



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Birmingham

**For reporting year  
1 July 2020 – 30 June 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

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

HMP Birmingham is a category B local prison housing adult men, both convicted and on remand, serving both Birmingham and Wolverhampton courts. It is moving towards being a reception prison of 80% remand, 20% resettlement. The prison currently has an operational capacity of 977, with a certified normal accommodation of 1,054. In 2018, the operational capacity was reduced from 1,450 on the closure of three Victorian residential wings. These wings remain vacant, awaiting planned refurbishment.

Prisoners are accommodated in nine different residential wings: five modern wings, two of which are reverse cohorting units (RCUs) and one of which is a drug dependency (detoxification) wing; three fully refurbished Victorian wings: one for enhanced prisoners, one for vulnerable prisoners and one for the care and separation unit (CSU); and a social care wing, for older prisoners and those who are shielding from Covid-19.

The modern side of the prison has a healthcare centre comprising two healthcare wards, and GP and dental surgeries. There are eight workshops, a gym and an education suite. The Victorian side of the prison has a library and an education block for vulnerable prisoners.

### **Service providers:**

Buildings and maintenance: Amey

Catering: Aramark

Community rehabilitation company (CRC): Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC (until June 2021)

Education: Novus

General healthcare: Birmingham and Solihull NHS

Psychology Services: Birmingham and Solihull NHS Psychology and Mental Health Trust; HMPPS Psychology Services

Transport: GeoAmey

### **3. Executive summary**

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

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to monitor the prison on-site and to discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to obtain as accurate a picture as possible in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less observed supporting evidence than usual. The prison has made all their statistical data available to the Board.

Evidence for this report comes from observations made on a reduced number of visits, attendance at meetings, scrutiny of records and data, applications and good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews. Members of the Board have gathered evidence from regular contact with senior leaders, managers and prisoner representatives. From March 2020 through to July 2020, monitoring was conducted remotely via teleconferences with the Governor, senior leaders and managers, and prisoner representatives.

From August 2020 onwards, the Board has attended all GOOD reviews three times a week, directly monitoring the care and separation unit (CSU). There have been limited visits to some wings in recent months.

At the time of writing, the prison has almost 25% of staff off work, largely as a result of the pandemic.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

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

It is the Board's view that Birmingham prison is the safest it has been for a number of years. Two years into public management and new leadership, there is ongoing improvement and stability, although the pandemic makes it harder to identify trends and make comparisons.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impeded, but not fully prevented, progress. Violence has reduced, possibly artificially, under a restricted regime with less mixing and more time in cell, but a general improvement in safety had been noted before the pandemic, when prisoners were out of cell for much of the day. There has been a slight increase in violent incidents in the last three months, as prisoners tire after more than 16 months of a regime of 22 and a half hours a day lock-up, knowing at the same time that restrictions in the community are easing. The number of assaults on staff is lower than in previous, non-pandemic times but assaults on other prisoners have risen in the last three months (see paragraphs 4.3.4 and 4.3.6).

Good use of data has helped improve safety. Analysis is systematic, rigorous and used to identify areas of concern. The senior leadership team (SLT) aims to prevent problems before they arise, as opposed to having to react to them. Prison self-evaluation is detailed and informs targeted interventions (see paragraphs 4.3.11, 5.2.11 and 5.4.1).

Communication between prisoners and management is good, and builds confidence and stability. Consultation in the form of surveys, forums and the involvement of

prisoner representatives in key meetings leads to positive actions (see paragraphs 4.2.5, 5.4.3, 5.4.5, and 5.6.2).

The installation of the body scanner in reception in August 2020 (see paragraph 5.2.8) and enhanced security searches at the gate from May 2021 have seen a reduction in the ingress of illicit items, although there has been an increase in 'throw-overs'.

It has been challenging for the prison to manage 'keep apart's', as Covid-19 cohorting arrangements and the temporary closure of three Victorian wings leave few options for separating prisoners. At the same time, the prison has received a relatively high number of prisoners convicted of very serious crimes, and many involved in organised crime groups and factions.

Although levels of self-harm are always a concern, they have remained fairly constant in recent months, which the Board considers to be a reflection on the work done to understand the drivers of self-harm, in order to keep prisoners safe (see paragraph 4.2.7).

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

Long stays in the segregation unit continue to give rise for concern. The prison provides good care and support for prisoners in the CSU, and personalised interventions provided by the psychologist for those in need, but external provision beyond that which the prison can offer does not exist and the most challenging cases remain stranded in segregation. The prison has no alternative for these prisoners because it is not safe to house them on the wings and there is nowhere else for them to go. There is no obvious solution at present for these challenging cases (see paragraphs 5.2.3 and 5.2.4). The Board believes that prolonged segregation is inhumane.

