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

Fair and humane treatment has continued to be a priority in the prison. Efforts have been made to limit the time prisoners have had to spend locked in their cells (see 6.5.2). Sanctions which are usually applied to those placed on the basic regime have

not been applied (eg televisions are allowed).The segregation unit continues to be run professionally and productively, with issues being dealt with and prisoners relocated as soon as is possible There has been no shortage in food supplies during the reporting period.

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

The GP and nurse-led services have continued, but with some limitations on the number of patients seen in clinic. Dental treatment has also continued. There have been some difficulties with external providers of mental health services, and social care, but the in-house team and prison staff have been providing additional support and services. The Board is pleased to note that exercise periods and time out of cells for domestics and meal collection has not been affected by Covid restrictions.

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

Vocational and training courses have not been available for most of the reporting year, but distance learning has continued. A lot of effort has been put into maintaining family contact for prisoners by remote means. Resettlement support has been reduced by the lack of face to face services, but maintained where possible by paperwork and telephone. The board is concerned at the total withdrawal of JobCentrePlus services.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

3.3.1 JobCentrePlus withdrew all support from the prison in March 2020. The Board asks the minister to investigate this action, in light of the fact that other services were maintained across the estate by remote means. The continuation or return of Covid restrictions should not deprive those due for release of this vital support.

#### 3.3.2 Property

Although the number of applications the Board receives concerning lost or delayed property has almost halved since last year, this is still a matter of great concern (see 5.8.1.and 5.8.2). The Board again asks the minister to undertake an urgent review into the handling of prisoners' property.

3.3.3 Loss of access to library computers has highlighted a need for tablets/laptops to be available to prisoners for educational purposes. The Board wishes consideration to be given to this as a permanent provision.

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

3.3.4 The service provided by Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) is still a major cause for concern. The Board requests an urgent review of the works maintenance

contract to ensure it fully meets the ongoing needs of a challenging prison environment. Failure to do so seriously impacts on outcomes for the prisoners. (See 5.1.3)

3.3.5 The repair and maintenance of kitchen equipment has continued to be a problem. The Board asks that the relevant contract be reviewed, to support the ability of the prison to continue to provide a healthy and nourishing diet to the prisoners.

3.3.6 In order for mental health practitioners to provide timely interventions, there is a requirement for prisoner records to be transferred between establishments when a prisoner is relocated. The Board asks for a co-ordinated and regulated procedure to be established to ensure this happens.

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

3.3.7 Whilst the Board acknowledges the impact of maintaining the prison regime during Covid, the hours allocated to the equalities officer are still a matter of concern. The Board asks for the consideration of an increase, or stability, in the pattern of hours allocated to this important post.

3.3.8 The Board hopes the provision of a dedicated wing for those prisoners wanting to engage fully with drug recovery programmes can go ahead in the near future.

3.3.9 The Board asks the governor to look proactively to appointing a suitably qualified person to the kitchen staff, who can support prisoners in obtaining an NVQ qualification, as a positive outcome of the experience gained by working there.

3.3.10 The Board recommends that consideration is given to the continuation of purple visits (a secure video calling platform) after restrictions are lifted. This would provide an alternative means of family contact where distance makes visiting difficult. (See 7.4.3)

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

3.4.1 The decrease in violent incidents, in spite of the frustrations naturally experienced by all during Covid, could be interpreted as a positive reflection on the ethos of the prison, as demonstrated by the frequent clear and frank communications from the governor to the prisoners, and opportunities for feedback.

3.4.2 The Board appreciates members' inclusion on the circulation list for the daily briefing, providing them with information they might otherwise not have access to.

3.4.3 The provision of in-cell telephones is a major step in communication. This has proved particularly valuable when many face to face services have been curtailed, and when family visits have not been possible. Similarly, the use of purple visits has helped maintain contact with the outside world, as has zoom contact during major incidents in family life.

3.4.4 There have been fewer prisoners passing through the segregation unit, and occupancy of the unit has been kept low.

3.4.5 Although there have been fewer complaints involving prisoners' property, there is still cause for concern.

3.4.6 The Board wishes to acknowledge the overall response to Covid within the prison, where measures have been taken to maintain as fair and humane way of life as possible. Many services have had to alter the way they work, but, with a few exceptions, much has been done to achieve this aim.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

The Safer Prisons Team is a small dedicated team of officers and office staff, run by a designated governor, who deal with all matters involving the safety of prisoners eg assessment, care in custody teamwork (ACCT) reviews, use of force, working with prisoners who become aggressive.

