



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Huntercombe

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

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

2.1 HMP Huntercombe is a category C prison for foreign national adult men. It stands in a rural location with limited access to public transport outside the village of Nuffield between Reading and Oxford.

2.2 Its certified normal accommodation is 460 and its operational capacity is 480 split between seven residential units with a mixture of single and double cells and a segregation unit comprising five cells and one special accommodation cell. Huntercombe was originally built as a POW camp during WWII, since which time the buildings have been added to and extended in order to provide a secure and improved environment for its present use.

2.3 The prison complex includes educational facilities, an indoor gym, an outpatient healthcare facility, workshops, gardens, sports pitch, exercise yards, a visits hall, a cafeteria run by prisoners and a multi-faith sanctuary.

2.4 Education is provided by Milton Keynes College (MKC) and healthcare by Practice Plus Group (PPG – formerly Care UK Healthcare). Further healthcare providers are listed in paragraph 6.1.2. General Maintenance is provided by Government Facility Services Ltd (GFSL) which has an office and Works hub on site.

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

3.1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and the drop in Board members from seven at the beginning of the reporting year to five at year end (the complement is 12) had a detrimental impact on the Board's ability throughout 2020 to monitor the prison and to formulate this annual report – see section paragraph 8.

3.1.2 From the time of the national lockdown in March to the end of the reporting year, only two members of the Board visited the prison where they would, when possible, visit the segregation unit, attend the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) and challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) meetings, together with some enhanced and good order or discipline (GOoD) reviews and would also follow up applications to the Board. Between January and March, the Board received 34 applications whilst from the commencement of lockdown to the end of 2020 only a further 41 applications were received.

3.1.3 The introduction of the national lockdown and the consequential Prison Service national regime in March 2020 resulted in the instigation of a reverse cohort unit for new arrivals for 14 days (paragraph 4.4.3). The new arrivals were temperature checked at reception and to maintain continuity on the isolation landing they were received in batches in order that they would enter and exit the isolation period as an entire group. Precautions of this nature, together with social distancing and multiple hand sanitising stations, proved efficacious and between 26 April and the beginning of November the prison remained completely free of Covid-19.

3.1.4 The Board commend the efforts of the SMT, healthcare team and staff at Huntercombe for the consistent and effective management of the pandemic, which enabled the prison to be allowed to drop to Level 3 of the national regime in July, which in turn resulted in some greater flexibility around allowing the men to attend the gym, some faith services and other limited out of cell activities.

3.1.5 Towards the end of the reporting year the level had to be raised again due to a second outbreak within the establishment which ended at year end.

3.1.6 The drop in referrals to the independent adjudicator is attributed to the cessation of mandatory drug tests (MDT) taking place at the commencement of the national regime in March.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The Board considers that the prison is a safe environment for prisoners.

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

From the evidence collated within this report, Covid-19 has had a major impact on the administration and running of the regime within the prison for all but the first quarter of 2020. The Board believes that through the leadership of the Governor, the execution by the senior management team (SMT), wing staff and all employed within

the establishment, prisoners are treated fairly and humanely in so far as the restrictions of the national regime have allowed throughout the reporting year.

The Board believes the lack of in-cell telephony throughout the prison as highlighted in paragraph 5.4.1 is a matter of unfairness for the prisoners.

The Board has raised concerns with the SMT and Home Office immigration enforcement (HOIE) regarding the increase in numbers throughout the year of time-served prisoners held under immigration powers (IS91s) – see paragraph 7.3.2.

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

As reported in section six, outbreaks of the pandemic were dealt with speedily as they occurred. At end of the reporting year a good start had been made to the vaccination programme within the prison.

As has happened in the rest of England the prison had encountered delays in getting routine appointments and care delivered, but at the year-end there had been progress on working towards reducing the backlog.

The Board was pleased to note that the nursing staff vacancies had been filled and induction undertaken.

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

A resettlement budget has finally been awarded to the prison and the Board looks forward to monitoring the impact this will have in the future on the resettlement prospects of prisoners – see paragraph 7.5.1.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

To review the charges for prison telephone calls across the prison estate to reduce the unfair discrepancies that exist, and approve the installation of in-cell telephony in Huntercombe – see paragraphs 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

With Home Office colleagues, to resolve the issue around prisoners held under immigration powers post-sentence – see paragraphs 7.3.2. and 7.3.3.

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

To introduce or renew practical and vocational contracts so that meaningful training and work that carries a recognised international qualification can be achieved – see section 7.2.

To ensure that issuing prisoners with an IS91 notification operates in accordance with the time limits set out in the service level agreement (SLA) with Home Office immigration enforcement (HOIE) – see paragraph 7.3.4.

The Board has concerns that the lack of progression to open prison conditions is both discriminatory and unfair – see paragraph 7.3.7.

### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

To continue the implementation of the incentives and earned privileges framework (IEP) introduced in January 2020 – see paragraph 5.6.1.

To investigate the possibility of improved technology across the prison to facilitate meetings and monitoring by the IMB in the event of a further lockdown situation.