The Board does not consider that the regime, locking individuals up for 22 and a half hours per day, is humane, although prisoners have tolerated this for 16 months and ongoing, knowing that the community has also been in lockdown, and knowing that the prompt action taken around Covid-19 has kept them safe. Given the challenges, the prison leaders have managed the situation well and continuously look for ways of providing a better regime, but the constraints of the pandemic and their potential longer-term impact on mental health are not yet known.

Levels of unplanned use of force are very high when compared with those in similar prisons, and there is a lack of consistency in using body-worn video cameras (BWCs). The prison leaders are aware of this and regularly issue reminders to staff at daily briefings, but are also aware that more cameras and rigour are required for improvement with BWC use (see paragraphs 4.4.1 and 4.4.7).

The Board has observed prisoners being treated fairly and with respect. On occasion, where there is evidence of staff wrongdoing, there is an investigation, suspension and, if appropriate a dismissal. While being supportive of staff and applying the principle of fair process, the SLT has a zero tolerance of any activity which is unjust.

The expectations hub and wellbeing navigators, trained in basic mental health first-aid, along with community information lead (CIL) wing workers, are all examples of the excellent employment of prisoners who are able to demonstrate leadership and represent constructively the voice of all prisoners to the SLT, and vice versa (see paragraphs 5.2.14, 5.4.1 and 7.3.2).

Refurbishments, both completed and planned, are providing prisoners with better living conditions. There has been substantial investment in improving accommodation, with, for example, over £1 million spent on updating all showers (see paragraph 5.1.1).

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

Healthcare provision is good, and possibly better than that in the community under Covid-19 conditions. Prisoners' wellbeing is a priority.

Nursing, psychiatric and psychology provision has operated without interruption. GP services have been triaged, and non-aerosol-generating dental treatment resumed in January. All emergency treatment has been possible externally.

Covid-19 has been managed well in the prison. There have been three Covid-19 outbreaks, without any individuals falling seriously ill. Only one prisoner, a 99-year-old with comorbidities, who died while in custody, has had a reference to Covid-19 on his death certificate. During remote monitoring, teleconferences with prisoner representatives from all wings gave regular feedback that provision was good.

The chaplaincy has, without interruption, supported prisoners during the Covid-19 restrictions, visiting the wings and seeing them at cell doors (see paragraph 5.5.1).

Peer support is a strength evidenced by the work of the wellbeing navigators, the expectations hub, Listeners and CIL workers.

The Board has concerns for the ongoing mental health impact of long hours in-cell, with purposeful activity, for some prisoners, limited to distraction packs.

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

Offending behaviour programmes were totally shut down by the Covid-19 restrictions from March 2020 onwards, and almost all purposeful activity, including classroom-based education, was suspended for several months. Rehabilitation has thus been interrupted and the long-term effects are yet to be seen.

However, the community rehabilitation company (CRC) continued working on-site throughout the pandemic. Its provision for prisoners on the wings and at the point of release has been good at all times. All prisoners have been seen on the day of their release, and accommodation on release continues to be at well above 90% (see paragraph 7.5.3).

The Board has concerns about support for finding accommodation on release, with the new contract with Nacro (see paragraph 7.5.4).

Issues continue with immediate and late releases from court to no fixed abode. In every such case, the CRC staff have to find accommodation with no advance notice (see paragraph 7.5.10).

There have been problems for prisoners in opening bank accounts on release, which is important for the receipt of benefit payments (see paragraph 7.5.11).

Family contact has been limited to telephone calls and virtual visits, and social visits only restarted in June 2021 (see paragraphs 7.4.1 and 7.4.3).

The prison leads excellent partnership collaborative working by convening monthly meetings, bringing together most partner and external agencies involved in resettlement. There is a wide range of interventions and support structures in place to promote reducing reoffending (see paragraph 7.5.1).

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

Plans, in line with national Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) guidance for a revised regime post-Covid-19, indicate fewer hours out of cell, but with a greater focus on purposeful activity. The quality of those activities will be of crucial importance. There is a risk of prisoners being locked up for longer without opportunities for social interaction and personal responsibility, which may not adequately prepare them for release.

Learning difficulties and autism are not particularly well addressed at present in the prison, and greater awareness and training will be required. However, a nurse specialist in learning difficulties has been appointed.