#### **4.1 Reception and Induction**

4.1.1 On arrival, all prisoners are assessed by healthcare, and their property and persons are searched. During the first quarter of the reporting year, this took place in the Reception Unit, but since then, prisoners have been immediately located on unit 5 (see *below*) to avoid any cross-infection. Healthcare again screens prisoners seven days after arrival.

4.1.2 On the rare occasions when there have been late arrivals, they were placed on observations until they could be seen by healthcare on the following day. Property is logged, and also dealt with on the following day.

4.1.3 The induction unit is situated on Unit 5, K wing. A full induction programme, was run by peer support workers before Covid, and included advice and information to help new arrivals settle in. Since March 2020, all reception and induction procedures have been carried out on Unit 5 by staff.

4.1.4 All new admissions are given an information booklet, produced by prisoners, about all aspects of prison life in HMP Highpoint. This is useful as new admissions can refer to it in their first few weeks and thereafter.

4.1.5 The chaplaincy sees all new arrivals, to signpost pastoral care available from their team. All new prisoners are screened by Education for disabilities and basic literacy and numeracy levels (see 7.1.1). Identification of vulnerability and risk is an on-going process during this time.

4.1.6 During Covid, all newcomers remain on Unit 5 for 14 days isolation, and provided they have not tested positive within that time, they are then located elsewhere as soon as accommodation is available.

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

4.2.1 There has been a 2.7% decrease in incidents of self-harm, from 513 in 2019 to 499 in 2020.

4.2.2 There has also been a decrease in the number of ACCT documents opened, from 525 in 2019, to 379 in 2020 (a decrease of 27.8%). These documents were checked by Board members when carrying out rota visits in person, and enquiries were made as to the status and well-being of prisoners on ACCTs during remote monitoring phone calls.

4.2.3 All prisoners have access to the Samaritan phone support service via the in-cell telephones. Access to Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to offer peer support) was limited at the beginning of Covid restrictions, but was later resumed.

4.2.4 There was one death in custody during the reporting year. The Board offers their condolences to the family. The death occurred in hospital, and was apparently due to natural causes.

On the anniversary of a death in custody which took place in the previous year, chaplaincy held a special service, and prisoners were able to apply to attend.

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

4.3.1 Statistics show that overall violent incidents in 2020 have decreased. The prison recorded that during the 2019 reporting year there were 513 incidents. During this reporting year there were 267 violent incidents:

- Prisoner on prisoner 156 (20 serious, 136 non serious)
- Prisoner on staff 111 (6 serious, 105 non serious)

This shows a decrease of 246 incidents (48%). Violent incidents are analysed, and those involved are interviewed by safer prisons staff.

*(See also 4.5 use of force)*

4.3.2 Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are opened on prisoners who are believed to have, or have, exhibited violent or antisocial behaviour. Victim support plans are opened on prisoners who have been victims of violence. Both plans offer support to the prisoner, through monitoring them more closely on the wings and in workplaces, with the aim of reducing their negative behaviour or their chances of being bullied. The plans also highlight to staff (wing staff, in particular) the need for closer observation and daily recording on the Prison National Offender Management Information System (P-NOMIS). *(See also 5.2.5 adjudications)*

4.3.3 Bullied prisoners are supported by staff, and known perpetrators are challenged. Where it is deemed appropriate, prisoners are relocated to a different unit within the establishment. Some prisoners choose to self-isolate on the wings through fear of bullying, or debt and drug related issues. Whilst it is recognised that this is their choice, they are encouraged to work through their issues, and have access to safer prisons representatives, listeners and the mental health team. When the Board was able to carry out in-person rota visits, seeing these prisoners was a regular feature.

4.3.4 Due to Covid restrictions, it has not been possible to monitor the deployment of the newly-introduced system of key workers as the Board would wish. (Key workers are prison officers given the responsibility for supporting a small number of prisoners under the Offender Management in Custody scheme.) Numbers of sessions are published daily, but during the reporting year there has been no means of monitoring the outcomes for prisoners.

Full implementation of the system has not been possible. For most of the reporting year, numbers of staff have been unable to attend work due to Covid-related issues. Under such circumstances, other staff (eg key workers) have to be redeployed, as maintaining the regime is the first priority.

The Board hopes to be able to carry out effective monitoring of the key worker strategy in the coming year.

