

# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Rye Hill

**For reporting year  
1 April 2020 – 31 March 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 Rye Hill opened in January 2001 and was operated by Group 4 Falck, which became Global Solutions Limited (GSL) in 2004, on a 25-year contract to the Home Office. In May 2008, GSL was bought by G4S, which took over the running of the prison.

The premises are purpose built, with eight residential units, with a certified normal accommodation of 600, an operational capacity of 625 and a maximum capacity of 664. The prison was previously asked to provide an additional 39 operational spaces, bringing it to maximum capacity; this increase was stated as temporary and has remained in use during the reporting period although it is expected to be cancelled shortly. During the reporting year, the number of prisoners was consistently near to the maximum capacity, ending the year with 656 prisoners. The prison is a category B training prison for people convicted of a sexual offence.

At the end of the reporting year, the prison held 67 prisoners under life sentences; this is only a small change from the 70 held at the start of the year. The number held on an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) decreased slightly, from 27 in March 2020 to 22 in March 2021.

At the end of the reporting period, there were 511 category B prisoners, 143 category C prisoners and one category D prisoner. This large increase in category C prisoners is due to transfers being suspended during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The ethnic breakdown has remained predominantly white, with approximately 80.9% white, 5.9% black, 8.4% Asian and 4.7% others.

Healthcare services are provided by sub-contract to a division of G4S called G4S Medical Services.

The education provider is Novus Foundation for Change.

Catering is provided by Aramark.

Links with the Samaritans are established, together with a Listeners service.

### **3. Executive summary**

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

This report presents the findings of the Board at HMP Rye Hill for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This period coincides with the mandated lockdown to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus and this 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, and ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The Board considers the prison to be a safe environment for all prisoners. Although there have been COVID-19 cases they have been well managed and the spread contained. Clinically vulnerable prisoners have been shielded and no serious illness experienced inside the prison.

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

The Board considers that the treatment received by prisoners has been fair and humane within the restrictions imposed nationally in response to the pandemic. There has been restricted time out of cell and limited access to purposeful activities however efforts have been made via the in-house TV channel, daily briefings and organised activities to mitigate the effect of the restrictions as much as possible.

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

The Board considers that the health of prisoners was well provided for with continued access to healthcare on a par with that provided to the community and a prompt vaccination programme once this was possible. However the Board believes there has been an impact on mental well-being for some prisoners and it is hoped that continued support will be put in place as the return to normal progresses.

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

The Board believes that the national restrictions, although necessary for safety, have materially impacted on the progression of prisoners with sentence types required to prove a risk reduction before release. Of special concern are over-tariff IPP prisoners who have not had access to programmes or education opportunities for nearly a year.

#### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on progression of IPP prisoners has again highlighted the difficulty for those extensively over tariff to gain a successful parole hearing. For a lot of these prisoners the length of time served compared with a

typical determinate sentence for the same offence appears to be very unfair and it is hoped that exceptional proactive support to resolve this situation will be included in the recovery plan.

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

There still remain too many prisoners requiring specialist support for mental health issues not being able to access appropriate places. This applies to both those requiring secure hospital settings and those with a personality disorder diagnosis. Although the moratorium on transfers may account for some delays in transferring this category of prisoners, a bigger cause appears to be the inadequate number of places within healthcare settings and across the estate.

### ***TO THE DIRECTOR***

Although we acknowledge the focus of the prison remains on accepting prisoners requiring accredited programmes, we would like to repeat our encouragement from last year that the list of education courses offered continues to include adequate personal and social development courses that can support progression for the lower-risk prisoners not suitable for accredited programmes.

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

The onset of the national pandemic and subsequent lockdown of prisoners prevented business as usual from taking place and it is difficult to identify progress due to the very untypical year with most activities restricted by COVID-19 protocols and progression impacted. However the establishment introduced a range of initiatives in order to deal with the situation which were reported to receive a significant volume of written support from both prisoners and families. Some of these such as video visits and the in-house TV channel will continue to provide benefit to the prisoners after regimes return to normal. Details of all the initiatives are included in this report (in particular see sections 5.3 and 7.4).

Prior to the pandemic, the establishment had worked to reduce the number of referrals to hospital treatment that exceeded the 18-week time scale, and during lockdown this reduction continued (see section 6.2).

However one high spot was the introduction of PAT dogs during the year which was very well received by the prisoners (see section 5.3).

An expansion of prisoner places was approved during the year with building work due to start in April 2021. This expansion should allow improvements in work locations, healthcare and multi-faith facilities.

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

In March 2020 HMPPS issued the national framework for prison regimes and services which put all prisons into ‘command mode’ and introduced:

1) Restricted regimes to implement social distancing, as set out in the exceptional regime management plan (ERMP)

2) Limited movement of prisoners between prisons,

and

3) A programme of work to compartmentalise the estate to isolate symptomatic prisoners, shield the vulnerable, and quarantine new entrants.

This document also defined the stages by which prison regimes could be opened up while still protecting the safety of prisoners and staff. The table below shows the stages and the time period in which HMP Rye Hill moved between these stages.

Stage	Conditions	Rye Hill Dates
5 Complete Lockdown	<b>Prison</b> as ‘Lockdown’, but with an active outbreak ongoing that is not being contained by level 4. Staffing levels below minimum for the ERMP.	Not required
4 Lockdown	<b>Prison</b> – Significant number of infections within establishment or prison unable to implement compartmentalisation strategy. <b>National</b> – Significant number of establishments with new infections. <b>Community</b> - High levels of community infection and transmission (Alert Level 4/5). Staffing levels able to deliver ERMP.	March – July 2020  Then  November 2020 – April 2021
3 Restrict	<b>Prison</b> - Assessment is that infection levels in the establishment are under control <b>National</b> – Small number of establishments with outbreak control teams in place. <b>Community</b> – At or transitioning to Alert Level 3 (epidemic in circulation) or below. Staffing levels sufficient to deliver activities set out in EDMs for this Stage.	July – October 2020  April 2021 - ongoing
2 Reduce	<b>Prison</b> - No infection present in the prison, or very low levels where spread is contained. <b>National</b> – Infection present only in small number of prisons. <b>Community</b> – At or transitioning to Alert Level 2 (COVID-19 present, but transmission is low) or below. Staffing levels sufficient to deliver activities set out in EDMs for this Stage.	Not yet reached
1 Prepare	<b>Prison</b> – No infection within establishment. <b>National</b> – No known infections in prisons. <b>Community</b> – At or transitioning to Alert Level 1 (COVID-19 not known to be present) Staffing levels near target and sufficient for normal regime delivery	Not yet reached

Each prison had to create and have agreed an ERMP and establish exceptional delivery models (EDMs) for the key aspects of the regime such as education, healthcare, visits etc. The EDM provisions for HMP Rye Hill in each area are noted under the relevant section.

During the initial level 4 lockdown period there was little provision for prisoner testing but prison staff could be referred as a priority at public test sites and this process worked satisfactorily with most results being returned within 48 hours. During the second lockdown testing was much more available and an in-house testing site was set up for regular staff testing. There were no positive results for prisoners inside the prison during the first lockdown period and the incidents of positive results during the second lockdown are noted under section 6: health and wellbeing.

As well as the changes to the prisoners' regime during periods of lockdown, staff procedures were also changed with key individuals such as the Director/Deputy Director never attending the same gathering, most routine work meetings being held using 'Google Hangout' to minimise face-to-face contact and every work space and meeting room having a risk assessment and being allocated a maximum occupancy number. Where possible staff worked on a dedicated unit and were not moved around the prison. However, for certain roles such as security this was not possible.

Staff absences rose during the first period of lockdown, with around 25% of staff testing positive or self-isolating at the worst point. However, once these numbers dropped they did not go up again during the second lockdown thanks to better testing.