When Birmingham prison reaches full reception prison status, with a population of 80% remand and 20% resettlement prisoners, offending behaviour programmes and education courses will need to be tailored to better meet the needs of short-stay prisoners on remand. Currently, the prison is assessed in the same way as training prisons, although its designation and context are not the same.

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

Homelessness is a concern, and a frequent issue in repeat offending. Will the Minister improve the management of immediate releases from court to "no fixed abode" and will he ensure that the Courts have a role to play to help ensure better communication and co-ordination with their local resettlement services so that no-one is immediately released to sleep on the streets?

What will the minister do to ensure that prisoners on remand, on short sentences, reaching the end of their sentence and those released out of their home area who are not on probation are given access to accommodation on release, as at present, as this will not be covered by the new contract with Nacro?

How will the minister ensure that foreign national prisoners are released or deported at the end of their sentence, and that they are not held in custody beyond the expiry of their sentence?

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

Will the Prison Service make better provision for the rehabilitative needs and resources required for prisoners who are long stay in the CSU, for whom normal location is not suitable (see paragraph 5.2.3)?

What is provided in close supervision centres for prisoners who, having already spent excessive times in segregation, are transferred to such units? Will the Prison Service commit to ensuring that isolation is balanced with rehabilitation and human, social needs and rights?

Many prisoners are subject to repeated stays in isolation in the CSU, as well as those who remain there for excessively long periods of time. Why is the number of days that a prisoner spends in the CSU not calculated cumulatively and continued on transfer from one prison to another?

How will the Prison Service plan a more coordinated, consistent and fair system of recording and tracking provision for prisoners with autism and learning difficulties, and how will they ensure that staff are fully trained and competent at recognising, working and interacting with prisoners with these conditions?

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons recommends that every prisoner should have 10 hours out-of-cell each day. How will the Prison Service ensure that prisoners have access to a humane regime, with fair access to exercise, fresh air and purposeful activity post-Covid-19?

Does HMPPS accept that personal and social skills are part of a prisoner's preparation for release, and that limited social interactions in a restricted regime post-Covid-19 may in the long term inhibit reducing reoffending, even if in the immediate term it improves stability in the prison?

## ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

As the prison moves to a new regime post-Covid-19, what assurance can the Governor give that the work provided will be genuinely purposeful and, in education, matched to individual capabilities?

Will the Governor assure a more robust system of ensuring that agreed actions in good order and/or discipline reviews are written down, communicated and acted upon?

How can officers be certain of using body-worn video cameras if they do not have access to one each, and can a more robust, reliable and accountable system be introduced to ensure that all radios are collected, deployed and returned every day?

How will the Governor ensure parity between ethnic groups when enhanced incentives and earned privileges status is applied?

Following the redeployment of the property officer from reception, how will the Governor ensure that all prisoners' property is correctly logged, held securely and does not go missing within the prison and on transfer on from the prison?

### 3.4 Progress since the last report

2019/20	2020/21
Body-worn video cameras (BWCs), although not always turned on when required, provide useful evidence when footage is available	It is a concern that, despite regular reminders in morning briefings, the wearing and use of BWCs is not routine
Closed-circuit television installed in February 2020 has helped identify perpetrators and provide evidence in adjudications	The body scanner installed in August 2020 has helped to detect and deter the ingress of drugs, as well as enhanced security checks at the gate
The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) system operates well in support of at-risk individuals	Awareness sessions for CSIP have helped, but further work is needed (and acknowledged by the prison) on training senior managers, mentoring case managers and raising awareness with all, to provide the necessary skills to achieve better-quality outcomes
Good management of the Covid-19 lockdown .... resulted in only three prisoners testing positive for Covid-19	Management of Covid-19 has continued to be good but, as the courts reopened and transfers resumed, there have been three outbreaks
The number of assaults dropped below the usual numbers	The highest monthly recorded figure for prisoner-on-prisoner assaults is 24% lower than the highest monthly recorded figure for the prior reporting year
In-cell activity and distraction packs were provided. No education took place during the early stages of Covid-19	In-cell education has improved with the introduction of a telephone helpline, which took 157 calls in June 2021. Work submitted is now receiving better written feedback. Some small class teaching has resumed
During the Covid-19 lockdown (March to July), prisoners were spending 23 and a half hours a day in-cell	Prisoners are now spending 22 and a half hours in-cell each day
The frequency of lost property is unacceptable, and is evidenced by the large proportion of applications and complaints about property issues	An HMPPS area-wide review of property demonstrates the desire to resolve the problems. HMP Birmingham appointed a property officer in reception and had good results. Staffing pressures have now led to the redeployment of this post. This issue is not resolved
There have been improvements in accommodation...	Another Victorian wing has been refurbished, all showers updated and a 'decency tracker' is used to record daily checks on the quality and condition of cells and accommodation
Prior to the lockdown, the key worker scheme was exceeding the national benchmark of 55% of meetings between	The key worker programme was halted at the start of the first lockdown in 2020 but only for a few weeks, so for the majority of

