



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Holme House

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

Published August 2021



Contents

Introductory sections 1 - 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Executive summary	6
Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and Humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	17
7. Progression and resettlement	21
The work of the IMB	26
Applications to the IMB	27

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 Holme House is a category C training and resettlement prison, holding convicted adult male prisoners (aged 21 and over), and a small number of young offenders (aged 18 to 21). It is part of the Tees and Wear Prison Group, together with HMP Durham, HMP Kirklevington Grange and HMP/YOI Deerbolt. The majority of the prisoners are from the local region, with a small number from further afield. Most prisoners arrive from HMP Durham.

2.2 The operational capacity is 1,210 with a certified normal accommodation (CNA) of 1,036. During the year the numbers changed to accommodate COVID-19 measures and the need to provide the development of the PIPE and the OPCAP was reduced to 1159. The population is roughly made up of:

- prisoners serving less than two years – 200,
- prisoners serving between two and four years – 300
- prisoners serving longer than four years – 700

2.3 Reception rates continue to be between 50 and 60 per month.

2.4 The prison consists of seven house blocks, including one for men convicted of sexual offences, which accommodates 200 prisoners.

2.5 The prison has a large number of classrooms, workshops, a gym, an inpatient healthcare facility with 14 beds, and a palliative care suite with two beds. Catering training is delivered, with a bistro opening two days per week during normal times. The separation and integration unit (SIU) has a CNA of 28, which includes two special accommodation units.

2.6 The prison continued to be a drug recovery prison (DRP), a joint Department of Health and Ministry of Justice-funded initiative, jointly run by Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) and NHS England.

2.7 Services within the prison were delivered by the following organisations:

- Novus – education, learning and skills
- First Point – training
- Changing Lives – training
- G4S – healthcare, including nursing, administration support, clinical drug and alcohol treatment (DART) until 31 March 2020 when Spectrum took this over
- Spectrum – GP and pharmacy services until 31 March 2020. Spectrum became the lead provider of all healthcare matters, including overseeing the dental services
- Burgess and Hyder Dental Group – dental services
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Mental Health Trust – mental health services.

- Change Grow Live – non-clinical drug and alcohol recovery team (DART)
- Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company – ‘through-the-gate’ services
- North Eastern Prison Aftercare Society (NEPACS) – visitors centre services and family support
- Amey – works and stores
- The Samaritans – Listener training
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council – library services and occupational therapy assessment and equipment provision

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

This Board's annual report is set against a background of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the prison and the local community. During the first lockdown the prison coped reasonably well with minimum infection and the prisoners were settled, in general, into the lockdown situation.

We congratulate the prison staff for the way in which they dealt with this very difficult time.

The latter part of the year saw infection increasing and staffing being significantly affected by shielding and self-isolation.

The prison was inspected earlier in the year by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons on 24-25 February 2020 and 2-6 March 2020.

The inspection results showed the prison was "*Not sufficiently good in the four areas of judgement; safety, respect, purposeful activity and rehabilitation and release planning.*"

A comprehensive action plan was prepared and agreed by the Inspectorate.

The role of the Board in Holme House was extremely difficult to deliver during the last ten months of 2020 because of the risks from COVID-19. For six months no members attended the prison and monitoring was carried out remotely using a number of tools.

We were disappointed that we could not fulfil our role to our own satisfaction during the bulk of the year. There were times when it was hard to get information from the prison due to high sickness levels among staff, however many officers were extremely helpful and we were grateful for their assistance.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

During the first half of the year the prison was relatively quiet with most men being locked up for 23 hours of the day with an understanding of the reason for that and appreciating the extra perks that were provided. Evidence is provided in section 5.2.

During the second half of the year the incidents of self-harm increased with a significant increase in the number of ACCTs opened.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The prisoners were treated fairly and evidence of this is in section 5.

It was a very tough year for many prisoners as most men were locked up for 23 hours per day for a significant period of time. After the first lockdown had ended, activities were put in place and work increased. Gym and library

services restarted mid-year with some cell-based education being delivered towards the end of the year.

There is still an unsatisfactory level of unscreened WCs in cells, many of which are shared (evidence in section 5.1). This does not comply with the national standard for the physical cleanliness and physical decency of prisons, published in April 2019, and can be considered to be not a humane situation, especially considering the length of time the prisoners have been locked up this year and also that they eat all of their meals in their cells.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The contract to deliver healthcare matters changed leadership on 1 April 2020 when Spectrum took over. They had good plans and aspirations at the beginning which, sadly, could not be rolled out as they would have liked.