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

3.4.1. Budget, staff and arrangements for resettlement in place by the end of the reporting year – see paragraph 7.5.1.

3.4.2 Kitchen contract awarded and new build to commence in Spring 2021 – see paragraph 5.1.4.

3.4.3 Gym flooring renewed and equipment now provided under a rental contract by Origin Fitness – see paragraph 5.1.5.

3.4.4 Backlog of OASys reduced to 26 at end of year compared to 184 in January 2020 – see paragraph 7.3.6.

3.4.5 The initiative taken by the Governor to immediately roll out the availability of video calls at the onset of the national lockdown enabled prisoners to make over 4000 video calls by the end of the reporting year – see paragraph 7.4.2.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

The Board is satisfied that the prison is operated safely and is pleased to report that there were no serious incidents during the reporting year. The breakdown of key metrics recorded by the prison are:

Measure	2020	2019	% change
Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork documents (ACCT)	115	127	-9.4
Violent incidents	70	87	-19.5
Discrimination Incident Report Form (DIRF)	44	38	+15.8
Adjudications	694	1141	-39.2
Adjudication referrals to Independent Adjudicator (IA)	23	173	-86.7
Control and Restraint (C&R) – number of times used	122	125	-2.4
Property complaints to prison (external)	63	54	+16.7
Property complaints to prison (internal)	36	44	-18.2

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

4.1.1 The number of men received into and transferred out of Huntercombe during the reporting year has been very substantially reduced as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and this will continue into 2021.

4.1.2 In reception, holding rooms are used to maintain social distance and masks and sanitising gel are provided. Immediate needs such as language support are identified and a comprehensive assessment process is undertaken.

4.1.3 The prison went into full lockdown on 24 March, with a consequent reduction in receptions and transfers; the prison has continued to be subject to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) guidelines, amended as necessary over the course of the year. Nevertheless, very early on in the pandemic, the conversion of a landing on one of the wings to an isolation unit for the reverse cohort unit (RCU) has enabled the establishment to continue to receive up to 14 men, subject to negative testing prior to arrival and isolation should symptoms emerge.

4.1.4 Formal induction is not carried out on the RCU, instead commencing when the men are allocated to normal location.

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

4.2.1 Despite the continued restricted regime from April to December (reporting year-end) the number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans opened (115) is slightly less than in 2019 (128). This may in part be due to the fact that within two weeks of the nationwide lockdown in March the prison established a series of wellbeing checks to ensure that 100% of prisoners were being seen on a one-to-one basis; these continued for 19 weeks, during which time every man was visited and spoken to at least once weekly to ensure they were not suffering under the national regime (23 hour lock-up).



4.2.2 There were no deaths in custody during the reporting year.

4.2.3 The monthly safer prisons and weekly safety intervention meetings (SPM/SIM) have continued throughout the year, taking place in the visits hall to allow for social distancing. Board members attended these meetings only rarely, but monitoring was undertaken through telephone contact with the safer custody team. Prisoners on open ACCTs are routinely discussed at these meetings. The meeting minutes are distributed to members, providing an opportunity to follow up any concerns.

4.2.4 The Board has found it logistically impossible to routinely attend ACCT reviews either physically, due to social distancing constraints, or remotely i.e. by telephone, but has been able to attend some enhanced reviews. The Board is hopeful that during the next reporting year our physical presence in the prison will allow attendance at ACCT reviews to resume.

### **ACCT Plans opened January to December, 2018-2020**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot	Avg
<b>2020</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>10</b>
2019	11	4	10	12	14	15	9	4	17	8	16	7	127	11
2018	15	3	18	9	6	11	11	11	5	13	11	15	128	10

4.2.5 With regard to prisoners refusing food, the total for the year was 21, the numbers ranging between zero (January/March/April) and six (June). As this is the first year when this Board has collated such statistics the next reporting year will allow for some comparisons to be made.

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

4.3.1 Whilst the prison has continued its policy of zero tolerance of violent incidents, the figures for violence during this reporting year have to be regarded in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regime that has been running since March. Association and movement between wings have been curtailed or severely restricted; workshops, library and gym closed for much of the year and the transfer in of new prisoners reduced. Together, this has left fewer opportunities for the creation of ‘flashpoints’ for violence.

4.3.2 Although the total number of violent incidents over the year was lower than that of the two previous reporting years – and the monthly numbers were consistently small over the latter half of the year – there was a ‘spike’ in May i.e. during lockdown, as seen in the accompanying table. The raised figure was due in part to an incident on one particular wing during which three officers were assaulted.

4.3.3 In June, a prisoner managed to gain access from a communal area to the roof above, remaining there for several hours before agreeing, through negotiation, to come down. He was recategorised and transferred to more secure conditions.

## Number of Violent Incidents January to December, 2018-2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot	Avg.
2020	4	8	7	3	13	7	5	5	5	5	5	3	70	6
2019	3	9	7	6	7	12	9	7	6	8	6	7	87	7
2018	11	6	3	6	6	9	8	14	11	11	5	7	97	8

### 4.4 Use of force

Year	Planned	Spontaneous	Total
<b>2020</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>105</b>
2019	14	111	125
2018	13	78	91

4.5.1 It would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the figures represented above, as this year has seen less movement around the establishment and this in itself has probably contributed to fewer spontaneous restraints. With the Covid-19 restrictions in place, Board members have been unable, as has been possible in previous years, to actively monitor live incidents. However, the insignificant changes in the figures continue to demonstrate that Huntercombe remains a stable environment.