key worker and prisoners, reaching 62% in February, but this was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic	the pandemic to April 2021, a minimum of 20 sessions took place on each wing
...the quality and suitability of accommodation on release cannot be verified by the Board	The CRC confirms that housing is of an approved standard

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 There were a total of 7,600 prisoner movements through reception in the reporting year, compared with 8,794 in the previous reporting year. The drop in numbers can be attributed to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on movement.

4.1.2 During Covid-19, Listeners have not been allowed in reception. Induction has been limited, with the result that some new arrivals may not have fully understood the Covid-19 regime and requirements. A number of incidents on one of the reverse cohorting units (RCUs) and early days centre may have resulted from this lack of understanding. In response, the prison, in consultation with the wellbeing navigators, has accommodated an experienced CIL worker on that wing, to guide and advise. Staffing has also been amended on the wing, to produce a more consistent workforce familiar with the prisoners. A safety officer was appointed to reception through to the early days centre (see paragraph 4.2.10).

4.1.3 Difficulties in setting up a PIN phone account and adding numbers have been the cause of some frustration among new arrivals. In normal circumstances, the issues arising would have been explained at induction.

4.1.4 Problems have continued to arise where prisoners have arrived at the prison with an excess of property over the allowed amount. This is exacerbated by the intransigence of the contractor, GeoAmey, around limits, when refusing property has resulted in loss of property and subsequent resource-intensive, time-consuming tracking and searching.

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

##### Deaths in custody

4.2.1 There was one self-inflicted death in February 2021, the first in two years.

4.2.2 There were six deaths from natural causes: two prisoners were in their 90s with comorbidities, two had terminal cancer, and the causes of two deaths are yet to be determined by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).

4.2.3 One prisoner had a reference to Covid-19 on his death certificate. He was 99 years old, with other underlying health conditions.

4.2.4 The Board is assured that all recommendations in the PPO reports following a death in custody have been implemented. There was one instance of a delay in calling the emergency code blue. Although this was judged not to have affected the outcome, it is a concern, as the PPO had advised the prison about this failing a few years ago.

4.2.5 There are currently nine prisoners with life-limiting conditions who have been allocated a family liaison officer.

4.2.6 The work of the family liaison officers following all deaths in custody has been timely, compassionate and supportive. As confirmed in the PPO report, care for those nearing the end of life has been good, equal to that expected in the community. The head of healthcare nurse was commended in a PPO report for the way in which she used a picture story book to enable the patient to understand his condition.

### **Self-harm**

4.2.7 Self-harm reached a high of 22 cases in the last week of July 2020, dropping back down sharply in September. By then, the prison had responded with self-harm forums. As a result, the prison is better aware of the reasons why prisoners are self-harming. Psychology input in Safety Intervention Meetings (SIM), CSIP, and good order and/or discipline (GOOD) reviews for complex individuals is evidence of the prison's efforts to understand harm, risks and triggers, and how to provide support. Training on suicide and self-harm was available to staff.

4.2.8 Over the year, incidents of self-harm have averaged out at 13 per week, compared with 17 per week in the previous reporting year.

4.2.9 In October 2020, it was noted that almost all self-harm incidents at that time involved the prisoner using razor blades. The prison took action by removing blades when safety in-possession risk assessment (SIPRA) forms were opened and making canteen aware that such prisoners should not be allowed to purchase blades while on an open SIPRA.

4.2.10 The prison introduced a safety staff member to support new admissions through reception to the RCU. This person identifies prisoners, using the safety diagnostic tool and other documentation, to advise and guide individuals most likely to self-harm in the first 24 hours in custody.

