



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Low Newton

**For reporting year  
1 March 2020 – 28 February 2021**

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## **Introductory sections 1 - 3**

### **1. Statutory role of the IMB**

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Description of the establishment

Low Newton opened in 1965 as a Remand Centre with four wings holding young men up to 21 years of age and a discrete wing for women of all ages on remand and sentenced.

The prison was re-roled as a women's prison in 1998 when it was refurbished. It now consists of eight residential wings together with general prisoner use areas e.g. Healthcare.

Low Newton holds women of all ages from 18 years onwards on remand and sentenced. It includes those serving short sentences to those serving licence sentences and also restricted status (high security) women.

- Operational capacity is 344
- CNA 314 (Certified Normal Accommodation – uncrowded capacity)
- COVID operational capacity 307
- Current operational capacity 274 (temporary reduction due to decommissioned accommodation)

Most cells are single occupancy with a small number of double occupancy cells.

Adult prisoners and young offenders are integrated. Risk assessments are carried out before it is decided on which wing a young offender should be located.

The age profile of the residents is (as of 11 May 2021):

Age Range	Total Prisoners
18-21	10
22-29	39
30-39	87
40-49	62
50-59	26
60-69	13
<b>Total:</b>	<b>237</b>

There are still serious problems with the roofs of various parts of the prison leaking water and as a result there has been a restriction in the available number of education classrooms and workshops. This has meant a reduction in the number of jobs and facilities available to the women. Some of the roofs have had temporary repairs and an agreement has been made to replace others with permanent repairs. The contract was due to start in August 2021.

G wing has been emptied as it is nationally one of the wings that failed health & safety and fire regulations following a review of prisons for safety issues.

The Governor took up the position on 1 February 2020. He immediately made some changes to the regime. The women are now known as prisoners not residents and he put officers into 'white shirts'. These changes have been much appreciated by both the women and the staff and makes for a more mutually respectful atmosphere.

### **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 and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

It is the Board's opinion that the prison provides an environment that protects the safety of the prisoners. The prisoners have been surveyed by the IMB during the lockdown and have confirmed that they feel safe. The Board is of the opinion that there may be lessons to be learnt from the experiences formed by the Covid regime that may be transferable to a normal regime. The establishment is kept clean and tidy both inside and out by both prisoners and staff.

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

It is the view of the board that the prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. Interactions between staff and prisoners are normally good and friendly. Staff know the prisoners under their care. The pandemic has meant the staff have showed innovation and different service delivery methods supporting prisoners to keep them occupied.

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

The Board considers that prisoners' health needs are generally well met. The last year has been difficult and ways of providing healthcare have had to be changed. There will be a period of time while appointments with outside healthcare providers are caught up following their postponement during the lockdown period. The Board continues to be concerned about the number of women in the prison who have serious mental health issues.

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

A wide range of interventions is provided to assist in resettlement but areas of concern are finding appropriate accommodation and dealing with mental health issues. Low Newton's priority has always been to offer every prisoner opportunities and support to plan for their successful, crime free release.

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

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

There is still a large number of women with severe mental health issues and the Board would support measures to enable appropriate women to be fast tracked to secure hospitals. The Board is concerned that the prison is regularly being used as a 'place of safety' for women with acute mental health difficulties.

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

Additional funding would enable the Governor to invest in new educational and vocational initiatives to allow for additional less stereotypically women's employment opportunities. This would help in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

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

Is there merit in a review of mental health services in the prison to allow for the possible creation of a mental health unit?

Are more handsets needed to allow more staff to access prisoners via the in-cell phones? This contact seems to have been particularly beneficial during lockdown.

Consistent timings of good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews would enable the Board to attend more frequently. It is acknowledged that recently these have been set down for 2pm on a Wednesday which has been helpful.

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

The last year has been difficult for the prison but the Board feels that staff have coped well. There is a stable senior management team committed to taking things forward for the prisoners.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **Introduction**

The prison holds three safety meetings every month of which two are held weekly – safety intervention and the relatively new initiative safety and support. The third is the safer prison and violence reduction meeting held monthly.

