



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Lancaster Farms

**For reporting year
01 February 2020 – 31 January 2021**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Lancaster Farms is a category C resettlement prison, with accommodation for around 560 adult male prisoners at the end of the reporting year.

The prison benefits from having a large open central area with grass and flowerbeds, large, easily surveilled wing communal spaces, and buildings that are reasonably modern and generally in a good state of repair. The majority of wing accommodation is in single cells, although the number of double cells with bunk beds has increased in recent years. There are now four cells specially adapted for prisoners with reduced mobility.

HMP Lancaster Farms is a modern prison with four main residential blocks, each divided into two wings. There is a first night unit (FNU) for prisoners recently arrived at the prison. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for most of the reporting year, one wing of the four main residential blocks was designated as a reverse cohorting unit (RCU) to accommodate and quarantine new prisoners for their first two weeks at the prison. The FNU was also used as an additional RCU for some periods.

The care and separation unit (CSU) holds 12 prisoners. Accommodation is provided in single cells, with five of the cells designated as 'safer cells,' two of which have closed-circuit television installed, and there are, in addition, two special cells. For a short period, the FNU was used as a temporary CSU, whilst the CSU was being renovated.

A number of prison services are provided on a contracted-out basis. Healthcare services are provided by Spectrum Community Health CIC. Spectrum also provides the substance misuse service, with mental health services sub-contracted to Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust and pharmacy services being managed in-house. Rehabilitation services are provided by Sodexo Justice Services and Purple Futures, with both companies contracting Shelter to deliver resettlement. Prison catering was contracted out until September 2020. The prison maintenance contract was awarded to Amey plc. NOVUS delivers education services under the offender learning and skills service (OLASS) contract.

The prison provides some community engagement through the well-attended school careers session, which involves five local sixth forms, as well as a collaboration between the University of Lancaster and the prison, though these activities were highly constrained during the reporting year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

- 3.1.1 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.
- 3.1.2 Whilst the Board recognises the enormous difficulties facing the Prison Service at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we raised concerns regarding the delays in implementing a range of measures to reduce and monitor infection risk, notably the availability and use of social distancing and PPE for both prison staff and prisoners, temperature testing of staff and visitors at the security gate and the widespread testing and vaccination of staff and prisoners. Given the particular risks affecting both prisoners and staff held or working within a confined area, more could have been done sooner to reduce virus transmission.
- 3.1.3 Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the Board adopted a range of approaches to maintain contact with prisoners and to receive information about the prison on a regular basis. The Board held regular phone calls with Governors and other staff, and with a small number of prisoners on each wing; additional information was shared with the Board by email on a daily basis.
- 3.1.4 Prisoners were able to contact the Board by paper-based applications or via a new national freephone telephone service. The Board was able to respond to prisoners using the "email-a-prisoner" system. Although alternative arrangements were in place for prisoners to submit paper-based applications to the IMB, using sealed envelopes being passed to prison staff and confidential scanning of applications by the IMB clerk, the Board notes that the total number of applications received was almost identical to that of the previous reporting year.
- 3.1.5 A reduced number of visits to the prison were undertaken by Board members, whilst adhering to a range of measures to reduce COVID-19 infection risks. In particular, the Board responded to requests from the prison to avoid visiting the RCU or accommodation wings with known COVID-19 infections. Throughout this period, the Board received full support from the Governor and other prison staff in its efforts to continue monitoring the fair and humane treatment of prisoners and their preparation for release.
- 3.1.6 Responses to the COVID-19 outbreak by the Prison Service and, to a lesser extent, by the Governor, have had enormous consequences for the experience of prisoners held within HMP Lancaster Farms since the start of

the outbreak in March 2020. These responses are reflected in many of the comments in the evidence sections of this report.

- 3.1.7 The Board notes that the most significant and direct impact on prisoners has been the policy to reduce significantly the amount of time out of cell for association or purposeful activities. We frequently refer to the “emergency regime” in this report, when the term “lockdown” could also have been used. Whilst these measures were undoubtedly aimed at reducing infection risks, the Board notes that enforced confinement within cells for 22 hours per day or more, for periods of many months, does not in itself appear to be consistent with humane treatment of prisoners, and the Board regrets that alternative approaches (albeit not without risk or expense) were not explored further.
- 3.1.8 Notwithstanding the concern recorded in 3.1.7, the Board also notes that many prisoners arriving during the year have offered feedback that the emergency regime at HMP Lancaster Farms has allowed more time out of cells than the regimes experienced at other establishments.

3.2 Main Judgements

How safe is the prison?

- 3.2.1 The Board’s monitoring of the prison continues to reveal that the Governor and prison staff work hard to offer, and to a large extent succeed in providing, a safe environment for the accommodation of prisoners at HMP Lancaster Farms. The Board has observed effective management of risks at safety intervention meetings and successful collaboration between key workers, safer custody, custodial managers, the mental health team and the chaplaincy.
- 3.2.2 From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic significant steps were taken to increase the safety of prisoners by reducing infection risk, notably the introduction of the emergency regime to organise time out of cells in cohorts, the cessation of most prisoner movement and activities, and the management of transfers into the prison via a reverse cohorting unit. The Board acknowledges that, to a large extent and at least for a period of several months, these measures were successful at controlling the spread of the virus within the prison. However, as noted in 3.1.2 above, the Board believes that a number of other important measures could have been introduced more quickly and more effectively, for example the wearing of face coverings by staff and limiting numbers of officers in wing offices at any one time.
- 3.2.3 The Board is disappointed to note the continuation of high levels of self-harm among a minority of prisoners and particularly the high frequency of incidents of self-harm among a small number of prisoners, many of whom have challenging and complex mental health needs yet continue to be accommodated at HMP Lancaster Farms rather than transferred to specialist, secure mental health facilities.

3.2.4 Levels of violence and the extent of substance misuse within the prison appear to have reduced since the introduction of the emergency regime that limits time out of cells, movement around the prison and the number of prisoners within each cohort out of cells. The Board welcomes these improvements in safety but it is regrettable that this has been by default because of Covid. However, the number of instances of use of force by prison officers remains high. This will be explored further by the Board in 2021-22.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

3.2.5 The Board believes that, to a large extent, prisoners at HM Lancaster Farms are treated fairly and humanely, with considerable care taken by prison staff to treat prisoners with decency and respect. The Board noted the support given to prisoners during the pandemic such as extra pin credit, diversion materials and snack packs; and wellbeing checks where appropriate.

