



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Isis

For reporting year

1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board, appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison, and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison, and also to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Isis – named after the River Thames – opened in July 2010. It is a public-sector training prison for convicted men, with a mix of young adults between the ages of 18 and 21, and category C adults. In 2020, the prison started to implement the young adult strategy, moving to being a prison for young adults between 18 and 21 years, and category C adults up to 25 years. In 2020, the proportion of prisoners between 18 and 25 gradually increased, so that by December 2020 70% fell into that category.

The prison is situated in Thamesmead, in south-east London. The certified normal accommodation is 478, and the operational capacity – that is, the maximum population that it can safely and decently hold – at the beginning of 2020 was 628. This changed to 614 as part of the response to COVID-19. During the latter half of 2020, the population was around 550.

The following provide services within the prison:

- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provides healthcare services and Oxleas Interventions provides support to those with substance misuse issues.
- Novus is the education provider.
- MTCnovo is the community resettlement company, with Catch 22 working within the prison.
- Mitie provides comprehensive facilities management, including catering.
- Voluntary organisations working within the prison include the Shannon Trust, Switchback, Kinetics, Belong and the Samaritans.

Prisoners are accommodated in two houseblocks, Thames and Meridian, each comprising a central hub and four spurs. Each spur can accommodate over 70 prisoners, on three levels. Each spur has a servery, and outside each is an exercise yard with fitness equipment. Each houseblock has a laundry, operated by laundry orderlies. As part of the response to the pandemic, part of one spur has been used as a reverse cohorting unit (RCU), which allows new arrivals to remain separate from the rest of the prison during their first two weeks in the prison.

In a block opposite the houseblocks is the ‘academy’, with 19 classrooms and a capacity in excess of 200; the ‘skill zone’, with six workshops; the library; the healthcare unit and the multi-faith suite. Separately, there is a well-equipped gym, able to accommodate 40 prisoners; a cardiovascular studio; an indoor sports hall and two

outdoor Astro-turf pitches. The kitchen is managed by Mitie, with a workforce that includes 20+ prisoners.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The restricted regime in place at the end of 2019 continued during the first three months of 2020. This meant that only 50% of prisoners were able to attend education, work and other activities at any one time, and time spent in-cell had increased. From 23 March, the prism of COVID-19 coloured the year and brought a range of changes to the regime, all decided nationally by Gold Command.

Initially, this meant that prisoners were in their cells for 23.5 hours a day, reducing to 23 hours in April and 22.5 in June. In September, prisoners were allowed out of their cells, in cohorts of 36 for 2.0 or 2.5 hours each day. This time was for exercise, showers and using the biometric system that allows prisoners to raise questions, make purchases and book visits. At the end of the year, there was still no association, education was mainly by in-cell packs and work opportunities were restricted. Most groups and group work had stopped in education, resettlement, Listener training, the chaplaincy, drug interventions, equality, behaviour management and health. This has had a serious impact on prisoners; their wellbeing, their ability to work or learn, and their ability to prepare for their release.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Arguably, the pandemic has been the greatest risk to safety within the prison in 2020. The handling of the pandemic is determined by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), with the prison developing detailed exceptional delivery models relating to changes in the regime and the operation of the prison. From April to November there were no cases of COVID-19, but in November and December a number of prisoners, who had transferred from other London prisons, tested positive. The Board has been concerned that it is not the practice to test prisoners before they are transferred. This would reduce the exposure of prisoners, staff and escort staff to the virus, as well as allowing prompt track and trace of exposed prisoners in the sending prison (see section 4.1).

Although mandated by the prison, some staff were slow to embrace and follow safety measures such as social distancing and the wearing of masks. A spike in December of

staff being absent because of testing positive or having been in contact with someone testing positive has led to more determined implementation of safety measures.

Although overall levels of violence reduced during 2020 due to lockdown, with April having the lowest level of violence, there was a sharp rise in violence towards the end of the year. There has also been an increase of prisoners reporting bullying, with 89 incidents in 2020 compared with 74 in 2019 (see section 4.3).

There was a rise in self-harm over the first three months of the year before lockdown, with 84 reported incidents compared with 43 during the same period in 2019. During the remainder of 2020, there was a drop in reported self-harm. Throughout the year, the figures were distorted by a small number of prisoners with mental health conditions or personality disorders, who often self-harmed eight or more times a month (see section 4.2).

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

At any other time, the requirement that prisoners remain behind their doors, except for a relatively short period to shower, exercise and use the biometric system, would be totally unacceptable. The prison and prison staff have tried to make this confinement more bearable, with activities such as distraction packs, quizzes and competitions but, in the longer term, prisoners need to be out of their cells, engaging for most of the day in purposeful activities that support their rehabilitation (see section 5.3).

In most aspects of prison life, the treatment of prisoners from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and other protected categories is within the expected range when compared with the prison population as a whole. However, in the results of a survey by the Board, in comparison to white prisoners a larger proportion of prisoners from BAME groups think that jobs are allocated unfairly, that there is discrimination in the prison and that complaints of discrimination would not be taken seriously (see section 5.4).

The property of a small number of prisoners transferring to the establishment is lost and often never recovered. Wherever possible, staff assist prisoners who arrive without their property. This problem has been raised year after year but, despite annual assurances, there is no evidence that this is being addressed by HMPPS, and the long-promised policy framework has yet to appear (see section 5.8).

In previous years, the Board has raised concerns that the prison did not consistently enforce some food hygiene standards, including the wearing of 'whites', the checking and recording of food temperatures, and ensuring that soap and towels are available in the serveries. This year, under the direction of a senior manager, there has been a

substantial and sustained improvement in food hygiene practices and the general cleanliness of the spurs (see section 5.1).

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Throughout the pandemic, the health providers have continued to respond to prisoners' healthcare needs, within the structure directed by Public Health England (PHE). The health assessments of new prisoners have been carried out and GP consultations have continued, although for some months these had to be by telephone. Clinics have also continued, although lower numbers attended.

As set out in our annual reports for 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Board has concerns about the continued detention of prisoners at the establishment with enduring or chronic mental health problems and those with personality disorders. This leads to a disproportionate demand on the prison's resources, in terms of cost and staff time. These prisoners can cause injuries to themselves and others, and are often unable to function within the prison or cope with its day-to-day activities. The concern of the Board is that, although healthcare and prison staff are committed to helping and supporting these prisoners, prison, and particularly Isis, as a training prison, is not the environment that will deliver improvements in these prisoners' conditions and behaviour (see section 6.3).