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

For a large part of the reporting year no transfers were permitted, to contain the spread of the virus. However starting at the end of July some transfers in were received with between 7 and 12 prisoners arriving every month including during the second lockdown. A system of 'reverse cohorting' was used to isolate the incoming prisoners from the existing population. These reverse-cohorted prisoners were held on Andrews Unit but represented a temporary additional cohort for regimes which meant that, although their regime and entitlements were consistently delivered and they always got some time out of cell, there were days when this time was less than for the other cohorts. However this was rectified early on in the implementation of the first lockdown.

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

At the start of the first lockdown there were 10 open ACCTS. This did increase slightly in April and May but the highest number of prisoners on an ACCT was 14 at the end of May and for most of the reporting period ACCT numbers were below 10.

There were eight deaths in custody during the period, four of which were counted as COVID-19-related deaths as the prisoners had tested positive for the virus prior to their deaths in line with the procedures within the community. Three of those prisoners tested positive whilst in hospital and one tested positive prior to being hospitalised, in line with the procedures within the community.



The Listeners service was stopped during lockdown as prisoners could not visit other cells, however access to the Samaritans via a free call on the in-cell phone was available throughout. Socially-distanced peer group support via PEN and ASSIST continued on the units while there were no positive COVID-19 cases in the prison.

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

Violent incidents were very low during the lockdown periods with a maximum of two serious assaults per month and in three of the months no serious assaults; this was probably due to the absence of free association periods. Although violent incidents remained low overall as the restrictions continued there was a small increase in fights between prisoners sharing double cells. This problem was reviewed and the following actions taken:

- All double cells were equipped with two TVs and two sets of headphones. This allowed prisoners to watch TV programmes of their choice. Headphones also gave prisoners in double cells an element of privacy while using in-cell phones.
- Prisoners in double cells were given the option to be in different cohorts from each other for shower and CMS regime. This allowed cellmates time away from each other.
- It was also acknowledged that a double cell could take twice the length of time to clean compared to a single cell so an additional 20 minutes' cleaning time was allowed.

The prison has also restarted its reward scheme for violence free days and once there have been no violent incidents for 14 days an enhanced meal choice or other reward is arranged. The arrangements about double cells plus the reward scheme seem to have reversed the increase in violence, with February seeing a total of three incidents.

### **4.4 Use of force**

The number of incidents of use of force was lower than previous reporting periods; approximately 17 per month in contrast to 23 a month last year. In general the prison population was compliant with the restricted regime and as violence levels were reduced the need to use force also dropped.

### **4.5 Substance misuse**

The number of mandatory drug test (MDT) failures reported in our monthly report remained low with the main concern being occasional finds of Spice on incoming paperwork or clothing.

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

Instructions on best practice during the pandemic were issued centrally by both the Prison Service (see section 4) and Public Health England. When creating the required EDMs for HMP Rye Hill there were challenges in delivering the best practice demanded by the two bodies with instructions not always co-ordinated. The overall aim of PHE was to put every prisoner in a single cell and restrict their contact when out of cell only to other prisoners of an identical status; this would have provided the highest protection but practically there were not enough single cells. Cells that were available were in large accommodation units that shared facilities, leading to a high potential number of cohorts in each unit and not enough hours in the day to give each group the Prison Service recommended time out of cell.

There were also difficulties in sourcing the number of staff needed at weekends as the normal pre-COVID-19 regime called for 57 PCOs on a working day but only 33 on a weekend day. The COVID-19 regime was the same every day and a working compromise was reached deploying staff differently and using overtime.

Due to these constraints, with the agreement of HMPPS, it was decided to have some of the PHE suggested cohorts housed in small groups throughout the prison rather than in a shared accommodation unit as recommended.

The process by which the staffing profiles for the agreed EDMs were negotiated appeared to be made more challenging due to the prison being privately run and contractual issues having to be considered; but once agreed they did appear to keep prisoners safe and still provide access to the minimum regimes as defined by HMPPS.

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

Compared with previous reporting periods time out of cell was very much reduced. However, it conformed with Prison Service directives (see section 6.5 for details).

Meals were collected from the servery and eaten in cell for non-shielding prisoners. Shielding prisoners had their meals delivered by a PCO. In addition, comfort packs, including biscuits and flavoured water, were distributed to all prisoners every two days. No problems were experienced with food supply and preparation.