3.2.6 Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst undoubtedly aimed at increasing the safety of prisoners and staff, raise questions as to the humane treatment of prisoners (and possibly consequences for prisoners' mental health), most notably in the high levels of confinement to cells, with few in-cell activities, little or no in-person contact with families and highly restricted access to telephones, for periods of many months.

3.2.7 As in previous years' reports, the Board notes that a minority of prisoners continue to be accommodated in double cells without screening of the toilet.

3.2.8 Whilst the Board notes the steps taken to undertake some refurbishment of cells within both regular accommodation and the CSU, significant outstanding issues remain, notably the instances of poor ventilation in some cells and, within the CSU, the absence of electricity in some cells, bleak exercise yards and inadequate drainage.

3.2.9 The Board has encountered a range of evidence relating to the handling of complaints from prisoners. Whilst data suggests that there has been a reduction in numbers of overdue complaints, it is clear that in some cases responses to complaints are inappropriately delayed and that prisoners are not kept updated on progress.

3.2.10 The prison's treatment of prisoner property, particularly on arrival at HMP Lancaster Farms, remained an issue of concern for the Board, despite significantly lower numbers of prisoners transferring into the prison this year.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

3.2.11 Monitoring by the Board during this reporting year suggests that, to a large extent, the prison has continued to offer reasonable levels of primary healthcare to prisoners despite the enormous challenges arising from the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.12 The provision of mental healthcare within the prison appears to have faced even greater challenges at a time when the impact of the pandemic on

prisoners and their families might suggest a need for enhanced provision of these services. The overall level of staffing for mental health services and the lack of physical space for staff and therapy (paragraph 6.3) are matters of concern for the Board, as is the cessation of drug rehabilitation work (paragraph 4.6) and the difficulties in finding suitable alternative, specialist accommodation for prisoners facing serious mental health difficulties.

3.2.13 The Board recognises the range of initiatives deployed to provide prisoners with access to exercise equipment since the introduction of the emergency regime and the steps taken to offer limited access to the gym later in the year.

3.2.14 Other significant detriments to prisoner wellbeing arose as a consequence of measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, most notably the significant reductions to time spent out of cells, access to purposeful activities and contact with families via visits and phone calls.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

3.2.15 One of the many significant and problematic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic was the withdrawal of staff by the education provider, NOVUS, and the gradual development of education via packs delivered to prisoners in cells, resulting in a marked reduction in prisoners' progress through educational courses during the year.

3.2.16 Similarly, most workplaces ceased, with the introduction of the emergency regime to manage infection risk, resulting in very limited progress towards the completion of vocational courses and the valuable work experience that is normally offered to prisoners, though the Board notes some positive progress towards the end of year.

3.2.17 The Board regrets that offending behaviour programmes were ceased, alongside other educational and vocational courses, leading to significant obstacles for prisoners seeking progression to category D status during the year and concerns among prisoners, shared by the Board, regarding the fairness of this.

3.2.18 Restrictions introduced to reduce COVID-19 infection risk also affected the availability of visits and hence the continuation of family contact considered to be an important component of preparation for release. Whilst the alternative "Purple Visits" via online video meetings between prisoners and families were welcomed in principle, delays, technical difficulties and the lack of privacy offered to prisoners have limited their impact and effectiveness.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- 3.3.1 To reconsider and improve the strategies available to the prison to manage and reduce the number of incidents of self-harm, particularly among the small number of prisoners who frequently self-harm and could be assessed as demonstrating severe mental health difficulties (paragraphs 4.2.2, 6.3.5).
- 3.3.2 To review the level of staffing and facilities associated with the provision of mental health services within the prison (6.3.2).
- 3.3.3 To conduct a wide-ranging review of all aspects of the response by the Prison Service to the pandemic, aiming to improve the fair and humane treatment of prisoners and their preparation for release by addressing a number of key issues raised in this report such as the provision of (and incentivisation of) in-cell education (7.1.4), the availability and effectiveness of “Purple Visits” (7.4.5), and the rapid deployment of PPE, testing and other measures to reduce infection risk (3.1.2).

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- 3.3.4 To review the suitability and implications of making transfers between prisons on Fridays (4.1.2).
- 3.3.5 To complete the ongoing review of the management of prisoner property (5.8.5).

TO THE GOVERNOR

- 3.3.6 To ensure that work previously planned to introduce screening of toilets within double cells is completed as soon as possible (paragraph 5.1.2).
- 3.3.7 To review and progress improvements and repairs to accommodation, including the improvements to ventilation in the FNU and to the exercise yards, drainage and provision of electricity to all cells within the CSU (paragraphs 5.1.5, 5.2.1).
- 3.3.8 To review and improve communication with prisoners in key areas such as the progress towards resolving or responding to complaints, decisions relating to IEP and the reasons for re-categorisation (paragraphs 5.6.5, 5.7.6, 7.3.2).
- 3.3.9 To ensure that the equality action team (paragraph 5.4.1) and prisoner council meetings (paragraph 5.4.2) are re-started as soon as possible.
- 3.3.10 To arrange for the training for new Listeners to be arranged and completed as soon as possible (paragraph 4.2.5).
- 3.3.11 To confirm that processes previously agreed with the Board, such as that the Board will be notified immediately following the deployment of PAVA or the use of the special cell, remain in force (paragraph 5.2.5).

- 3.3.12 To ensure that the recent trend of increased contact between prisoners and their key workers is continued and evidenced by feedback from prisoners (paragraph 5.3.2).
- 3.3.13 To review and increase the availability of wheelchairs for those prisoners with restricted mobility (paragraph 6.4.3).
- 3.3.14 To take further steps to ensure that food hygiene logs are completed for each wing at each meal (paragraph 5.1.8).