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

4.4.1 A “men of concern” register holds the details of prisoners who require special provision, for reasons of mental health or eg dementia. These prisoners are provided with extra support from wing staff, and if appropriate, from another prisoner who is designated as a carer. They are encouraged to keep themselves and their cell clean and tidy, to take exercise, and to collect their meals and medications. They are also encouraged to talk about any issues they have. There were on average 4 such prisoners at any one time.

4.4.2 All vulnerable prisoners are visited once a week by a chaplaincy counsellor.

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

Due to Covid restrictions, the Board has not attended incidents where use of force has been used to control prisoners, nor the use of force meetings, which they are invited to attend.

4.5.1 Force was used to control prisoners on 371 occasions during this reporting year, with monthly figures lower for the second half of 2020 than for the first six months. In the previous year, 2019, use of force was employed on 362 occasions.

4.5.2 Batons were drawn on two occasions. Handcuffs were used on 81 occasions and were not always used during restraint.

## **4.6 Substance misuse**

4.6.1 The Board has not been able to obtain detailed figures, but during the reporting year, there was a decrease in identified drug misuse, and an increase in the number of prisoners found to be under the influence of illegally brewed alcohol. Incidents of the latter were dealt with by healthcare, although in some cases external medical assistance was sought, for example where the user had injured themselves whilst intoxicated. Cell searches were conducted to discover the brew. The most common drug misuse continued to be the manufactured narcotic NPS, often in impregnated paper received through the post. The misuse of vape tubes was also a common means of drug usage.

4.6.2 During the early Covid restrictions, new arrivals were contacted remotely, and did not receive the usual assistance with the assessment forms relating to drug use, resulting in some not being identified. This was resolved by induction packs being sent to all new admissions. Although many of these were not returned, on Day 14, a member of the team went to Induction. Once the resident was located on the Unit, another visit was made, for anyone who might have been missed.

4.6.3 Mandatory and regular tests have been carried out as required.

4.6.4 In previous years, D wing was designated as a wing offering support to all prisoners wanting to engage fully with drug recovery. This facility was not available during the reporting year, although there are plans to establish a “drug free” wing.

4.6.5 Those being discharged from prison can be particularly vulnerable. After leaving prison, some will lapse into their old ways. Phoenix Futures makes referrals to external agencies which can offer ongoing support, and the success of this has been progressing.

4.6.6 During Covid, work carried out by Phoenix Futures has been adapted to suit the circumstances. Eg Group work has stopped. At one point, there were plans to run micro-groups, but it was decided that this was not the best use of staff time, as more clients could be seen individually. The post of Family Worker has unfortunately seen a turnover of 3 in the reporting year, although extremely valuable work was carried out by the last post holder, and it is hoped that her successor will be able to make full use of this, in what is a vital role in contributing to the well-being of prisoners.

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

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

5.1.1 Staff actively make sure that the units are clean and tidy. Prisoners who do not keep their cells clean are encouraged to do so. *(See also 4.4.1 vulnerable prisoners)*

Serveries are thoroughly checked after each meal, and the findings recorded. The standard is usually high. Governors' visits result in a high level of activity, and the prisoners seem justifiably proud of the results.

5.1.2 Funding to replace the flooring on Unit 14 was obtained last year, however, was then withdrawn. This was due to funding pressures and the fact that the prison could not complete the work within the financial year. Funding to replace the flooring on Unit 15 has been secured and we are hopeful that this work will be completed this year.

5.1.3 Due to Covid 19, it was not possible to monitor all of the work carried out by Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL). The Board understands, however, that the works are still not being carried out in a timely manner. The Board understands that when works are carried out, they are not regularly quality checked by a GFSL supervisor.

The Board also understands that prisoners are carrying out minor maintenance works, which helps. The Board is concerned that other repairs are not being carried out in a timely manner and this is having an impact over the two sites, North and South.

The Board would once again point out that the workforce employed within the prison are trying their best to complete the works, but are still being hampered by lack of leadership from the GFSL senior management team.

It would appear that the GFSL senior management team does not understand the complexities of the issues and concerns in HMP Highpoint as a working prison

The Board understands that GFSL are still struggling to recruit for the following posts: electricians, plumbers, painters, carpenters, supervisor

Specific concerns include delays in:

- General repairs to electrical equipment
- General repairs to plumbing
- Repairs to kitchens on both North and South sites

All of this has an immense impact on the day-to-day regime and the life of the prisoners.

The Board asks that HMPPS will carry out an urgent review of the works maintenance contract provided by GFSL to ensure it fully meets the needs of a challenging prison environment.