The safety intervention meeting is attended by a cross-section of departments and focuses on key aspects that involve:

- violence in prisons estimator (VIPER) top ten
- care and separation Unit (CSU)
- intelligence reports
- cell sharing and risk assessment (CSRA) reviews
- ACCTs
- pregnant prisoners

An action plan is formulated and action taken is discussed at the next weekly meeting.

#### **The safer prisons team**

The priorities for the safety team since September 2020 and policies and practices are:

#### ***Cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA)***

Every act of violence at Low Newton now triggers a review of the prisoner's CSRA and this is done every Friday during the safety intervention meeting. This is now embedded and improves safety in the establishment.

#### ***Challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP)***

There is ongoing support for all the prison's custodial managers and senior officers in the use of CSIP and monitoring; this means that all incidents involving threats, bullying or actual violence result in a CSIP referral which will be fully investigated.

#### ***Body-worn video camera (BWVC)***

Staff received training and the prison resolved hardware issues with the aims of lowering violence, reducing false allegations, protecting prisoners and staff, and providing evidence which could be used in court to secure conviction.

#### ***Listeners***

This prison has only three Listeners which is 50% below complement. A recruitment campaign is planned.

## **Safer prisons and violence reduction meeting**

This meeting takes place on the second week of the month and is a comprehensive review of the previous month and a look forward. Major items on the agenda include:

- Samaritans and Listeners update
- violence and self-harm
- CSIPs
- ACCT assurance analysis
- exit surveys
- equalities monitoring tool (EMT)
- safer prisons continuous improvement plan

As with other safety meetings attendees are from the relevant areas of the establishment who all have an input.

## **Summary of safety meetings**

The combination of the three safety meetings (as each dovetails into the other) ensures the prison is highly focussed on all safety aspects and is very proactive. Actions are followed up and accountability takes place. Analysis and trends are examined. Individual case management is reviewed, plans are formulated and close management of safety is evident.

The Board is very satisfied through its observations that the safety teams work extremely effectively to minimise risks to both prisoners and staff.

The Board will continue to monitor.

## **Safety and support unit**

This new initiative was implemented in December 2020 with the primary aims of identifying risk and having in place a structure to manage the supply and distribution of illegal and illicit items.

Initially the strategy is to isolate prisoners to prevent distribution of illicit items and provide a safe environment and then to encourage engagement with interventions and support to address this offending behaviour.

Working with the women Low Newton will develop these services to provide help, support and intervention to those trafficking into the prison.

The IMB has observed that this policy and procedures are carried out and weekly meetings take place to review progress. The Board will continue to monitor.

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

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) is the care planning process for prisoners identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm. The ACCT process requires that certain actions are taken to ensure that the risk of suicide and self-harm



is reduced. The table shows the number of ACCTs opened per month and total for the annual reporting period.

March	25
April	29
May	25
June	20
July	20
August	20
September	22
October	26
November	20
December	19
January	26
February	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>272</b>

The prison manages individual prisoners on ACCTs through a procedure which involves ACCT quality assurance and close management from officers on duty through the levels up to the governor responsible. The procedures in place ensure that all other relevant parties i.e. mental health, healthcare are fully involved.

The IMB members observe open ACCTs whilst on rota duties and the member whose area of special interest (ASI) this is attends the safety intervention meeting which provides weekly updates specific to the prisoner currently on an ACCT.

The new ACCT documentation has been causing some staff members some difficulty in their completion. Training has been undertaken but the new format appears to be a lot more complicated and resource intensive. The prison has flagged this up with Prison Service headquarters safety team.

The highest level of monthly totals was the beginning of lockdown periods. The Board's evidence through monitoring shows the prison is vigilant in its handling of those who are vulnerable.

The table below shows the number of acts of self-harm each month

March	46
April	17
May	20
June	21
July	44
August	45
September	60
October	78
November	61
December	26
January	20
February	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>470</b>

The trend shows a significant increase during the summer and autumn months (July to November.) This is mainly accounted for by a small number of prisoners repeatedly self-harming. An example of this is in February 2021 when, of the 32 incidents involving 11 individuals, 3 prolific self-harmers (defined as those harming 5 times or more) accounted for 20 of the incidents.