3.4 Progress since the last report

The Board notes the following developments during the year that have contributed to improvements in the fair and humane treatment of prisoners:

- 3.4.1 Information relating to the numbers of complaints received, responded to and remaining overdue during the year suggests that the prison has made improvements to complaints handling, with significantly fewer complaints overdue at the year-end (paragraph 5.7.3).
- 3.4.2 Data relating to the number of contacts between prisoners and their key workers suggest that this initiative has accelerated during the year, although the improvement is not yet fully embedded and prisoners continue to report significant gaps in contact and key worker relationships (paragraph 5.3.2).
- 3.4.3 The Board is aware of some important repairs and improvements to accommodation, in some areas, during the year, though a number of significant issues remain (paragraph 5.1.5). Perhaps of most significance is the long-awaited introduction of in-cell telephony, where work started at the end of the reporting year (paragraph 5.1.3).
- 3.4.4 Following the introduction of the emergency regime, daily welfare checks for vulnerable prisoners were introduced (paragraph 4.4.3), in addition to processes associated with the ACCT policies.
- 3.4.5 The Board has observed a continued increase in the use of body-worn cameras among prison officers (paragraph 4.5.4).
- 3.4.6 The Board has been advised that the availability of illicit substances within the prison has declined, no doubt partly due to the emergency regime, but also supported by effective security and intelligence (paragraph 4.6.2).
- 3.4.7 Some modest but nevertheless important new arrangements for access to psychological support and trauma therapy were introduced during the year (paragraph 6.3.6).
- 3.4.8 The prison has, in the main, responded helpfully and promptly to requests from the IMB for access to more information, some on a daily basis, to support remote monitoring of the prison during this pandemic. The Board is

appreciative of the availability of the Governor for regular and at times frequent update calls (paragraph 3.1.3).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4 Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

- 4.1.1 Prisoners arriving into reception at HMP Lancaster Farms are transfers from other prisons, rather than from the courts. Shortly after the introduction of the emergency regime, transfers into the prison recommenced, though with later, further restrictions when the prison became an outbreak site. Overall numbers of receptions during the year were significantly lower than normal, and the prison population fell from around 560 to 460 during the year.
- 4.1.2 The issue of prisoners transferred into the prison on Friday afternoon was raised both by the reception staff and prisoners and is of concern for the Board. The impact on both staff and prisoners is the insufficient time to complete all the necessary processes such as providing food, allowing prisoners to make a phone call and shower. Furthermore, some prisoners have not arrived with their essential medication, though this difficulty appears to have been largely resolved during the reporting year.
- 4.1.3 The loss/misplacement of prisoners' property from one establishment to another has been a recurring and much documented issue by this Board, as noted in section 5.8 of this report.
- 4.1.4 Buttermere-2 wing has been assigned to be the prison's RCU, a dedicated isolation unit for new arrivals to the prison. Induction into the prison is delivered on the second day after arrival. Prisoners are given a leaflet on the impact of COVID-19 on Buttermere 2 as part of their induction process. The Board found that all prisoners are isolated on arrival on the RCU due to COVID-19 restrictions and are relocated to other residential units following their period of quarantine. The Board notes the good management of the RCU and its effectiveness at reducing the spread of COVID-19 within the prison.
- 4.1.5 To reduce COVID-19 infection risk, the Board chose to comply with requests from the prison to avoid visiting the RCU since its inception, but has maintained contact with men through phone calls and via applications. Feedback from prisoners suggests that, in the main, men held in the RCU are understanding of the special measures being undertaken in response to the pandemic.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- 4.2.1 During the reporting year, the assessment care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process, caring for prisoners at risk, was initiated with 206 prisoners, somewhat lower than last year (301).

- 4.2.2 Incidents of self-harm continued at high levels during the year, with 399 incidents reported (359 incidents of self-harm were recorded in 2019), involving 72 prisoners. Cutting or scratching is recorded in around 85% of incidents, whilst 8% of incidents involved hanging/ligature making. The Board notes with great concern that four prisoners were responsible for around 50% of the incidents of self-harm.
- 4.2.3 A number of mitigation measures including distraction packs, radios and activities were introduced. The most common form of self-harm, cutting, required a change to the razor policy to manage access to blades. Other means to self-harm, including broken observation panels and porcelain from sinks, increased.
- 4.2.4 The Board has observed proactive and purposeful interactions between staff and prisoners, aimed at building better relationships. These interactions are evidenced in the key worker entries and during the ACCT process, however the Board have noted several occasions when ACCT documents were not signed by the prisoner. The appointment of a full-time safer custody officer is also a welcome development.
- 4.2.5 It is unfortunate that, at a time when many prisoners are in need of support, the prison has only four trained Listeners, and access to Listeners has not been available in all wings during the pandemic. At the end of the reporting year there is a waiting list of nine men who have expressed an interest in training, but this requires the recommencement of training from the Samaritans. Listeners work on a rota system to support prisoners and are supported by a weekly debrief telephone call with the Samaritans whilst the safer custody officer liaises between the Listeners and Samaritans.
- 4.2.6 The safer custody team overcame a number of challenges including staff absence during the pandemic and the need to initiate daily prisoner welfare checks to support the most vulnerable prisoners as details of the emergency regimes were changing.
- 4.2.7 The Board has noted and been reassured by the level of additional daily welfare checks introduced on each residential unit in response to the greatly increased amount of time prisoners are spending in their cells.
- 4.2.8 Weekly safety intervention meetings (SIM) take place with multi-disciplinary support provided by the chaplaincy, mental health team, safer custody team, healthcare team and custodial managers to proactively manage vulnerable prisoners. Support, monitoring, referrals and interventions form part of the case management process.
- 4.2.9 Board members have attended a number of SIM meetings to review and monitor prison processes and the resulting interventions and has noted good practice in place among a range of staff and functions within the prison. The

presence at safety intervention meetings of senior members of the management team evidences the commitment to prisoner safety and security.

4.2.10 Regrettably, one death in custody occurred during the reporting year apparently as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 virus, and is subject to investigation by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman and Coroner.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The introduction of the emergency regime, in which COVID-19 infection risks are managed by allowing only small numbers of prisoners out of their cells at any one time, appears to have resulted in a marked reduction in the numbers of violent incidents (fights between prisoners, assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and assaults by prisoners on staff). Prison data shows the total number of such violent incidents in 2020 was around 60% lower than in 2019.

4.3.2 The reduction in violence is attributed to the close monitoring of, and re-arrangements to, the cohorts of prisoners allowed out of cells together, the enormous reduction in movement of prisoners around the prison for purposeful activities, the loss of association time, the higher ratio of staff to prisoners whilst prisoners are out of cells, and reduced availability of illicit substances (and therefore reduced level of debt) within the prison.

4.3.3 The number of individual isolating prisoners fell significantly during the year, with just one individual isolator at the end of the year, again largely due to the impact of the emergency regime.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

4.4.1 The safer custody team has responsibility for safeguarding and vulnerable prisoners. The prison does not have a vulnerable prisoners unit. Other parts of the report focus upon issues relating to prisoners with a mental health issue or learning disability.