However, house block-based services meant that the service was delivered and waiting times were minimal.

Dental services were almost halted with only emergencies being dealt with.

The DRP continued to be delivered last year although drugs continued to be a significant problem within the prison.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

From March 2020 resettlement plans became very limited because the education department and other resource facilities were closed and remained so to the end of the year. Evidence of education delivered is detailed in section 7.1.

3.3 Main areas for development

Once the pandemic is over and the prison gets back to a normal schedule, in-cell and house block improvements need to be completed. These include floor repairs and WC screening.

The transformational plans put in place by the Governor hopefully will change the culture and improve the ability for the men to make progress in some of those areas that have been missing.

We would like to see education progress to ensure that the men are able to make up for lost time last year.

The ongoing concerns of the Board regarding some decency matters such as unscreened toilets in cells, damaged floors and poor quality showers have been issues for some years now. More evidence in paragraph 5.1.

TO THE MINISTER

The Board would like to see the funding necessary for repairs as well as funding previously approved, to be made available expeditiously.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

We would like to see this category C training prison delivering better education with demonstrable and improved outcomes for resettlement.

TO THE GOVERNOR

The Governor had been in place for the last few weeks of the year only. The Board has already seen a change in culture and would like to ask the Governor to continue to deliver his plans and aspirations.

We would like to see the prisoner induction programme improve significantly. We have, sadly, observed this deteriorate over the last four years.

3.4 Progress since the last report

In many ways there has been little progress since our last report, and this is to be expected because of the COVID 19 pandemic. However, Holme House has managed the pandemic reasonably well, particularly in the first lockdown. The HMIP report did lead to some improvements being carried out:

- The reception area has been transformed with a change in layout, facilities, furniture and possibly culture as well (see section 4.1).
- The healthcare outpatients' waiting room has also been updated resulting in a pleasant relaxing area.
- Despite lockdown, significant painting has taken place within the walkways, house block entrances and communal areas.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

We observed significant improvements to the reception areas and considered that increased privacy was afforded to new people coming into the prison.

The Board carried out a survey of men in reception for the last quarter of the year. The majority were happy with reception although there were a few healthcare issues.

Induction within the prison has not been satisfactory for a few years in that incoming prisoners do not receive appropriate and timely induction and this matter was picked up by HMIP as a key concern. Very few improvements were made during the year on this matter.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Safer custody recorded 728 incidents of self-harm in 2020. A small number of men repeatedly self-harmed (for example, in one period 11 prisoners committed 32 acts of self-harm). From January to March (prior to the initial national lockdown) incidents averaged 64 a month; from April to December the average incidence was 57 per month but during December 84 incidents occurred.

Staff referred 638 prisoners for ACCTs (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) during 2020. This is a significantly higher number than 2019 (164). Approximately 20-25 ACCTs are open at any one time. Safer custody encourages active management and reviewing of the ACCT so that the case is not open for longer than necessary while the prisoner is kept safe.

Holme House has 19 trained Listeners. During 2020 they conducted 622 listening sessions. Periodic COVID-19 lockdowns of their own and other house blocks and isolation occasionally limited the availability of Listeners and their ability to hold a Listening session. Newly arrived prisoners view a Samaritan DVD about the Listeners in reception and the telephone number of the Samaritans runs as a 'ticker tape' reminder on the Way Out TV channel.

Discussion at the fortnightly ACCT meetings addresses how to manage prisoners who are proving difficult to manage while in the ACCT process. Support focuses on care maps being meaningful, achievable and time-bound to ensure completion, and closure of the ACCT is considered when the care map has no outstanding issues. Board members were unable to attend these meetings because of the COVID pandemic.

The safety intervention meeting (SIM) is held weekly and operates with an appointment system to enable social distancing. The focus of the discussion

centres on prisoners with more complex issues and the prisoners who need interventions to support them while in Holme House.

There were seven deaths in custody, six of which were natural deaths and one self-inflicted.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Violence reduced by 28% in 2020 compared with 2019. Intelligence suggests that the main reasons for violence and threats to prisoners are drugs, medication, cell sharing, debt issues and issues from the community.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), the national case management model, are used in managing prisoners who harm others through violent behaviour. Fortnightly CSIP meetings check that reviews of the plans are completed on time and document the facts and improvements which have been implemented.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

Prisoners who have been sentenced for sexual offences are accommodated in house block 7. Some of these prisoners are the oldest in the prison and may have mobility and care assistance needs. This house block is the only block with a passenger lift. The prison has double-deck walkways which enables movement of these vulnerable prisoners from their house block to their workplace in the DHL canteen stores, the chapel, library, gym, etc. while ordinary prisoners are also moving about the prison. The chapel, gym and library run separate services/sessions for these prisoners.