There was one death in custody during the reporting period, although the prisoner actually died in an outside hospital having been there for just over two months.

## **LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN SAFETY SURVEY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the annual reporting period the IMB carried out two major prisoner safety surveys seeking their views of how they have found 'Life under lockdown'.

The first survey was conducted in August 2020 with no Covid-19 in the prison but under the lockdown regime.

The second survey was conducted during the middle of January 2021 immediately after the prison was Covid-19 free following an outbreak.

The same questions were asked in both surveys which ensured consistency and continuity.

The survey had four primary objectives and five elements of methodology and 69 prisoners were interviewed (28% of the prison population).

### ***First survey key findings***

*Q1 How well do you think you have coped under lockdown? Not well, well, very well*

- 19% (13) stated they had not coped well due to mental health issues
- 48% (33 prisoners) said they had coped well
- 33% (23 respondents) said they coped very well

*Q2 How well do you think the prison managed Covid-19? Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good*

- 7% (five prisoners) said the prison's management of the virus was unsatisfactory
- 25% (17 women) said the prison had managed the situation satisfactorily
- 68% (47 women) stated that the prison staff had managed well.

*Q3 How has the staff treated you under lockdown? – not well, well, very well*

- 7% (five) of the respondents said they had not been treated well
- 46% (31 prisoners) answered that the staff had treated them well
- 47% (33 prisoners) said they had been looked after very well

*Q4 How safe have you felt during the pandemic? – not safe, safe, very safe*

- 7% (five prisoners) said they did not feel safe in the prison
- 39% (27) of those interviewed felt safe in the prison
- 54% (37 women) felt very safe during their time in the prison.

### **Second survey key findings**

*Q1 How well do you think you have coped under lockdown? – not well, well, very well*

- 22% (15) stated they had not coped well
- 52% (36 prisoners) said they had coped well
- 26% (18 respondents) said they had coped very well

*Q2 How well do you think the prison and staff has managed COVID 19?*

*Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good*

- 8% (six prisoners) said that the prison's management of the virus was unsatisfactory
- 38% (26 women) said the prison had managed the situation satisfactorily
- 54% (37 women) stated that the prison staff had managed well

*Q3 How has the staff treated you under lockdown? - not well, well, very well*

- 3% (3) of the respondents felt they had not been treated well
- 41% (28 prisoners) answered that the staff had treated them well
- 55% (38 prisoners) said they had been looked after very well

*Q4 How safe have you felt during the pandemic? – not safe, safe, very safe*

- 10% (seven prisoners) said they had not felt safe in the prison
- 43% (30 prisoners) said that they felt safe in the prison
- 46% (32 women) said that they felt very safe during their time in the prison;

Evidence from both surveys reveal that the prison, its management and staff are to be commended on its handling of Covid-19 challenges but it can be seen the impact on the women of the situation was quite noticeable particularly in relation to coping.

## **4.2 Violence and violence reduction**

This breakdown deals with the three main elements of acts of violence committed: prisoner on prisoner, fights (where more than two prisoners are involved), and assaults on staff.

### **Prisoner on prisoner**

March	1
April	1
May	2
June	1
July	1
August	1
September	1
October	4
November	2
December	1

January	1
February	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

There is no alarming trend throughout the year.

### **Fights**

March	3
April	1
May	1
June	0
July	3
August	1
September	0
October	1
November	0
December	0
January	1
February	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

This is where two or more prisoners are involved and since August 2020 there has been a decline in the number of incidences.

### **Prisoner on staff**

March	0
April	5
May	0
June	0
July	6
August	5
September	2
October	12
November	6
December	6
January	5
February	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>

Around half of assaults on staff are committed by prisoners with mental health issues. The peak in October 2020 is accounted for by two prisoners carrying out seven assaults on staff.