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1 The Board remains concerned by the number of incidents of use of force this reporting year by prison staff. This follows the significant increase noted in last year's report. This is in the context of the emergency regime during this reporting year, the related reduction in violence and the much lower occupancy of the CSU. We will be reviewing use of force documentation in 2021-22.

4.5.2 The Board has expressed concerns regarding the introduction during the year of the capability for using PAVA spray within the prison. To date, PAVA spray has not been deployed.

4.5.3 The Board has noted that intelligence-led cell searches are carried out on a semi-regular basis at Lancaster Farms. It is the Board's understanding that these searches are conducted in a professional manner and they have

resulted in the discovery of items of contraband, mobile phones and related accessories, which increases safety within and beyond the prison.

- 4.5.4 During the previous reporting period, the issue of staff not wearing body-worn cameras (BWCs) was raised. The Board was disappointed to see few officers were choosing to wear them. The Board's current monitoring suggests a marked improvement in this area with a significant number of officers regularly and consistently choosing to wear BWCs. Such cameras are now routinely deployed for planned control and restraint incidents, cell searches and when engaging with prisoners who may pose a risk such as those who are engaging in dirty protests or making threats to staff.
- 4.5.5 Performance statistics and daily briefings prepared within the prison and shared with the Board show a welcome reduction in overdue use of force paperwork during the year. At the end of the reporting year, paperwork was overdue for a small number of incidents and these incidents had occurred within the previous ten days.

4.6 Substance misuse

- 4.6.1 The substance misuse service within Lancaster Farms is provided by Spectrum Community Health CIC. The prison follows established protocols when psychoactive substances/medications have been misused, insofar as immediate medication reviews take place.
- 4.6.2 The Board's monitoring suggests that following the introduction of the emergency regime in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a marked decline in the availability and use of illicit drugs within the prison, though daily briefings show a marked increase in the finding of illicitly brewed alcohol.
- 4.6.3 One of the unfortunate consequences of the changes to the regime within the prison has been the cessation of drug rehabilitation work, as detailed in section 6.6 of this report.

5 Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

- 5.1.1 Since the introduction of the emergency regimes, the reduction in prisoner movement for work and training around the outside areas has coincided with an unwelcome increase in the duck population with resultant duck excrement at the inside entrances to most of the wings.
- 5.1.2 The Board is disappointed to note that there are no plans to reduce the number of double cells, of which there are 68. Some double cells are twice the size of a single cell but others have been transformed from a single to a double with the addition of bunk beds. The lack of screens around the toilet in these cells has been a concern of the Board for several years. In this reporting year we are told the screens are now in stock but still awaiting installation.
- 5.1.3 The lack of in-cell telephony meant that under the emergency regime lockdown there were insufficient telephones for prisoners to maintain good contacts with their families. Each wing of approximately 60 prisoners has only three telephones and, following the introduction of the emergency regime, men were restricted to a time limit, varying between 10 and 15 minutes. Prisoners have frequently complained that there was insufficient time to talk, particularly with their children. The time limits imposed on telephone use also meant that prisoners on some days had to choose between calling their solicitor or probation worker or their family. The 16 additional phones initially provided were unable to be used as they were insecure. In January 2021, work to install telephones in cells was started, a move which is welcomed by the Board. During the period of the pandemic, prisoners were all given a weekly £5 phone credit, as compensation for the lack of social visits.
- 5.1.4 All cells, apart from in the segregation unit, have televisions and prisoners appreciated the extra channels added during lockdown.
- 5.1.5 The Board are pleased that the programme of maintenance was continued during the reporting period and cell redecoration and the replacement of flooring, begun during this reporting period, will continue into the next. Issues with poor ventilation for some cells within the FNU were frequently brought to the attention of the prison by the Board and are yet to be resolved.
- 5.1.6 Prisoners reliant on prison issue clothing have complained that only being supplied with two of everything (for example, tee shirts, trousers, underwear etc.) is insufficient, particularly when washing machines were out of service.
- 5.1.7 In September 2020, the prison took back control of the catering from Compass. Complaints about food are uncommon and many prisoners comment favourably on the food compared with that available in other prisons. The Board received a small number of complaints from prisoners during lockdown concerning the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables available from the canteen.

5.1.8 Throughout the reporting period members have frequently noted the lack of completion of the food hygiene logs which are required to be completed before the serving of meals at midday and afternoon. The Board is disappointed to report the overwhelming majority of these logs are not being completed at the appropriate time.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

5.2.1 During this reporting year the segregation unit was temporarily relocated to the wing normally used as an FNU. This was to enable flooring to be replaced, remedy the lack of electricity in some cells, and redecorate cells and communal areas. However, electricity is still only available in six out of the 12 cells. It was disappointing that the drainage channel at the far end of the landing was not increased to enable the speedy clearing of any flooded cell on the wing. The outdoor exercise yard is largely unchanged and remains bleak with the covered yard frequently contaminated for long periods with pigeon droppings.

5.2.2 Members of the Board have attended a number of segregation reviews in this reporting year and have observed prisoners being dealt with in a fair and just manner. Attendance at reviews and adjudications continued throughout the year; however, the prison was very slow in responding to the Board's request for remote access to reviews and adjudications via a telephone link.

5.2.3 Staff working on the segregation unit demonstrate a high degree of sensitivity and resilience in some very challenging situations. They show understanding and compassion towards prisoners, particularly those experiencing significant deterioration of their mental health for a variety of reasons.

5.2.4 The Board was pleased to note the number of prisoners who spent time in the segregation unit was down considerably compared to the previous year. The monthly average of men held in the CSU in 2019-2020 was 27 whereas in 2020-2021 it was 18. Similarly, the period of time spent in the CSU showed improvement, with only four prisoners spending longer than 50 days there compared with nine the previous year.

5.2.5 Use of the special cell was down significantly on the year 2019-2020 from 16 to six times (up to January 2021). The Board has raised concerns on several occasions that it is not notified promptly when the special cell is used.

5.2.6 The Board regrets that the situation regarding the lack of in-cell work activity in the segregation unit, which was highlighted in last year's report, remains unchanged.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Observations by Board members when visiting the prison noted good relationships between prisoners and operational staff. Increased positive interactions between officers and prisoners were also commented on by the

chaplain during the period of lockdown, when he observed officers variously engaged in table tennis and conversation with prisoners, for example.