The prison follows the adult safeguarding policies and procedures of the Tees-wide adult safeguarding board. The safer custody and equalities hub manager represents the prison on the Tees-wide adult safeguarding board.

4.5 Use of force

During the year it was not possible for the Board to witness any incidents of use of force. The HMIP considered that "*The governance of use of force lacked vigour*" and that "*not all incidents that we observed were justified, and the behaviour of some staff during restraint was inappropriate.*"

Spontaneous use of force was used about 130 times during 2020; during 2019 it was used about 260 times. Planned use of force in 2020 was approximately 50% of that used in 2019. External 'Tornado' assistance was used once during an incident on 30 December 2020.

Multiple batons were drawn on 22 October 2020 when a man threatened to assault an officer with a kettle. PAVA was not deployed during the year.

This will be a key area for monitoring during 2021.

4.6 Substance misuse

There was a significant reduction in drug finds and subsequent abuse. However, an increase in "hooch" being brewed by prisoners led to a significant number of finds across the prison. Steps were taken by the prison to reduce the availability of potential ingredients and vessels which could be used for brewing or storage.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing

As with most areas the Board has not been able to monitor the condition of individual cells. However, we have been able to consider what progress has been made in some areas of concern from previous reports. In the main, fabric checks have not been carried out and workers from Amey have been reluctant to enter cells to continue to carry out the necessary replacement of beds and screening of WCs, citing social distancing and weight loads for one man.

Floors in some house blocks continue to be in a poor condition despite the Minister, in responding to the Board's annual report of 2017, telling us that: '[the] Ministry of Justice Estates Directorate has approved the bid to upgrade the internal lighting and replace the floors in house blocks 1–4', in his letter dated 17 May 2018. It is apparent that the work had not been carried out up until the end of 2020.

The kitchens have continued to deliver the required diet although COVID-19 infections towards the end of the year placed a strain on the staffing, both employed and prisoner.

For many years we have been concerned about unscreened WCs in cells.

At the end of year the figures were still unsatisfactory with an overall average of 37% of all cells not having WCs screened. Our concern about this is heightened because prisoners eat all of their meals in their cells.

A breakdown is as follows:

House block	% of cells without screens to the WC
1	46
2	46
3	55
4	61
5	35
6	0
7	19

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

This unit now referred to as the separation and integration unit (SIU) has 26 cells and two units of special accommodation. The unit is well cleaned and maintained. Damage to cells is repaired in a timely manner. The heating was upgraded during 2020.

We have continued to be impressed by the professional, caring and considerate approach shown by staff to vulnerable prisoners. The staff face challenges, which, at times, are increased by attitudes and behaviour from

some very disturbed prisoners. In 2019 a number of prisoners had refused to leave the unit for a variety of reasons – mainly for ‘self-protection’. The ‘virtual seg’, introduced towards the end of 2019, which transfers prisoners to other category C prisons within the Tees-Tyne and Yorkshire-Humber regions where they are accommodated in ordinary accommodation, is used to effectively support these prisoners.

During 2019 the occupancy of the separation and integration unit averaged 20 in June and 13 in December. During 2020 the occupancy has been further reduced as a consequence of officers being encouraged to challenge prisoners when they push against the boundaries of acceptable behaviour which has helped reduce the number of men sent to SIU. The average length of stay in the unit in 2020 was 7.3 days. A defensible decision log was provided for each man on an open ACCT in the separation and integration unit.

Special accommodation was used three times between April and December 2020. There were no dirty protests or use of the body belt.

The decrease in the number of referrals to the independent adjudicator during 2019 has continued into 2020. Between April and October 18 cases were referred to the external adjudicator. In comparison, during 2019 the former independent adjudicator was often dealing with more than this number, and sometimes double this number, at every visit.