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

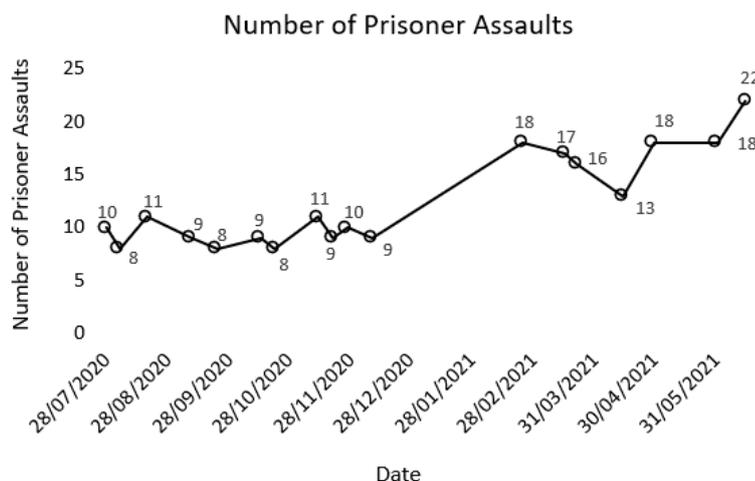
4.3.1 The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) scrutiny visit in January 2021 acknowledged that there had been good work to promote safety since the urgent notification two years ago, although they noted a failure to accurately record all acts of violence and self-harm.

4.3.2 Since then, an operations and system group (OSAG) audit gave a score of 'substantial' in terms of compliance with incident reporting at the establishment, demonstrating that improvements have been made.

## Violence

4.3.3 The main reasons for violence were related to gangs and debt. Drugs are the primary cause of debt, which often leads to violence, bullying, self-isolation and self-harm. The prison population contains a large number of prisoners associated with organised crime groups, many of whom have been convicted of violent crime, and they can put pressure on vulnerable prisoners to hold or become involved with illicit items.

4.3.4 Graph 1 shows the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults during the reporting year. These are lower than in the previous year. Assaults started to rise in 2021, coinciding with the easing of restrictions in the wider community and prolonged restrictions in the prison. Nevertheless, the highest monthly recorded figure for number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults for the current reporting year is still 24% lower than the highest monthly recorded figure for the prior reporting year (September 2020: 65.4% lower; November 2020: 63% lower; February 2021: 40% lower; March 2021: 17.5% lower).

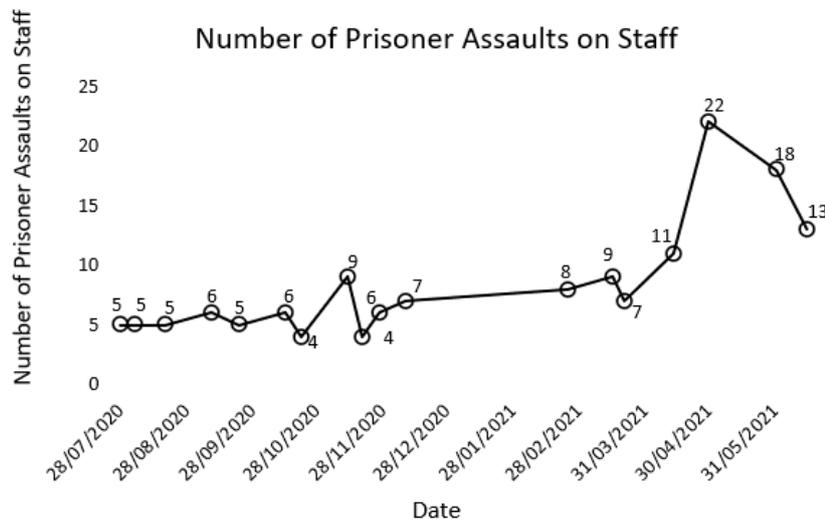


Graph 1: Line Graph showing the number of assaults on prisoners by prisoners within the last 28 days at various times throughout the reporting period (July 2020 – June 2021).

4.3.5 Stability has also been affected by staffing levels, which have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. On one of the RCUs, having non-regular staff was thought to have been a contributing factor to increased levels of violence there.

4.3.6 Graph 2 shows the number of prisoner assaults on staff throughout the reporting year. Initially, these were lower for each month than in the previous year, until April 2021 (July 2020: 61.5% lower; October 2020: 64.3% lower; February 2021: 50% lower). April 2021 saw a spike in assaults on staff, which was 144% higher than in April 2020. This figure has started to decrease, but the figure was still 30% higher in May 2021, in comparison with May 2020. Assaults on staff tended to be in response to use of force (UoF). This included prisoners pushing past staff to exit

their cells or refusing to return to their cells, which triggered the majority of assaults on staff.



Graph 2: Line Graph showing the number of prisoner assaults on staff within the last 28 days at various times throughout the reporting period (July 2020 – June 2021).

4.3.7 The CSIP data has been made available to the Board throughout the reporting period and we have spoken to individuals on CSIP plans, and more recently undertook a survey of those on such plans.