- 5.3.2 The increase in the amount of key worker interactions has increased during this period of reporting due to the high priority given it by senior management. We are informed by senior managers that following accreditation, the prison now carries out between 70% and 80% of key work appointments every week. However, the Board has some doubts regarding the reliability of this statistic and notes that there are still occasions when prisoners are unable to name their key worker. One prisoner told the Board recently that he had had only three or four one-to-one meetings with his key worker during the last year.
- 5.3.3 The Board understands that every prisoner on an ACCT or with an ongoing mental health record now has a meaningful daily interview with the newly appointed designated safety officer. However, there have been several occasions when the Board has identified and reported on ACCT documents that have not been signed by the prisoner.

5.4 Equality and diversity

- 5.4.1 The Board notes with regret that equality action team meetings were discontinued following the introduction of the emergency regime and regrets that these meetings were not prioritised.
- 5.4.2 At the end of the reporting year, there were no prisoner equality representatives in the prison as those who had been representatives had been released and no new prisoners had been identified for this role. The Board regrets that other prisoner forums and the prisoner council meetings were also curtailed and that alternative solutions to continue such forums in small numbers with social distancing were not prioritised.
- 5.4.3 Statistics shared with the Board suggest that 53 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted during 2020, almost twice the number (27) submitted in the previous year. The form and process to submit a DIRF changed during the year, making it difficult to identify specific trends or recurring issues. The Board is advised that investigations were completed within the requisite time scales.
- 5.4.4 Data for prisoners' self-declared disabilities indicate 141 disability markers among 97 prisoners (reduced from 165 in 2020, though no data is available for 50 prisoners). Disabilities range from learning disabilities, including dyslexia and autism, to reduced mobility and physical capacity. A further group of prisoners have been identified with visual, speech or hearing impairment. Whilst mental illness is recorded for 34 prisoners, the Board is keen to examine how such data is compiled as this appears to be a small percentage of the prison population.

- 5.4.5 Numbers of personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP) were monitored and remain stable over the year.
- 5.4.6 The Board is aware of instances where prisoners with a disability are not afforded the same opportunities as others, due to their disability. These include the timely provision of a wheelchair (paragraph 6.4.3) and appropriate access to the outside for fresh air and exercise (paragraph 6.5.1).
- 5.4.7 Foreign nationals (11 in total) account for a small proportion of the prison population. Liaison with HMP Risley takes place given the specialist staff available there to support the specific needs of this group of prisoners.
- 5.4.8 The Board has observed that risk assessments and screening are undertaken to actively manage vulnerability resulting from the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, together with others including individual isolators.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

- 5.5.1 In the view of the Board, the chaplaincy has continued to carry out its duties during the pandemic and has sought to do this in an equitable way. However, not all faith chaplains have been in a position to attend the establishment, so men from some faiths may not have seen a chaplain for some time, leading to concern from the Board as to the level of support offered to prisoners.
- 5.5.2 Services have been delivered for much of the year via the prison TV and radio. From the beginning of September communal worship recommenced with around 40 men attending Jumu'ah prayers with Covid safety a priority: each man is provided with his own prayer mat and these are spaced appropriately to ensure physical distance is maintained. Christian services usually attract around 20 men and these are similarly physically distanced. To ensure social distancing, men need to apply to attend any service to manage numbers.
- 5.5.3 During the pandemic, arrangements were put in place for prisoners to follow the funeral of a relative on an iPad in the chaplaincy. Prisoners have been able to light a candle in the chapel when a loved one has died. The Board recognises that this is a helpful, if somewhat restricted, attempt at tending to prisoners' needs at some very difficult times.
- 5.5.4 Special menus and eating arrangements were provided during Ramadan for prisoners who were fasting and there was a special meal for all prisoners arranged for the end of this period.
- 5.5.5 The Board notes that the chaplaincy has an excellent record of attending over 90% of ACCT reviews. The chaplaincy also visits the CSU on a daily basis apart from a short period when the level of COVID-19 risk became very high.
- 5.5.6 The chaplaincy interacts with families on a regular basis. This may be led either by a prisoner request or by a family contacting the chaplaincy directly. The chaplaincy provided support to prisoners and staff on the wing and to the

family of the prisoner who died in custody during the reporting year (paragraph 4.2.7).

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges

- 5.6.1 There are three levels of privilege in the prison: basic, standard and enhanced with generally around 1% of prisoners on basic, 57% on standard and 42% on enhanced. The Board is concerned that there is relatively little difference in privileges between standard and enhanced levels, yet the prison does not take advantage of the flexibility to offer a higher level of earned privileges.
- 5.6.2 Regrettably, the emergency regime (including the cessation of education and work) imposed throughout the pandemic severely impacted the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme, with one prisoner informing the Board that: ‘...more than 60% of privileges do not exist due to current regime...’
- 5.6.3 Whilst for most of the period of the emergency regime, no prisoner was deprived of a television as a result of an IEP sanction, the Board was disappointed to learn that this sanction was reintroduced at the end of October, despite prisoners remaining in cells for around 22 hours each day.
- 5.6.4 Reviews of prisoners on basic level usually take place every seven days, however during the period of the COVID-19 regime these reviews were undertaken at 72 hours.
- 5.6.5 The prison did record an IEP forum in early December 2020. The Board has raised concerns regarding reports of prisoners experiencing a lack of communication from prison staff about their IEP status and review.
- 5.6.6 The Board has noted significant delays in arrangements for independent adjudications after the introduction of the emergency regime, leading to concerns regarding the application of fair and timely justice within the prison.

5.7 Complaints

- 5.7.1 Complaints (using form COMP1) and appeals (using COMP1A) are administered by the complaints clerk. Due to changes to staffing and the allocation of responsibilities among staff, the role of complaints clerk has, regrettably, changed several times during the reporting year.
- 5.7.2 The paper-based complaints process continued to operate throughout the period for which the emergency regime related to the COVID-19 pandemic was in place, though for a short period complaints from one wing were subjected to a 72-hour quarantining process to reduce virus infection risk, thereby delaying response times.
- 5.7.3 Weekly performance statistics shared with the Board indicate that the total number of complaints in the reporting year is broadly the same as that of the previous reporting year. The number of overdue complaints declined

significantly during the year, falling from around 50 to around eight at the end of the year.

- 5.7.4 The Board has examined a randomly selected subset of complaints and their related responses. Whilst the majority of complaints are responded to within time limits and with a high level of sensitivity and support for the prisoner, a significant minority of responses to complaints are very late. The Board recognises that processes are in place to monitor the number of overdue complaints, but is concerned that lengthy delays in responses, particularly when complaints involve incidents within or information from another prison, continue. The impact on prisoners, in terms of frustration and uncertainty, is clear from our monitoring work.
- 5.7.5 The Board also notes that many applications from prisoners to the IMB make reference to complaints submitted and to a level of dissatisfaction with the timeliness or content of responses to those complaints.
- 5.7.6 The Board is aware that delays in responding to complaints frequently occur when the complaint relates to an issue that initially (often property-related) arose at another establishment and the complaints clerk is depending on the timeliness of responses from another establishment in order to process the complaint. However, in these cases, more regular updates and acknowledgments of the delay could be issued to prisoners.

5.8 Property

- 5.8.1 The Board is not aware of any direct changes to the handling of property associated with the emergency regime related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.8.2 Applications from prisoners to the Board indicate that the management of prisoners' property continues to be a cause for concern among prisoners and hence for the Board. Around 20% of applications received by the Board during the reporting period related to property, almost identical to that of the previous reporting year. Of these, almost 90% of applications relate to property during transfer or held within another establishment. Whilst the total number of applications relating to property on transfer from other establishments remains broadly unchanged since last year, we note that this arises within a year when the total number of prisoners transferring in was much reduced, yet a higher proportion of prisoners transferring in appear to have experienced difficulties.
- 5.8.3 During the reporting year, the Board became aware of property-related issues arising from the more rigorous application of a policy of restricting the numbers of bags of property accepted with new prisoners. This appears to have affected prisoners arriving from HMP Kirkham, in particular. The Board raised a number of issues with the governor relating to individual prisoners' difficulties in accessing important pieces of property that were not contained within the three bags accepted, and raised concerns regarding the overall policy. The impact on some prisoners, in terms of access to important and personal property, was self-evident.

- 5.8.4 The Board was disappointed by the initial delay in resolving some instances of prisoners arriving without property. However, by the end of the reporting year, significant measures were put in place to address the difficulties being experienced by prisoners and complaints from prisoners regarding this issue have reduced significantly.
- 5.8.5 The Board notes that a new national policy regarding the management of transfers of prisoners' property is being developed and would welcome further improvements in the reliability of property transport between establishments.

6 Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

- 6.1.1 Spectrum Community Health CIC is the main provider of healthcare services at the prison, whilst mental health services are run by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust. Due to the pandemic no major external CQC review has taken place, but the health providers strive to maintain compliance with CQC requirements.
- 6.1.2 Spectrum employs approximately 40 health care staff across a range of services (e.g. recovery, primary care, pharmacy and paramedic); services have been stretched by the pandemic and the establishment of medication facilities on some wings amidst COVID-19 outbreaks as a further measure to reduce prisoner movement.
- 6.1.3 Staff from Spectrum or TEWV are involved in induction, ACCT and segregation reviews as appropriate. Healthcare complaints are managed by Spectrum; the majority of these relate to medication (especially analgesics) and delays in clinical treatment.
- 6.1.4 Healthcare forums ceased following the introduction of the emergency regimes and were due to restart in November 2020 but were delayed by an increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases at the prison.
- 6.1.5 COVID-19 infections and risk management, both within and outside the prison, have impacted upon healthcare provision. Despite some staff testing positive or self-isolating, services have been maintained, including six staff on duty at weekends and bank holidays. The emergency regime introduced to manage COVID-19 infection risks has caused difficulties in maintaining clinics whilst cohorts of men allowed out of cells cannot be mixed. One positive consequence of the pandemic has been the use of online and telephone appointments with consultants for some specialist services.

6.2 Physical healthcare

- 6.2.1 Despite the pandemic and the introduction of an emergency regime, the Board has observed that primary healthcare services were maintained throughout the year.
- 6.2.2 Different working practices were adopted (e.g. enhanced triage arrangements; clinics for long term conditions run by nurses and pharmacists) for GP and dental services. Physiotherapy services ran as close to normal as possible, and whilst optician and podiatry services were curtailed during the year they were working as close to normal as possible at the end of the reporting year.
- 6.2.3 In some areas, waiting times have increased (e.g. non-urgent dental clinic wait times at the end of the year were 20 weeks while non-urgent GP referral wait times were 10-14 days).

- 6.2.4 Following a successful flu vaccination campaign (86% uptake), the roll-out of the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination programme commenced in January 2021 in line with national guidelines.
- 6.2.5 The Board is pleased to note that one of the nursing staff has been awarded Florence Nightingale Nurse of the Year for 2020.
- 6.2.6 HMP Lancaster Farms has no in-patient facilities, though protocols exist for the transfer of patients to the nearby NHS Trust for specific treatments. In 2020, two prisoners were transferred to HMP Manchester for specific health needs.

6.3 Mental healthcare

- 6.3.1 Ten staff are currently employed in this service, totalling less than five full-time posts. During the reporting year, the Board has observed that the service is challenged by long wait times and very high thresholds for transfer to specialist mental health facilities at other prisons.
- 6.3.2 The overall level of staffing for mental health services and the lack of physical space for staff and therapy are matters of concern for the Board: this was evident in the COVID-19 pandemic when, within a few days, most of the team tested positive.
- 6.3.3 The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon mental health services, with emergency and ACCT activities taking precedence during most of the reporting year.
- 6.3.4 The Board has noted good liaison activities between the mental health services and the prisons or other criminal justice services from which prisoners are transferred.
- 6.3.5 During the reporting year, numbers of incidents of self-harm remained high, averaging around 30 per month, and the Board remains concerned by the level of support for these prisoners. The Board recognises that a significant number of self-harm incidents arise from a small number of prisoners, but equally, remains concerned that additional resources or strategies are not available to reduce further and/or faster the incidents of self-harm among those prisoners. The impact on prisoners of the absence of effective strategies to reduce self-harm (either within this establishment or by transfer to specialist mental health facilities) is alarming.
- 6.3.6 The Board is pleased to note that arrangements are in place for Survivors Manchester to provide therapy for trauma for victims of abuse.
- 6.3.7 The Board welcomes the forthcoming installation of in-cell telephony as this will help facilitate contact between prisoners and health services.