### **Level of force used**

	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Guided holds	8	4	6	1	7	5	5	4	3	4	2	8
Control and restraint	4	8	0	1	17	9	14	12	12	3	5	1
Personal protection	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	7	0	0	2	4
Other	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0

The months that show higher levels in the use of force are attributable to one particular individual who was involved in 40 incidents over these periods

### **4.3 Substance misuse**

As mandatory drug testing (MDT) was suspended throughout this period, there is no data for positive tests, however a proactive initiative implemented in December 2020 (safety and support unit – see above) has been to reduce illicit items being distributed into the prison. Suspicion-based MDTs have been carried as part of the introduction of the safety and support unit to provide intelligence regarding trafficking of illicit substances into the prison. This is proving successful in its aims.

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

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

Low Newton has at present eight wings – A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and I wings plus a healthcare unit and the care and separation unit (CSU) which has three cells. Prisoners take great pride in cleaning these areas and keeping the prison tidy.

A single cell occupancy policy is operating under the current Covid regime and since the last report all cells have in-cell telephones. There is no overcrowding at present and there is a reduced operational capacity to accommodate this. Pre-Covid this was 344; currently it is 274.

G wing is being demolished soon for health and safety reasons and has now been emptied in preparation. This will reduce the operational capacity by 40 spaces. However, it is hoped to have some temporary accommodation in place in the near future.

There are two cells on E wing and cells on I wing being converted into social care cells and electro-chromatic doors are being fitted to existing cells on A, E, F and healthcare. These are doors that can be switched between transparent and opaque at the press of a button. Electrical work has been undertaken on A and B wings to upgrade the electric points in cells.

The so called 'safer cells' have been decommissioned following national policy.

A new unit is being established on E wing – the safety and support unit (SSU) – for women reported as being internal secretors, to try and break the cycle of women coming in and out of prison carrying drugs for debt or bullying reasons (see above).

The CRED initiative – clean, rehabilitative, enabling, decent – has continued to run through the pandemic with robust risk assessments, equality impact assessments and local operating procedures in place.

Amey have done a good job supervising and mentoring the CRED women to decorate cells. Their partnership with the women's work parties has been most successful. Most of the cells in the prison have been refurbished and the group will start on A and B wings in the near future. Funding is being sought and it is hoped that the whole prison will have been refurbished during the next few months at a cost of around £65k.

The prisoners' consultative council (PCC), with a representative from each wing, has a monthly meeting with staff where prisoners, problems and queries are discussed and acted upon.

Prisoners are able to make their meal choices from weekly menus that are issued to them. Although the catering budget allocated to the prison is low, prisoners are offered meals that are nutritious, well cooked and presented and of good variety. Meals are planned and prepared in accordance with food and hygiene regulations, with options available to meet cultural, religious and medical dietary requirements. Healthy eating options are also available.

Board members are invited to taste the meals on their visits and these have always been found to be excellent. There is also a comments book available for prisoners to

note their opinions about the meals they are receiving. The vast majority of the comments are very pleasing and positive.

Regular surveys take place to obtain the prisoners' opinions. The suggestions are adopted where possible. Prisoners also have the opportunity of raising issues at the monthly PCC.

Prisoners in both the main kitchen and the training kitchen can gain vocational qualifications from having their work assessed.

Over the last few months, since the start of the pandemic, the hot meal has been prepared and delivered at lunchtime, whereas the packed food is delivered to wings at teatime. This seems to be working well and will most likely continue as a permanent feature.

## **5.2 Segregation**

There are three cells, an adjudication room and an interview room in the care and separation unit (CSU). Staff working in the unit are excellent at building up a rapport with prisoners and encouraging them to improve and control their behaviour. Comparatively few are placed on GOoD, rarely for more than 14 days and more often up to seven days.

A Board member is informed of all moves to the CSU and, if possible, visits that person before observing the 72-hour GOoD review. (Covid-19 has seriously restricted the number of observations made by Board members during this reporting year.) Review panels are conducted by a governor, attended by the appropriate members of staff, with all necessary information available. The prisoner attends and is invited and encouraged to make representations.

Reviews subsequent to the 72-hour review are scheduled to take place on Wednesday afternoons, allowing a Board member the opportunity to observe. The Board considers that the reviews are conducted fairly and in detail.