4.5.2 This is the first year for which data on the number of guiding holds is available. We list below the breakdown for 2020.

Full C&R	Guiding Holds	Personal Safety	Handcuffs
41	40	9	15

### 4.5 Substance misuse

4.5.1 Mandatory drug testing (MDT) was suspended at the outset of the national regime.

4.5.2 Prior to the start of the national regime there had been 18 incidences of prisoners placed on Basic due to MDT failures.

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

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

5.1.1 Twenty-six temporary mobile accommodation units (TMAUs) were brought in at the beginning of the pandemic in order to enable the population to be spread out more and reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. These constituted a super-enhanced wing and are used by prisoners who have been carefully risk-assessed due to the relative insecurity of the location of the TMAUs, and this, together with the fall in roll from the maximum capacity of 480 at the beginning of the year to 388 by year end, has helped reduce the number of double cells.

5.1.2 Despite the fact that the number of applications to the IMB has decreased from 155 in 2019 to 75 throughout the reporting year, eight were received concerning accommodation – a drop from 15 in the previous reporting year. Within the prison complaint system 817 complaints were received of which 118 (23.13%) were in this category (paragraph 5.7.1). Of these, 42 relate to single cell requests or moving wings, and 25 were concerns over the national regime imposed due to the pandemic, 17 were received concerning maintenance of the fabric and heating of the prison buildings, with broken windows and window vents being an ongoing lament and beds/bunks no longer fit for purpose. The Board has been unable to evidence whether these issues have been remedied in a timely fashion, due to limited visits to the wings throughout the last nine months of the year.

5.1.3 When able to attend the prison, the Board has continued to find that it is kept in a clean and tidy manner. Monthly decency checks of all cells were suspended at the onset of lockdown and we are informed that cell checks have since been conducted in an informal fashion by wing staff ascertaining that cells are clean and that the fabric of the cells is in a satisfactory working order.

5.1.4 The Board is delighted to report that after several years of reporting that the kitchens were no longer fit for purpose a contract has been awarded to build a new kitchen and it is hoped that the work for this project will start in late Spring 2021.

### **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 With the limited live monitoring the Board has been able to undertake it has been difficult to draw specific conclusions. However, we have been pleased with the support the prison staff have extended to us to enable us, as far as possible, to evidence any concerns we may have. The ability to listen in by telephone to adjudications has allowed us to ensure that we still continue to monitor the efficacy of this process, albeit on a much reduced number of occasions. Unfortunately the visiting Board members have not been able to attend regular adjudications due to the small size of the adjudication room not allowing for the prevailing social distancing regulations, but they have confirmed that the unit continues to be clean and well kept.

5.2.2 The unit has five cells, one of which allows for constant watch to be facilitated and there is a sixth cell for short-term special accommodation. In addition to prisoners on cellular confinement, many of whom are often both challenging and

disruptive, vulnerable prisoners can sometimes be placed in the unit for their own protection until more suitable long-term steps can be taken to relocate them.

5.2.3 It is unusual for Huntercombe to hold a prisoner in segregation for a prolonged period, however one such case arose in November of the reporting year when a prisoner transferred in straight from the CSU of another establishment and refused to go onto normal location. By the end of the year he had spent a total of 123 days in Huntercombe and his previous establishment's CSU. At year end there seemed no easy solution to this situation despite the combined efforts of all staff involved in his case within the prison.

5.2.4 The Board commend the staff who successfully maintain the unit in a safe and decent manner for all prisoners held in segregation, but believe that it is never ideal to locate prisoners on ACCTs within the unit, and that for those with serious mental health issues a better solution should be available to them which Huntercombe is unequipped to provide, rather than prolonged periods spent in the isolated environment of the segregation unit.

### **Adjudications**

Year	Number of adjudications	% change	Number referred to IA
2020	694	-39%	23
2019	1141	+15.5%	173
2018	988	+15.2%	103

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

5.3.1 The key working initiative was working well prior to the national lockdown, but was suspended in March due to the Covid-19 outbreak. This was replaced by wellbeing checks carried out by a member of the wing staff with each man on a weekly basis. Key working was re-established when the prison was allowed to drop to level 3 of the national regime, but had to be suspended once again late in the year when the prison was designated an outbreak site.

5.3.2 In addition to IMB members' own observations, the Board obtained information from equality, Insider and Listener orderlies. We are of the opinion that in the main the staff/prisoner relationships are good and that treatment by staff is generally fair and humane.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 Through the reporting year, and highlighted by the Covid-19 situation and consequent restricted time out of cell, the Board has become aware of prisoners' frustration over access to telephones, the charges levied by British Telecom (BT) and the lack of in-cell telephony.