6.4 Social care

- 6.4.1 Whilst there are some specialist residential facilities and links with Lancashire County Council, there has been little need to call in outside agencies to provide social care for prisoners at HMP Lancaster Farms.
- 6.4.2 The Board notes that in some cases, peer support appears to work relatively well and both physiotherapy and occupational therapy provision supports those in need of social care at the prison.
- 6.4.3 The Board has raised concerns (early in the reporting year) regarding access to wheelchairs: whilst there is one wheelchair available for emergency use only, the delay in sourcing individual wheelchairs (up to 15 weeks) is excessive and unacceptable. This situation directly impacts on the fair treatment of prisoners with reduced mobility.

6.5 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

- 6.5.1 All wings have an outside area with gym equipment which was available and to some extent extended following the introduction of the emergency regime. Prisoners stated that they had the opportunity for a daily period of outdoor exercise, however the prison was slow to accommodate those prisoners unable to access the designated outdoor area due to disability, and one prisoner told the Board he had not been able to access the outdoors for a period of three months. For a brief period during the more relaxed regime in the wider community, the indoor circuits programme was given the go-ahead in December, which enabled exercise to be undertaken in any weather conditions.
- 6.5.2 Following the introduction of the emergency regime, the majority of prisoners were allowed out of their cells only in separate cohorts, for two periods each day. These times were used for exercise, recreation, showers and telephone calls. Time out of cells for prisoners in the reverse cohort wing was generally less and was dependent on the numbers in each particular cohort. Between mid-March and mid-September prisoners were in their cells for around 22 hours a day. Prisoners were generally understanding of the changes necessary due to the pandemic and appreciated the frequency of notices from the Governor informing them of changes to the regime, but the Board recognises the potential impact on prisoners' mental health and is disappointed that other measures could not be found, across the prison estate, to support more time out of cells whilst managing COVID-19 infection risks.
- 6.5.3 The gym offers Active IQ level 1 basic which if successfully completed secures entry to level 2 leading to a recognised qualification in gym instruction. Entry to gym courses is dependent on the successful completion of a level 1 Maths and English test. The gym was closed from March to October. From late October 2020, all prisoners were offered two half hour sessions of sports hall activities per week, with a maximum of 24 per session. Prisoners referred by healthcare were able to access more sessions.

6.6 Drug rehabilitation

- 6.6.1 Drug rehabilitation services were significantly affected by the changes to regime that were implemented to manage COVID-19 risks within the prison.
- 6.6.2 The introduction of specific wings, prior to the pandemic, for the provision of drug rehabilitation, including methadone clinics, had been relatively successful but these activities have been impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks on those wings, resulting in delays to some clinics and the provision of drug rehabilitation services.
- 6.6.3 Whilst the Board recognises the immense difficulties arising during the reporting year, improving access to drug rehabilitation services in the coming months, to match similar services that would be available in the community, should be a priority for the prison's focus on resettlement and preparation for release.

6.7 Soft skills

- 6.7.1 The Board recognises the massive impact on 'soft-skill' opportunities for prisoners during this reporting year, due to COVID-19 restrictions and praises the efforts made to provide opportunities to connect prisoners with their families at this very challenging time.
- 6.7.2 It has been the first time that Lancaster Farms has made no submissions for the Koestler award. However, through the excellent work of the education department, 20 pieces of work have been submitted to the NOVUS exhibition at Liverpool Tate Gallery.
- 6.7.3 The Shannon Trust staff survey in December 2020 reported that around 50% of prisoners need help with reading. The Board has observed that an adequate number of mentors exist and prisoners in need of support are identified through their key worker and through the educational assessment process during induction.
- 6.7.4 The Board notes a range of other initiatives within the prison such as the Play List Project, organised by the Irene Taylor Trust, providing a cycle of different music genres via CDs to around 40 prisoners with worksheets to complete.
- 6.7.5 The Board acknowledges the 'Learning Together' project, a partnership with Lancaster University, which led to 12 prisoners successfully graduating in March 2020, each receiving university credits and offered bursaries for future HE study with the University. This project was regrettably paused during the COVID-19 pandemic.

7 Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

- 7.1.1 As part of the initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the education provider, NOVUS, moved staff offsite, and after a short delay, provided education packs to be delivered and completed in cells.
- 7.1.2 Monitoring by the Board at the early stages of the pandemic suggested that the provision of education in-cell was very problematic and slow in its delivery. In April 2020, 171 packs of work had been delivered with only 18 being marked and returned.
- 7.1.3 During the period April to September 2020, 25% of the prison population did not have a starting point as Mandatory Educational Assessments (MEAs) had not been completed. As a matter of urgency, the prison had to intervene and implement systems to catch-up with MEAs that had not been undertaken by NOVUS. The Board notes with concern that the impact of having no starting point for prisoners' educational assessments may be significant for their rehabilitation and progression.
- 7.1.4 The disruption to the education provision has had a significant impact on prisoner engagement. For example, there were just 66 and 101 engagements with prisoners in November and December 2020 respectively (out of a prison population of up to 500). The Board has been advised that the impact of isolation on prisoners' ability to complete work has meant that the pace of completing packs has been slower than anticipated.
- 7.1.5 Minutes from wing representatives' meetings confirm the anxiety among prisoners during the periods of lockdown in relation to the lack of activities. The Board has been concerned throughout this time about the negative impact of isolation and boredom on the mental health of prisoners. The Board is disappointed that little has been done to incentivise participation in education during the pandemic.
- 7.1.6 The Board understands that NOVUS are operating under a 'costs plus model' for education provision, meaning that the prison asks of NOVUS what it wants to be delivered and that must be done with the staffing that is in place. This appears to be a very restrictive practice in terms of wider opportunities for prisoners.
- 7.1.7 Since the return of NOVUS staff into the prison, the difficulties associated with managing infection risks whilst offering face-to-face support to prisoners appear to have resulted in continued slow progress towards restoring high levels of completion, marking and returning of educational materials by prisoners.

7.1.8 The Board is pleased to note that the library continued to provide resources on all units following the introduction of the emergency regime, although provision varied in quality.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, all vocational training and work ceased other than a small numbers of places available within the areas of waste management, kitchen, packing and wing cleaning. Later in the year, the prison was able to offer an increased number of workplaces within waste management, gardens, dry lining, and the electrics and industrial cleaning workshops were re-opened.