Governors dealt with 1,358 adjudications between April and October 2020. The highest number of charges referred to the ‘possession of any unauthorised article or having a greater quantity of any article than he is authorised to have’. The ‘use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour’ was the second most often charged offence. At the end of December 2020 there were 128 outstanding remanded adjudications. These were referred to the original adjudication governor for continuity of hearing. COVID-19 isolation led to some cases being remanded. The number of people who could be in the adjudication room at one time was limited by COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

At the end of December 2020, the separation and integration unit had 182 outstanding police referrals. Some police referrals date back to 2018 and with no further action have been timed out or the prisoner has been released while waiting for a decision. This works against ‘justice’ for the accused or any victim of the incident and could be perceived as the accused ‘getting away with it’.

Only one GOaD review was completed out of the designated time. This was reported to the deputy governor and the review was held. Staff from healthcare or mental health services were present at 75% of GOoD reviews. The Board was only able to attend may GOoD Board reviews during the year up until the 23 March.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

The staff culture is changing under the direction of the new Governor and deputy governor. The new Governor's blog in the weekly bulletin was well received by staff. Staff spoke positively to IMB members about the introduction of the blog and the management approach. The ethos is now that officers take responsibility and make decisions within their authority and challenge prisoners as required in the knowledge that they will be supported in doing so. This approach has significantly reduced the number of men having to be moved to the separation and integration unit.

The number of staff available to work has been seriously impacted by COVID-19 either because they are ill, they or family members may be ill and have to isolate or because they have to isolate due to a health vulnerability. Sickness absence is closely monitored and reviewed. Some staff have been able (or required) to work from home. There were some initial difficulties in availability of technology enabling access to prison systems from home.

Staff working from home (and Board members) were able to participate in some meetings through dialling into the main board room. COVID-19 social distancing limited the capacity of this room to nine people.

It has been recognised that there are a significant number of new officers who may have been in Holme House for a year but have not yet experienced or supervised the usual flow of prisoners to and from work, library, or gym, etc. or worked in the visits hall during social visits.

Key work has been adapted to the recovery status and availability of staff. This has focussed on supporting a priority group of prisoners (approximately 130), including those who are on an ACCT or CSIP, who received key worker contact lasting 30 to 40 minutes each week while other prisoners had a 'well-being check' with key worker contact lasting about 15 minutes. The priority list was shared daily with all managers and only the duty governor could authorise cancelling a scheduled key worker contact for a priority prisoner.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Prisoners submitted an average of 4.6 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) per month to safer custody for investigation.

Designated governors led focus groups in a four-month programme to stimulate the development of the groups covering disability, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), LGBT+, veterans, travellers and equality champions were in place. This was seen as giving a powerful message that equalities and diversity are a whole prison responsibility and not just for the safer custody team.

The various focus groups discussed anonymised group-associated DIRFs to involve them as part of the DIRF process and as a learning experience. During an observed LGBT+ group meeting prisoners discussed how words used in banter between gay prisoners where it could be heard by others could be perceived as homophobic if used by officers or 'straight' men.

The prison celebrated black history month during October with posters from the black history organisation on display around the prison. All prisoners could order food celebrating black history. Safer custody provided black history activity packs. A socially distanced event held in the code 4000 workshop produced artwork for display around the prison and featured poetry reading, rap and discussions. One in-cell TV channel showed films featuring black actors nightly and staff events also covered black history.

LGBT events included 50 years of Pride with a rainbow themed decorated tree in an internal quadrangle, and 'coming out day' messages in bottles on the 'Pride' tree.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

It has not been possible to have collective worship or prayers since March. Chaplains and red bands, who are trained prisoners, work using a team approach. They have noted that working in pairs rather than singly can modify how some prisoners interact with the black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) members of the team who often receive a less positive response from many prisoners. The two chapel red bands, one Christian and one Muslim, were unable to work during lockdown of their house block. One of the red bands is also a trained Listener and has been able to use these skills in his chaplaincy work.

Chaplains found that with the slower pace of a less active prison, staff were more comfortable about talking to the chaplains about their own concerns.

The chaplains visited all prisoners on an ACCT and attended ACCT reviews. They also tried to visit all under 21-year-olds for a weekly casual chat recognising that they might struggle with increased time locked up.

The chaplaincy added the Church of England helpline to a list of telephone help lines. This provided pre-recorded messages, prayers and meditations.

The chaplaincy supported prisoners during the streamed coverage of funerals in the chapel or code 4000 workshop. If streaming was not possible prisoners went to the chapel to light a candle. This has been well received by bereaved prisoners. The chaplaincy recognised that the process for supporting prisoners who had dead or dying relatives had not been working as well as it could. They revised the process and took responsibility for its operation.

Through a 'prayer during the day' leaflet they are promoting a prayer time (12.30 pm) when people can pray knowing that they are praying with others across the prison – 'alone together'.