Prisoners awarded cellular confinement at adjudication are listed on a board in the CSU but are usually located on landing cells. This is not a regular occurrence and is risk assessed on a case by case basis. Visiting Board members check the board in order to visit anyone on cellular confinement.

Board members observe adjudications when making rota visits.

## **5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships**

Staff and prisoner relationships are good. The in-cell phone system has enabled daily contact with new prisoners to help them with life in a prison particularly if it is their first time. It is also used to conduct both welfare checks and enhanced-level welfare checks. (Which depends on the assessed level of risk of the prisoner).

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

Low Newton has a positive outlook in eliminating unlawful discrimination between people of different racial groups, religions, age groups, disabilities and sexual persuasions. This is done by reviewing the policies, by education and investigating complaints by means of DIRFs (discrimination incident report forms) raised by

prisoners and taking action against any member of staff, prisoner or visitor who uses insulting language or behaviour.

The tables below give details of the number of prisoners with declared disabilities (as of 11 May 2021).

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Number of prisoners with the disability (Prisoners may have more than one Disability)</b>
Deaf - Lip Reads	1
Severe Disfigurement	1
Speech Impediment	1
Dyslexia	2
Learning Disability (Inc. Autism)	2
Visual Impairment (Inc. Blind)	2
Reduced Physical Capacity	4
Hearing Impairment - not deaf	7
Progressive Condition	9
Learning Difficulties (Inc. Dyslexia)	13
Reduced Mobility	16
Other Disability	19
Mental Illness	42

**Number of Prisoners with 'No Disability' or 'Disability Not Recorded'**

141

<b>Detail</b>	<b>Count</b>
Active Prisoners	237
Number of prisoners with a disability	81
Number of prisoners with no disability information entered on NOMIS	28
Refused to Disclose	1

Policy is driven by monthly meetings, attended by section heads and attended by prisoner representatives, where policy and actions which are relevant to minority groups, including foreign nationals, are discussed.

The percentage of Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) groups in the North East is relatively low compared to other parts of the country. The percentage in the prison is less than 10%. Data on adjudications, complaints, releases, prisoner status, segregation and use of force is collected and reviewed at the meeting. Any statistically significant deviation from the proportion of prisoners in the BAME category compared to the whole population is highlighted and explained where necessary. No disproportionalities have been identified. Random selections of redacted DIRFS are read out at the PCC meetings with representatives asked for feedback. These are also checked by a BAME staff member for quality purposes.



This member of staff also attends use of force meetings where CCTV footage of control and restraint is viewed. It is hoped, in the near future, to have external scrutiny quality assurance from the local council at County Hall.

<b>Ethnic Code</b>	<b>Ethnic Description</b>	<b>Total Prisoners</b>
A1	A1-Asian/Asian British: Indian	1
A2	A2-Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	1
B1	B1-Black/Black British: Caribbean	2
B2	B2-Black/Black British: African	3
B9	B9-Black/Black British: Any other Backgr'nd	1
M1	M1-Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	4
M3	M3-Mixed: White and Asian	1
M9	M9-Mixed: Any other background	2
W1	W1-White: Eng./Welsh/Scot./N.Irish/British	213
W2	W2-White : Irish	3
W3	W3-White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
W9	W9-White: Any other background	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>237</b>

Foreign nationals are a very low proportion of the population at Low Newton. In the most recent breakdown of numbers in February 2021, there were eight foreign nationals – one each of Polish, Irish, Indian, Kenyan, Palestinian/Iraqi, Chinese, Romanian, Malawian – out of a prison operational capacity of 307.

There are specific needs for these prisoners including language barriers (needing more opportunities to develop skills in English), cultural barriers, food, maintaining family links and legal advice on immigration issues.

In addition to confidential healthcare assessments, all prisoners are invited on arrival to make staff aware of any specific needs so that measures can be put in place.

Each year quarter the equalities management team looks at and analyses data for that quarter. In the latest analysis of the data (October – December 2020) the more noticeable percentages showing the greatest disproportionality was regarding complaints and sexual orientation. It was noted that younger women are more likely to submit complaints, particularly those aged 18-25 years. The over 40s are significantly less likely to submit complaints.