5.1.4 During the reporting year, a fire at another establishment led to a survey of similar accommodation blocks at Highpoint (Units 6 and 7). Although not identical in construction, the decision was taken that these units would be closed in 2021.

5.1.5 The North and South sites combined produced well over 2,500 meals each day.

Special diets and religious observances were catered for. Due to Covid restrictions, food tasting by Board members was discontinued from March.

5.1.6 Supplies and deliveries to the kitchens have remained good throughout the pandemic.

5.1.7 The maintenance of kitchen equipment continues to be problematic, with long waits for replacements and repairs. In one instance, a dispute with a sub-contractor, ServiceLine, led to a new gas cooker not being installed for some time after it had finally been delivered.

5.1.8 The prisoner workforce has been reduced on south site from 30 to 15, due to social distancing requirements. Good working practices have however been implemented.

5.1.9 A few years ago, it was possible for prisoners to obtain an NVQ for kitchen work. The relevant member of staff left however, and has not been replaced. The Board hopes that this can be rectified in 2021.

5.1.10 There has been little disruption to prisoners' orders for "Canteen", and they have been able to buy food supplies to cook for themselves in the unit kitchens as usual.

(See 7.2.1)

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 The segregation unit continues to be settled and run in a highly professional and productive manner. Staff have to deal with very challenging and unpredictable behaviour, and are able to diffuse volatile situations when dealing with prisoners. *(The unit was highly commended by HMIP after its 2019 inspection.)* There are 18 operational cells available, plus one that is reserved for searches, and two 'special' cells, one of which is currently used as a library, and the other as a storeroom. The average occupancy of the unit was 9.

5.2.2 During the reporting year, 434 prisoners passed through the unit, compared with 542 in 2019, a reduction of 20%. Progression plans are made to facilitate a prisoner's return to a residential unit or, where deemed appropriate, a transfer out to another establishment. The segregation governor has attempted to keep the occupancy of the unit low, and return prisoners to normal locations. Two prisoners have stayed in the unit for over 42 days; the correct procedure was followed each time.

5.2.3 Segregation review boards are held with a governor, with members of the mental health team and chaplaincy present. Under pre-Covid conditions, there was also a Board member present, and a visit was made to every prisoner in the unit twice a week, where good access was always permitted.

5.2.4 During the period the Board has been carrying out remote monitoring, a member of the Board has contacted the segregation unit each day for an update of the following:

- Number of prisoners in the segregation unit and reason why
- Number of prisoners returned to normal locations
- Number of prisoners on an open ACCT document.

During the reporting year, Board members have attended 104 segregation reviews, most of which were of necessity carried out by telephone.

5.2.5 During the reporting year, there was a total of 3,021 adjudications, compared with 3,624 in 2019, a decrease of 17%. Adjudications would normally take place in the segregation unit, but during Covid restrictions, a governor and a member of the segregation unit staff have carried these out on the units, to avoid unnecessary movement of prisoners and staff. Due to Covid, the Board has only attended a small number of adjudications. The Board noted that at the adjudications, the prisoners are shown respect and fair-mindedness by the duty governor and segregation staff.

5.2.6 The Board regrets its inability to carry out the above visits as it would wish, as these are an important part of the monitoring process.

### **5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers**

5.3.1 During the reporting year, staff turnover has been minimal. There has been some disruption to normal services because of staff redeployment to handle Covid related situations, but the regime has generally continued to operate smoothly. Staff/prisoner relationships have been observed to be good, with de-escalation of potential incidents taking place in a professional and humane manner. (*See also 4.4.1 men of concern register*)

5.3.2 Towards the end of the reporting year the governor has been holding ad hoc forums in the chapel, for all units, to give opportunity for feedback and to raise any issues. Prisoners are given a week's notice to volunteer for selection as unit reps (six from each unit) and for fellow prisoners to pass on anything they'd like them to raise.

5.3.3 There have been few examples of prisoner frustration at Covid restrictions being vented against staff. This the Board believes is due to the careful and humane managing of the restrictions by the governor and staff.

5.3.4 The Board has noted the frequent notices to prisoners from the governor, explaining in clear and frank terms any changes in regime due to Covid.

5.3.5 Key workers: *see 4.3.4*

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 Due to COVID 19 the Board has not had the opportunity to gather all of the information required for the annual report.

It should be noted that the Business Administrator retired during the reporting year and the Community Diversity Officer (CDO) from the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality worked from home.