The chapel had a prisoner crocheted poppy display to commemorate Remembrance Day and a socially distanced remembrance service was held.

While collective Christmas Day services could not take place, a conifer tree in an internal quadrangle was decorated with lights around which the chaplaincy led short gatherings for each house block in the week leading up to Christmas Day.

Diwali could not be observed as usual this year. Uncertainty about whether Ramadan would begin on 23 or 24 April complicated the arrangements for providing food for Muslim prisoners fasting to ensure they could eat before dawn after Ramadan had been confirmed. The men received a cold meal, a hot meal which would be stored in a flask and a breakfast pack. They also received packs of dates. Similar uncertainty about the timing of the ending of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid and the practicalities of ensuring safe delivery of the food meant that it was agreed that the celebration meal be served on the day after the end of the fast.

The chaplaincy arranged for one prisoner to celebrate the Jewish New Year via Zoom. The kitchen provided appropriate food.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)

The prison uses the regional reward and recognition incentive scheme with bronze, silver and gold levels. COVID-19 guidance stated that all prisoners, regardless of their IEP status, should be provided with a television. At the end of December 2020 two prisoners were on the bronze level, 357 prisoners on silver level and 761 prisoners on the gold level.

A 2020 update of the facilities list details the items prisoners on the different levels may have in their possession or purchase. Prisoners on the bronze level can spend £5 per week from their spends account on canteen supplies, those prisoners on silver can spend £18 per week and those on gold level can spend up to £30.

Following consultation with prisoners and staff a 'next steps' update introduced options for prisoners on the silver and gold levels to purchase clothing from specified suppliers delivered directly to the prison.

Prisoners on the gold level could choose either an annual one-off spend from private cash to the value of £300 or a clothing parcel to be ordered by a person on the prisoner's approved contact list, delivered directly to the prison by one of the agreed approved suppliers. Prisoners on the silver level would continue to have access to existing purchase arrangements to purchase goods up to the value of £150.

This change in purchasing opportunity proved very popular. The considerable increase in the number of parcels entering the prison led to a period when parcels were delayed in being delivered to the prisoners. This led to an increase in the numbers of complaints relating to parcel receipt. The issue is being addressed.

5.7 Complaints

Prisoners submit an average of 210 complaints (Comp 1s) each month. The overall timeliness of responses to prisoner complaints had previously failed to meet the five-working-day standard. This has now improved so that usually there are no overdue responses. A report covering the number of complaints received the previous day, the number of complaint responses overdue and those due for response in the next few days was a regular item at the morning briefing meeting. Managers are directly answerable for any delayed responses.

A monthly senior management team analysis report flags up increases in complaints about particular subjects so that remedial action can be taken. Residential, property and mail are regularly the most common causes for complaint.

From January to March a member of the Board assessed the responses to the first ten complaints recorded each month for response time and the quality of the written response. The member found the responses to be respectful and easy to understand. Often the respondent had spoken to the prisoner and discussed the issue with him. The written response confirmed the conversation and decision.

5.8 Property

The Board continues to get applications from prisoners regarding lost property either during transfer or within the prison. Most matters do get resolved.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

All prisoners arriving are screened for health issues, including mental health, in prisoner reception. In the main this goes well although there have been

issues which were highlighted in the survey carried out by the IMB and also in a PPO report regarding a fatality which was *".... concerned that when he arrived at Holme House, his initial health screenings were not carried out in line with guidelines, and that the staff completing them had not been trained to do so"*.

A number of respondents to the prisoner survey said that they were told to submit an application to get help with mental health matters rather than a referral being made by the nurse to request a mental health assessment.

- *"PTSD Anxiety depression. I was told to put an app in to Mental Health."*
- *"It wasn't dealt with very well ...I've got anxiety and depression and also personality disorder and it was if they didn't want to know and ignored my plea."*

However many more said that they had a good response from healthcare in reception.

Plans for Spectrum to implement improvements were hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the remainder of the year. However, they implemented a number of activities which enabled the prisoners to continue to get access to services.

Most GP appointments were held by telephone, with nurses triaging men on house blocks and dealing with a high proportion of medical issues, only referring to the GP if necessary. This has resulted in there not being a waiting list to see the GP and the men getting a more responsive service.