With regard to sexual orientation, 7.3% of the prison population have not disclosed theirs, with another 21 who are unknown. To ensure the data is accurate in future, a full review of first night induction and reception procedures is being undertaken to see how the question is presented. There is an obvious reluctance to declare sexual orientation upon reception into H.M Low Newton.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

Covid-19 altered the way pastoral support was given in the prison and some changes will remain. Services have been recorded on a DVD and prisoners have been able to watch these in their cells. Services are also continuing to be recorded in this way. Over the Christmas period a DVD a day was produced providing

entertainment and worship. The DVD players have been lent out to prisoners enabling them to do such things as the Alpha course in their cells.

In-cell worship packs have been provided to enable worship at the prisoner's own pace. Chaplains have worked in the servery dispensing food and talking to prisoners. If necessary follow up visits were also arranged. Studies from various faiths have been provided in cells, which have included colouring items and puzzles.

The in-cell phones that were installed over the summer of 2020 have proved very useful to the chaplains in keeping contact with the prisoners. Using one of the limited number of handsets in the prison that contact to the in-cell phones, chaplains have been able to ring the prisoners and chat. This is seen as a normal activity – being rung up by phone – and is far less intrusive than going to the cell, seeing the person and then locking them up again.

Everyone released from prison now gets given a hygiene pack and everyone coming in to the prison gets a decency pack. These are provided through the chaplaincy service.

The table below gives a breakdown of the declared religion of the prisoners (as of 11 May 2021)

<b>Religion Code</b>	<b>Religion Description</b>	<b>Total Prisoners</b>
ATHE	Atheist	1
BUDD	Buddhist	3
CHRST	Christian (unspecified)	27
COFE	Church of England (Anglican)	42
GROX	Greek Orthodox	1
JEHV	Jehovah's Witness	1
METH	Methodist	1
MORM	Mormon	1
MOS	Muslim	6
NIL	No Religion	103
OTH	Other	1
PAG	Pagan	7
PENT	Pentecostal	1
PROT	Protestant	1
RAST	Rastafarian	1
RC	Roman Catholic	37
SPIR	Spiritualist	2
		1
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>237</b>

## 5.6 Complaints

The Board receives details of complaints made by prisoners. Numbers of complaints are fairly low. The Board believes this to be because the prisoners are largely content and able to get issues answered by staff without resorting to the formal complaints procedure.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

#### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

During the lockdown health provision by external providers was stopped. Everything moved to wing based care. Appointments were diarised on the wing with a nurse allocated to the wing. This is still happening in this way for some health conditions. Immunisations and vaccinations have continued.

The in-cell phones have enabled triage to take place over the phone. This can be done by a nurse and then referred to a GP, or a GP can ring through. If the phones are not available then notes can be left for the prisoner. There are not many of the handsets available that allow connection to the in-cell phones and it would be a help to healthcare staff if there were more.

Clinics have restarted for all patients with no restrictions other than following Public Health England PPE guidance. There has been a small increase in external escorts since community services have recommenced.

The Board receives minutes from healthcare meetings and will attend where possible.

#### **6.3 Mental health**

Approximately 40% of the prisoners have mental health issues to varying degrees. Some are seriously ill. Often it is these prisoners who occupy cells in healthcare or the CSU. The effect of the Covid-19 lockdown was not as negative as might have been feared. The reduced mixing of prisoners led to reduction in bullying and drug misuse together with a reduction in mental health issues. Referrals are now increasing as the regime relaxes but there will be lessons to be learned from the period.

The Board understands that the mental health team would like to create a mental health unit which may relieve pressure on healthcare and the CSU. It would enable drugs to be given in a different way and would increase access to psychiatrists.

A speech and language therapist is working with prisoners with communication needs.

#### **6.4 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Psychosocial DART (Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team) is currently part of Reconnected to Health. The healthcare contract was awarded to Spectrum on 1 April 2020. Reconnected to Health is made up of Spectrum, TEWV (Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust) and Humankind. The service successfully transferred 103 staff over to Humankind on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Critical functions and minimum staffing numbers needing to be on site were established. Staff began to work on site and work from home on rota basis.