4.3.8 In general, staff do challenge poor behaviour and make CSIP referrals where necessary. Awareness sessions for CSIP have helped, but further work is needed (and acknowledged by the prison) on training senior managers, mentoring case managers and raising awareness with all, to provide the necessary skills to achieve better-quality outcomes. The prison is now sampling CSIP plans prior to the weekly safety intervention meeting, with a view to ensuring a consistent approach and improvement in the quality of plans and outcomes.

4.3.9 Twelve responses were obtained from various wings for the Board’s CSIP survey. The Board appreciates the small sample size and the somewhat limited conclusions that can be drawn, but this has helped to identify general themes and issues. Of those surveyed:

- 8 said that being on a CSIP had helped them to understand why they used or threatened the use of violence – the main reasons being that they used or threatened violence due to gang-related issues, debt, drugs, general retaliation and so as not to look vulnerable on the wing.
- 6 said that being on a CSIP had somewhat improved their relationships with staff and prisoners, while the other 50% said that this had made no difference.
- 6 said that they felt either somewhat or significantly more in control of their use, or threats, of violence as a result of being on the plan.
- 5 said that they felt being on a CSIP plan reduced the number of incidents of violence they have been involved with. Some of the reasons given were that being on a CSIP had enabled them to get

better access to such things as: tailored advice, anger management, mental health and psychology support.

4.3.10 The responses suggested a varying quality and engagement in CSIP plans. Some prisoners said that they would like more regular review meetings, with several saying that they had had only one review meeting, or were only being seen approximately once a month, while some said that they were not told of the reason why they were put on the plan. Some prisoners felt that some staff viewed CSIP plans merely as a tick-box exercise, and one prisoner said that the staff member responsible for his plan had told him that he thought it was a waste of time. Two respondents said that they had received more regular review meetings when on a CSIP plan at another prison. Those who said that they had regular review meetings said that they benefited from this, and the ability to receive tailored targets. Ultimately, the statistics obtained from the survey are encouraging, especially considering the challenging nature of the prisoners on these plans. The improvements needed, as noted above (and acknowledged by the prison), should ensure that further progress is made.

### Self-isolation

4.3.11 The SLT, wing staff and safer custody team have a good knowledge of those prisoners who are self-isolating, and there is a focus on understanding the reasons why and improving the level of support and access to basic entitlements. Those self-isolating are supported by staff and key workers, and are seen by a duty governor as part of the welfare checks.

4.3.12 The Board regularly receives data on the number of prisoners self-isolating, and the reasons for this. We have visited the prison on several occasions specifically with a view to corroborating this data.

4.3.13 Data has shown a decreasing trend in the number of prisoners self-isolating in the reporting year, as shown in Graph 3.



Graph 3: Line graph showing the number of prisoners self-isolating within the last 28 days at various times throughout the reporting period (July 2020 – June 2021).

4.3.14 The number self-isolators is now 70.6% lower than at the start of the reporting year. The Board undertook a recent survey of prisoners who had self-isolated. From a small sample of 13 responses from various wings, some general points and issues were identified:

- The prevalent reasons for self-isolating were threats of violence and debt, with the two often inextricably linked. Every respondent mentioned at least one of these reasons, with 7 specifically referencing these reasons, linked with drugs and/or gang-related issues, while others did not specify the nature of the debt or threats.
- 12 of those surveyed confirmed that they frequently received their normal meals, although there were some general issues raised regarding portion sizes and the temperature of food.
- 12 confirmed that they were able to make telephone calls, although several raised the issue that they could be left unable to make calls over the weekend if they ran out of credit, as they were not able to top this up prior to the 3pm cut-off on Friday.
- 10 said that they were frequently able to shower and use the kiosk.
- 7 said that they were provided with no or limited education or distraction packs, or said that packs had been provided but there was no support for this. There was a consensus that those self-isolating wanted greater access to education, distraction or other packs/activities with which they could better occupy their time.
- 6 specifically mentioned a desire to move to a different wing or to a different prison, with a view to then ceasing self-isolation. Most acknowledged that this was difficult to achieve under Covid-19 cohorting restrictions.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

4.4.1 The high levels of unplanned use of force (UoF) are a concern to the Board, particularly in comparison with comparator prisons.

4.4.2 Graph 4 shows the number of UoF instances for this reporting year compared with the previous one. In July, August, September and October 2020, UoF was: 131%, 71.4%, 250% and 62.7%, respectively. higher than in the previous reporting year. UoF was applied mainly when prisoners refused direct orders, such as refusing to return to their cells, not wanting to transfer out when the courts resumed work, or prisoners not wanting staff in their cells.