5.4.2 The Equalities Officer has a base on the South site but also services the North site. Only 17.5 hours per week are identified for this role on both prison sites. The allocation of hours remains varied due to redeployment and COVID 19.

Thanks to the Equalities Officer and the Community Diversity Officer, the following information has been obtained regarding the ethnicity of prisoners submitting discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) and the prison area to which they refer.

Ethnicity of Prisoner DIRFS (44) 2020	
ASIAN	7
BLACK	14
MIXED	2
WHITE	4
OTHER	1
Education	2
Ormiston	1
Kitchens	2
Healthcare	1
Workshops	1
UNITS	
Tempest (B)	6
Tempest (C)	1
Blenheim	5
Javelin	1
Handley	1
7A	1

Vulcan	5
Lancaster	1
Gloster	3

DIRF and general complaints (52): 2020	
Disability	3
Religion or Belief	5
Race	22
Age	0
Gender reassignment	0

NB A number of prisoners submitted more than one DIRF

5.4.3 HMP Highpoint has a diverse ethnic mix of prisoners predominantly from the London and Essex regions, but due to COVID 19 the potential for staff training has been reduced

During the reporting year there were 220 foreign national prisoners from 50 countries (approximately 21% of the total population). Facilitating deportation is frequently complex and lengthy regarding the response of the Home Office and foreign embassies. Prisoners will be assessed for transfer to immigration removal centres at the end of their sentence, but some are not deemed suitable, or elect to stay at the prison until their situation is resolved. An immigration officer is based at the prison and engages with prisoners to hear their concerns, and inform and update them. The process can be very frustrating for all concerned.

5.4.4 There was an intention that HMP Highpoint would become a Foreign Nationals Hub during the reporting year, but this did not happen.

## 5.5 Faith and pastoral support

One fulltime member of the pastoral team contracted Covid early in the year, and was seriously ill for a long time before his phased return to work in October. The Board thank him for his work, and wish him a full recovery.

5.5.1 In September, the team consisted of 2 Roman Catholic chaplains, 1 Muslim, and 1 Free Church. In addition, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist chaplains have

made a number of visits during lockdown, and in November a visiting chaplain from the Salvation Army joined the team.

5.5.2 In spite of lockdown, the team have been carrying out all statutory duties, plus visiting all units on a daily basis.

5.5.3 One-to-one sessions have continued, and there is a confidential phone line to the chaplaincy and to Samaritans as well as a private prayer line, all of which are well used by prisoners. Weekly newsletters are written for all religions, and these are personally delivered by the chaplaincy. *(See 5.5.6 below)*

5.5.4 Services were resumed for a while, but had to stop due to Covid restrictions. At Christmas, all prisoners were given Prayer Petitions, to ask for prayers for family members, and the team held their own service for this. Each prisoner was also given 3 cards, donated by the Mothers' Union, to send to family and friends

5.5.5 In addition, prisoners have access to the bereavement counselling service, provided in the main by Cruse and by a spiritualist counsellor.

5.5.6 An analysis carried out by the chaplaincy team shows that since July, one-to-one support of prisoners far outweighed conducting liturgical services. This support has been much appreciated by the prisoners.

*(See also 4.2.4, 4.4.2, 7.4.3)*

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges**

5.6.1 Prisoners are encouraged to 'do the right thing for the right reason', to earn IEP enhancements.

5.6.2 During Covid, prisoners whose behaviour meant they would normally be placed on the Basic regime were noted as such, but they were not placed under those conditions. Eg they retained their use of a television – this was to support their well-being during the Covid restrictions. All prisoners therefore were in effect living under either standard or enhanced conditions.

5.6.3 Unit 7A comprises individual units, set in a communal garden, which house 24 enhanced prisoners.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 Should a prisoner have an issue with the prison, he can send a COMP to the complaints clerk. This should normally be responded to within seven working days, but due to Covid and operational issues, this has not always been achieved.

5.7.2 Daily briefing reports show that complaint forms are freely available on all wings. There was not a significant increase in the number of complaints received, but the content, as usual, reflected what was happening in the outside world. Eg at the time of the murder of George Floyd, the number of complaints about racism rose.