The CQC inspection report published in March 2020 highlighted areas of healthcare that were unsatisfactory and all have been addressed:

- clinical waste bins are now locked and plans to dispose of this waste safely are in place.
- the outpatient waiting room has been upgraded and refurbished.
- GP sessions are now confidential and private.
- all prisoners are risk assessed for in-possession medication and reviewed by the pharmacist.

Low staffing levels have continued to be problematic and exacerbated by COVID-19. Nursing vacancies have been covered by agency and bank nurses, many of whom have been in these roles for up to two years.

External hospital appointments have been kept if essential, but video link and tele-med consultations have also been used where appropriate.

Healthcare has implemented the 'community' model and has managed to deliver aspects of it throughout the year, with most consultations being carried out on the house blocks rather than men going to the outpatients unit.

A complex needs nurse has been put in place to offer care to vulnerable patients and those with complex needs.

Access to dental care continues to be a problem with only emergency appointments being offered. Waiting lists for the dentist were in the region of 200.

Vitamin D is available free of charge to all prisoners through the DHL canteen service.

The 16-bed inpatient unit and two palliative care suites are a regional resource and function well and are well used.

There has been an average of 40 complaints per month to healthcare throughout 2020 with numbers rising towards the end of the year.

6.2 Mental health

Despite staffing difficulties, self-referrals had a waiting time of four to five days with urgent cases being seen within 24 hours.

One-to-one consultations have continued to take place in outpatient clinics but group work has been unable to take place. The number of ACCTs has risen significantly with mental health nurses attending ACCT reviews.

Complex cases are discussed at the daily meeting of staff.

The transfer of seriously ill patients to mental health hospitals or secure units has continued although there is the continuing impact of unacceptable delays because of the shortage of available vacant beds in those establishments.

The Holme House mental health team were awarded runners-up in the 'Trauma and informed care' category of the Nursing Times awards.

6.3 Social care

Stockton Borough Council continues to provide assessments, services and advice about the needs of prisoners requiring social care, including assessments and care plans. Recommendations for adaptations are provided. The council also provided mobility aids and daily living assistive equipment.

A plan is in place to provide a store for social care equipment for issue after assessment.

The 2020 CQC inspection report queried whether prisoner-carers received training and supervision. The restricted COVID-19 regime of the prison prevented this from taking place but plans are in place to roll this out when circumstances allow. However, Spectrum appointed more band two healthcare workers to assist with this.

Prisoners with social care needs have planned release from Holme House and the local authority provide a bridge from prison to the community.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic exercise and time out of cell has been seriously reduced and only the statutory exercise time was allowed at the beginning of lockdown. As time moved forward the gym staff delivered exercise outside. However the prisoners overall did not have any significant time out of cell.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

The prison continued to deliver the drug reduction programme during the year.

Forty-two prisoners from 65 starts successfully graduated in the therapeutic community.

At any one time there is usually about one third of the prisoners in therapeutic treatment with those being split equally between maintenance and reduction treatments. During the year sixty-nine prisoners became alcohol free and three hundred and twenty-six drug free.

6.6 Soft skills

There was very little activity carried out for the best part of the year.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education,

During January and February classroom-based courses continued as normal with attendance at circa 75%, an improvement on 2019, as a focus was placed on improving course allocation.

From March and for the remainder of 2020 there were no classroom-based courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and cell-based activities were introduced in the form of distraction packs. They contained virtually no educational element other than simple 'word searches' which could marginally improve literacy. The packs were developed to occupy prisoners rather than teach them.

During this time the prison introduced a 'Way to Learn' TV channel through which men could undertake booklet-led courses at the end of which the prisoner would receive a certificate.

During this period art, music and code 4000 continued to provide in-cell activities.

In June Novus introduced in-cell learning opportunities, although take up was very low as the prisoners perceived no benefit in taking up the opportunities as they received no extra pay or time out of cell because there was no face to face education delivered nor encouragement.

In August Novus returned to site and began producing course-focussed in-cell packs. The distribution of the packs was by trusted prisoners (red bands), although as above uptake was low.

It took until November for agreement to be reached for more positive education to be delivered on house blocks with an agreement to provide meeting rooms in wings and an agreed cleaning schedule after each prisoner was seen.

In the interim red bands were used to encourage other prisoners to work on courses.

Problems with the availability of red bands because of self-isolation meant the initiative was not as successful as hoped. It was not until December that all problems were ironed out and Novus began one to ones with prisoners in the house blocks.