4.4.3 From November 2020, the number of UoF incidents has actually been lower than the previous reporting year.

4.4.4 The prison states that an increase in the deployment of handcuffs has accounted for some of the increase in UoF statistics, with this being used as a restraining and preventative measure. The prison believes that this has helped to reduce violence relative to the previous reporting year.

4.4.5 The Board has noted disproportionate incidents of UoF involving mixed race prisoners and a high level of UoF in the CSU. The prison has analysed the data and taken appropriate action.

4.4.6 While improvements have been made, there are times when UoF paperwork has not been completed on time.

4.4.7 It is a concern that, despite regular reminders in morning briefings, the wearing and use of body worn cameras (BWCs) is not routine. At one point, staff shortages meant that BWC footage was not being reviewed. There are insufficient cameras to issue one to every officer.

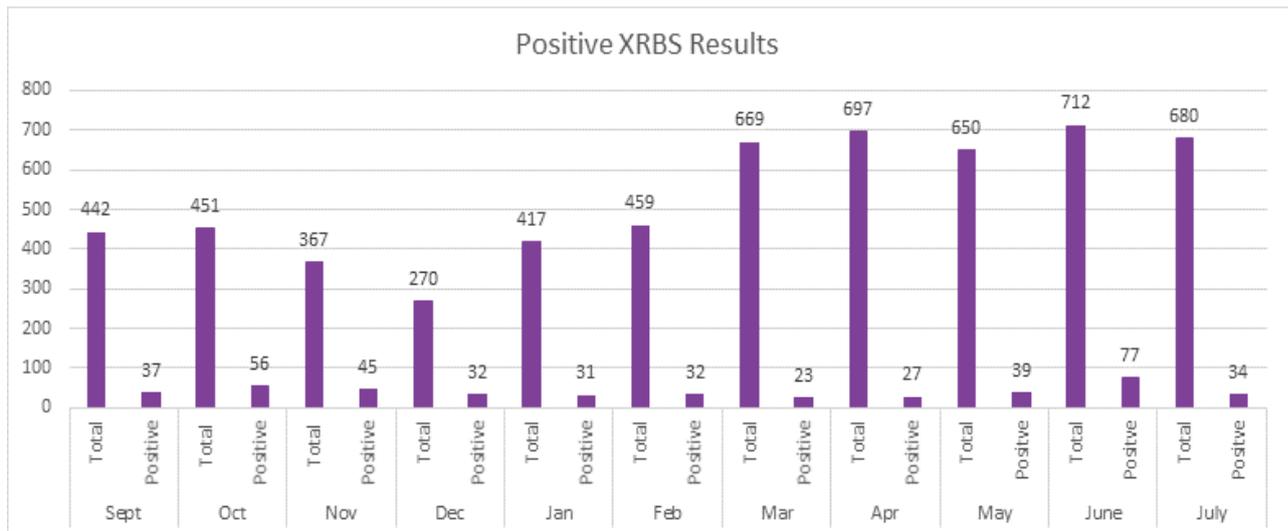
## **4.5 Substance misuse**

4.5.1 The number of prisoners seeking support with drug addiction has remained fairly constant. An average of 250 prisoners a month are working with the Birmingham recovery team.

4.5.2 Drug ingress through reception has reduced following the installation of an X-ray body scanner (XRBS), which has shown good early results of detection and as a deterrent. Enhanced security has been introduced, with body and property searching of staff and visitors on entry. This was introduced in May 2021. In the corresponding period, the number of 'throw-overs' has increased.

4.5.3 Previous anecdotal information suggested that a main route of ingress for illicit articles (namely, illicit substances and mobile phones) was through reception by internal secretion. Data analysis following the implementation of the XRBS confirmed this as an ingress route exploited on an even larger scale than anticipated (see chart below).

4.5.4 Further analysis suggested that prisoners received from police custody suites (primarily Oldbury and Perry Barr) were more likely to have items secreted internally. A multidisciplinary meeting with all relevant stakeholders (police, escorting contractors, courts and the Prison Service) took place, in order to provide further counter-measures to this route of ingress.



4.5.5 Although ingress has been reduced, drugs are still present within the prison, despite the new security measures. Throw-overs have included mobile phones, cannabis, psychoactive substances and tobacco. There has been no discovery of class A drugs. The use of psychoactive substances has fallen in comparison with previous years.