### ***Service delivery***

In March 2020, an IMB member attended the Foundations of Recovery Change Programme. The programme was made up of five sessions: introduction, planning your recovery journey, culture of addiction/culture of recovery, setting goals, self-esteem and mindfulness. This was the last programme before lockdown and the change of provider. On this programme seven clients graduated. The IMB member was very impressed with the delivery and prisoners' engagement.

The first quarter service delivery model focussed on critical functions and how these could be carried out innovatively with the technology and resources that prisoners were able to access. The teams continued to provide triage, comprehensive assessment, recovery and risk assessment plans and reviews, harm reduction and in cell PSI (Psychosocial Interventions) work, remote mutual aid and planned discharges to the community.

The use of internal post enabled communication with service users via a penpal approach. Assessment packs, in-cell workbooks and key pieces of information were communicated via post and the residents actively engaged by returning completed work packs communicating any changes to their mood or care plan so staff could respond accordingly.

National recovery month in September 2020 was celebrated despite not having prisoner contact.

### ***Service development***

The DART team regularly receives feedback from prisoners about the service they have received and how it can improve. A "You said. We did" newsletter was produced every month and these ideas used for potential development of services.

### ***Continuity of care***

One of the biggest challenges/changes for the team was arranging continuation of methadone for those being released either positive for Covid-19 or in isolation through track and trace. Arrangements for methadone to be delivered direct to the ex-prisoner at their home address or for a named person to collect on their behalf was a success for the DART team and ensured that even over the Christmas break and bank holidays all prisoners had throughcare.

### ***Service user feedback***

Overall the biggest success for the DART has been that they have still provided a service to all of the prisoners but in a new way and the feedback has remained positive. The IMB has observed numerous testimonies from those who have engaged with DART.

### ***DART involvement with prisoners***

<b>Month</b>	<b>Active case load</b>	<b>Number of referrals</b>	<b>Face to face 1:1s</b>	<b>1:1 via written communication</b>	<b>1:1s via phone</b>
March 2020	153	19	177	-	-
April 2020	157	24	87	-	-
May 2020	164	24	81	-	-
June 2020	155	32	74	-	-
July 2020	151	31	137	17	-
August 2020	140	36	184	23	-
September 2020	126	31	246	14	-
October 2020	130	31	245	7	-
November 2020	128	38	170	35	33
December 2020	134	24	41	161	133
January 2021	136	32	13	198	196
February 2021	147	34	112	78	100

Throughout the lockdown period and the significant Covid-19 outbreak, the workload has remained at a high level. The DART team has adapted to new methods of working and introduced new initiatives to maintain a standard which is to be congratulated. The Board will continue to monitor.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

This reporting year has been a challenging one with regards to delivery.

#### ***The provider***

Novus stopped face-to-face delivery from March 2020. This saw huge changes in ways of working with Novus working completely remotely. The annual delivery plan was adapted to fit in-cell delivery only and arrangements had to be made to allow registered learners the chance to finish what they had started pre-Covid-19.

These changes included in-cell delivery and the induction process being moved to a paper-based system so that new entrants to the prison were not missed out. Best efforts were made to continue 'business as usual' with priority being placed on maths and English if below Level 1, as would be the case before Covid-19.

The summer saw the community lifting restrictions and the provider came back on site in a 'bubble' format. Significant planning and risk assessments were conducted to allow for this.

Novus staff on site once more meant more structure, more tracking of work, marking and challenging of learners. In-cell telephony was utilised to give feedback and motivate learners so that they felt their work was being recognised.

A more varied delivery plan was implemented. Covid-19 brought some benefits. Without restrictions on class sizes and working in-cell allowed learners to access education who previously may have been placed on a waiting list. Open awards and a programme of learning were introduced, giving prisoners the chance to try something new such as health and wellbeing, biohazards, budgeting and finance on top of the usual offerings. Packs were generally well received.