5.4.2 BT are the suppliers of the telephone facilities at Huntercombe, and at present only the enhanced wing in the prison has in-cell telephony. Until such time as every telephone available to all prisoners throughout the prison is in-cell, the rate BT is charging the men is higher than at other establishments where there is in-cell telephony throughout. The Board considers this to be unfair and would encourage the Minister to enable this disparity to be overcome by reviewing the charges for prison telephone calls across the prison estate in order to reduce the discrepancies that exist, and to approve the installation of in-cell telephony within Huntercombe. Many of the prisoners have transferred to Huntercombe from prisons which are fully covered by in-cell telephones where the charges are considerably less than those charged by BT at Huntercombe. Huntercombe is a foreign national only prison, thus many prisoners need to make calls overseas. These calls are currently charged at between 37 and 60 pence a minute, with no weekend discount for calls made on a foreign national Pin number. In addition, men due to be deported need to make arrangements for their arrival in foreign destinations. The Board believes the charges levied for overseas calls are difficult for many men to meet.

5.4.3 Huntercombe, as a foreign national prison, contains diverse national and ethnic groups, which may also include transgender prisoners, all of whom represent a large variety of different cultural and religious backgrounds, some of which can cause tension amongst the men. Following their discussions with various prison orderlies of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the Board believes the prison handles issues around diversity and equality within the prison well and that staff are encouraged to take these matters seriously.

5.4.4 The prison received 44 DIRF applications during the reporting period, an increase of six over the previous year. The Board received one equality application.

5.4.5 The prison maintains a categorisation of the nature of the DIRF applications and the number upheld. There is no evidence that the DIRF review process is anything other than robust and fair.

Category	Total 2020	Total 2019	Upheld 2020	Upheld 2019
Race	27	26	5	4
Disability	1	1	0	0
Sexual Orientation	6	2	1	0
Religion	7	7	3	3
Gender reassignment	1	1	0	1
Age	1	1	1	0
Unclassified	1	0	0	0
Total	44	38	10	8

5.4.6 The healthcare team were shortlisted in the 2021 national BAME health and care awards in the Health & Wellbeing Advocate of the Year category for the work that has been done with the cohort of men who are cared for at Huntercombe.

5.4.7 The patient engagement leads on site have been working with the EPIC (Empowering People: Inspiring Change) team to complete the equality and diversity

health needs assessment. This is of particular benefit in a foreign national prison. The team are using the outcome to help initiate increased input from the healthcare champions. An example of this is the reception leaflet that is given to inform men on arrival of the way in which healthcare works, what to expect and how to access services which was re-designed by the healthcare champions and is now in use.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The pastoral care team in Huntercombe comprises 12 chaplains representing all faiths, and who provide services, religious teaching and association groups within the prison Sanctuary. Under pre-Covid-19 conditions, due to large numbers, Muslim prayers were held in the main sports hall.

5.5.2 Most of 2020 has been a difficult time in which to exercise this support. However, the chaplaincy has continued to play a remarkably supportive role within the prison. Throughout the full lockdown periods social distancing made this challenging, particularly during the months when the gym was closed, where under normal circumstances Muslim prayers are held. Some form of religious activity was maintained where and when possible in a limited capacity, and when the prison was allowed to move to level 3 of the regime this permitted some ad hoc services to be resumed on a once a month basis for men within the same bubble group.

5.5.3 Praise is due to several of the chaplains, such as the Orthodox (Romanian) and Hindu chaplains who worked extra hours in order to visit men and speak to them in their own languages. The Muslim imams ran ad hoc groups which were important to many of the men, the Roman Catholic priest ran services for both Roman Catholics and Protestants and the Jewish chaplain came in as frequently as possible. All the above was managed despite several of the chaplaincy staff being in the vulnerable group for Covid-19.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes (IEP)**

5.6.1 January 2020 saw the introduction of a new incentives and earned privileges framework which the Board intends to focus on in 2021 due to the fact that full implementation has not been possible throughout Covid-19.

5.6.2 Following the restricted national regime introduced at the end of March and all prisoners having access to televisions, plus an extra £5 telephone credit, men were only placed on the basic level for an initial 3 days, at the end of which they were reviewed and, in most cases, returned to standard IEP level.

All awards at adjudications were suspended for six months.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 The prison received 817 complaints during the reporting year of which 189 (23.13%) were for residential matters; 67 of these were single cell requests, complaints about a cell mate, referring to IEPs and concerns surrounding Covid-19. The Board received 75 applications – see paragraph 5.1.2. A pattern of concern to the Board is the number of prison complaints (54) and applications to the IMB (17)

referring to staff/prisoner/bullying issues. Of the 17 logged by the IMB six were against different members of staff, five were for bullying in previous establishments, three were for prisoner-on-prisoner bullying and the remainder were for feeling unsafe, either on a specific wing or out of cell. The Board feels this is an area that it has not been able to investigate sufficiently during this reporting year due to limited physical contact with prisoners and small numbers on the Board able to enter the prison, however this is an area that the Board will be monitoring in greater depth when conditions permit.

5.7.2 Of the 817 complaints received by the prison throughout the reporting year, 68 were beyond the target response time either by one day or due to weekends or public holidays. One remained outstanding at the end of the year, and this one, together with 37 of the 68, were complaints referred back to prisoners' previous establishments.

5.7.3 Each week throughout the year the prison employed the policy of randomly selecting three complaints addressed by different responders which were supplied to the SMT for quality assurance.

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 The prison received 111 (13.59%) complaints relating to property, 63 with regard to property which had failed to accompany the prisoner or to materialise after their transfer from a previous establishment, and 36 relating to various property issues at Huntercombe. The prevailing theme is one of compensation requests for lost property.

5.8.2 The Board received a total of three applications relating to property during the reporting year.

## 6. Health and wellbeing

### 6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Healthcare at HMP Huntercombe is provided as an outpatient service under contract by Practice Plus Group (PPG), formerly Care UK Healthcare. There is no inpatient provision. All other services are provided by subcontractors to PPG identified on the table below.

#### Services provided

Service (provider)	No. of hours	Frequency	Comments
Audiology (Specsavers)		When requested	
Optician (The Prison's Optician Trust)	16	2 x Monthly	
Dentistry (Time for Teeth)	16	Weekly	2 x days/week.
General practitioner (GP) (PPG)	25	Weekly	Surgeries held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On-call on Tuesday and Thursday. No GP surgeries at weekends
Hepatology (Oxford Health)	4	Monthly	
Physiotherapy (Premier)	12	2 x Monthly	
Podiatry (Premier)	4	1 x Monthly	Nail surgery is carried out in addition to the contracted clinic sessions and additional funding has been requested from the commissioners.
Psychiatrist (Midland Partnership)	4	Weekly	
Psychologist (Midland Partnership)	16	Weekly	2 x days/week.
Sexual health (Oxford Health)	4	Monthly	



6.1.2 HMP Huntercombe was in lockdown for much of the reporting year, restricting the amount of face-to-face care which could be given. As the regime opened during periods between outbreaks, more face-to-face appointments were able to be undertaken, ensuring that those attending the department were being seen within their cohorts. In order to facilitate this the nursing team carried out wing-based clinics where possible so that the sub-contractors who required the use of the equipment within healthcare could coordinate their clinics more easily.

6.1.3 There has not been a Care Quality Commission assessment of provision this year, but an inspection by HMIP in December 2020 reported positively on the healthcare provision in the prison and how the pandemic and outbreaks had been handled.

6.1.4 During the year there have been fluctuating nursing staff vacancies which have been covered by agency staff. Work has been ongoing all year to recruit to the staffing establishment and at the year end all vacancies had been filled with the exception of recruitment of a GP, which is ongoing.

6.1.5 The healthcare assistants and nurses in reception provide point of care testing, chlamydia screening and Covid-19 swabbing for all new arrivals to the prison. The two healthcare assistants that lead on this have won both local and national healthcare hero awards for their work on this project and are now assisting the regional blood borne virus (BBV) lead in sharing their technique with other sites.

6.1.6 A partnership board exists between the commissioners of healthcare, PPG as the provider and the Governor representing the prison and meets quarterly. The IMB is now also invited to attend these meetings to monitor healthcare provision.

6.1.7 PPG had a student associate practitioner from HMP Winchester during the year and this gave staff the opportunity to use their teaching skills, share good practice and also gain ideas from a fresh pair of eyes. The staff are keen to continue this in the future.

6.1.8 PPG recorded 79 concerns/complaints during the year, mainly concerning availability of medicines, and a new medicines management training package is being put in place. There were 11 complaints to the prison and eight applications to the IMB about healthcare.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 The establishment in addition to the head of healthcare is for 6.4 general nurses, 2.7 healthcare assistants, 0.2 dietician, a full-time pharmacy technician and 3.6 administrative staff. The number of staff vacancies in all teams has increased workload but has been covered by agency staff with effective managerial oversight.

6.2.2 Essential services have been maintained by using nurse triage and face-to-face intervention with nurses and GPs. Routine clinics for most services were restored between outbreaks, including the physiotherapist, podiatrist and the dietician, with professionals triaging their referrals remotely to prioritise and address urgent need.

6.2.3 In October the 'did not attend' (DNA) rate for the GP clinics was 10.7% as movement slips were being sent out for appointments and men were reporting that these were not always received or that it clashed with their gym slot. The GPs started to call the wings to access patients on a daily basis which resulted in a decline in DNA rates to 3.4% in Nov and 2.9% in Dec.

6.2.4 Regular dental clinics resumed as soon as they were able to with the dental team having good oversight, prioritising the waiting lists based on clinical need. Urgent care has been available throughout the pandemic. Aerosol generating procedures were restarted in line with national guidance.

6.2.5 Personal protective equipment (PPE) was in good supply and all health staff had received FFP3 face mask fit testing. Emergency equipment was updated in line with current guidance.

6.2.6 The clinical and administrative management of hospital referrals has been good. Many appointments which had been cancelled by the hospital have been rebooked. Patient consultations with community specialists have also been undertaken by telephone.

6.2.7 Waiting times for the dentist and optician have increased due to the cancellation of clinics during the pandemic, but additional sessions were booked to catch up and at all times urgent appointments have been arranged when needed.

6.2.8 Partnership working between the health teams, the prison, Public Health England and NHS England was good. The prison was declared an outbreak site early in the Covid-19 pandemic and again at the start of 2021.

6.2.9 Prisoners presenting with symptoms were managed to national standards, and there were clear pathways for those requiring quarantine and those choosing to shield. The GP identified prisoners who met the shielding criteria. They were seen regularly, given a supply of face masks, and shielding care plans were in place. A separate shielding wing and a protective isolation unit were established. An initial Covid-19 symptom check was carried out by health staff before prisoners entered the reception area.

6.2.10 The latest data for the year in September 2020 showed that 95% of secondary health screens were completed within seven days on the reverse cohort unit.

6.2.11 Wellbeing assessments have continued to be completed, which has been important during longer periods of prisoners being locked up.

6.2.12 HMP Huntercombe would normally have a different topic for health promotion each month, in line with national promotion topics, but this was suspended following lockdown in March for the remainder of the reporting year.

6.2.13 The team has prepared well for the Covid-19 vaccination roll out, ensuring that all the men were fully informed to make a clear decision once they began to be offered the vaccine.

6.2.14 With limited movement around the prison to look at healthcare boards and health promotion material, the focus has been on in-cell material. Information was

provided and the men also received advice from the different teams on site – such as good dental hygiene, dietary advice from the dietician, in-cell activities provided by the physiotherapist and mental health materials, such as sleep hygiene giving advice and guidance to help with sleep issues, stress and anxiety management and general wellbeing.

6.2.15 Most patients on medication received it in possession following a robust risk assessment. Measures were taken to enable social distancing when medication was collected from the healthcare department, with good support from officers. Medicine prescription and supply have been largely unaffected during the pandemic, although there have been delays in patients receiving HIV and hepatitis C medication on time from external sources. This was escalated to commissioners and has been resolved.

6.2.16 The health team works well with the offender management unit to plan the discharge of prisoners being transferred or deported. A pre-discharge health clinic was held a few days before departure and a good supply of medication was given.

### **6.3 Mental health**

6.3.1 The establishment of registered mental nurses (RMN) provided by PPG is 2.2 of which 1.6 posts are filled and the rest covered by agency staff until recruitment is completed. Secondary mental health services and the psychosocial drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) are provided by Midland Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT). MPFT is contracted to provide two RMNs who are in post with the addition of a band 7 team leader from December 2020.

6.3.2 The psychosocial team have carried out individual interventions on the wings which the team felt had enhanced relationships with prisoners and staff. Harm minimisation advice and a variety of self-help guidance were provided. Some groups had restarted between the outbreaks.

6.3.3 The primary and secondary mental health teams are integrated and see patients regularly. A daily allocation meeting which DART workers also attended facilitated prompt triage of referrals and both urgent and routine referrals were seen quickly, including patients with severe and enduring mental health needs. They are managed effectively under the care programme approach (mental health services for individuals diagnosed with a mental illness). The team offer a variety of interventions including interventions based on cognitive behavioural therapy, sleep hygiene and an extensive range of in-cell guided workbooks. A booklet entitled 'Living with Lockdown' which has been translated into Albanian, Romanian, Spanish and Polish provides useful coping strategies.

6.3.4 A psychiatrist continued to deliver one face-to-face session a week throughout the pandemic. It is reported that the team attended all ACCT and segregation reviews and complex case reviews, however there is no data available this year to support this and the Board will work on securing this data during 2021.

6.3.5 There have been no transfers under the Mental Health Act to secure mental hospitals.

## **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 There is a memorandum of understanding with the local authority and Practice Plus Group have been commissioned to deliver social care when needed.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

6.5.1 Prisoners responded positively to the initial Covid-19 lockdown, accepting the limited regime of a short period of exercise in the open air (the gym closed immediately, reopened for a limited period then closed again towards the end of the year, in line with national restrictions) and limited association time on the wing.

6.5.2 Exercise time and access to the gym facilities has been curtailed throughout the pandemic, along with restricted time out of cells. However the gym staff have been working with prisoners in the limited association times providing physical activities in the exercise yards.

6.5.3 The gym equipment is now provided by Origin Fitness and in early 2020 a new floor was fitted throughout the main exercise area. This all serves as an improvement to the situation in the gym reported by the Board in the 2019 report.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 The Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous facilitator was unable to attend the prison during the pandemic. The psychosocial team has set up a postal sponsor service endorsed by the prison which enabled prisoners to write to the facilitator through a secure PO box. This was a helpful initiative.

6.6.2 DART workers completed their induction of new arrivals to the prison on the reverse cohort unit (RCU) and carried out a fuller assessment following the 14-day period.

The team has made literature available to prisoners and staff on all wings for Alcohol Awareness Week and Overdose Awareness Day. Information has been advertised on the Way-out TV channel.

6.6.3 Naloxone – a drug to manage substance misuse overdose – was available on release.

6.6.4 The drug sniffer dog has been in the prison on 201 occasions during the year, which included using the passive dog with visitors and the proactive dog for mail, parcels and search areas.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 Education is supplied by Milton Keynes College (MKC). Throughout the first three months of the year full and part-time courses were available covering English as a second language (ESOL), English, art, hospitality, construction and paints, maths, barbering and IT.

7.1.2 Over the course of the reporting year MKC were pleased to report that despite Covid-19 they did not lose any staff and recruited two new members.

7.1.3 Following the announcement of the national lockdown all educational activities ceased whilst adjustments to service were discussed and agreed. During this period learners were provided with distraction packs which were a wing responsibility and provided by the prison.

7.1.4 MKC created some uncredited work packs/books on particular subjects to support learning until direct contact could resume. Incoming prisoners have had an in-cell induction following their period of self-isolation and initially about 100 prisoners applied to take these courses, however over time these numbers have dwindled. The work packs covered the core subjects but a generic pack covering setting up a business has had to be substituted for the vocational courses usually offered such as barbering, hospitality, paints and construction. The packs have followed the curriculum but there have not been any exams or accreditations, tough certificates of completion were awarded. This may have become a disincentive to prisoners hoping to gain qualifications as uptake numbers for the courses dropped off as the year progressed.

7.1.5 Face-to-face teaching is paramount for those prisoners for whom English is not their first language and this too contributed towards the response to the packs being problematic.

7.1.6 Distance learning was least affected by Covid-19 and overall students were able to continue to work on their projects.

7.1.7 Library services are provided by Oxfordshire County Library Services and were stopped in March at the commencement of the first lockdown. Until the reopening of the library on 1 September 2020, prisoners were able to put in requests for books and DVDs and these were distributed by prison workshop instructors. At the beginning of September the librarian returned and continues to provide a well-supported and varied programme for the prison. Competitions were organised on all the wings to celebrate Black History Month and the winners from each wing put on a show which was judged by a well-known author and attended by HMPPS CEO Jo Farrar and the then Permanent Secretary Mike Driver. In November, the librarian set up a seasonal montage in front of which men could pose for their photograph which they could then send to relatives with their season's greetings. The library also provided facilities for Storybook Dads CD and DVD recordings and a Christmas magazine.

7.1.8 The Shannon Trust reading plan - the Turning Pages programme - has filled a gap between no activity and English as a second language (ESOL) class work and on average 70 learners were participating in daily one-to-one support sessions lasting about 20 minutes. This was suspended during the pandemic.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 No waste management courses were run throughout the reporting year.

7.2.2 Prior to Covid-19, 40 men (20 am and 20 pm) were working in industrial cleaning and were able to complete all the required work and training for the BICs Level 1 qualification. Following lockdown, cleaning duties were confined to individual wings and from necessity became more flexible according to individual wings' needs. Since early October, training for groups of four was taking place, and this remained the standard for the rest of the reporting year.

7.2.3 Social enterprise was introduced towards the end of 2019 and has proved to be a popular and successful workshop which has been able to continue running throughout the year due to outstanding contract and work obligations. Twelve to 15 men were initially employed in this area, producing face masks and other items for HMPPS, however by the end of May the number had dropped to between seven and eight on average.

7.2.4 One of the two garden areas within the prison has been designated as the area for the new kitchen rebuild and thus has not functioned for 2020. The remaining garden ran as usual, weather permitting, and some classroom sessions were commenced prior to lockdown but no qualifications were delivered due to lack of internal and external verifiers under the education framework.

7.2.5 At the commencement of the year, the recycling workshop was producing camouflage netting under contract to the MOD, however there was no qualification offered in this activity. Following lockdown this area closed with no specific timescale in place for it to reopen due to national public service prison industries (PSPI) contracts not yet being reinstated at year end.

7.2.6 Prior to lockdown, the textiles workshop was running with about 12 men producing sweatshirts and face towels for a contract under PSPI. The unit was about to complete a new business plan and was hoping to renegotiate the PSPI contract. The unit remained closed at the end of the reporting year.

7.2.7 Prior to Covid-19, the kitchens employed about 18 workers and there were six to eight servery workers on each of the wings. These have remained consistent throughout the year with each wing now having approximately eight to ten workers engaged daily for time limited sessions to ensure bubble working is adhered to.

7.2.8 Prior to Covid-19, approximately 40 orderlies were employed either part- or full-time in work and educational roles. At the commencement of lockdown only a few were able to continue due to being engaged on essential or critical jobs. Through the last quarter of the year the prison has been able to engage some to support the work of staff.

The previously successful peer advisor scheme was initially suspended at lockdown, but was recommenced at the beginning of May with 16 recruits receiving work packs to learn remotely. This course required 16 weeks to complete, during which time the original number of 16 dwindled to three, of whom two will have left by the end of 2020.

### 7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Throughout the reporting year 268 prisoners were deported from Huntercombe. Of this figure, all but six were within the early release scheme (ERS). This compares with 361 in 2019, the difference being due to the drop in international flights from the United Kingdom following the announcement of the national lockdown in March.

7.3.2 IS91s: During the course of 2020 the number of prisoners issued with an IS91 notification (because they have completed their prison sentence and are now detained under immigration powers) has increased from three in January of the reporting year to 24 by the end of December. Foreign national offenders (FNOs) who have passed their conditional release date (CRD) become eligible for immigration bail, however releases on bail have been adversely affected by the lack of approved and suitable accommodation in the community, which is further impacted by the lack of available spaces within immigration removal centres (IRCs). Thus, many of those who are suitable for an IRC have continued to remain in the establishment. Additionally, there is a lack of spaces within the local prison estate, where those who are unsuitable for an IRC could be held on remand conditions rather than convicted conditions. This has become a matter of concern to the Board. The impact of remaining in confinement for men who are no longer sentenced prisoners is neither fair nor humane and, with few exceptions, creates tensions within the establishment which we witness regularly, and results in various and multiple expressions of frustration and also exacerbates mental health issues, all of which the prison is left to deal with.

The Board believes this situation should be addressed by both HOIE and the MoJ.

7.3.3 The chart below shows the outcome for those FNPs in Huntercombe who have reached their CRD and have been served with an IS91 notification within the reporting year. This does not include the 24 FNPs who remained in the establishment at the end of the reporting year – see paragraph 7.3.2.

	Transfer Locals	Deports	Transfer IRC	Transfer IAC (Court)	Immigration Bail
January	4	1	4	5	0
February	3	1	6	0	0
March	4	0	7	2	1
April	0	2	0	0	7

May	0	0	2	0	4
June	0	1	7	0	8
July	0	1	5	0	6
August	0	0	3	0	7
September	0	0	4	0	12
October	3	0	2	0	9
November	0	0	3	0	15
December	0	0	0	0	13

7.3.4 Under the HMPPS - HOIE service level agreement, the target time for IS91 paperwork to be served is 30 days prior to a prisoner's CRD. However there have been instances in the reporting year when the IS91 notification has been served within one to two days of the CRD which, for many prisoners, can add to their frustration and anxiety.

7.3.5 Staffing issues in the offender management unit reported in our 2019 annual report have largely been addressed and staffing now stands at

Prison offender managers:

Budget:	Actual:
3.5	5.0

Probation officer offender managers

Budget:	Actual:
5	4.0

7.3.6 As a consequence of the improved staffing quota within the OMU the situation of prisoners' OASys has been improved. At the beginning of January 2020 there were 184 outstanding OASys. By the end of 2020 this had been reduced to 26.

7.3.7 At the commencement of 2020 there were eight men eligible for ROTL employed in various of the above. With the announcement of the national lockdown all ROTL placements, except for one man, who was deemed an essential worker due to working in food production, were suspended and cannot be reinstated until restrictions are lifted. 7.3.8 At the end of the reporting year, release on temporary licence (ROTL) placements negotiated by the prison were: 10 for gardening and bee keeping; two ground staff at the local golf course; two in food production; two in a neighbouring National Trust property and a prospective contract with the local municipal recycling centre.



7.3.9 Recategorisation is remarked on in the HMIP scrutiny report (Dec 2020) stating “progressive moves to open conditions were rare.”

7.3.10 Prisoners have raised with the Board their lack of understanding around the issue of being ineligible for a move to a category D/open establishment. The Board understands that this remains a local decision tempered by whether a prisoner is of interest to HOIE in relation to deportation, and that the foreign national prisoner is deemed very low risk. Nevertheless, the Board question that this seems to be a blanket decision that in practice appears to cover all FNPs.

7.3.11 The TMAUs provide similar conditions to a category D open prison, but these do not entirely replicate open prison conditions due to being within a closed prison environment.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 There were no family days in 2020. Social visits were curtailed due to Covid-19 from mid-March until the end of July, when the prison was allowed to drop to level 3 of the national regime, after which they resumed on a limited basis. Each of the seven wings and the segregation unit were allocated one weekend day every four weeks with a maximum of eight prisoners and their visitors on each day. There was not always a large take-up for these days.

7.4.2 However, the successful and popular video calls rolled out immediately by the prison at the commencement of the national regime, and highly praised by the HMIP scrutiny visit in November, have enabled over 4000 video calls to be made by an average population of 420 prisoners.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 A resettlement budget was finally awarded in July 2020 after much lobbying by the Governor and the IMB and this will cover the cost of two officers, two administration staff and a band 6 head of resettlement. Offices and a social area for prisoners have been prepared and set aside for this but at the end of the reporting year the work of this unit had not yet commenced.

7.5.2 When possible through the reporting year, key workers have co-ordinated with prison offender managers (POMs) over resettlement matters due to the budget awarded in October of the reporting year not yet having taken effect.

## 8. The work of the IMB

8.1 Due to the Covid-19 outbreak in March of the reporting year, two members of the Board resigned due to ill health, and of the remaining five, four were unable to attend the prison in person due to various vulnerabilities. A third member resigned in the early autumn.

8.2 Monthly Board meetings were held either remotely by telephone or in the training suite at HMP Huntercombe which is located adjacent to the prison.

8.3 Physical attendance by the Board throughout the year has been extremely limited and largely managed by one member together with a new member appointed in February 2020. No Board member attended the prison throughout the months of April, May and June.

8.4 Remote monitoring continued throughout the year for those members unable to attend in person.

8.5 No applications were received via the 0800 telephone number.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	87

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
C	Equality	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
F	Food and kitchens	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>
H1	Property within this establishment	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>
K	Transfers	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>
	Total number of applications	<b>155</b>	<b>75</b>



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