Library

As with education the library functioned normally during January and February but then had to shut down and the books could not be used by the prison. The initiative of a prison officer led to the introduction of book rounds. The officer purchased some 1,000 books and a list of available titles was compiled using red band prisoners to deliver and collect. This delivered a valuable, albeit somewhat restricted, library service.

In September, when library staff returned, a 'click and collect' service was introduced using the red bands to deliver and return books.

The library staff introduced monthly spelling and sentence building competitions and other activity opportunities for prisoners.

7.2 Vocational training, work

For the first three months of the year the situation in the prison remained largely as it had been in the previous year. The number of purposeful activity places is normally above 1,000 and the number of unemployed men below 10%. Allocation is fair but some of the places are unfilled. The HMIP report recommended that sentence plans should be used to inform the allocation process. Attendance rates continued to be above 70% but were inconsistent. The men overwhelmingly were observed to have a positive attitude, treating each other and the teachers/instructors with respect and working diligently.

After the end of March there was very little work apart from restricted essential duties, which were delivered using the exceptional delivery models (EDMs).

Work which did continue included kitchens, gardens, bins and yards as well as the laundry at a reduced level because contract work was not available and many house blocks carried out their own washing.

However, due to the measures introduced since March to ensure that the prison is COVID-19 compliant the number of out of cell activities has been significantly reduced to around 490, some of these being part time. At any one time approximately 400 are filled, the shortfall largely being due to the number of house block workers allowed out of their cells at any one time. The use of part-time/split shift pattern work has helped with mental health, more time out of cells and the continuation of constructive work both in Holme House and the wider estate.

7.3 Offender management and progression

The Board's annual report for 2019 expressed concern about the embedding of offender management in custody (OMIC) in the working of the offender management unit (OMU) for a variety of reasons including the prison population, the number of prisoners assessed as being at a high risk of causing severe harm (then 700), the caseloads of prison offender managers (POMs) – then 75 prisoners per POM – and the risk of deployment of offender supervisors into mainstream activities.

The prisoner unlock number reduced by about 100 under COVID-19 imposed operational changes. There has been no significant change in the proportion of prisoners assessed as high risk. The average caseload had decreased slightly to 68-70.

The unit has not had its full staff allocation since the commencement of the OMIC programme. It was expected that this should be achieved by May 2021. COVID-19 impacted on the staffing of the offender management unit when, in

May 2020, 2.7 probation officers (40% of capacity and 1,000 hours of POM time) were redeployed into community services.

The unit undertook 304 assessments during 2020. Handover reports to community services in preparation for release and for men on short sentences were prioritised. Despite the staff shortages there was only a backlog of 44 assessments at the end of the year. The new Governor undertook a SWAT analysis of OMU which showed good staff morale, positivity and willingness in the OMU team.

As part of the work embedding OMIC, staff training needs have been met. Cases are allocated quickly and staff with specific expertise, for example personality disorder, have been identified as single points of contact as resources for the team.

Under the EDM, offending behaviour programmes have only been provided in exceptional cases. Social distancing-imposed room capacities meant that Kaizen, for example, could only be provided to groups of three prisoners. An explanation of how the operation of offending behaviour programmes was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions was given to the prisoner consultative council for dissemination to prisoners on house blocks. Concern about the availability of offending behaviour programmes has been a regular topic in applications to the IMB.

In December 2020 work began to set up a 'lifer group' which would be a peer-led support group with red band oversight. Each house block will have a lifer representative who will meet other representatives monthly.

Two scheduled parole hearings were affected by COVID-19 house block lockdowns. A contingency plan was put in place to enable hearings to proceed and will remain in place until general easing is possible. This is via video link.

7.4 Family contact

The prison relaxed the 45-minute cap on telephone calls to encourage family and friend contacts. While visiting was suspended the importance of speedy reporting of faults on in-cell phones was recognised. Orderly officers and duty governors had to decide on alternative means of contacting family and friends while a repair was reported and carried out.

The e-mail a prisoner service delivered over 23,000 messages to men in Holme House in 2020 and 15,000 replies were made. The service saw a slight increase in traffic in March to May, which then settled down averaging around 1,800 per month for the rest of the year.

During the early months of 2020, work continued on improving the 'visit experience' with the visitor portal and visits hall staffed from a cohort of officers who had received visit focussed training with inputs from NEPACS

and their Visitor Voice group. They had also attended 'hidden sentence' training to better understand the impact of imprisonment on families and partners. Prisoners could wear their own clothes. Instead of announcing the imminent end of visits by public address, staff went round and told the individual groups. The prisoner consultation group had asked if different snacks could be available in the NEPACS canteen in the visits hall and these became a popular purchase.