Since the start of lockdown and in the 2020-21 reporting year there were 401 enrolments with education, 105 completers and 206 with ongoing education provision. The IMB observed work packs produced to a high standard and a recent external audit by the Ministry of Justice quality team returned a grade of 'good' for the standard and the quality of the packs provided. The staff are to be commended on their effectiveness.

The library has been open throughout lockdown, providing a delivery to cell service. Although this has proved popular and helpful, staff are looking forward to the time when prisoners are able to visit the library in person.

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

This has continued where possible. Work parties continued for the large part of 2020, with restricted numbers, strict social distancing and mask wearing becoming mandatory. The prisoner work party took on a large amount of the establishment cleaning, ensuring daily cleans were done to maintain sanitisation and cleanliness for all staff and prisoners in the main corridor and prisoner-facing areas. To their credit they have continued to gain qualifications in their area, through evidence gathering during this time, and have been largely successful in gaining module certification. This work along with workshops, horticulture and waste management however, ground to a halt when the establishment was put into a restricted regime.

Plans and a new initiative are in place when it is safe do to so. Qualifications in waste management (including WAMITAB – a national organisation providing qualifications and certificates), kitchens, horticulture, the Ocado workshop are all in the pipeline following the lifting of restrictions. The Board will continue to monitor.

### **7.3 Family contact**

During the lockdown periods actual visits were stopped. A company called Purple Visits was and is being used to facilitate video visits. Take-up of these video visits has not been as high as expected. Some of this is due to friends or relatives not having suitable technology; sometimes security issues cause the call to freeze if there is unexpected movement. Work has been done to explain the system to both prisoners and friends and relatives to increase usage. Where children are likely to be on the call the prison will arrange for a play pack to be sent to the family so that the prisoner and child(ren) can work together through puzzles and other activities. The prison can also arrange to send details of books that can be read together.

### **7.4 Resettlement planning**

This is a core function of the Prison Service. It is directly related to the Prison Service's objective 'to reduce crime by providing constructive regimes which address offending behaviour, improved educational and work skills and promoting law-abiding behaviour in custody and after release'.

Low Newton is continuously engaged with civil, corporate and faith alliances to provide support when prisoners are released.

A wide range of interventions are provided to assist in resettlement but areas of concern are finding appropriate accommodation and dealing with mental health issues.

The impact of Covid-19 has been profound. The Board has found it difficult to conduct the annual resettlement planning survey which it began last year. The survey is expected to continue in the next annual report, circumstances permitting. Education and training have been restricted, maintaining family connections has been difficult and many links with community services have not been effective. Despite these difficulties, the establishment has worked hard to produce a service to help prisoners return successfully to the community.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board consists of 5 people – one female and four male. Two members are dual-boarding with other prisons in the area. The female board member is a new member who joined in September 2020 and is in her probationary year.

The Board has returned to actual visiting following months of remote monitoring and Board meetings. It has been a difficult period to develop Board cohesiveness.

The pandemic meant we were in lockdown and Board meetings were held by Zoom and remote visiting. The Governor was able to join the meetings by teleconference and the Board was kept up to date. The staff member responsible for Covid-19 measures in the prison provided regular updates in the early days of the pandemic.

Since we have returned to physical prison visits and Board meetings the Board is beginning to develop as a more cohesive team.

The Board needs to increase personnel and is hopeful recent applicants will join us. The Board needs a better gender mix as we are a women's prison with only one woman on the Board at the moment. Once new members are appointed it will be one of the Board's top priorities to ensure induction training and mentoring are implemented and ongoing development of the new members is carried out.

During the reporting period the number of applications to the IMB fell to 21. Various means of getting applications from prisoners were tried including use of the national IMB 0800 line.

The Board has been operating without access to an office for most of the year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	Minimal due to Covid
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Minimal due to Covid



## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	<b>1</b>	
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
C	Equality		
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell		
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
F	Food and kitchens	<b>3</b>	
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>
H1	Property within this establishment	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	<b>2</b>	
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	<b>1</b>	
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
K	Transfers	<b>1</b>	
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	<b>3</b>	
	Total number of applications	<b>42</b>	<b>21</b>



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