All prisoners, whatever their ISP status, had access to a TV except those in the CSU where there are no power outlets in the cells for safety reasons. Extra TV channels were provided, including an in-house controlled channel for movie night showings, exercise routines and pre-recorded religious services.

This use of an in-house channel is intended to remain after the recovery period with a prisoner-staffed media hub proposed to produce content.

No reports have been received this year of difficulties with the CMS machines, the terminals used by prisoners to, eg, order their food, book appointments, and apply for visits.

### **5.2 Segregation**

CSU numbers remained low throughout the lockdown period. At the time of the first lockdown there were nine prisoners including three who had been in the CSU for a prolonged period (275, 232 and 155 days, respectively). During the period between

the two lockdowns, appropriate transfers were found for two of the long-term residents and numbers dropped to two to seven prisoners including only one longer term resident.

During the lockdown period the regime in CSU continued as normal as it already provided socially distanced access to showers and exercise.

A prisoner was transferred in during late 2020 from a high security hospital setting and has had to remain in the CSU as his behaviour would put him and others at risk on normal location. This is not the first instance of a prisoner being discharged from the secure hospital estate back to the prison estate, because he no longer responds to medical intervention but remains in a state of mental health that makes it very challenging for him to live on normal location and which, based on previous cases, could lead to regular prolonged periods in the CSU.

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

It was felt important that all prisoners and their families were kept informed of what was happening in response to the pandemic. The Director and other senior staff recorded a daily vlog which was shown on the in-house TV channel so prisoners were aware of any changes and events. Prisoners' families were sent monthly updates to keep them aware of what was happening in the prison; these included age appropriate letters to children on the visitors' log.

Key worker sessions were suspended during the lockdown periods but welfare checks were made daily by phone. Key worker face-to-face sessions restarted in a socially distanced manner in the period between lockdowns and as the prison moved to level 3 the daily welfare calls have been made optional with very few prisoners asking for them.

The prison introduced the PAT dog scheme to the prison in the months before the first lockdown and this was very well received by the prisoners. Although this had to be suspended during the lockdown periods it has now been restarted and a number of the prisoners have commented on how they enjoy seeing the dogs.

A number of charity events were organised during the year which staff and prisoners took part in together.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The previous structure of bimonthly equality action team (EAT) meetings and regular forums for protected characteristics have not been held while COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Although we have not seen an increase in applications concerning equality issues, the information normally available on numbers of each protected characteristic, and issues that have been raised, does not appear to have been recorded during lockdown. It is hoped the previous framework for monitoring equality issues will be quickly re-established as the prison moves out of lockdown.

There were 68 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted during 2020. This is typical of previous years; however of some concern is that many were not considered DIRFs, only 18 were logged and only four upheld. This could possibly indicate that the reduction in regime led to a lesser need for the process, or that the prisoners do not understand when to use this procedure or, more concerning, that the bar for upholding complaints is very high.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

Face-to-face services were suspended while the prison was in level 4 lockdown; however faith services were recorded and shown on the in-house TV channel. Faith representatives from the chaplaincy continued socially distanced visits to prisoners throughout and provided bereavement counselling. During the second lockdown period the prison also facilitated access to streamed funeral services via Zoom.

There was a limited return to socially distanced collective worship for a period between lockdowns. Numbers were restricted, so for most of the major faith services such as Friday prayers an individual prisoner could only attend every other week.