7.2.2 The anxiety of men in relation to their employment has been raised at wing representatives' meetings, with concerns or comments such as "When is there going to be more work?" and "We have been without work for too long now" recorded.

7.2.3 By mid-December 2020, there were 144 part-time and 105 full-time spaces for work and vocational training available, though only 80 and 70, respectively, of these places were filled.

7.2.4 Some vocational courses were delivered in cell via paperwork covering theoretical aspects of the course. The Board praises the creativity and hard work of the instructors to progress prisoners on courses but raises concerns regarding the catch-up that will be required to cover the practical elements of courses.

7.2.5 The Board notes the significant impact on learning outcomes for prisoners in terms of course completions and qualifications gained, with just 12 prisoners completing and passing the rail track course and nine completing and passing the dry lining course, though the Board is pleased to note that 10 prisoners have gained employment within the rail industries having completed the course at Lancaster Farms.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The Board has received a number of applications, heard frequent complaints from prisoners and has itself raised concerns about the impact of the lack of offending behaviour programmes on prisoners' progress towards re-categorisation. The Board also notes the significant decline in numbers of prisoners being re-categorised to category D during this year. Whilst the measures to manage the COVID-19 infection risk were undoubtedly the main or even sole reason for the cessation of offending behaviour programmes, the Board regrets that additional resources were not made available to support the continuation of at least a reduced number of courses with appropriate PPE and social distancing.

7.3.2 The Board received a number of applications from prisoners recently re-categorised from category D to category C, and has raised concerns

regarding the extent of communication or explanation offered to these prisoners.

- 7.3.3 The Board notes that there has been a backlog of entries to the offender assessment system (OASys) during the year.
- 7.3.4 The prison held around 45 men with IPP/life status at the end of the year, but is advised that, as part of discussions about offender flow, new strategies will be implemented to ensure prisoners are allocated appropriately to the correct establishment based on their needs. The Board is hopeful that this strategy will have a positive impact for those prisoners.
- 7.3.5 The Board has observed good links between the offender management unit (OMU) and those responsible for probation and parole both internally and externally. After the introduction of the emergency regime, face-to-face contact between prisoners and the OMU has been replaced by contact via video links and mail applications, with a target of three-month catch-ups by letter or phone. The Board has observed instances of good communications between OMU and key workers during the year.

7.4 Family contact

- 7.4.1 The Board notes with concern that due to measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, family contact has significantly reduced during this reporting year.
- 7.4.2 Visits ceased in March 2020, only becoming available again for a short period, with a range of restrictions in place to control virus-transmission risks. The introduction of a tier-based system of restrictions within the community in May 2020 resulted in travel restrictions for many people in parts of the North West which further curtailed visits for many prisoners. The subsequent status of the prison as a COVID-19 “Outbreak Site” is the number of COVID-19 positive prisoners increased led to a further cessation of in-person visits. Whilst recognising the need to respond to the pandemic, the Board notes the severe impact on prisoners of being unable to meet with close friends and family during this period.
- 7.4.3 As noted in paragraph 5.1.3 above, prisoners have been limited to 10-15 minutes of time per day on wing telephones, so that access to phones during short times out of cells is fairly distributed among the men. This has caused serious difficulties for men seeking telephone contact with families at a time when visits were (mostly) not allowed. The Board regrets that urgent action was not taken to install additional phones during this pandemic.
- 7.4.4 Prisoners are able to send mail out of the prison, however the sending of paper mail has also been affected by the pandemic with some mail being sequestered for 72 hours prior to sending.
- 7.4.5 Some months after the cessation of in-person visits, a number of laptops became available for video call visits, known as ‘Purple Visits’. Whilst the

Board welcomes this innovation at a time when in-person visits were not available, we were concerned by the length of time before Purple Visits became available at HMP Lancaster Farms. Furthermore, the Board has raised concerns about the technical difficulties that arose from security features within the video calls that on many occasions led to Purple Visits being disrupted or curtailed. A more fundamental limitation concerns the need for relatives to have a good standard of digital skills and internet access to utilise the system. The Board also noted the lengthy delay in replacing laptops following damage or faults.

- 7.4.6 Outside of pandemic restrictions, POPS (Partners of Prisoners) deliver visitor services and support family contact. Lancaster Farms has a designated play area where prisoners are able to interact with their families in a more comfortable setting.
- 7.4.7 The Board anticipates that Partners of Prisoners (POPS) will resume support for visitor services. Where possible, senior managers and the chaplaincy work well together to manage the external visits reception and the internal visits hall, including a café and creche. The family forums have, in the past, been invaluable, although the Board believes that family days should be offered more often, and to more participants.

7.5 Resettlement planning

- 7.5.1 As with almost every other area of the prison's operations, the Board has observed serious disruption to resettlement planning during the year as a direct consequence of measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 7.5.2 Due to difficulties facing the Board's monitoring activities this year, the Board has not accessed detailed data regarding the proportion of prisoners who were released to settled accommodation or into employment on release, or those that took up substance misuse service referrals in the community or had secure ongoing financial arrangements and bank accounts.
- 7.5.3 There were no ROTL placements from HMP Lancaster farms during this reporting year, and the Board continues to note with concern that this is regrettable given the supposed focus of the prison on resettlement, but does note the special factors associated with the pandemic that would have affected suitability for ROTL during this year.
- 7.5.4 The Board regrets the relative lack of assistance that prisoners receive to help them become more familiar with ICT and, more generally, the digital environment, including assistance with applications for housing benefit and undertaking job searches. The joint NOVUS and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service self-assessment report and Board observations suggest that realistic employment opportunities or work simulation opportunities remain limited.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members ^(*) at the start of the reporting period	10 (4 members resigned during the year)
Number of Board members ^(*) at the end of the reporting period	8 (2 members joined during the year)
Total number of visits to the establishment	42 (rota visits, in-person)
Total number of segregation reviews attended	2 (in-person)

(*) Numbers of Board members at the start and end of the year include one member on sabbatical throughout the year.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including cell quality and cell allocation	4	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	5	8
C	Equality and diversity	8	9
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	6	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	16	9
E2	Resettlement issues	0	3
F	Food and kitchens	3	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	24	32
H1	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	41	39
H2	Property within this establishment	4	5
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	8	7
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	28	35
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10	12
K	Transfers	32	13
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	26	23
	Total number of applications	215	210



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