Other issues related to compensation for lost items (often from the same person, and in some instances where compensation has already been paid – as can be verified by the records), prisoners eager for D cat classification, and prisoners not seeing their key workers. (See 4.3.4)

5.7.3 There were 2885 complaints received from prisoners within HMP Highpoint . and 174 from other prisons.

## **5. 8 Property**

5.8.1 The Board has received 56 applications concerning lost property, of which 41 were from prisoners who had transferred from other establishments. This is a marked decrease from 2019, when the figures were 133 in total, with 83 from prisoners who had transferred.

5.8.2 The problem still seems to be mainly regarding the transfer of property between establishments. It is frequently possible to resolve what has happened to property that is mislaid in the establishment to which a Board member is attached, but it is often not possible to establish what has happened to property mislaid elsewhere. This leads to unnecessary time being spent trying to locate the property and, most significantly, frustration and disgruntlement among prisoners. Items are not necessarily of monetary value, but more significantly, of personal and emotional value to the prisoner. Loss of such belongings can severely affect the well-being of all prisoners, particularly those serving longer sentences

5.8.3 Again, the Board asks the minister to order an urgent review into the handling of prisoners' property.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare: general**

Healthcare has been provided by Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd on North and South sites since October 2020. There were no resultant changes to the services provided. (See also *Reception and Induction 4.1.1, 4.1.2*)

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 There is one permanent GP, plus a regular agency employed practitioner, providing a daily GP service on South site, and one day a week on North, plus telephone assistance.

6.2.2 Due to Covid restrictions, there has been a limit of six in the waiting room, and only urgent appointments have been made. (This is partly due to restrictions under which outside providers are working.)

6.2.3 A seven day nurse-led service is provided, but not on a 24 hour basis. Emergencies outside these hours are managed via the NHS 111 service and

paramedic/emergency ambulance call-out. If a prisoner needs to attend the local hospital for treatment, officers are deployed to facilitate this. Prison officers also receive first-aid training, including use of the automated defibrillator.

6.2.4 Dental treatment has continued, both by telephone consultation and face-to-face, with on average 7 patients being seen per day (4 days a week).

### **6.3 Mental healthcare**

6.3.1 There are six in the mental health team, mainly nurses, including one Learning Disability nurse. They deal with prisoners who have been diagnosed with secondary mental health illnesses. Those with anxiety disorders are referred to the IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service, provided by the Forward Trust. There is currently a backlog of cases, which has resulted in re-referrals to the mental health team. This backlog is due in large part to the Forward Trust taking over from ReThink in April, but being unable to start work until October, due to the pandemic.

6.3.2 The team have been able to continue with face-to-face work, triaging on the units, and maintaining their mandatory attendance at Segregation review. In liaison with the Safer Prisons team, they have provided distraction packs for prisoners during lockdown.

6.3.3 There have recently been problems with men transferring from other establishments without, or with delayed, handover information.

### **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 There are regular needs assessments, and social care provided from external sources where possible. The Board has noted that where, in one instance, this provision was not available for whatever reason, support has been provided to the prisoner by the prison team.

6.4.2 Prisoners identified as “men of concern” are discussed at the morning meetings.

6.4.3 Peer support is made available where required, and this has continued during lockdown.

6.4.4 There are no special units at HMP Highpoint. Where palliative/end of life care is required, prisoners are supported within the prison for as long as is possible, and transferred to the local hospice at the appropriate time. The Board notes that there is a good working relationship with the hospice.

### **6.5 Exercise, time out of cell**

6.5.1 Prisoners have the opportunity for two outside exercise periods per day, which has not changed during Covid, of 1hr 15mins in the morning, and 1hr in the afternoon. Although the gym has been closed, gym instructors have been visiting the wings, and the enhanced units have gym equipment available in the exercise yards.

6.5.2 Although movement between units has ceased due to Covid restrictions, approximately 50% of the prisoners have only been confined to their cells during the “normal” lockup periods, from 17.45 to 08.45, and between 12.15 and 14.15. For the remainder, the twice daily exercise periods have continued, as has time allocated for domestic activities eg showers, and the collection of meals. (In addition, employment of wing cleaners has continued, and work in the kitchens and some of the workshops - see 5.1.8 and 7.2.4.). The Board wishes to commend the Governor for maintaining this opportunity for social interaction between prisoners, whilst limiting the possible spread of infection. (See 2 Description of the establishment, Unit 5 and unit 9)

## **6.6 Drug rehabilitation**

See 4.6.4 to 4.6.6

# **7. Progression and resettlement**

## **7.1 Education, library**

As the majority of the reporting year has been subject to Covid restrictions, the following information relates to those conditions.

7.1.1 All new residents are screened at Induction by Education, for learning disabilities and basic literacy and numeracy levels. There is an LDD (Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities) practitioner and a number of the staff have also received this training. Residents who are found to require support are given adapted workbooks, and extended times for completion of work. This is supported by using in-cell phones, and lunchtime visits by the Education team.

7.1.2 All classroom learning stopped in March. In-cell learning packs are available on request for all residents. Uptake has so far been described as moderate, but measures are being taken to improve this.

7.1.3 During the first national lockdown, all distance learning provision (Open University, City and Guilds) stopped for a few months. Since this has resumed, there are now 42 residents following such courses. This included 6 new students in February. For three of these, funding was already available, and the Distance Learning Manager was able to obtain funding from other sources for the remaining three. One resident has obtained an OU qualification.

7.1.4 The external contract for library provision did not operate between March and July, due to national lockdown restrictions. During this period, books were issued to the wings from existing stock. In addition, a large number of outside companies generously provided free books to the prison.

7.1.5 From July, a delivery and collection service was established. Residents complete order forms for books, audio books, and DVDs, which are delivered during lunchtimes.

7.1.6 One loss for residents has been access to library computers for distance learning courses, and workbooks have had to fill this gap.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Overview:

Some sections have been hard to quantify in comparison with the previous reporting year. Work places have of necessity been greatly reduced, and obtaining records of places available has at times been difficult. All efforts have been made to continue to provide work and education as far as has been possible.

The Board hopes to be able to record firmer data in the next reporting year, and more positive outcomes for all prisoners.

7.2.1 The rehabilitative culture within the prison has continued all year, including during Covid restrictions. Prisoners have the responsibility for the cleanliness of their own cell, units/wings, and they have the facilities to cook their own food in communal kitchens. This helps prepare them for release, and in many cases introduces them to new skills and responsibilities.

(See 5.1.10)

7.2.2 Vocational training in bricklaying, painting and decorating, plumbing, carpentry, motor mechanics, and barbering were available on the North site, providing a total of 60 places, also a barista course with 6 places, prior to March 2020. On the south site, qualifications in warehousing and distribution, horticulture and hospitality and catering were all available, delivered through in-prison work places. In addition, there were 12 multi-skill places (covering the construction industry) plus 5 forklift courses, and 2 roofing courses, and 10 barbering places. (A total of 156.) Some of this was made possible by a change in the Dynamic Purchasing System, which allowed money to be used from the Education budget.

Courses which were started in April 2019 all ended in March 2020, and the campaign for 20/21 had just been started, with courses ready for delivery, when lockdown occurred.

7.2.3 Business and Engagement activities (eg with Sue Ryder, football clubs) took place up until March. Since March, outside work has continued with gardens, stores and visits centre (this being to maintain a Covid secure facility.)

7.2.4 Under Covid restrictions, five of the possible eight workshops have continued to operate with three outside contracts, providing 51 places, where previously there were 237. These are packaging, tailoring, waste management, and textile baling. For some months, tailoring had a contract for providing scrubs, which then transferred to an PSPI contract. It has not been possible to offer half-day sessions to two groups of inmates per day due to regime restrictions.

7.2.5 Prisoners were reported to be complying with the Covid regime, and managing well. There was no lack of residents putting themselves forward when vacancies occurred.

7.2.6 All paperwork is in place and ready for opening up the facilities whenever the level of restrictions changes.

7.2.7 The welding workshop has been closed since 2019, due to difficulties in recruiting instructors, mainly because the pay is not comparable to that offered outside.

### **7.3 Offender management and progression**

7.3.1 Sentence planning and objective setting has been carried out mainly by telephone.

Prisoners should have an OASys (Offender Assessment) within the first 10 or 16 weeks of sentencing, depending on the length of their sentence. There was an inevitable delay during the reporting year, as face to face contact was not possible. When restrictions were lowered, however, staff were afforded overtime to target the outstanding OASys.

7.3.2 Due to Covid, there was no delivery of offending behaviour programmes from March. In July, a national directive was issued, setting out changes as to which prisoners should be prioritised. The thinking skills programme (TSP) and Resolve (which aims to reduce reoffending) were resumed in the autumn, but with 3 instead of the usual 10 participants in a group. Kaizen (an accredited offender behaviour programme) also ran with 3 participants.

7.3.3 During Covid, the probation team directed resources to IPP prisoners and lifers, ensuring they received contact and support with parole issues, signposting and referrals to eg psychological services, appropriate courses (Kaizen etc). If there is need for progression to a facility with specific provision eg PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment units) this is progressed by OMU.

7.3.4 There is a strong Psychology department at HMP Highpoint, comprising two senior psychologists and six trainees. They deal with the rehabilitation of prisoners, risk assessments for the parole board, referrals from probation, and various rehabilitation programmes such as Kaizen and Resolve.

7.3.5 During the reporting year, the only ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) available was for resettlement day release. This enabled one man to work in outside visits, but this was suspended when the prison returned to level 4 restrictions.

### **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 All cells now have in-cell telephones. As well as being available for contact with family and friends, Samaritans etc, the system has also proved useful during Covid for such things as learning support.

The 'email a prisoner' facility is in place throughout the establishment. This has been used more by family and friends emailing in, than emails going out, as prisoners then generally prefer to respond by telephone.

Letters for prisoners are scanned, and checked by the dogs, and then delivered to the prisoners. Out-going mail is submitted unsealed, censored, then posted out.

7.4.2 Visits continued to be supported by Ormiston Families, until March. A survey was planned into the number of prisoners without visits, and why. It has not been possible to discover the results of this survey, or whether it was carried out.

7.4.3 During Covid, Purple Visits video calls have been introduced, and prisoners can apply for these. There were some initial technical problems, which deterred some prisoners from using them. These issues are being dealt with. At first, the uptake was slow, because some prisoners found the lack of a physical presence distressing.

The chaplaincy team were also able to facilitate Zoom contacts in particular cases eg a birth, or serious illness, which were much appreciated by the prisoners concerned. There were 170 zoom sessions during the reporting year.

7.4.4 The board hopes that the weekly bus, for visitors, from central London, to help overcome the problem of the rural location and lack of public transport will be reinstated when restrictions are lifted.

*(See also 4.6.6 re family worker)*

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

There are concerns that due to Covid restrictions, the resettlement programme has unavoidably not been carried out with the usual effectiveness. There has been no face-to-face service; all contact has been through paperwork and phone calls.

7.5.1 During the reporting year, 524 prisoners were discharged. 59 of these had no fixed abode. (This includes those who, for whatever reason, either would not give an address, or wouldn't engage with the resettlement team, as well as those for whom accommodation could not be found.). This represents a decrease from 15.5% to 11.3% on the previous year,

7.5.2 Support with benefits, bank accounts etc pre-release has been maintained, but on a limited basis (see above). *(See also 2 "agencies and contractors")*

7.5.3 Job Centre Plus withdrew all their provision to HMP Highpoint in March 2020, and provided a leaflet to pass on to prisoners. There was no further input within the reporting year. The Board hopes this will be urgently rectified.

## 8. The work of the IMB

At the start of the reporting year, there were 13 Board members, 3 of whom were at the beginning of their probationary period, and one who wasn't able to start her probation until half way through the year. This meant in fact that there were 9 Board members carrying out visits up until March, and when lockdown started, 4 new members who had not carried out any solo visits. In March and April, 2 experienced Board members left, and another resigned soon after, bringing the number of experienced members down to 6. All of this has contributed to reporting difficulties. Some members of the Board, however, were able to continue visiting the prison, and the rest of the Board monitored remotely. Of note is that applications have been collected and dealt with throughout the year.

In spite of the restrictions, a recruitment campaign has resulted in 2 new members joining at the end of the year, and three applicants ready for interview in 2021. The chair's tenure also ceased at the end of the reporting year, as she had been a Board member for fifteen years. The Board wishes to express their gratitude and appreciation to her and to the other members who left, for their work and support.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	270 **
Total number of segregation reviews attended (due to COVID, most of the reviews were carried out by telephone)	104

\*\*Visits to the Prison during the COVID19 conditions

Applications	78
Rota	45
Meetings	18
Special Interest	7
Other reasons	122

Due to COVID-19, one member of the Board went into both prisons to empty the IMB boxes on all units during the period before unlock. This Board member assessed the applications from the prisoners and contacted the relevant department. The Board member then contacted the prisoner by letter and confirmed the action taken.

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	7
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	26	16
C	Equality	9	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	34	6
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	26	7
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	10	7
F	Food and kitchens	9	11
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	52	24
H1	Property within this establishment	50	15
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	83	41
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	17	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	36	30
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	44	20
K	Transfers	34	12
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	33	14
	Total number of applications	470	241



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [imb@justice.gov.uk](mailto:imb@justice.gov.uk).