As part of the activities to mark the start of the first lockdown a number of activities took place, co-ordinated by the chaplaincy:

- A non-religious act of remembrance was held in the gardens and eight rose bushes were planted for the eight residents who had died during the year (not all from COVID-19). A few words were said about each resident, and the bushes were planted by prisoners nominated by staff. The event was videoed and shown on the in-house TV channel.
- Also announced was the beginning of a flower-planting project. The chaplaincy offered each prisoner the opportunity to come separately into another area of the gardens to plant a flower in memory of someone. They were able to write their memories or a memorial message onto a bio-degradable circle of paper that they buried with the plant.
- A day of reflection was held when the chaplaincy led a minute's silence, coordinated and broadcast over the prison Tannoy at lunchtime. Staff socially-distanced along the main movement route to mark this minute. A video of the act of remembrance together with a resumé of the other notable events of the year was broadcast. At 5pm the chaplaincy led a minute's applause over the Tannoy, for staff and residents to express their gratitude for all key workers. An enhanced meal choice was also provided for staff and residents.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes (IP)**

The changeover to ISP from IEP was not fully in place at start of lockdown and there have been some issues with prisoners, and some staff, not fully understanding the new scheme. Staff were issued with training material but due to lockdown there have been fewer challenge conversations than the warnings that were previously given and in March 2021 there are proposals to relaunch the scheme with additional training.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The number of complaints only increased slightly during the COVID-19 restrictions with an average of 140 Comp1 complaints being received per month (compared with 117 per month last year). The peak number (176, compared with a peak of 197 last year) were received during the month when restrictions were being lifted and may have been an indication of the uncertainty felt by prisoners at this time. The most common category was again residential although the specific topic of the complaints was very varied. Handling of complaints was timely and not considered to be an issue.

## **5.8 Property**

Due to a reduction in transfers there have been fewer problems with lost property but there have been issues with purchases from approved suppliers as the volume of purchases increased significantly during lockdown and this led to delays in approving orders and distributing received goods. This can be seen in the number of complaints submitted – only 9% of complaints being about property but 40% of these specifically about orders.

## **6. Health and well-being**

From the start of the first lockdown to the end of October there were nine confirmed COVID-19 positive staff cases but there were no prisoner cases. On the weekend of 1 November 2020 two prisoners were identified by healthcare as displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and after testing were confirmed positive. A track and trace exercise was completed and it concluded that the most likely cause of infection was a member of staff assisting one of the prisoners during a Purple Visits setup.

At this point the prison stopped some of the level 3 activities such as attending workshops. Initially there were two units with suspected cases and these were locked down and daily updates were given to all prisoners. Over the lockdown period further cases were discovered via mass testing of units and where exposure was suspected these prisoners were put into isolation. By February there had been some cases on half the accommodation units but lockdown measures prevented widespread infection and all prisoners recovered. In March 2021 it was confirmed that the prison was again COVID-19 free and plans were put in place to start moving back to level 3. A vaccination programme was conducted in parallel to the community programme and by the end of the reporting period 319 prisoners, almost 50%, had been vaccinated. Thirty-one declined but of these 12 subsequently accepted a vaccination.

During the periods at level 4 regime there were 43 prisoners recommended to shield based on NHS advice. As well as those vulnerable to COVID-19 a number of the shielding prisoners already had life limiting health issues and during the lockdown period there were very difficult decisions to make about whether it was safer for these prisoners to remain in the prison but not have the expert nursing care or be transferred to hospital where they would be initially managed alongside possible COVID-19 patients until they could be tested. Regrettably two prisoners transferred to hospital with serious health complaints went on to catch COVID-19 and one died.

During the peak of the first lockdown access to NHS services was severely limited (as was the case in the community). There were two incidents of specific concern: one prisoner that medical staff stated should be hospitalised refused to go once told he would initially be put on a COVID-19 ward; another patient needed kidney dialysis and this was not available because the hospital was not able to staff routine care and he was not considered an emergency. However the prison and NHS did facilitate four emergency admissions during the April/May/June lockdown period. During this period there were 25 days of bed watches putting additional strain on staff availability.

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

The approach to accessing healthcare services had to be changed during lockdown but it was possible to continue GP and primary mental health services. However services such as dental, physiotherapy, optician and similar clinics were suspended other than for access to emergency treatment. We received no specific complaints about healthcare availability.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

There were some issues with medication distribution as this initially needed to be done at the cell door, meaning it took more staff and time, but these problems were resolved and as soon as level 3 was approved prisoners returned to collecting medication at the meds hatch.

Prior to the pandemic, the Board noted that there had been extensive work completed to reduce the number of referrals to treatment that exceeded the 18-week time scale. During the pandemic, work with the local hospital and the on-site healthcare team managed to continue this reduction even though access to most outpatient services was suspended for much of the year. Emergency admissions to hospital continued as needed through the lockdown period. Hospital escorts dropped to an average of 21 a month during the first lockdown period from the previous figures of around 100 a month, though hospital appointments attended did begin to increase later in 2020 increasing to around 40 a month and had climbed to 60 a month by March 2021.

## **6.3 Mental health**

Access to primary mental health nurses continued during lockdown but access to external services such as in-reach and psychiatry was difficult to facilitate. This improved later in the year.

## **6.4 Social care**

Access to social care from the outside provider continued for six prisoners with the use of PPE. Unfortunately one of the carers tested positive for COVID-19 necessitating the isolation and testing of these six prisoners. However, none tested positive.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

Each unit had four main cohorts (plus any shielding / reverse cohorting groups) so around 15 prisoners at a time were unlocked with strict social distancing rules operating. Cleaning was conducted between cohorts. Prisoners that were not self-isolating or shielding collected their own meals from the servery with servery worker numbers reduced to allow social distancing. Laundry was collected and delivered to cell doors.

During level 4 lockdown daily exercise of at least 30 minutes plus 15 minutes for cell cleaning time and showers was available daily.

During the periods at level 4 regime there were 43 prisoners recommended to shield based on NHS advice. There was some difficulty as the number of shielders did not match the capacity of any accommodation unit so they had to share a unit with non-shielding prisoners and be managed as a separate cohort. This put restrictions on the amount of time available for regimes. As shielders could not be separated into their own unit a decision was made to allow them to remain in their current cell so all units had to schedule regimes for a shielding cohort. Some shielding prisoners were in a double cell with a carer/friend and it was decided that, if both prisoners wished, the carer was allowed to shield as well rather than move.

The IMB spoke to the majority of shielding prisoners via in-cell telephones during July/August 2020. They reported that they were happy with their treatment and had

received the promised regimes. One prisoner did comment that as he had refused exercise so often the staff stopped asking him but did arrange exercise for him if he used his call bell and requested it. One commented that he preferred the shielding regime to his normal regime as he felt safer being out on the quieter unit.

After the regime opened to level 3, prisoners were given the options to remain on the shielding regime or return to the main cohorts; most chose the latter.

During the lockdown period there was no access to the gym but exercise-based workouts were available in the exercise yard and 'walking clubs' run for different cohorts. In addition a number of 'Lockdown Games' were organised to encourage prisoners to take part in exercise events.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Face-to-face drug and alcohol treatment (DART) services had to be suspended for the lockdown periods; however DART staff could contact the prisoners on their in-cell phones. While the prison was in level 3 a small number of prisoners were able to return to work in the DART gardens. It is not anticipated that DART services can return to their previous approach until the prison has approval for level 2.



## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

There were concerns about provision of education at the start of the lockdown period. Later a change of management by the education provider introduced a new approach and a monthly learner voice survey to try and identify issues.

Initially the education department provided distraction packs that were not always tailored to prisoners' levels or courses. This improved as better processes were put in place and workbooks became more tailored and explanatory videos were broadcast on the in-house TV channel. No face-to-face teaching occurred and prisoner mentors handed out and collected work, but marking and feedback was not always received. At the end of the reporting period prisoners are returning to their course classrooms and sitting exams they have missed out on during the lockdown periods.

Library visits were suspended but books could be ordered for delivery to cells. This was performed by a prisoner orderly accompanied by a PCO rather than the librarian. The librarian also organised regular reading of stories and poetry on the in-house TV channel.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Although workshop attendance was suspended during the level 4 lockdown, and the number of unit workers unlocked had to be restricted to support social distancing, all prisoners continued to receive their normal wages even though they could not work. There was some opportunity for in-cell work but this was limited. There was a limited return to workshop attendance during the July to October period but this was for a small percentage of workers because they still needed to socially distance and remain in their cohorts for regimes. Plans for level 3 lockdown in April 2021 will see a phased approach to increasing workshop attendance.

Vocational training was suspended during lockdown other than limited unit work and kitchens.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

There were restrictions on the activities of the offender management unit during the periods of lockdown with only re-categorisation and some sentence planning for prisoners close to parole hearings being carried out.

In spite of these restrictions 811 re-categorisation reviews were held during 2020 and 88 prisoners were awarded their category C status.

Most programme activities were suspended under level 4; however five prisoners were allowed to finish their programmes as one-to-one sessions. For the period between the two lockdowns, programmes continued as one-to-one sessions but groups of three with social distancing were also permitted. This has inevitably reduced the number of prisoners able to complete programmes, however 65 did successfully complete a treatment programme in 2020.

This restriction on programmes has especially impacted on IPP prisoners and others close to a parole date who need to show risk reduction.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

Face-to-face social visits were suspended during periods of level 4 lockdown but were restarted in August and September with everyone wearing masks, and screens separating prisoners from visitors. The number of visitors was strictly limited to ensure social distancing in the visits hall. Face-to-face visits were suspended again when positive cases were identified in November 2020 but were due to recommence in April 2021.

During the lockdown periods, regular letters from the prison were sent to families letting them know what was going on in the prison to keep their relative safe. Prisoners could also call approved numbers at any time via the in-cell phones (other than those in the CSU who had daily access to a phone). All prisoners got £5 a week PIN credit and the drawdown limit was increased to £30 so they could top this up from their earnings.

The online visits facility Purple Visits became available from August 2020 and capacity has now increased with current capacity exceeding take-up.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

No prisoners at Rye Hill were eligible for the HMPPS Covid-19 temporary release scheme. Details were gathered but the nature of their offences excluded them.

There have been 31 releases direct from Rye Hill during the period, a big increase on the 20 last year and concerns about finding accommodation continue, with one elderly prisoner only having accommodation identified within days of release. This increase in releases may have been partly due to the difficulty in transferring prisoners around the estate but the Board remains concerned that the arrangements with the Probation Service and release support organisations are still not working well in spite of efforts by Rye Hill staff.

## 8. The work of the IMB

Visits to the prison were suspended in late March and restarted briefly between the end of July through to October. Visits were then suspended again for the second lockdown. During these periods Board meetings and catch-up meetings were held via Zoom.

During the first half of the year three out of four recently-appointed members decided not to continue on the Board, one as she was from Portugal and choose to return to stay with her family during the pandemic.

Initially difficulties were experienced accessing paper applications as the Board could not visit to physically collect them and there was reluctance by the prison senior management team to post them. However the Board became involved with the new 0800 application line launched by the Secretariat and, following advertising to prisoners via a letter and labels attached to the red boxes, this has been well used.

Five new recruits had been interviewed just before the first lockdown and, following some difficulties with the new online DBS processes, four were security cleared and appointed. Three have so far started and have made initial visits to the prison. Zoom meetings were used to provide some training until prison visiting returned to normal levels, although some visits have started at the beginning of March 2021.

Fewer applications than previous years have been received. This may have been due to the difficulties with paper applications before the 0800 line was launched. The changes to topic categories for the applications are likely a reflection of the changes in regimes i.e. no transfers reduced property from other establishment queries whereas concerns about sentence planning and progression increased due to services being suspended.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7, including 4 members in induction
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8, including 4 in induction
Total number of visits to the establishment	45 due to COVID restrictions
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Very few due to COVID restrictions

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	14	14
B	Discipline, including adjudications, ISP, sanctions	20	6
C	Equality	8	9
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	14	4
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	11	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	11	8
F	Food and kitchens	0	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	25	13
H1	Property within this establishment	21	16
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	18	0
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	12	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	16	24
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	44	49
K	Transfers	1	2
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	33	12
	Total number of applications	<b>230</b>	<b>169*</b>

\* Please note, of the 169 applications received, 8 covered more than one category area; therefore, the category totals exceed the overall total number of applications.



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