Visits stopped in March. The NEPACS visitor centre was closed but the manager was available for families to speak to five days a week. NEPACS family support workers continued operating, responding to applications from men and calls from families and friends.

Visits resumed for a brief time on 4 August with strict conditions (social distancing, no contact, face masks, etc.). For potential infection control purposes visits took place for one house block per day with house block days being rotated. Catering facilities, toilets and creche/play areas were closed. Every second visitor seating unit was out of use. These conditions reduced to 20 the number of potential visits which could be held in a session. The visitor centre operated a one-way route through the building with tables being allocated to enforce social distancing. Social distancing meant that visitor entry and exit to and from the visits hall would be slowed because occupancy of the portal entry gate had to be reduced. The restrictions led to reduced demand for visits in person – on one Friday in August there was only one visit taking place. Feedback from prisoners and visitors said that they did not want visits due to the non-contact COVID-19 rules in place. A few visitors were banned from further visits due to infringements of the social distancing and no contact rules.

From August men could also apply to have a virtual Purple Visit. The parents of one prisoner visiting in person told us that they preferred to come to the prison, but their son and his partner preferred to have a family video visit. They said that this way the children would not have to be kept from physical contact with their father.

Demand for video virtual visits was and continues at less than 30% of availability (one 'visit' per month per man). A few prisoners complained about technical problems with the video 'freezing' but this was not unique to Holme House. A small number of visitors via video have been 'banned' for breaching security by taking screen shots of the men's faces during video visits. This breaches the security rules of Purple Visits.

To encourage use of video visits NEPACS provided children's story books to each house block so that fathers could read stories to their children by video.

No applications were made for face-to-face visits during the Christmas and New Year period when 40 visits were available.

It was not possible to hold family days this year. NEPACS sent out personalised Easter material to children who had been due to come in and

work on preparing Easter cards with their fathers. NEPACS activity workers also provided online activities for children and young people when they could not visit their fathers.

The library ran a programme in collaboration with NEPACS in which men could colour in a drawing and then choose a children's book to be sent, with the drawing, to their child.

7.5 Resettlement

The OMU re-categorises around 120 prisoners per month. In September 2020 they adopted the new digital recategorisation system.

Transfers have been restricted during the pandemic and were the exception from March 2020 onwards, only being approved in exceptional circumstances.

Two prisoners were released under release on temporary licence (ROTL).

168 prisoners were released to home detention curfew (HDC). There were some difficulties relating to bail accommodation support services BASS securing appropriate accommodation.

Through the Gate works with Thirteen housing group and other housing providers on accommodation on release. Snapshots of activity provided by Through the Gate show that in November 2020, of 102 prisoners released, 90% had secured accommodation, 81% had a bank account and 100% had received support to claim benefits. In the December 2020 snapshot, the performance for 92 prisoners released was 95%, 78% and 100% respectively.

The work of the IMB

For nearly ten months of the year the Board worked in a very different way from normal, because of COVID-19. From the middle of March all members worked remotely from home. One experienced member and a trainee began to visit the prison once per week in September and carried out some restricted monitoring.

Members continued to have allocated areas of special interests and individual house blocks for monitoring.

Applications were dealt with by the chair and BDO, from home, with the assistance of an officer from the business hub. The process was difficult and sadly response times were not as we would have liked. The number of applications received was much lower than previous years and we can only assume that lack of our presence in the prison resulted in many men not knowing about our role.

Members rang into the morning briefing meeting most days and so were able to be aware of the daily issues. Members contacted the relevant officers on a regular basis to obtain information and updates.

Members were able to attend remotely a limited number of meetings.

Very few GOaD reviews were attended during the year.

The Board carried out a survey of new men who entered the prison in the fourth quarter of the year. The main purpose of the survey was to gain information as to the quality of induction and reception. 311 surveys were issued. 50 responses were received giving a response rate of 16.08%.

The overall responses were:

Positive responses = 74%

Negative responses = 26%.

Results of the survey have provided information for other sections of this report.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of board members	16
Number of board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	97
Total number of segregation reviews attended	55

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	22	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	11	5
C	Equality	8	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	29	9
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	42	24
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	15	11
F	Food and kitchens	11	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	107	46
H1	Property within this establishment	59	18
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	54	26
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	24	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	92	20
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	59	6
K	Transfers	30	28
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	0
	Total number of applications	563	216



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

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

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

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk.