



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP OAKWOOD

**For reporting year
01 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 IMB Board (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 Oakwood opened on 24 April 2012. It is operated by G4S through a contract with Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS). It had operational capacity of 1605 until a revamp commenced in July 2016 and by the end of March 2017 it stood at 2106. HMP Oakwood is one of the largest prisons in the country. In 2020/21 there were 2516 admissions and 2124 discharges from the prison. The prison is holding 233 licence recalls.

All those held are adult male prisoners over the age of 21. 860 prisoners (41%) are serving sentences in excess of four years with 412 serving sentences over 10 years. Approximately 190 men are serving indeterminate or life sentences and 48% of the population have been classed as representing a serious risk of harm. Twenty-three percent of prisoners have been convicted of sexual offences.

The staffing group is diverse and represents a good mix of ethnic backgrounds.

The prison is a modern facility, which is well maintained, clean and tidy. This is enhanced by the flower beds in the general areas and on some house blocks, which have been created and cared for by prisoners. Douglas, the lifers house block, grows vegetables for its own consumption and sends surplus to other wings. They also provide vegetables for the Plot-to-Plate initiative, which supports prisoners cooking for relatives during visits.

A Controller, Deputy Controller and Assistant Controller from HMPPS are based within the prison and are active in the control and management of the contract between HMPPS and G4S.

The prison is a category C training designated resettlement prison located near to Wolverhampton. The key providers to the prison include:

- Practice Plus Group (healthcare) which replaced CARE UK –from April 2019
- GEOAmeY (transport to and from other prisons and the courts)
- DHL (ordering and delivery of canteen items)
- Aramark (catering services)
- Novus (education provider)
- Staffordshire Library Services
- Lloyds Pharmacy Services
- Staffordshire County Council (social work and care support)

Further support is also provided by a range of voluntary organisations, one of which is Restart which is a social enterprise set up to support men in prison, those transitioning out, their family members and all those affected by imprisonment.

There are some 20 prisoner-led groups providing regular help and support to prisoners throughout the prison. Most are now well-established and utilise the skills, experiences and self-motivation of the prisoners. The senior management team (SMT) is commended for its encouragement for, and unstinting support of, these groups.

The prison comprises the following units:

Ash: (vulnerable prisoners) currently accommodates 661 prisoners on eight wings. The eldest prisoner is 90 years of age with 348 prisoners over the age of 50, representing 17% of the total prison population. The disabilities on the house block range from mental ill-health, visual/hearing impairment to age-related illnesses, including dementia. A Uppers is a supported living wing; B Uppers is also a supported living wing but with a minimum age of 50 years. A Lower is an enhanced wing; D Lower is a long-term/lifers wing. D Uppers is an induction wing.

Beech: (mainstream prisoners) accommodates 637 prisoners on eight wings. This includes a specialist lifers' wing, a Family Intervention wing providing a supportive environment and a range of Family Intervention courses and Willow Unit. Willow provides additional support to meet the needs of a group of prisoners who have shown that they are unable to meet HMP Oakwood's expectations and/or have become disengaged from the regime.

Cedar: (mainstream prisoners) accommodates 641 prisoners on 8 wings. This includes a long-term/lifers' wing housing 64 long-term prisoners and Chestnut, which is a basic wing for prisoners who have difficulty engaging and need ongoing support.

Douglas: (lifers and indeterminate-sentenced prisoners) accommodates 87 prisoners on two wings.

Elm: (Drug Recovery Unit [DRU]) accommodates 80 prisoners on two wings.

CSU: (Care & Segregation Unit) has 24 standard cells, including a constant watch cell, two cells providing special accommodation and two dirty protest cells.

The Oaks: provides 80 single units of temporary accommodation, which were installed in June 2020 providing alternative accommodation for trusted prisoners. This enabled the provision of 80 single use cells in the main house blocks.

Hazel: at the beginning of the pandemic, the second floor of the healthcare building was made available to house prisoners with COVID-related symptoms.

Cells in the main house blocks are equipped with a WC, shower, wash basin and telephone (restricted through a prisoner telephone PIN system), bed and storage. A telephone system, allowing staff at prison locations which have had in-cell phones fitted the ability to call a prisoner in their cell, was fitted throughout 2020. The Board was given access to this system in September 2020.

Healthy living wings were available on each of the main house blocks apart from Cedar during the reporting year. Ash and Beech have their own induction wings.

Several cells have been adapted for wheelchair use and for the use of Listeners on each house block. Each house block has an education block and a hub for medical staff.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information during the lockdown periods. Notwithstanding that the Board was not able to operate within the prison for periods during the lockdown, remote monitoring was maintained throughout, with the Board employing a range of alternative

monitoring methods. When permitted, the Board resumed its presence in the prison via the IMB office.

The Director and SMT have been very supportive in facilitating the Board's endeavours to maintain its monitoring role throughout. The Board would like to highlight the following:

- The impact of the lockdown restrictions imposed on prisoners and the potential, resultant impact on their health and wellbeing has been to the fore in all aspects of the prison's COVID-19 planning.
- All levels of prison staff have shown exemplary commitment in their care for the prisoners, at times to the detriment of their own wellbeing.
- The written communication from the Director, to both staff and prisoners at all stages of the lockdown period, has been informative and honest throughout.
- The impact on the prisoners of a 23-hour lockdown regime with limited exercise and association has been at best difficult and, for some, traumatic. The commitment and care of both prison and healthcare staff have helped mitigate the impact on prisoners.

The Board's main concern during the lockdown period has been the almost complete absence of Novus from the prison. The Board has seen little or no evidence of any contribution by Novus during this period.

Novus has been served an Improvement Notice and has an HMPPS served improvement action plan now in place.

In March 2021, significant changes within the SMT were announced following the announcement of the departure of the Director. It is the Board's view that the appointment of the Deputy Director as Director, and the subsequent appointments announced, will ensure a seamless transition to the management of the prison.

3.2 Main judgements

3.2.1 How safe is the prison?

"Staff have done a good job to make everyone feel safe." Prisoner, August 2020

It is the Board's view that the prison is safe. The COVID-19 pandemic covers 75% of the reporting period.

Confinement to cell, the closure of house blocks and the restricted movement of prisoners have resulted in fewer incidents of violence against both staff and prisoners. As a consequence of these restrictions and the cessation of visits, the influx of prohibited substances into the prison has lessened. The data on violence and violence reduction, outlined in section 4.3, indicates a significant reduction in the number of reported incidents compared with last year.

The installation of a new walk-in body scanner has increased the number of incoming prisoners identified as potentially concealing contraband after an amnesty offer has been declined. Since the installation in February 2021, 11 prisoners have failed the scanner. They are immediately taken to the CSU to await developments.

The safety and wellbeing of prisoners has been under constant review to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. The guidance from HMPPS and Public Health England, in partnership with other health partners, has been scrupulously followed throughout to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff.

3.2.2 How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

“I believe that staff have done everything to enable us to return to work.” Prisoner, September 2020

The Board is of the opinion that prisoners are treated humanely and fairly. The confinements imposed on prisoners have in general been sensitively managed. Regular, but timed, exercise has been maintained throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period. The opening of Hazel for those prisoners feeling unwell with COVID-19 related symptoms significantly helped in ensuring the safety of the other prisoners.

Purple Visits, in the absence of social visits, have continued to take place. Aramark has continued to provide a balanced menu of two cooked meals a day for, on average, 1950 prisoners. Key worker sessions for two priority groups of prisoners have continued under an exceptional delivery model (see section 5.3).

3.2.3 How well are prisoners’ health and wellbeing needs met?

“Increasing mental health issues are now paramount.” Prisoner, August 2020.

The Board is of the view that the health needs of the prison population have been met and are at least equivalent to that offered in the community and sometimes better.

Where group sessions ceased, the commitment of mental health and substance misuse staff enabled one-to-one sessions to continue.

Prisoner confinement and COVID-19 has been a challenge to the healthcare provision in the prison. Nevertheless, healthcare staff have maintained their presence throughout the period, providing a high level of medical care and support continuously to the prisoners.

3.2.4 How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The resettlement team have worked remotely during the COVID-19 lockdown period. However, the team endeavoured to provide support in conjunction with the offender management unit (OMU), the Probation Service and offender managers to ensure key risks are managed. All sentence related courses ceased, which caused concern to prisoners who were unable to complete their sentence plans.

The absence of the education provider meant that many of the courses that were part of the prisoners’ sentence plans could not take place.

The community rehabilitation company remained on site and supported the majority of the 150 prisoners released each month. OMU continued to work throughout. Additionally, all workshops closed for the majority of the lockdown period. Limited but essential work was allowed for a small number of prisoners.

3.3 Main areas for development 2020/21

TO THE MINISTER

It was commented on in the Board's 2018/19 annual report that *"The transfer of prisoners' private property across the prison estate still remains a concern."* The response from the Prison Service was that HMPPS hoped to publish the new prisoner property framework in early 2019. The draft framework was received, for consultation, in April 2021.

Notwithstanding that a new framework was promised some time prior to 2018, and the intervening COVID-19 lockdown disruption, it is disappointing to note that there are still no agreed protocols or systems in place for the secure transportation of prisoners' property between prisons.

The Board is concerned that the support of foreign nationals by external agencies during the lockdown period was limited. Whilst it is understood that staff were working from home, there did not appear to have been any positive arrangements put in place to progress plans for the prisoners concerned. This apparent lack of planning is concerning.

The independent adjudicator's (IA) last visit before lockdown was on 20 March 2020. Virtual IA adjudications commenced on 11 September 2020 and are continuing. It is not known when the IA will resume face-to-face adjudications.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The Board commented in its 2019/20 Annual Report that, following the change of education provider to Novus in April 2019, *the "quality and quantity of the education provision has fallen sharply since its last annual report and that the delivery plan commitments made by Novus have not been achieved."*

The absence of any meaningful presence of Novus in the prison during the COVID-19 lockdown period has lessened, even further, any confidence in Novus as an effective education provider.

The Board is concerned regarding the number of incoming prisoners on transfer, on the authority of Gold Command, who arrive with serious pre-existing illnesses and injuries. Our concerns include those arriving with COVID-19 symptoms and prisoners arriving without either their prescribed medications or medical records.

Purple visits should continue to complement normal face-to-face visiting arrangements. However, a more reliable platform must be provided to improve the quality of the remote visiting.

The Board is concerned that incidents where a ligature has been used are no longer recorded by the Prison Service. Although the number of incidents at Oakwood where a ligature is used is small, these incidents are of such concern that healthcare has responded to this by arranging for trauma shears to be standard equipment in healthcare emergency bags (see section 4.2). It is noted that operational staff carry fish knives to deal with any ligatures. The Board is concerned that the HMPPS letter dated 3 December 2020 continues to leave the position regarding ligatures unclear.

The Board is concerned about the number of late arrivals at the prison who are deemed vulnerable for various reasons (see section 4.1) and do not arrive with the appropriate medication and treatment plan (see 4.1.2).

The Board is concerned that prisoners were not routinely tested for COVID-19 on transfer into the prison (see 4.1.1).

In March 2020, HMPPS ordered no new offending behaviour programmes to be put in place until further notice. This continued for the duration of the lockdown period and was of concern to the prisoners in respect of problems completing their sentence plans and parole applications. The Board queries whether a remote process for such programmes should be in place?

TO THE DIRECTOR

The Board requests the Director to review the following areas of concern:

- The condition and numbers of body worn cameras, to ensure that a reliable body worn camera is available to all relevant staff (see section 4.5).
- The Board should be notified, in advance, of all planned use of force incidents, as these required notifications have not happened during the reporting period. Members can, wherever possible, then attend and monitor accordingly.
- The range of alternative communication options in addition to communication via the kiosks on the wings. Prisoners have commented that, at times, they were not always aware of the arrangements for Purple Visits and exercise times, which appears to be linked to the lack of time available to the prisoners to use the kiosk during lockdown. The installation of a prison radio and TV would greatly enhance this.
- All instances of missing property are followed up, particularly in relation to cell searches.
- The checking of phone numbers (PIN numbers) is done as soon as possible for prisoners transferring to the prison.

3.4 Progress since the last report of 2019 to 2020 (information in blue is the update to the recommendations from 2019/2020)

TO THE MINISTER

Throughout the year, the Board has expressed concern about the disproportionate number of property applications from prisoners who claim that all, or some, of their property has not been received from the transferring prisons. Many of the complaints relate to two prisons in particular, HMP Hewell and HMP Birmingham.

The Board commented in last year's report, about its concerns relating to the management, accountability and transfer of property across the prison estate and little seems to have been done at a national level to improve on this.

The Minister sent a letter in October 2020 expressing her gratitude for the hard work in capturing the helpful observations, particularly as the Board continued to be short of members and the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on its ability to gather information.

TO HMPPS

The Board considers that the change of education provider to Novus in April 2019 has resulted in a number of significant and challenging staffing issues, which have impacted detrimentally on the quality and quantity of staffing and education provision. Poor staff retention and recruitment and increased sickness levels have resulted in non-delivery of new courses that were stated on the annual delivery plan provided by Novus.

The Board considers that the quality and quantity of the education provision has fallen sharply since its last annual report and that the delivery plan commitments made by Novus have not been achieved.

TO THE DIRECTOR

The prison's drug and alcohol strategy was revised in April 2019. The strategy is detailed and comprehensive and its implementation is supported by a monthly drug strategy meeting.

However, a number of matters remain unclear to the Board at the present time:

- Has a local protocol been agreed with the police regarding local police response times and how they are monitored?

All requests for police assistance are recorded in the control room with the log date and times the police are called. This is also documented in the visits observations book. No recent incidents due to COVID-19.

- Has the security department developed a protocol with the local Probation Office regarding former prisoners visiting HMP Oakwood?

After discussion with the head of the offender management unit (OMU), it was agreed that this is not viable due to the number of different probation areas. There is no single system that cross references visitors and prisoners across the country, and the onus is on the prisoner to write in to the head of security in order to gain permission.

- Has representation on the local criminal justice board been achieved?

This was not deemed feasible due to COVID-19 restrictions.

- Will CCTV be further improved in the visits area?

Recent upgrades to our existing system will allow for better picture quality of the visits' cameras.

- Have links been made with the local community/Neighbourhood Watch group?

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, no links have been investigated at this stage until such restrictions are eased.

- Has guidance been produced for staff on the preservation of evidence?

Yes, preservation of evidence has improved, particularly in the CSU following major incidents. Further tool box talks have been arranged for when COVID-19 restrictions lift regarding handling of evidence and completion of evidence bags etc. The submission of evidence to the control room safe (out of hours) has improved and is reviewed daily by the security team.

- How is the protocol in relation to visit interceptions monitored?

No visits interceptions in the last 12 months due to COVID-19.

- The Director should ensure that the recommendations made by instructors relating to the use of force are fully implemented.

All implemented. There has been improvement in these areas which are monitored by the use of force co-ordinator. Any areas for improvement are addressed.

- The Director should consider a request to HMPPS for upgrade of the shower and toilet facilities and an upgrade of the shower curtains and fittings in the cells.

A request was made to the authority to look at investment for this and there was no appetite for such funding.

- Following concerns expressed in last year's annual report the Director should consider again how to ensure that staff enforce the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) across all house blocks and ensure the regular availability of appropriate cleaning materials so that the serveries are maintained to a more consistent standard of hygiene and cleanliness.

The PPE and cleaning materials are readily available. Staff are briefed daily by management to ensure all workers are wearing the right PPE. The high churn of workers means that we constantly have to establish the standards.

- The Director and head of healthcare should review the positioning of the health complaints boxes to ensure better access to them by prisoners.

We are currently in the process of ordering healthcare complaint boxes for all house block levels and the CSU; this will give all residents opportunity to post a complaint confidentially. Our patient experience lead is working with security to ensure the correct boxes are ordered and placed in the agreed designated areas. This will give residents full access to complaints boxes, regardless of location.

- A small number of new arrivals have complained they have been left without their medication on their first night and sometimes longer because the

sending prison did not send medication. At the prison an appropriate system and subsequent follow up should be put in place to ensure that this does not happen.

When residents arrive in reception without prescribed medication, the nurse will contact the sending establishment to have the medication transferred over. If the medication is a controlled drug, then this is prohibited. In this instance a prisoner will either agree to remain in Oakwood and wait until the next day for an urgent prescription or will return to the sending establishment.

- Whilst staff follow the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) guidelines on medicine management at the medicine hatches, there should also be an officer managing those prisoners queuing for their medication. The Board is concerned that over the year IMB members have observed occasions when officers have not been present to supervise the prisoners. The Director should ensure that officers are present at the medicine hatches during the dispensing of medication.

There are staff in attendance at each medication hatch and a first line

manager (FLM) on both Beech and Cedar. House block managers have been re-briefed to ensure they are present throughout the whole of the medication time.

- The issue of missing property during transfers to and from the prison is still a concern to the Board. New arrivals have also commented that the delay in checking telephone numbers before a prisoner is allowed to call his family can often take days and sometimes longer, resulting in families not being informed of the move. The Director should ensure that all instances of missing property are quickly followed up and that the checking of phone numbers is done as soon as possible.

All residents' pin accounts are transferred via the BT pin machine the next day after arriving at HMP Oakwood once finance has received the Transfers In report. All active numbers on the BT machine automatically transfer; this allows the resident to make calls straight away as long as they have sufficient funds. Residents that transfer in from Serco prisons have to be issued with a new pin number as Serco prisons do not use BT. Induction staff provide new arrivals with the option to send requests via the kiosk or by a manual request form. Finance processes all resident requests in the time frame set.

Any residents who are subject to public protection arrangements are processed by the public protection team as they need to verify and complete the relevant checks before numbers can be added.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

COVID-19 lockdown started at the beginning of March 2020. The prison lockdown meant that prisoners were in confinement in cells for 22 hours a day with 60 minutes exercise time and kiosk time, and 45 minutes wing time.

To help prisoners cope with the ongoing confinement, all basic regime prisoners were elevated to standard regime and provided with TVs. Distraction packs were made available for all prisoners and, whilst the library was closed, orderlies provided a supply of books via a mobile distribution service.

Security meetings continued throughout the lockdown period. The fourth floor of Ash house block was designated a safe area for the most vulnerable prisoners.

A walk in X-ray scanner was installed in February 2021, funded by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This has had an immediate impact on the identification of contraband concealed by incoming prisoners. Opportunity is given to all new admissions to surrender contraband without penalty under the secreted items policy. In February and March 2021 11 prisoners were relocated from reception to the CS because the scanner revealed they were carrying contraband.

4.1 Reception and induction

In 2020/21 there were 2561 prisoners admitted to the prison and 2124 discharged in the same period.

The prison's reception and induction procedures aim to provide a warm and positive experience for new arrivals. Experienced staff, with prisoner orderlies on hand to assist in the registration process, support an effective and efficient reception into Oakwood. Property is received and accounted for in accordance with established procedures.

Early identification of vulnerability and risk issues for each new prisoner is carried out, including cell sharing risk assessments. Individual healthcare assessments are undertaken to ensure new or ongoing medical needs are identified so that appropriate healthcare can be arranged.

Healthcare assessments are undertaken by experienced nursing staff. The transfer in of prisoners during the COVID-19 lockdown period has presented concerns with late arrivals: vulnerable prisoners arriving with complex mental health issues, untreated physical injuries, unannounced COVID-19 symptoms and some without their medication. Many have transferred from local reception prisons. Healthcare staff are diligent in their assessment and care of incoming prisoners, endeavouring to process all prisoners appropriately on arrival. This can, at times, mean that prisoners are not received on the induction/isolation wing until after prison shut down.

The induction process has been curtailed due to COVID-19 restrictions and the need for incoming prisoners to isolate for a period of time.

The Board is of the opinion that the prison's reception and induction processes are delivered professionally, effectively and comprehensively.

4.1.1 Issues with transfer during pandemic

The Board was concerned that transferring prisoners are not routinely COVID-19 tested before departure. In one week, there were 55 new admissions and healthcare staff had no knowledge from the sending prisons whether or not the incoming prisons had any COVID-19 related conditions. Whilst all prisoners were isolated on admission for 14 days, it is ironic that in the community mobility was restricted, whilst prisoner movements appeared unrestricted.

4.1.2 Prisoners transferring without medication

There were a number of situations where prisoners arrived without medication. It was a credit to the healthcare staff in reception that they found time to ensure that those without the correct medication, including specialised medication, had their medication needs met at the earliest opportunity after arrival.

One prisoner arrived from HMP Dartmoor via HMP Bristol. He had Alzheimer's disease and his medical induction took up to an hour including contact with referrals, social services and occupational therapy to ensure the necessary support provision was put in place.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

During the reporting period, there were 887 self-harm incidents relating to 509 prisoners compared to 1176 self-harm incidents last year relating to 473 prisoners.

Whilst the number of self-harm incidents has decreased, the number of prisoners self-harming appears to have increased. There has been an increase in reports of prisoners with mental health concerns exacerbated by isolation, which has increased prisoner frustration and anxiety.

The prison has responded positively, throughout the lockdown period, with appropriate in-cell activities and prisoner-led interventions where possible. These have contributed, significantly, to providing support and stimulation to prisoners.

Of particular concern is the small but significant number where a ligature has been used especially as this is no longer recorded by the Prison Service.

During the reporting year, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) made a number of recommendations relating to the deaths in custody for the year. The prison has responded accordingly (see replies in blue): The Board will monitor the implementation of these recommendations in the current reporting year.

- Healthcare staff to say whether the prisoner's current state of health has an impact on his mobility and prison staff to show that they have taken this information into account in assessing the prisoner's current level of risk.

This is included on the risk assessment and will form part of the brief that staff receive prior to escort. Both staff on the escort sign to say they have received a brief and fully understand what is required of them.

- The Director and head of healthcare should ensure that all staff undertaking risk assessments for prisoners taken to hospital understand the legal position on the use of restraints and that escort arrangements are proportionate to

risk. Staff should fully complete all relevant sections of the risk assessment including a medical assessment.

For all planned hospital escorts, security administrators will complete the prisoner escort report (PER) ensuring all sections are fully complete. In case of an emergency this may not always be the case, in which case as soon as is possible a fully complete PER and risk assessment will be sent to the escorting staff.

- Managers should review risk assessments within 24 hours if a prisoner is admitted as an inpatient, when there is a significant change in circumstances or during the daily management visits. They should take full account of the prisoner's medical condition in decision on the continuing use of restraints.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, no daily management visits have been completed at the hospital. They have been completed, however, over the telephone with the escorting staff. The 24-hour review once confirmed as a bed watch would be completed over the phone with the escorting staff. When NHS policy allows, daily management checks will resume at the hospital.

- Restraints should not be used during serious or invasive treatment unless there are exceptional reasons to do so.

When all staff are dispatched on escort, planned or emergency, they will receive a full brief from the orderly officer which includes a section on the Duty Director section of the risk assessment that discusses the process for removal of restraints. When a medical professional asks for restraints to be removed staff would contact the establishment and gain approval from the Duty Director. In a life-threatening situation this would automatically be completed.

- Escort staff should understand the importance of informing the prison immediately when a health professional asks for a prisoner's restraints to be removed. Decisions by managers should be taken quickly and documented.

When all staff are dispatched on escort, planned or emergency, they will receive a full brief from the orderly officer which includes a section on the Duty Director section of the risk assessment that discusses the process for removal of restraints. When a medical professional asks for restraints to be removed staff would contact the establishment and gain approval from the Duty Director. In a life-threatening situation this would automatically be completed.

In 2019 and 2020, respectively, there were 783 and 705 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened. In 2020 there were an additional 49 ACCTs relating to incoming prisoners on open or post closure ACCTs.

There were 31 trained ACCT assessors (38 in the last reporting year), 60 case managers (71 in the last reporting year) and 15 Listeners (32 in the last reporting year) in March 2021. The Listeners training by the Samaritans for additional personnel that was scheduled from April 2020 was adversely affected by COVID-19.

During the previous year, there were nine deaths in custody. Four of the deaths occurred in hospital. Seven of the deaths are still awaiting the results of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigations.

The PPO made recommendations following the two remaining deaths, referring to the need to liaise with the medical director of the Practice Plus Group to ensure a clear pathway is developed to help prisoners with dementia to access care home placements promptly, that next of kin details are kept up-to-date, that all staff are aware of the provisions in PSO24/2011 on entering cells alone when there is a risk to life, that staff are aware of shielding prisoners so they can take necessary precautions and that the accuracy of prison clocks in key areas is ensured.

The Board has been advised that all the recommendations have been actioned and a follow up is in place.

The Board continued to attend all Coroners' court hearings remotely during the reporting year.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 32 (95 in the last reporting year) serious assaults reported, with 150 (285 in the last reporting year) assaults on prisoners and staff. The number of reported fights were 20 (129 in the last reporting year), 11 of which were categorised as serious.

In March 2020, HMPPS ordered no new offending behaviour programmes to be put in place until further notice. This continued for the duration of the lockdown period and was of concern to the prisoners in respect of problems completing their sentence plans and parole applications. The Board queries whether a remote process for such programmes could have been put in place.

During the reporting period 278 challenge support and intervention plans (CSIPs) were put in place, of which 162 relate to prisoners of white ethnicity and 97 to black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners.

4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities

"The two people I care for have had no problem accessing the care and support they need". Carer, July 2020

"I have just come out as being transgender and even with everything that is going on, the prison has been very supportive and helpful to me". Prisoner, July 2020

"It was hard on all of us being behind doors for 23 hours especially for those I care for who went a bit downhill with depression". Carer, July 2020

At the end of March 2021, 567 prisoners were identified as having a disability, which equated to 27% of the total population. Within this total figure of 567, some prisoners have declared more than one disability resulting in a total of 910 recorded.

The 567 residents are spread throughout the establishment.

On arrival to Oakwood, the prisoners are issued with questionnaires on safeguarding by Red Band trusted prisoners. If any new prisoners need safeguarding measures, they are put in place by the safer custody team. Adjustments were applied to take into account COVID-19 requirements. Further support is provided by prison allocated occupational therapists who advise on necessary reasonable adjustments to support daily living. A full safeguarding induction would usually be completed but has been limited during the COVID-19 lockdown period. (See also section 6.4). There are full

and part-time carers employed to assist any prisoner identified as needing extra support, including those with underlying conditions. Any prisoner identified as having any disability measures will be provided with the necessary support and assistance.

Prisoners who are elderly, disabled or with reduced mobility are housed on a dedicated wing on Ash house block, where they are encouraged to develop their independence and confidence to associate with others. Prisoners who are medically unfit or unable to work are encouraged to attend either workshops or education. Prisoners aged 65 or over can continue to work if they wish.

At the end of March 2021, 348 prisoners (17% of the population) were aged over 50 and 47 were over 70. During the lockdown period, the work undertaken on Ash for the elderly, disabled and with reduced mobility ceased. It is hoped this will be reinstated when lockdown restrictions are lifted. For those not medically fit to work or attend education, they were provided with in-cell work which ceased during lockdown.

Ash house block accommodates 527 prisoners convicted of sexual offences (96% of the total number of such prisoners).

4.5 Use of force

There were 531 use of force incidents during the reporting period, 462 of which were spontaneous and 69 were planned. On a monthly basis, an average of 2% of the prison population was subjected to either a spontaneous or planned use of force.

The usage of force is limited to the use of ratchet cuffs, guide and hold, and control and restraint techniques. PAVA spray, batons or body belts are not used in the prison. Of the 531 incidents of use of force, control and restraint was applied on 261 occasions and guide and hold on 146 occasions. Ratchet cuffs were applied on 46 occasions.

62 incidents in October 2020 were the highest monthly total for three years with the lowest figure of 31 incidents occurring in May 2020. Eighty-eight percent of prisoners were restrained in a standing position, which is the safest position. The 21 to 35 age range are the most likely to be involved in use of force incidents.

The use of force instructor oversees all of the body worn camera recordings and picks up any use of force concerns that are not being dealt with appropriately. Re-training is mandatory if unacceptable practices are observed.

The body worn cameras are now over five years old and not now covered by a warranty for repairs, which are expensive.

The Board has observed control and restraint training and observed good attention to detail and follow up by the instructors.

“I was impressed by the rigour of the assessment process which was managed in a fair and professional manner. The safety of both prisoners and staff was stressed throughout.” IMB member, October 2021

All Board members will, post lockdown, observe control and restraint training to better understand the teamwork and control required by the control and restraint teams for the safety of both staff and prisoners.

4.6 Substance misuse

Elm is a dedicated drug recovery unit (DRU) having a maximum of 80 prisoners who participate in a 16-week course. During the early stages of the COVID-19 lockdown, the DRU prisoners were moved to Beech house block and Elm was used as a reverse cohort unit for new admissions to the prison.

The DRU returned to Elm later in the lockdown period with a reduced capacity of prisoners. The DRU currently has 12 prisoners completing the course with new groups being staggered and starting in socially distanced groups of six. All prisoners moving onto the unit are fully searched to stop illicit substances coming onto the unit and there are recovery champions helping them throughout their time on the unit. Prisoners have now also started to engage with the basic intervention group (BIG) regime on a daily basis but this was suspended during lockdown.

Throughout the reporting year, the number of prisoners on clinical treatment showed a steady decline with the number peaking at 200 in October 2020. Between October and March 2020, there were 182 code blue alerts involving new psychoactive substances (NPS) with 28% of the alerts occurring in November 2020.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

“There are no big issues or problems in regard of the lockdown. If any issues do arise, they are resolved”. Communication, information, co-operation and support (CICS) peer led group member, July 2020

“Better food and a proper connection to the TV and better communication would have improved my time here.” Prisoner on house block, November 2020

“There were no cleaning disinfectants to clean cells and no sanitisers. Only one mop and broom for the wing.” Prisoner on house block, November 2020

The prison’s good standards of cleanliness have been maintained throughout the lockdown period. Cleaning rotas have been maintained and the reduced foot traffic of prisoners, particularly on the house blocks, has contributed to maintaining the standards.

The Board is pleased to report that damaged and unreliable washers and dryers have been replaced during the reporting year. This has had a significant effect on the tidiness and appearance of the public areas on the house blocks.

At the peak of the lockdown period when only limited time was available for prisoner exercise and cell cleaning, there were comments by prisoners that there was often insufficient time to clean cells properly. However, prisoners generally understood the constraints and the pressures on staff to facilitate exercise regimes and cell cleaning.

Remote monitoring by the Board meant that members were unable to physically monitor accommodation, kitchens or servery hygiene standards through the lockdown period. However, letters were sent to the communication, information, co-operation support (CIC) group and other peer group representatives on two occasions and they were able to advise the Board that, on the whole, they were able to perform their jobs although there were some issues with access to cleaning materials.

During the lockdown period, Aramark has continued to provide a balanced menu for prisoners and two cooked meal options a day. Aramark should be commended for maintaining continuity of high-volume catering including special diets. However, as the Board resumed monitoring, concerns were raised about the quality and variety of the food provided, particularly in respect of those with special diets.

Canteen orders were still delivered but the quality of some of the fruit and vegetables was very poor. Arrangements were made with Restart to provide a range of better quality provisions. Restart is a local social enterprise initiative, which supports prisoners within custody and on release.

Eighty pods/snooze boxes were installed at the end of the first quarter of 2020 which have since been populated by trusted prisoners, mostly from Douglas. The knock-on effect of this is that a number of cells have been made available for single use.

5.2 Segregation

“We are left behind our doors for 23 hours and this led to me doing what I did. I had a clean, non-violent record for 14 months pre-lockdown.” Prisoner, January 2021

The prison’s CSU is a self-contained block with 24 standard cells, two cells providing special accommodation and two dirty protest cells. The CSU is a clean and well-maintained unit.

Prisoners in the CSU were not provided with a TV during lockdown as there is no TV signal available in this block. The Board was concerned that where prisoners are sent to the CSU for their own interest, they did not have access to a TV. Prisoners were however, provided with newspapers and radios. Prisoners within the CSU could not use the internal activities room but still had access to gym equipment on the CSU yard.

The restrictions imposed during the lockdown period meant that indoor activities and individual fitness sessions have not taken place. However, regular visits by the duty director and chaplaincy have continued to take place. The Board produced a letter that was given to all prisoners moving to the CSU, which outlined the support that was available to them from the Board.

Good order reviews and adjudications continued to take place throughout the lockdown period. Telephone facilities were installed in the review room to enable members to call in and remotely monitor both hearings. Throughout the lockdown period, all good order reviews were monitored by the Board together with a targeted number of adjudications. Prisoners were made aware of the Board’s presence at both sets of hearings and they were advised that members were available to speak with them, confidentially, after the hearings.

Reviews are, invariably, handled sensitively but firmly with the prisoners' wellbeing to the fore. Whilst the CSU made every effort to re-locate prisoners back to the house blocks where possible and safe to do so, a number of prisoners were unwilling to re-locate as they felt that the CSU regime was safer than that of the house blocks. Transfers between prisons and mental health establishments did not easily take place due to the restrictions, which meant prisoners stayed in the CSU longer than was desirable.

The IA ceased sitting shortly after the start of the lockdown period. The prison's internal adjudicator's sentencing powers were in line with the adjudication tariff of up to 32 days cellular confinement, but limited in relation to the additional powers that the IA has.

The IA's last visit before lockdown was on 20 March 2020. Virtual IA adjudications commenced on 11 September 2020 and are continuing.

The remote working by the IA was, initially, hampered by connectivity with the platform being used. This has now been resolved. However, the practicality of production and transfer of additional evidence to the IA continues to be problematic.

The CSU continues to be well managed at FLM and SMT level. Their experience and approach to both prisoners and staff, encourages a professional and supportive environment for prisoners. The Board commends the CSU staff for the respect, patience and support they have consistently provided to all CSU prisoners but especially those suffering mental health and behavioural problems, which were exacerbated by the constraints of the prolonged lockdown period.

There were some prisoners on ACCTs in the CSU but the Board were unable to monitor the content of the ACCT reports remotely. There were a small number who were in the CSU for over 42 days owing to the national restrictions on movement; some had mental health problems, some needed to be moved for their own safety, some were re-categorised. The Board monitored this in discussion with the Director and the Controller and were satisfied that everything was being done to effect transfers as soon as possible.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

The relationships between staff and prisoners have been good throughout the lockdown period. The period of COVID-19 lockdown has been a testing and traumatic time for both staff and prisoners. Despite the ongoing threat of infection, the prison has always been able to maintain its operational requirements to keep prisoners protected and safe.

Both management and staff are commended for their commitment and dedication under the most difficult of circumstances.

There is no doubt that the majority of prisoners understood and were appreciative of the commitment by staff to provide a safe environment to protect their wellbeing. At its most restrictive, the lockdown imposed on the prisoners was severe and prolonged. Regular regime updates from the Director, to both staff and prisoners, helped develop a mutual dependency of support and understanding to manage the worst of the pandemic.

Throughout the lockdown period, every opportunity was taken, when safe and appropriate to do so within HMPPS instructions, to reduce the severity of the regime to extend exercise periods and association within secure cohorts. On Douglas, bingo sessions were arranged for prisoners within their cohorts and gym equipment was made available on each of the house blocks.

4069 key worker sessions took place prior to the suspension of the scheme in March 2020. The key worker scheme was suspended at the start of the lockdown regime on 24 March 2020. During the reporting period, 10,267 key worker sessions were completed. However, the scheme continues to be delivered under an 'Exceptional Delivery Model' prioritised into two categories:

Priority 1: Prisoners that meet the following criteria receive a weekly key worker session – ACCT, CSIP, CSU, transgender, medically vulnerable, shielding, high risk medical, complex cases, care leavers and prisoners who fall under high-risk public protection being released from custody within the next four weeks.

Priority 2: Prisoners receive a 15 minute, monthly 'key intervention' session. This includes prisoners that meet the following criteria namely, foreign nationals, veterans and prisoners with no family contact.

In general, the prisoner/staff relationships have been good with the realisation, by prisoners, that staff are working to keep them safe.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The COVID-19 lockdown prevented the range of equality events and meetings taking place across all the house blocks. An equality newsletter continued to be published, led by a safer custody officer.

Protected characteristics meetings that were previously held bi-monthly did not take place during the lockdown period.

During the reporting period, there were 162 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) submitted compared with 158 the previous year. By protected characteristic, race represented 72% of DIRFs submitted compared with 55% the previous year.

Of the total number of DIRFs submitted during the reporting period, 65% were submitted by prisoners and 30% by G4S staff, which is the same as the previous reporting year. Of the DIRFs found proven, 60% were submitted by G4S staff and 30% by prisoners, which is also the same as the last reporting year. The Board intends to monitor the outcomes of DIRFs during the next reporting period.

A review of DIRFs showed that in relation to ethnicity for the January to March 2021 period, of the total number of 1247 submissions made, 869 were made against white prisoners and 378 against multiple ethnic groups. The percentage of submissions proven against white prisoners was 40% and 15% were proven against multiple ethnic groups. In the monitoring that the Board was able to undertake, we have found no evidence of a disproportionate number of adjudications, use of force etc. against multiple ethnic groups. DIRF responses that the Board has seen showed that racist behaviour was challenged effectively.

There are currently 200 foreign national prisoners with 13 detainees held on IS91 where they are held under immigration detention powers. The prison works collaboratively with HMPs Huntercombe and Risley who hold foreign national prisoners.

Foreign nationals are seen on arrival and induction. They are supported by other prisoners who provide language and translation support. All new arrivals are given an induction COVID-19/information booklet translated into different languages. This is supplemented by a question-and-answer leaflet sent to all house blocks. This is to help staff answer the general questions asked by foreign nationals as well as provide information on legal matters, entitlements and how such support can be accessed. Letters and five-minute phone calls are available and regularly advertised. The kiosks situated on each of the house blocks have provision for use in 20 different languages. The Board will be undertaking a review of services available to those who do not speak English during the next reporting year.

Home Office surgeries have not taken place during the lockdown period. However, there is regular contact by staff with the Home Office team, by email, to deal with any issues that arise.

An in-house prisoner-led peer group, Your Consultation Group (YCG), was able to continue to offer its support, notwithstanding safety restrictions in place. YCG has direct contact with the policy writers at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to clarify difficulties with interpretation of Prison Service Orders (PSO) and Prison Service Instructions (PSIs) and to discuss policy anomalies. Out of lockdown, the YCG will also attend UKBA surgeries to offer assistance to foreign nationals.

There are approximately 68 prisoners who have previously been employed by HM Forces. There are veterans in custody prisoner representatives who, outside of lockdown, meet with new prisoners on arrival, to signpost them to appropriate peer group support.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team has provided excellent support throughout the lockdown period with regular visits to the CSU and throughout the prison. Bereavement and pastoral support were given to prisoners of all denominations. Examples of the support provided include the Sikh chaplain emailing faith literature via staff and a newsletter to Sikh prisoners, and online access to funerals for all denominations.

Access to prison radio and TV for services provided by the chaplaincy team will be available during the first quarter of the next reporting year.

5.6 Incentives schemes (IEPs)

From the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period, the prison has adopted a balanced approach to the use of IEPs, taking into account the stringency of the lockdown processes.

During the lockdown period only those that were involved in an incident and sent to the CSU were put on a basic regime, which was then authorised by the Director.

In January 2021 new documentation was introduced to enable a regular review of those prisoners on a basic regime with a view to changing to standard where behaviour had improved. All decisions were recorded in the defensive decision log. 0.6% of prisoners are now on a basic regime within the CSU.

5.7 Complaints

The total number of complaints received by the prison during the reporting period was 1907, of which 124 (6.5%) were upheld and 1782 (93.5%) were rejected. In the previous reporting year there were 2617 complaints received by the prison, of which 164 (6%) were upheld and 1783 (94%) were rejected.

There were 37% fewer complaints received by the prison during the reporting year compared to the previous year, with the two main categories of complaints being re-categorisation and residential. The restrictive lockdown periods and the cessation of applications for category D status accounted for the two main areas of complaints.

During the three-month period from January to March 2021, 48 complaints were dealt with under the health complaints procedure. 100% of the complaints were dealt with within three days. There were no main themes of concern.

5.8 Property

The number of property complaints from within Oakwood for this year was 17 against 20 last year. The number of property complaints either during transfer or in another establishment was 49 this year against 71 last year.

Throughout the year, the Board has expressed concern about the disproportionate number of property applications from prisoners who claim that all, or some, of their property has not been received from the transferring prisons. Many of the complaints relate to two prisons in particular, HMPs Hewell and Birmingham.

The Board commented in last year's report about its concerns relating to the management, accountability and transfer of property across the prison estate and little seems to have been done at a national level to improve on this.

The issue of missing property during transfers to and from the prison is still a concern to the Board. New arrivals have also commented that the delay in checking telephone numbers before a prisoner is allowed to call his family can often take days and sometimes longer, resulting in families not being informed of the move.

The Board is further concerned regarding the levels of property that go missing following cell searches. The Board will monitor this issue going forward.

The overall compensation payments made by the prison was £3,641 during this reporting year against £1,255 last year. Last year's figure includes four large settlement payments.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

“The only thing I would like to say is when the Health Champions can start work again as we can take some of the strain off Healthcare.” Prisoner Health Champion, June 2020

The healthcare provider has been working in an urgent and emergency mode for most of the year but continued to maintain a level of care equivalent to that provided in the community. Consequently, no routine interventions have taken place unless deemed to be essential.

The head of healthcare is to be congratulated on the support given to her team during this difficult period. During the reporting period she personally responded via remote monitoring on a regular basis to Board requests in relation to prisoners' healthcare needs.

There have been virtual calls set up with the GP; nurses have continued to provide triage over the telephone. Where it is deemed necessary for the prisoner to be seen by the GP after triaging, arrangements have been made. End of life care has been provided in one case. Additional money was made available by NHS England, who commissioned Care UK to provide 24-hour support to cover the COVID-19 period. This has been staffed by a nurse and a healthcare assistant.

Hazel in-patient unit was opened and funded by G4S to act as an isolation unit of 22 beds for prisoners, staffed by PCOs. Hazel was used for end of life care prisoners or any prisoner who it was felt had deteriorated and needed additional care.

The healthcare team supported the establishment of the reverse cohort unit on Elm which worked well. This provision was transferred to Beech uppers at the beginning of June.

There were no major issues in relation to the accessing of appropriate PPE during the period.

There have been the following recurring themes reported on rota reports:

- Concerns regarding prisoners being transferred from HMPs Birmingham and Dovegate where medical issues were not identified and/or communicated.
- Concerns regarding late arrivals of new prisoners and time pressures that nurses experience to complete health checks when information from sending prisons is poor or non-existent.
- Concerns regarding prisoners being released without medication, following a court appearance.
- There were prisoners transferring into the prison for short periods of time, sometimes only a week, leaving the prison to deal with issues around substance and alcohol misuse, accommodation etc. before discharge.

A mental health first aid meeting was set up by the patient lead health officer in March 2021 and an action plan was put in place for more support to be offered to prisoners exhibiting mental health problems.

A 'survive and thrive' workshop is being developed, in readiness for when restrictions are eased, to help with learning new ways to cope.

Understandably most of the regular monitoring in health did not take place during the COVID-19 period. Both the integrated quality assurance and improvement meeting and the incident review group will recommence in the next reporting year.

6.2 Physical healthcare

During lockdown prisoners only had access to specialist care where it was urgent or essential. Any necessary follow up appointments were by phone. During the reporting period, 448 prisoners were referred to accident and emergency departments. As at 31 March 2021, 289 prisoners are awaiting dental treatment and 63 awaiting eye tests with 483 waiting for specialist treatment. (This is made up of 298 initial appointments and 185 follow up appointments).

Whilst some prisoners have raised concerns about the waiting times for treatment, the Board is of the view that waiting times were equivalent to those in the community.

6.3 Mental health

During the reporting period the mental health team were unable to prioritise the routine referrals following on from a period of high referral rates in March and April 2020. Increased need in regard to higher numbers of prisoners presenting as acutely unwell has put pressure on the service.

Case load numbers stand at 287 for mental healthcare and 220 for psychosocial care at the end of March 2021.

Mental healthcare has continued on a one-to-one basis whenever possible; however the number of staff available was reduced. The team became fully operational in mid-June. All group work ceased at the beginning of lockdown but the mental health team have continued to be available to those in most need to provide an appropriate level of support. They have used a triage service over the phone but there has been a face-to-face service where it was deemed necessary

The mental health team is to be commended for the work they have done on arranging for workbooks on anxiety and depression to be translated into other languages.

6.4 Social care

At the end of March 2021, there were four prisoners in receipt of a care package provided by Staffordshire County Council. They reside on Ash and Douglas. Four social workers are assigned to Oakwood along with other Staffordshire prisons. There is an allocated occupational therapist for the prison. Aids to daily living can be made available for prisoners who need reasonable adjustments for their day-to-day living. Assessments take place for prisoners who are due for transfer or for release, to ensure their support continues.

The Board has received comments from prisoners with disabilities concerning problems they have experienced during lockdown:

"I am forced to leave the sanctuary of my cell, twice a day to collect medication from the healthcare dispensary. I am a wheelchair user and disabled so I cannot get exercise in the time allowed and on my own." Prisoner with disabilities, February 2021

6.5 Exercise, regime

Throughout the peak of the pandemic, daily exercise for prisoners within dedicated cohorts was limited to 30 minutes. Whilst time management, by staff, of the exercise time was a logistical challenge to enable all prisoners to have an exercise period with appropriate escort and supervision, in the main the majority of prisoners were compliant and staff ensured that exercise time took place. As the restrictions eased the amount of time for exercise was increased. Additional time was available for use of the kiosk.

The gym area and outside recreational facilities have, for a significant part of the reporting period, not been available for use in accordance with HMPPS instructions. Gym equipment has been made available on the house block external yards as a replacement for prisoners to use, in accordance with HMPPS instructions.

As the lockdown restrictions eased, exercise time was increased accordingly but only when deemed safe to do so. Within the confines of each individual house block, outside gym equipment was made available for use under supervision.

Regular COVID-19 updates from the Director to both prisoners and staff explaining the need for restrictions helped, generally, to manage expectations.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Elm became the unit for reverse cohorting and the prisoners resident on Elm transferred to Beech house block. When Elm resumed as DRU, the head of residence reviewed the admission criteria and processes to prevent the ingress of prohibited substances.

The substance misuse team continued to work programmes with prisoners on an individual basis but there were no group work programmes. Every possible help was given when prisoners were being released, with full and comprehensive release planning in place.

6.7 Soft skills

There are over 20 peer led groups operating within the prison. Most ceased working/meeting at the start of lockdown. The Board contacted group representatives by letter or survey. Some of their responses are as follows:

"The Resettlement, Advice Line and Peers' Helpline (RALPH) team has been able to provide the support we have always provided to people being released before lockdown as we have the RALPH to call at any time during the day." Prisoner, August 2020

*"I hope all of you at the IMB are well and in good spirits. Thank you for this check up on us". Prisoner (Veterans' Group): May 2020*In November 2020, the Board conducted a detailed survey of veterans within the prison requesting feedback on

what help and support they had received during the extended lockdown period. It was explained that the feedback would help to better understand the kind of support received as well as identifying areas where support needs had not been met.

Twenty-seven responses from 83 surveys were received. With many veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the key concerns were about lack of access to mental health support and the stress from extended periods of lockdown.

The veterans' representative, who made frequent visits to all veterans pre-COVID-19, was unable to visit for much of the lockdown periods. This level of personal support could not be replicated and was greatly missed.

Nevertheless, there were many positive comments of understanding of the need for such a lockdown and of the help and understanding from staff of their particular needs and concerns.

The prison managed to achieve two parenting courses in the summer of 2020. The new family intervention team (FIT), established in October 2020, has undertaken one-to-one meetings with prisoners to check on their family needs and advise on Purple Visits.

A new peer group commenced for care leavers in the summer of 2020. One of the main purposes of the group is to make people aware of care leavers and how they can offer more support to the prisoners.

Letters were sent to the Communication Information Co-operation (CIC) representatives at the beginning and midpoint of lockdown:

- *“Concerns for many on the house blocks who have ‘obvious’ mental health issues but no regular mental health team visits or interventions.”*
- *“Prisoners ‘feel’ that their ‘complaints’ are not being taken seriously enough which is causing conflict with officers when prisoners confront the officers with their issues.”*
- *“Lack of organised games and competitions in the exercise yard especially as they are only getting between 15 and 30 minutes per day. At the beginning of lockdown, these activities were much appreciated but unavailable now.”*

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

“I have been a maths monitor for six years and I have really enjoyed the job. All stopped in March and no thank you from NOVUS staff. Had I been working up to my release I would have helped 1000 prisoners.” Prisoner providing education support, November 2020

“We have been very fortunate, on Ash, having the Ash satellite library facility which has been very well utilised. It is difficult to see how more could have been done whilst minimising health risks.” Library orderly, February 2021

“I only had time to get Level 1 Music before lockdown. I have asked for my music certificate and the CD I made, but have had no reply from Novus.” Prisoner, December 2020.

“I tried to complete my sentence plan for 11 months but to no avail. I lost my D Cat because of this.” Prisoner, January 2021

Novus staff have not been on site since March 2020, but they have provided distraction packs, which were distributed throughout the establishment. Two thousand copies were being printed weekly; this reduced to 800 from July due to education packs being provided, which reduced the need. Distraction packs were still being made available to the house blocks at the end of the reporting period.

Prospects created a jobs newsletter and jobs board that was sent out to prisoners leaving the establishment. There were Christmas, art and fitness competitions. The Shannon Trust also created packs that were sent out weekly.

There were 498 English and 499 Maths assessments during the reporting period. A review of educational provision is being undertaken during the reporting period 2021/22 when comparative data will be available.

The library has not been available, but a trolley service has been arranged on the house blocks, making both books and DVDs available to the prisoners. Library staff organised a writing competition for prisoners called 10 x 10.

The Board considers that the change of education provider to Novus in April 2019 has resulted in a number of significant and challenging staffing issues, which have impacted detrimentally on the quality and quantity of staffing and education provision. Poor staff retention and recruitment and increased sickness levels have resulted in non-delivery of new courses that were stated on the annual delivery plan provided by Novus. The Board considers that the quality and quantity of the education provision has fallen sharply since its last annual report and that the delivery plan commitments made by Novus have not been achieved.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There has been no vocational work, apart from essential tasks, available during the lockdown period.

7.3 Offender Management, progression

“I have been waiting a long time for my review for Cat D. I am unsure about what is happening as I do not get feedback from the OMU.” Prisoner awaiting cat D review, February 2021

There have been delays in long-term prisoners receiving their offender assessment system (OASyS) reports, without which they are unable to progress to category D status.

The offender management team has worked on a full-time basis throughout lockdown although they have not had face-to-face contact with prisoners. Eventually access to prisoners via in-cell phones was arranged. Remote access to Parole Boards was also arranged and a number of prisoners reported they felt more comfortable using this medium rather than a face-to-face meeting.

7.4 Family contact

“I am not interested in using Purple Visits. It takes too long to set up.” Prisoner, January 2021

“Because of the distance from my family, Purple Visits is good. I can see my grandchildren 'cos I am missing them.” Prisoner, February 2021

“We were part of a group looking at plans for visits starting up again. All our queries were answered and our views listened to in relation to making the Visits' Hall a safer place.” Prisoner, July 2020

All visits ceased on 24 March 2020. Social visits re-started on 28 July 2020 whilst Purple Visits (video visits) commenced on 12 October 2020. All face-to-face visits ceased on 20 October 2020 due to high infection rates within the prison. All face-to-face visits, nationally, ceased on 20 December 2020. Social visits resumed on 26 April 2021 and Purple Visits have been ongoing

The help and advice line for offenders' wives (HALOW) has been open and supported both prisoners and families during lockdown. HALOW has also telephoned families regularly and gifts have been sent out to children. The helpline has been available throughout the lockdown period. A Facebook page was set up for children with activities for them to take part in. HALOW has also provided the visits and family intervention team (FIT) with family support workers.

At the beginning of lockdown, staff made arrangements to make safe the visits area. Furniture was replaced to enhance social distancing, toys and books were removed, washing stations installed at the entrance to the visits' hall and masks have to be worn.

The FIT enabled photos to be taken for prisoners to send to their families at Christmas. A more discreet search has been installed for visitors to be searched under religious and cultural guidelines. The FIT has a comprehensive action plan in place to support families.

7.5 Resettlement planning

“I have done in-cell work and got 7 certificates and am working with Resettlement.” Prisoner November 2020

There has been no face-to-face contact with the resettlement team, although it has provided remote support throughout lockdown. Liaison with community rehabilitation companies has continued as has offender supervision to ensure the management of risk relating to prisoners being released.

A survey was undertaken over a three-month period by a Board member and the following summarises the responses:

- The majority of the survey respondents came to Oakwood during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. These prisoners arrived very close to the end of their sentences. The amount of time for the specialist services, OMU, resettlement, education and work training was very short to assist these prisoners.
- On leaving Oakwood four of the respondents were returning to their previous homes and did not need help from resettlement. The majority however, needed help to secure a place to stay. Accommodation was secured for a very high percentage of prisoners at the end of their sentence.
- The majority of respondents wanted to attend the courses and activities that were part of their sentence plans, giving rise to the comments that due to the absence of these opportunities they were deprived of the opportunity to move to category D establishments.
- Two prisoners said that they had completed their courses and were waiting for their certificates, which they had not received although they had asked for them. The prisoner waiting for his music certificate was concerned because he was intending to use it to try and obtain work in the music industry.
- Disappointment was expressed that it was not possible to work during the pandemic/lockdown. The prisoner who had been working as a maths tutor was particularly disappointed that his role had ceased.
- Several respondents stated they knew how to access universal credit, and help had been received to obtain suitable identification.
- The majority of respondents said they knew how to register with a GP. Those on medication thought they would leave with enough medication to cover their needs until they were able to contact their doctor.
- Advice on keeping safe in the community with COVID-19 was given to some in Oakwood and one had been given advice by his partner by telephone. But several respondents said they would have liked more information about COVID-19, as they were worried for their families and themselves. One prisoner felt that face coverings should have been issued to prisoners from the beginning.
- There was recognition that the COVID-19 situation had to be lived with and prisoners had to get on with the new normal. But there were some things that would have made daily life better, for example having a single cell, more time for exercise and time out of cell. There was mention of a lot of time being spent watching TV and better TV reception would have been appreciated. A positive comment was made that Oakwood has a good complaints system.
- It was commented on that staying for long periods in a cell had led to feeling depressed and gaining weight due to lack of exercise; prison food was perceived to be getting worse.
- One respondent said he had had to wait four months to see a doctor. Another comment was that staff made excuses when they had not done things for the prisoners. More visibility of senior managers and professional staff would have helped

8. The work of the IMB

During the course of the year the Board at HMP Oakwood has continued to work both in the prison and remotely. The Board had one member leave for personal reasons and one on a sabbatical for health reasons for part of the reporting year.

The Board continued with the recruitment of new members and during the period three were appointed and have commenced training remotely, supported by the Board Development Officer and their mentors.

Throughout the lockdown period the Board enjoyed support and contact from a member of the senior management team on a weekly basis. The support from prison staff during the Board's extended periods of remote monitoring has been excellent, enabling the Board to continue to effectively remotely monitor the work of the prison.

By way of monitoring remotely, the Board has:

- Arranged for the Chair and Vice Chair to have remote access to systems
- Arranged for members to have access to prisoners via the in-cell phone system from the IMB office
- Worked with members to look at working arrangements, post COVID-19, and produced a Plan Ahead document to facilitate monitoring as members return to the prison
- Undertaken a risk assessment for the Board, to enable members to work safely in the office and around the prison
- Continued to "attend" reviews and adjudications remotely
- Provided prisoners arriving in reception with a letter explaining how to contact the Board during remote monitoring. A letter was also provided for prisoners in the CSU on how the Board continues to provide support notwithstanding remote monitoring
- Sent out letters to the members of all the peer led groups seeking views during lockdown
- Undertaken surveys to seek the views of a wide range of prisoners
- Appointed a member to take the lead in monitoring the 0800 call system provided by the Secretariat for the provision of applications to the Board
- Appointed a member to take part in the national discussions regarding the property framework
- Appointed a member to take part in the consultation on the use of IT for Board members

The Chair also took part in a presentation on the monitoring framework.

This has been a very busy year for the Board and, as Chair, I am proud of all that we have achieved in very difficult circumstances.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10 members, 1 trainee
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9 members, 2 trainees
Total number of visits to the establishment	174
Total number of segregation reviews attended	298

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	33
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	12	26
C	Equality	11	24
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	20	15
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	37	6
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	41	18
F	Food and kitchens	12	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	67	89
H1	Property within this establishment	20	17
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	71	49
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	6	10
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	98	51
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	66	54
K	Transfers	18	6
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	116	60
	Total number of applications	612	465



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