In common with other prisons, the restricted regime introduced by HMPPS in response to the pandemic has resulted in prisoners spending most of their days in their cells. At Isis, prisoners spend 22/21.5 hours a day in their cells. This is less time than in some other prisons, but a substantial increase compared with a normal pre-COVID-19 regime at Isis. There needs to be research into the impact on prisoners' mental health of these long periods of time spent in a cell, for what by the end of 2020 was a nine-month period, and especially as these restrictions are likely to last for a substantial part of 2021 (see section 6.3).

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) has continued its work with prisoners who are within 12 weeks of release, but contact has had to be by in-cell telephones, rather than face-to-face, and groupwork has had to be replaced by packs, to the detriment of prisoners (see section 7.5).

The suspension of all face-to-face teaching in March 2020 severely restricted the delivery of a meaningful curriculum. The return of teaching staff in August, the focus of packs on specific subjects, and the prison incentivising participation have led to a steady increase in engagement. However, although in-cell packs can be highly effective

for some kinds of content and for self-motivated learners, they do not suit all. In addition, the inability to arrange examinations has resulted in many prisoners being released during the course of the year without gaining an accredited qualification (see section 7.1).

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

We urge the minister to require HMPPS, working with NHS England, to develop concrete action plans to address the continued detention of prisoners with enduring or chronic mental health problems and those with personality disorders, as a prison environment that will not deliver the positive changes needed.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

We ask the Prison Service to:

- revise the centralised recruitment process for prison officers, to ensure that the supply of new staff aligns with the predicted future requirements of the prison (see section 5.3)
- deliver the ‘prisoners’ property policy framework’ that the minister stated in response to previous annual reports that HMPPS was planning to publish (see section 5.8)
- work with NHS England to address the concerns that prison is not the environment that will deliver positive changes for prisoners with chronic and enduring mental illness or personality disorders (see section 6.3)
- commission research into the impact of the time spent in cells during the pandemic on the mental health of prisoners
- return to a full regime as soon as conditions around the pandemic and the advice of PHE indicate that it is safe to do so
- recognise that while the prison has adapted education to the conditions imposed by COVID-19, face-to-face tuition is often necessary with less confident learners, or for some aspects of learning, such as practical skills or complex concepts. Most learners benefit from a range of different approaches, rather than a single method, and this needs to be reflected in future arrangements for education (see section 7.1).

TO THE GOVERNOR

We recognise the challenges that the Governor and the staff have had to manage in 2020, particularly in managing the regime. In 2021, we ask that she and her team:

- ensure that initiatives to reduce violence are focused on the increasing number of young adults, and acknowledge the incidence of bullying (see section 4.4)
- resume organised physical exercise and access to the gym as soon as conditions permit (see section 6.6)
- ensure that plans are in place to prevent a return to the levels of self-harm over the first three months of the year, when a normal regime is resumed (see section 4.2)
- continue to work hard with Novus to drive up levels of engagement in remote learning during a period when classroom teaching is unlikely to return for several more months (see section 7.1)
- maintain the considerable improvement in the standard of hygiene and cleanliness that has been achieved, particularly in the houseblocks (see section 5.1)
- ensure that healthcare complaint forms are easily accessible to all prisoners during the period when time out of cell is severely limited (see section 6.5)
- ensure that communication between the offender management unit (OMU) and prisoners about sentence planning, recategorisation and transfers improves as staffing levels increase (see section 7.3)
- respond to the findings of the equality survey carried out by the Board, and particularly:
 - understand why prisoners feel that jobs are unfairly allocated
 - review whether the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) system is an effective means of prisoners reporting discrimination and having their concerns investigated (see section 5.4).

3.4 Progress since the last report

The pandemic has impacted every part of prison life during 2020, making a comparison with 2019 difficult. There has been significant improvement in the cleanliness of spurs and food hygiene practices. Other planned improvements have necessarily been put on hold.

The Governor and her senior management team are to be commended for the way the prison has been managed during the pandemic. They have:

- maximised the time out of cell

- kept the number of positive cases low
- provided activities, including music and 'Olympic games' events on the yards, cookery competitions, regular quizzes and bingo, and participated in an art competition with the Tate, and Belong ran a book group
- delivered legal and video visits, and social visits were reinstated for the period when they were permitted
- marked religious days, including arrangements for those observing Ramadan and celebratory meals for Eid, Diwali and Christmas
- incentivised participation in education
- enabled in-cell consultation by GPs, other health professionals, Oxleas Interventions, Catch 22 staff and, latterly, education staff
- increased the number of key worker sessions undertaken
- promoted exercise by delivering outdoor PE sessions every day.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The prison has a safer custody function which collects comprehensive data on all aspects of safety, violence and drug use. A detailed monthly report is produced, and a newly combined safer custody/use of force/equality meeting held, usually chaired by the Governor, and attended by managers from across the prison. A Board member attends some meetings as an observer.

The charts below are derived from the safer custody data and show trends during the year.

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception was operating efficiently in the early part of the year, and changes were made from the end of March in response to the pandemic until personal protective equipment (PPE) became available. However, the PPE instructions have not always been adhered to – notably, on a day when, it transpired, COVID-19-positive prisoners arrived from HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

During the last six weeks of 2020, four prisoners who were transferred to Isis from London area prisons immediately tested positive for COVID-19. At least two of these prisoners had clear symptoms of COVID-19 when they arrived, and, we assume, when they left their originating prison a few hours earlier. In each case, the track and trace facility at Isis identified four or five other prisoners who also needed to self-isolate, together with a small number of prison reception staff. There was also the possibility of

the escort contractors being infected. It is only the thoroughness of the testing and isolation procedures at Isis that prevented further spread in the prison. It is of concern to the Board that COVID-19 testing and proper temperature checking did not take place before prisoners were transferred.

The holding rooms in reception are clean and new arrivals are processed efficiently, with normal formalities, including the initial healthcare assessment. During the pandemic, new prisoners have been located in the RCU, rather than the induction spur, where they have no contact with other prisoners beyond their group for a quarantine period before being integrated within the prison. They receive their first night assessment; are allowed to make in-cell telephone calls; receive induction packs, in-cell information and books; and, if time permits, they can take a shower.

Most induction activity continues, much of it by telephone. It can take up to two weeks to fully induct a new intake. The Board is pleased to see that the secondary healthcare screening is face-to-face, although it can take place up to a week after arrival. Of concern to the Board was that education assessments were not undertaken during the first two months of the lockdown. Since then, induction packs that enable future learning to be planned have been distributed, but their completion rate has, at times, been very low.

The total number of transfers into Isis in 2020 was 624.

The Board surveys all new prisoners, and many have praised the staff of the RCU and the induction mentors for the welcome given to them on arrival. New prisoners have been more critical of the cleanliness of the escort vehicles and the condition of cells upon arrival, although both have improved over recent months.

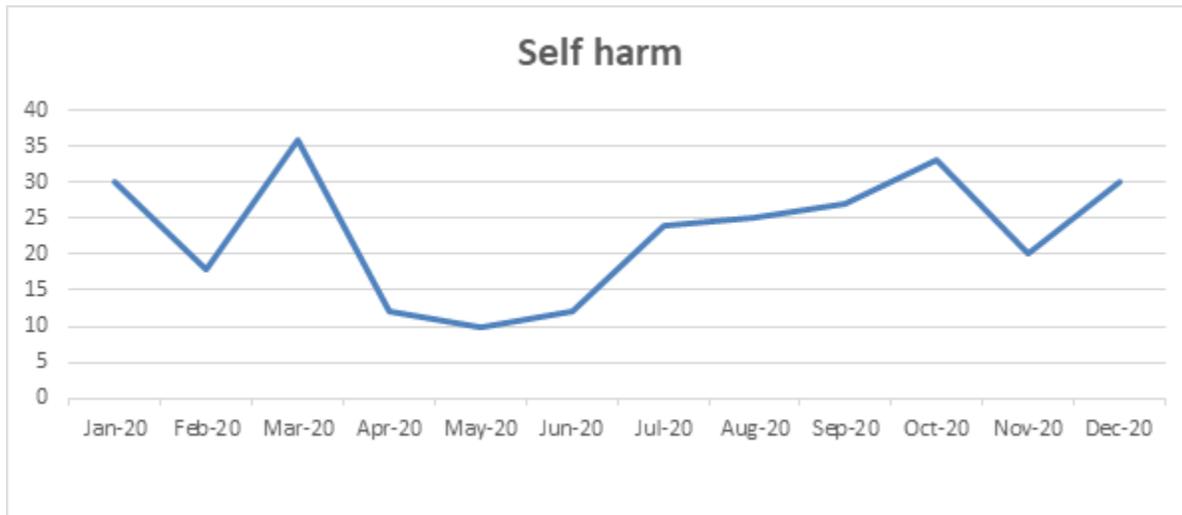
4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened during 2020 decreased slightly, to an average of 15 per month (or a total of 185 for the year – down from 209 in 2019, although comparisons are difficult as the prisoner population has decreased throughout the year). The management of the ACCT process was robust, with regular checks made by the duty governor and the safer custody team. Suicide and self-harm training has been rolled out across the prison, to all prison and many non-directly employed staff.

There was a disturbing rise in self-harm over the first three months of the year before lockdown, with 84 reported incidents, compared with 43 during the same period in 2019. For the remainder of 2020, there was a drop in reported self-harm, despite the prisoners being locked in their cells for long periods of time. There were 277 incidents of self-harm

in total during the current reporting year, compared with 318 last year. The figures are somewhat distorted by a small number of prisoners with mental health conditions or personality disorders, who often self-harmed eight or more times a month. The vast majority of self-harm is inflicted by white prisoners, with over 50% aged 25 and under.

The numbers of incidents per month are shown below.



The number of Listeners fell dramatically after March, as the existing Listeners were released and new ones could not be trained by the Samaritans. Towards the end of the year, the Samaritans returned to train and mentor Listeners, and there were nine at the end of the year. There is, every two weeks a meeting of the Listeners with the Samaritan representative. During a typical month, there are 50 or so callouts for Listeners, and the prisoners have access to the Samaritans directly through a freephone number on their in-cell telephones.

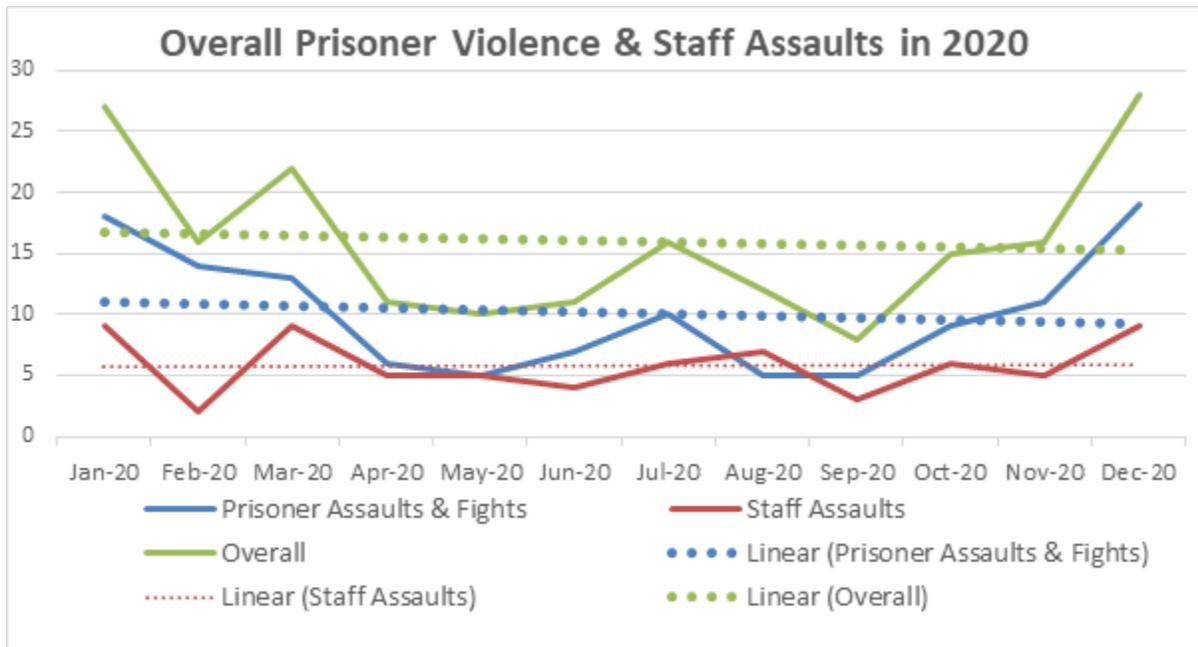
There was one death in custody during 2020, apparently by natural causes, but which is currently being investigated by the coroner and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Overall, the level of violence was high for the first three months of the year, although lower than in the equivalent period in 2019. Both prisoner violence and staff assaults remained low during lockdown, although there was an increase in prisoner violence towards the end of the year as lockdown rules were eased.

The number of prisoners aged 25 and under has increased to approximately 70% and this has also contributed to the increase in prisoner violence; over 80% of the recorded violence was perpetrated by men aged 25 and under. Violence continues to be a problem at Isis and this is likely to increase as the number of young men increases as

the young adult strategy continues to roll out in 2021. The ethnic mix of prisoners involved in fights and assaults is broadly similar to that of the prison population, using the figures for the second half of 2020.



There have been very few serious incidents during the year, all of which were resolved before the national resources could become involved.

Although the level of violence continued to reduce in 2020, it remains high, for reasons including gang affiliations, debt and often mindless acts. The safer custody team conducts interviews on arrival to determine any 'non-associates' and efforts are made to keep people apart when there is a possibility of violence occurring. Both the perpetrators and victims are reviewed on a regular basis to determine if further moves are necessary to protect victims.

There has also been an increase of bullying reported by prisoners, with 89 incidents in 2020, compared with 74 in 2019.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

The establishment does not have separate accommodation for vulnerable prisoners, and there is no prisoner who has been convicted of a sexual offence.

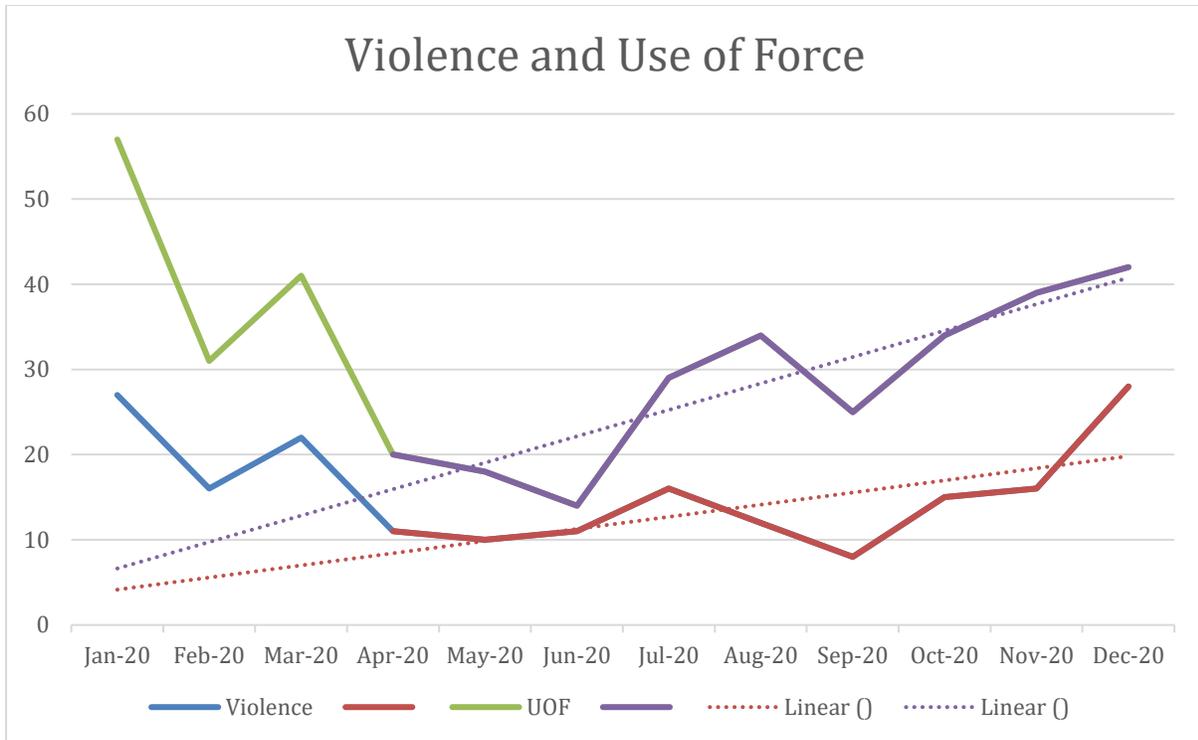
These prisoners continue to cause injuries to themselves and are often unable to function within the prison or cope with the day-to-day activities. As set out in our annual reports for 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Board has concerns about the continued detention

of prisoners with enduring or chronic mental health problems and those with personality disorders.

4.5 Use of force

Over the first three months of the year, levels of use of force and violence continued the steady decreases shown in 2019, with a large drop from March to April when the strict lockdown regime came into effect. In April 2020, violence was at the lowest level ever seen at the establishment. Since April, however, there has been an upward trend in violence (staff assaults, prisoner assaults and fights), with an increase to 28 incidents by the end of the year, albeit from a very low initial value, and an increase in the use of force, also from a very low level of 12 occasions in June to 42 occasions in December. The end-of-year level was still lower than the long-term average. The 'reasons for use of force' that showed an increase over this period were 'fights and assaults' and 'issues with staff'. The increases were also over a period when the lockdown regime was being eased and strict adherence to the timing of sessions out of cell was required for the regime to operate. Monthly incidents of violence and use of force are shown in the figure below.

An article in the *Observer* stated that, for prisons in England and Wales, force was used, on average, 59.1 times per 100 prisoners in the year to April 2019. In Isis, force was used 384 times in 2020, or about 62 times per 100 prisoners – slightly higher than the average, in a year when there were long periods of lockdown.

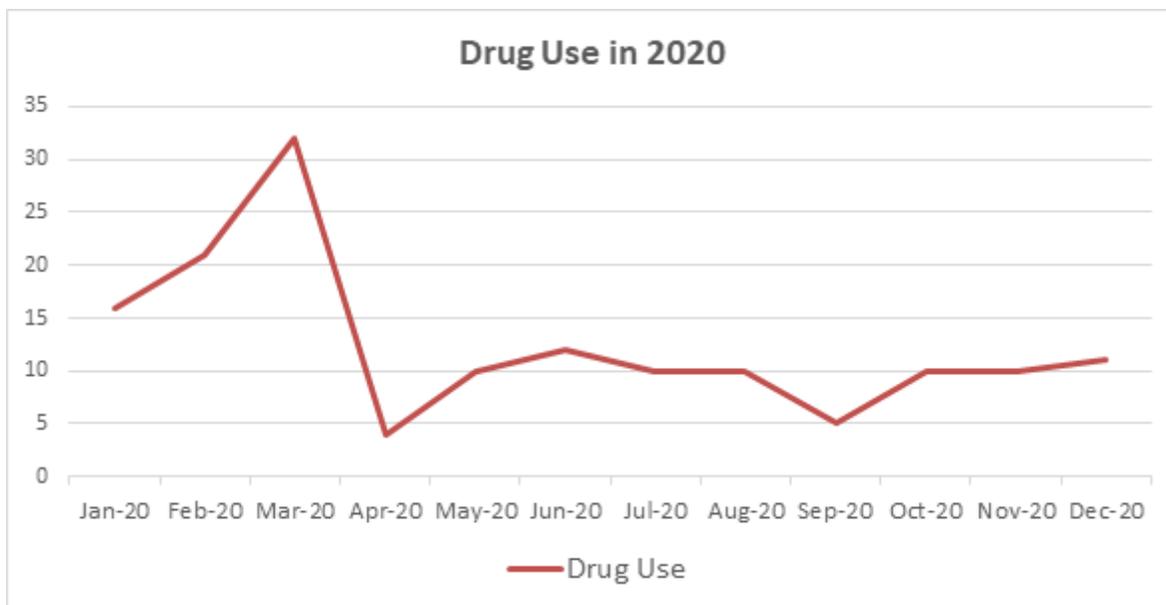


Routine use of body-worn video cameras increased over the course of the year, of the operational cameras an average of 77% are routinely taken by staff to be worn whilst on duty. Some footage was available for an average of 79% of incidents, compared with 73% last year, and 51% included footage from before the start of the incident. Footage is reviewed at a fortnightly management meeting. The backlog of use of force paperwork has again decreased over the course of the year, from 400 at the end of 2019 to 138, touching a low of 75 in June.

4.6 Substance misuse

Statistics compiled by the prison on drug use include for possession, 'under the influence' and the smell of drugs. Again, the number of incidents in the first three months of the year was high (although lower than in the same period in 2019) but then remained low for the remainder of the year during lockdown. The full body scanner in reception ensures that any illegal items are identified when new prisoners transfer into the prison, and the lack of visits has also tackled that potential source. All incoming post and parcels are tested; all staff and official visitors enter through airport-style security; and dogs, X-ray and an itemiser are used to check all goods delivered to the prison.

The number of monthly incidents of drug use, as described above, is shown below.



5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

In 2019, the Board drew attention to the poor standards of hygiene and cleanliness in the serveries and the spurs. In 2020, a senior manager took over responsibility for hygiene and cleanliness, particularly in the houseblocks. This has resulted in considerable improvement. Cells are checked at random on a weekly basis and Mitie has been more responsive to maintenance issues within the prison. Some cells have been repainted and toilet seats, initially provided in 2019, have been replaced as required. Showers are checked regularly and are mainly of a good standard of cleanliness.

In the serveries, prisoners wear PPE, and food hygiene practices have improved, including the reinstatement of food temperature recording and the availability of soap and hand towels. The cleanliness of the trolleys being returned to the kitchens continues to be somewhat erratic. Meal service requires supervision as prisoners continue to raise issues of portion size and control. Vermin also continue to be a problem, with the control contractor needing to visit on a regular basis.

Prisoners' personal laundry is undertaken by prisoner orderlies in the houseblock laundry. The monitoring of kit, bedding and towels, with additional new supplies, has improved the standards of decency afforded to prisoners.

In their short time in post, the kitchen manager has made some improvements, including introducing more fresh vegetables and vegetarian options. The catering for the specific dietary requirements of a handful of prisoners is particularly good. The kitchen manager is also responsive to requests that come through the community council, and the food for special occasions – religious festivals and events such as Black History Month – is appreciated by the prisoners. However, the standard and amount of food have also been a source of concern to the Board, with prisoners sometimes raising concerns about food quality and portion control. Comfort packs ordered from the Ministry of Justice every week during the pandemic, containing drinks, biscuits and snacks, are appreciated by the prisoners.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit has 16 cells, plus two for special accommodation. The unit is kept clean and maintained to a good standard. It is staffed by a cohort of officers who typically stay there for a three-year period, offering noticeable stability. An average of 34 prisoners were segregated each month in 2020 (the monthly average was 38 in 2019). A total of 405 prisoners were segregated during 2020, of whom 114 were young adults, down on the 2019 numbers of 451 and 163, respectively.

In 2020, two prisoners were held in the segregation unit for longer than 42 days, and one of those was authorised for 84 days. In each instance, due process was followed, with the prison group director authorising the continued detainment. Both were eventually transferred out of Isis.

The number of prisoners on an ACCT held in the unit in 2020 was 39, much in line with the 2019 figure. The decision to hold such prisoners in the segregation unit is always made by a governor and is subject to review.

Of the 405 held in segregation over the year, there were 114 under good order and/or discipline (GOOD) rules, and of these 88 were young adults. The segregation unit statistics and trends are given careful consideration at the segregation monitoring and review group meetings, and the adult/young adult and ethnicity split is broadly reflective of the prison population. Staff are alert and responsive to the needs of the prisoners they are caring for in the unit and focus on the actions required to return them to the houseblocks. Extended periods of remote monitoring made it very difficult for a Board member to be present at most GOOD reviews in 2020, although 18 were attended.

The special accommodation was used a total of six times in 2020 but always for a very limited period.

Independent adjudications were paused from March to mid-June. During this period, cases were repeatedly remanded and then reviewed against a higher threshold, predominantly around violence. Virtual hearings resumed online from mid-June and the backlog was cleared in a couple of days.

With the exception of the very early weeks of lockdown, the regime in the segregation unit has operated as normal throughout the year.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

The prison has improved its staffing since 2019, but there have been occasions where cross-deployment has been necessary – resulting from a combination of turnover and prison officer absences due to COVID-19 or the need to isolate. The centralised recruitment process is slow and fails to keep up with the rate of attrition, resulting in a constant understaffing.

During the lockdowns, prisoners were appreciative of the efforts made by prison officers on the spurs to make the time in cell more manageable by organising quizzes and competitions. All cells had televisions, and prisoners were able to borrow games and games consoles. All prisoners were given telephone credit so that they could keep in touch with their families. During this initial period, prisoners were philosophical about the measures put in place and felt that the Governor had done as much as she could to make the lockdown bearable. During the latter part of the year, the lockdown measures were relaxed and the ability to use the gym and other exercise facilities was appreciated. The cohorts were increased to 35–38 prisoners, and this allowed a regime with more time out of cell.

The community council meets monthly and is attended by the Governor, department heads and representatives for the prisoners on each spur. Wing and other representatives decide the agenda at a pre-meeting. They are also able to raise issues brought to them by prisoners on their spur.

The number of key worker sessions has increased over the year but because of staff absences, only between 6% and 20% of sessions were delivered in November and the beginning of December 2020. The lack of key worker sessions has not delayed releases; its effect on longer term outcomes is difficult to assess.

5.4 Equality and diversity

During 2020, the prison has been implementing the young adult strategy, which has resulted in the percentage of younger prisoners increasing; 70% are under 26 years of age and 19% between 26 and 30 years. The ethnic breakdown of prisoners is 71%

(68%) from BAME groups, and 29% (32%) white; the 2019 figures are shown in brackets. In December 2020, there were 93 foreign national prisoners, of whom nine were IS91 prisoners.(held under Immigration Act powers). This is a significant increase on the 2019 total of 38 foreign nationals and indicates the difficulties in moving these prisoners during the pandemic. A total of 101 prisoners had a disability (similar to the 2019 total of 100), including reduced mobility, learning disabilities and mental illness (in the latter category, there were 31 prisoners, including 11 with a diagnosis of severe and enduring illness).

Equality representatives have been appointed in each houseblock and there are six care and support orderlies. During the pandemic, meetings for specific groups such as Travellers have been suspended, but the prison was able to organise focus groups, both for prisoners and staff, to explore the issues highlighted by the Black Lives Matter campaign.

In 2020, the safer custody and equality meetings were merged. This monthly meeting is chaired by the Governor or her deputy, and attended by key staff. The review of equality issues is intertwined with data relating to levels of violence, use of force, segregation and cell searches (see also sections 4.3 and 4.5).

In September, an equality survey of all prisoners was conducted by the Board, and 143 prisoners responded. From the survey, the following results emerged:

- No group felt that the allocation of jobs was fair. Prisoners from a BAME background have higher levels of disquiet; 62% felt that the allocation of jobs was unfair, with 50% of white prisoners expressing the same view. Prisoners thought that jobs were given to favourites, or to those who made most trouble, and that normal education requirements were sometimes not applied. The prison has carried out a review of jobs and found that job holders match the ethnic background of the population, including for those jobs regarded as attractive. However, further enquiry is needed as to why prisoners hold this view.
- Just 10% of black prisoners felt that a complaint of discrimination would be taken seriously, and 50% that any complaint would be taken seriously. For Asian prisoners, the response pattern was similar. Thirteen DIRFs were completed in 2020, and none of these were upheld. In 2019, there were 11 DIRFs, with none upheld. Whether the DIRF system is an effective means of prisoners reporting discrimination and having their concerns investigated has to be questioned.
- Seventy-five per cent of black prisoners and 66% of Asian prisoners felt that discrimination existed, compared with 48% white and 52% mixed-background

prisoners. Just over 30% of black prisoners said that they had experienced discrimination.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The population at 30 November 2020 included 225 Muslim, 74 Roman Catholic, 51 Anglican, 126 Christian and 10 Rastafarian prisoners, along with 19 from other faiths and 47 of no religion.

The chaplaincy has played a vital role for prisoners during this very difficult year. Faith services have been restricted in the multi-faith suite but chaplains of all faiths have provided support with cell visits, telephone calls, and in-cell packs for corporate worship and faith studies, together with broadcasting services on the prisoner television channel.

Pastoral care is offered to prisoners, especially when there has been a death of a family member or close friend; where possible, a virtual funeral service has been provided, in addition to time out of cell for prayers in the chaplaincy.

Chaplains continue to work with prisoners who have complex needs, also liaising with probation staff, community chaplains and outside agencies supporting resettlement. All prisoners, irrespective of their faith, receive support in personal matters of concern.

Alternative arrangements were made for various religious celebrations, including Ramadan, Eid, Easter, Diwali and Christmas, as these were unable to take their usual format this year.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

BAME prisoners are slightly over-represented on the enhanced level of the IEP scheme. However, the scheme has not been fully operated during the pandemic.

5.7 Complaints

In the first three months of the year, the prison received an average of 201 complaints each month; for the remaining nine months, the average reduced to 106. An average of 89% of complaints were answered within the expected time in the months to March; during lockdown, this reduced to an average of 86%. The most frequent issues raised in complaints across the year were canteen, property, categorisation and staff. In general, the ethnic background of those making complaints matched that of the prison population.

5.8 Property

The majority of prisoners' property arrives with them. Prisoners are restricted to 3.5 bags. Wherever possible, staff assist prisoners who arrive without their property, emailing the sending establishment details of missing items and escalating to the reception custody manager and then the head of operations when necessary. Officers have also arranged to collect belongings from the most local prisons on rare occasions. Despite these efforts, there are still occasions when prisoners' property is not recovered.

In the 2018 and 2019 annual reports, the issue of property not transferring with the prisoner was identified as a significant problem. In 2020, the number of prisoners complaining that their property had not transferred was 123 and the Board received 34 applications. In response to the 2018 annual report, the minister stated that HMPPS planned to publish a 'prisoners' property policy framework'; this has still not happened. This remains a significant issue for prisoners, who often lose personal items or important documents that cannot be easily replaced or compensated financially.

The number of applications to the Board relating to property within the prison was 44, compared with 49 in 2019. Although lower than in 2019, this represents a larger proportion of the prisoner population.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare: general

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust is the provider of healthcare services. The healthcare service was led by an operational manager. The local delivery board meets every two months and is attended by healthcare, social care and prison staff.

In March, as the country locked down, healthcare provision changed in line with NHS England guidance, to level 1 – essential services. This service included: a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service including emergency response; GP, pharmacy and houseblock medication services; daily input into the segregation unit; attendance at ACCT reviews (mental health led); an internal X-ray service and a limited emergency dental service. The first night reception service continued to be provided, but the second assessment took place over the first week, in the RCU, rather than on the day after arrival, in the healthcare department. The mental health team continued to provide one-to-one supportive primary and secondary mental health services. Clinical substance and psychosocial misuse services continued but at a reduced level.

Towards the end of the year, although a full service had not been resumed, some clinics were taking place in the department, including GP and dental services. Hospital elective appointments had also resumed. A user group was in place at the beginning of the year, but this has been suspended since March.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The primary healthcare team has 19.8 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff, of whom 14.3 are qualified healthcare professionals. At the beginning of the year, 22 specialist clinics were held in the healthcare department each week, including with the GP (four sessions per week) and dentist (four sessions per week), and three clinics are held monthly – ultrasound, podiatry (two sessions per month) and optician (four to five sessions per month).

6.3 Mental healthcare

As well as the primary mental health service provided by the 3.1 FTE staff, further services are provided, as follows:

- The mental health in-reach team treats those with a diagnosis of serious and enduring mental illness such as schizophrenia and bipolar affective psychosis. At the beginning of the year, it had a caseload of 22. This gradually reduced over the months, to 11 in December.
- The caseload of the psychological therapies team varied during the year: 74 in February, 27 in April and ending the year with 62.
- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder services had a caseload ranging from 23 to 36.
- The learning disabilities team had a small caseload, ranging from 12 in January to two in November. Throughout the year, the majority of the caseload were under 30 years of age.
- Atrium, a counselling service, had a caseload of 12 before March. There was no service again until October.

The healthcare provider is able to transfer prisoners with an acute need to a prison with the necessary inpatient facilities reasonably quickly. However, the Board continues to be concerned that there are prisoners at the establishment, although small in number, with enduring and chronic mental health issues and/or personality disorders. This leads to a disproportionate demand on the prison's resources, in terms of cost and staff time . These prisoners can cause injuries to themselves and others (see section 4), and are often unable to function within the prison or cope with the prison's day-to-day activities.

The concern of the Board is that, although healthcare and prison staff are committed to helping and supporting these prisoners, prison is not the environment that will deliver improvements in these prisoners' conditions.

The Board has also been concerned that during the pandemic, there has not been a systematic assessment of the mental health of prisoners not already on the provider's mental health caseload, but who have been spending 22/21.5 hours in their cells each day. As the pandemic restrictions will continue into a substantial part of 2021, the Board urges that some assessment of all prisoners is undertaken.

6.4 Social care

There is a small number (three or four) of prisoners requiring social care support, which is provided by care and support orderlies or staff from the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

6.5 Healthcare Complaints

The healthcare service has a separate system for handling prisoner complaints . In 2020, 91 complaints were received, the number each month varying considerably. In the first three months of 2020, the average was 12 but for the remaining nine months the monthly average was six. This reduction may be explained by the pandemic and staff efforts to continue to provide a service. However, during the restricted regime, when prisoners had much reduced time out of cell, the Board was concerned that complaint forms were sometimes not as accessible as they had been previously.

Medication was the category that attracted the largest number of complaints each month. In a patient experience questionnaire reported in May, a proportion of respondents (approximately 15%) did not feel that they had been well treated by staff or as involved in decisions about their care as they would have wished.

6.6 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

During lockdown, most organised physical exercise was suspended, with prisoners restricted to a short amount of time each day in the exercise yards, although PE instructors visited the yards to show prisoners how to use the outdoor equipment. Some circuit training was also organised on the Astro-turf, but this activity was limited, requiring two PE instructors to be available. The reopening of the well-equipped gym in October was welcomed by many prisoners who were able to use it. The gym's closure in December was a blow to the physical and mental wellbeing of many prisoners for whom keeping fit and healthy is an important part of their lives. The Board believes that the resumption of organised PE should be a priority when conditions allow.

6.7 Drug rehabilitation

Oxleas Interventions provided a clinically led substance misuse service throughout 2020. Referrals are made from a range of sources, including at reception, by individuals and by prison officers. The caseload has been between 273 and 220 during the year. Monthly referrals averaged 43 up to March; thereafter, the average reduced to 21. After March, referrals from reception were lower than in previous months, but in line with the number of arrivals.

For those referred to Oxleas Interventions, cannabis is the drug of choice, followed by alcohol and then cocaine. The peer mentor scheme was affected by the lockdown. As group work has not been allowed during this time, there have been no behaviour change programmes or awareness sessions. Work with prisoners has been one to one and programmes have had to be replaced by in-cell packs.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

As a designated training prison, Isis contracts Novus to deliver its education and training programmes. These are developed in response to the requirements of the Ministry of Justice and the Governor. The programmes are aimed at providing prisoners with skills and qualifications that enhance their prospects of employment on release.

In a normal year, the prison provides education and vocational training opportunities which are delivered in classrooms and workshops. However, the suspension of all face-to-face teaching in March 2020 severely restricted the delivery of a meaningful curriculum.

The Board is concerned that, since March, the absence of teaching, the reliance on in-cell education packs and the inability to arrange examinations have resulted in many prisoners being released during the course of the year without gaining an accredited qualification.

For the last seven months of the year, when teachers returned to duties following a two-month absence, all learning has been remotely managed, with education packs delivered to prisoners to complete in their cells.

To begin with, the level of prisoner engagement was low. For example, in August, 75 induction packs were sent to new prisoners to assess their English and mathematics levels, but only nine were returned. Clearly, it was not possible for teachers to plan the next steps in learning for those who did not complete the tasks. At around the same

time, 243 packs were distributed in one week, covering a variety of courses, but less than 10% were completed and returned. The system for distributing and collecting packs via wing representatives, rather than teaching staff, and the lack of prisoner motivation were two factors which contributed to these poor figures.

Changes to the prison's pay policy in October, which financially rewarded prisoners for returning packs in the same way that attendance at lessons was rewarded, has had a positive impact. The appointment of education representatives, who teachers can contact via the internal telephone system, has also helped to drive up levels of in-cell learning. In November, teaching staff began visiting the houseblocks to manage the distribution and collection of packs, which was another positive development. Figures towards the end of the calendar year indicated that around 50% of packs were now being completed and returned.

The Board feels that the prison should continue to work hard with Novus to drive up levels of engagement in remote learning during a period when classroom teaching is unlikely to return for several more months. Giving prisoners the opportunity to gain qualifications by completing examinations and assessments, particularly in English and mathematics, should be seen as a priority, however challenging this might be.

The 'academy' is responsible for the delivery of English and mathematics. Whether prisoners need to start at entry level or can tackle the City and Guilds functional skills qualifications, is normally determined through the induction process, but this has not taken place throughout the pandemic period. There are systems in place to monitor the progress of learners with special educational needs, as well as those from ethnic minority backgrounds, but the severely restricted regime has made it challenging to track the progress of any learner.

Courses covered by education packs distributed towards the end of the year included English, mathematics, barbering, catering and hospitality, customer service, food safety, painting and decorating, radio, business studies and Open University programmes. While in-cell packs are highly effective for some kinds of content and for self-motivated learners, face-to-face tuition is often necessary for less confident learners, or for some aspects of learning, such as practical skills or complex concepts. Interaction among learners in a group enhances learning and enables the development of communication and cooperation skills. Preferred learning styles vary, but most learners benefit from a range of different approaches rather than a single method.

The library, which is run by Greenwich Leisure Limited ('Better Leisure') on behalf of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, has been shut to prisoners since the lockdown in March. Until its closure, visits averaged 700 per month, which was on a par with the corresponding period in 2019.

Library staff returned to the prison for three days per week in May. Batches of books donated by the 'Give A Book' charity, donated magazines and puzzle packs have been sent to each houseblock on a regular basis. At the beginning of lockdown, around 300 books from the current stock were available to all the spurs.

In common with other prisons, the Shannon Trust has not been operating since the lockdown, but five laptop computers have the Shannon Trust programme loaded and these were issued to learners to undertake the programme. A programme for training new mentors will be a priority when the library is open again and the Trust's volunteers are allowed to continue their work.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The provision of training and other purposeful activities has been minimal throughout most of the year. Before the national lockdown in March, the Skills Zone training courses offered were in barbering, painting and decorating, industrial cleaning, aerial window cleaning, upcycling, recycling and waste management, and horticulture. Catering and hospitality training was also offered via the kitchens and the staff restaurant. All courses offer City and Guilds or WAMITAB (Waste Management Training and Advisory Board) qualifications, and prisoners have a consistently high pass rate. Painting and decorating, industrial cleaning, catering, waste management and horticulture all lead to jobs as orderlies within the prison for suitable course completers.

In normal times, these activities are offered in eight sessions each week, from Monday to Thursday, morning and afternoon. Attendance averaged 75% for the almost 90% of prisoners registered on courses. At the beginning of the year, plans were under way to increase the provision of barbering by providing small salons on the houseblocks.

Since the lockdown, only the courses which lead to prison jobs continued to operate. However, these courses became purely practical, with no classroom learning taking place. This has, in turn, led to a cessation of all examinations and awards of qualifications. Clearly, this is deeply worrying for the continued training of prisoners and their ability to secure employment in these industries upon release.

The range of work opportunities available to prisoners, including houseblock orderlies; orderlies for visits, induction and reception; work in the serveries, library, chapel, horticulture, and in education, skills and the gym; and a range of representative and mentor roles, has also reduced due to the COVID-19 regime change. Listeners, wing representatives and education orderlies have recently resumed their roles.

The prison has several initiatives to increase the prospect of prisoners having employment on release, which have mostly been put on hold throughout 2020. These include the following.

- Prisoners working in The Quays (staff restaurant) were linked into the Right Course programme, which prepares prisoners for employment in the catering and hospitality sector.
- The prison was awarded the Proactive Prison award in 2019 by the Employers' Forum for Reducing Reoffending, for its work in preparing prisoners for the world of work through its partnerships with a range of employers through the charity Bounce Back.

7.3 Offender management, progression

As in previous years, the OMU has operated with a number of vacancies this year and, like other departments in the prison, has had to deal with staff being off sick, shielding or isolating. Offender assessment system (OASys) reports underpin sentence planning. In November 2020 there were 68 outstanding reports, a significant improvement on 2019. Dealing with the backlog is hampered by prisoners arriving at Isis without an OASys report. Between June and December, an average of 21 prisoners a month required an assessment but arrived without one.

There have been long delays in moving prisoners to other establishments following recategorisation. In December 2020, there were 28 prisoners waiting for transfer to category D establishments. The movement between prisons and the provision of transport is managed centrally, and some additional delays have been caused by COVID-19-related issues. However, the situation is exacerbated by some examples of poor communication between staff and the prisoners waiting for sentence plans, recategorisation or transfer. In 2020, 23% of applications to the Board were related to sentence management, an increase from 17% in 2019, and represented the largest single area by far of prisoner concerns.

As with other departments in the prison, the team delivering offender behaviour programmes has been affected by COVID-19-related issues – in particular, staff absences, cross-deployment and the lack of suitable rooms for individual or group sessions. A national directive led to most programmes being put on hold, which meant that some prisoners have been unable to progress their sentence plan.

7.4 Family contact

Each prisoner has access to an in-cell telephone, and this, along with the telephone credit given to all prisoners, has been invaluable, given the time spent behind doors

since the first lockdown in March 2020. Mail arrangements have remained the same during the year. In early 2020, the use of the 'email a prisoner' scheme was expanded, so families can now pay for a 'reply sheet' from the prisoner which reaches the family via the prison and the 'email a prisoner' service.

In mid-July, video calls ('Purple Visits') were introduced, with 30-minute sessions available six days a week. Each month, between 192 and 285 calls have been booked, out of over 400 available. Families have experienced technical difficulties with using the service, and security issues have been a contributory factor to the low take-up.

Social visits restarted in August and continued until the next national lockdown. The sessions were only 45 minutes in duration, to allow time for cleaning and sanitising between sessions. Only family members were allowed to visit, and prisoners were not allowed to touch or hug visitors, even their children. The number of prisoners able to attend each session was 18, reduced from 40 before the lockdown. Even so, the number of prisoners booking visits was consistently low, often in single figures. The reason for this, as well as the restrictions, is thought to be travelling times; a visitor from West London can have a 180-minute round trip for a 45-minute visit.

7.5 Resettlement planning

2020 saw 493 releases, a slight reduction on the 561 in 2019. The CRC continued to support prisoners who were within 12 weeks of release. Prisoners eligible for release are allocated a caseworker. Prior to COVID-19, all resettlement assessments and mentoring were completed face-to-face. However, due to the pandemic, CRC staff were not able to complete these, instead using in-cell telephones, the biometric system and internal mail. Tailored in-cell packs were created by caseworkers for substance misuse, relationships, employability and domestic abuse. In the last three months of 2020, 121 prisoners were released; of these, 47 needed help with housing, 76 needed to claim benefits, 72 needed support in relation to employment, training or education, and 19 needed help in opening a bank account. Only three prisoners did not take up some support from the CRC.

Due to the CRC not being able to have face-to-face contact, groups were not able to run, with prisoners missing out on discussions that would aid their behaviour and thinking, give them support prior to their release and prepare them for the challenges they might encounter. Getting it Right is a probation/CRC-governed programme that runs for two weeks, typically has 10 to 12 participants and includes change, relapse prevention and thinking skills. The last programme of Getting it Right was run in March 2020.

The pandemic has narrowed job opportunities for released prisoners. Hospitality and retail have not been open for most of the year and these are key sectors for prisoners seeking employment. Construction resumed normal working but job opportunities and interviews have moved online.

All prisoners leaving custody receive a CRC COVID-19 resettlement pack and a Jobcentre Plus information sheet, providing a helpline number that ex-prisoners can call to apply for benefits, as job centres are not open. Prisoners' probation worker, key worker, prison offender manager and case administrator are able to access the resettlement plan, and every plan is sent to the prisoner's probation worker in the community. Probation officers are meeting some prisoners, usually the more high-risk individuals.

8. The work of the IMB

To be able to continue to monitor throughout the year, the Board has adopted new ways of working to respond to the challenges of the pandemic. Since April, Board meetings have been held on Zoom. Some monitoring has been done remotely by members telephoning departments to collect information, and others by members visiting the prison. Prisoners have also been able to use a free 0800 telephone number to make an application. Applications have been responded to by meeting the prisoner, using the in-cell telephones or replying in writing. In addition, daily reports from the prison, including reports from the segregation unit and weekly calls with the Governor, have been very helpful.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	200

Total number of segregation reviews attended	18
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Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	28	19
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	37	19
C	Equality	3	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	24	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	19	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	24	14
F	Food and kitchens	1	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	37	34

H1	Property within this establishment	49	44
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	82	34
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	7	5
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	84	83
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	66	52
K	Transfers	17	12
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	7	6
	No Action	5	2
	Total number of applications	490	356

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