## 5. Fair and humane treatment

### 5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Accommodation continues to improve as refurbishments continue, with, most recently, the full refitting of an entire Victorian wing and the £1 million updating of showers across all wings. There are daily checks on the state of cells, and the prison has implemented a highly effective 'decency tracker' which monitors, records and tracks the quality of accommodation.

5.1.2 Improvement building work has begun on the gym and in the visits and legal visits areas.

5.1.3 Many prisoners who could not afford to buy new clothes had to wear the same few items for the duration of the Covid-19 lockdown, now over 16 months, as 'hand-ins' were not permitted. For those who could afford to purchase new clothing, ordering was often problematic. In June 2021, a new process was introduced, allowing clothes parcel hand-ins to be accepted.

5.1.4 In response to an HMIP survey at the time of the scrutiny visit in January, 51% of prisoners said that the food was good or reasonable, a 16% improvement on the 2018 inspection findings. However, as a result, the catering manager was asked to carry out a review. The findings showed dissatisfaction with the portion size of cold meals. Eighty per cent of prisoners wanted more hot meals. In response to the results of the review, the prison now offers two hot meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and has invested £27,757 in mixing and dough-making machines, to provide healthier, home-made bread.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

5.2.1 In the reporting period, a total of 752 prisoners were segregated.

5.2.2 It is reported that special accommodation has been used once in the last year, in April 2021. The Board considers this a major achievement.

5.2.3 On occasion, it is difficult to identify exit strategies for some prisoners. Eleven prisoners were held in segregation for over 42 days. The longest stay was for 187 days. Another prisoner who stayed for 168 days was waiting for a promised place in the high-security estate, which took a long time to be found.

5.2.4 However, the Board is concerned that the prison does not have a resource to accommodate such prisoners, that there are insufficient resources (such as close supervision centres) nationally and that the process of referring a prisoner for a close supervision centre place is far too long to be just and humane. The two applications for close supervision made in February 2021 were both rejected on the grounds that the prisoners' needs could be met in the long-term estate. The Board believes that such men with complex mental health issues or personality disorders need alternative provision to avoid prolonged stays in the CSU.

5.2.5 However, over the year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of category B prisoners held in the prison.

5.2.6 Isolated lengths of time in the CSU can sometimes hide another reality: many of the prisoners on long stays in the CSU have also been subject to repeated stays in the unit. For example, one prisoner had seven separate periods in the CSU of one, 36, 149, eight, 20, seven and 56 days, respectively.

5.2.7 Segregation meetings are not given sufficient priority. The Board has not been made aware of any segregation monitoring and review group meetings during the reporting year, and so has not been able to attend. Cancelled meetings have not been rescheduled.

5.2.8 The policy of sending new arrivals who test positive on the body scanner directly to the CSU has resulted in a significant increase in the number of prisoners admitted there. Between January and August 2020, the number of prisoners segregated per month averaged 46. From September to December 2020, with the installation of the scanner, the average rose to 67 prisoners per month. In September 2020, the actual number was 84. Senior managers report that the impact of the scanner has been to significantly reduce the volume of drugs coming into the prison (see paragraph 4.5.2).

5.2.9 The Board considers the majority of GOOD reviews to be well managed, respectful and solution focused.

5.2.10 The Board cannot be certain that actions decided upon in GOOD reviews are always carried out. Communications regarding action points are verbal, without a defined process, following a GOOD review.

5.2.11 The ethnicity of prisoners held in the CSU in the reporting year was:

<b>Ethnicity of prisoners held in the CSU in the reporting year:</b>				
	Number	% of CSU population over the year	% of prison demographic over the year	Level of disproportion
Asian	134	18%	17%	<b>+1%</b>
Black	134	18%	18%	-
Chinese / other	12	1%	3%	-2%
Mixed race	74	10%	6%	<b>+4%</b>
White British	368	49%	46%	<b>+3%</b>
White other	30	4%	10%	-6%

5.2.12 Data indicates that mixed race and white British prisoners have been held in the CSU disproportionately in relation to other ethnic groups.

5.2.13 Non-English-speaking prisoners have access to interpreters through Big Word, and the effective use of a Polish-speaking member of staff has been seen in a GOOD review.

5.2.14 Prisoners have access to peer support from wellbeing navigators and Listeners. The wellbeing navigators report that wing staff are proactive in facilitating this service, and the Board has seen this in action.

5.2.15 Generally, repairs in the CSU are carried out promptly, but delays have been longer during the pandemic due to the staffing issues of contractors.

5.2.16 The Board notes that the number of prisoners with a learning difficulty admitted to the CSU is not recorded. Therefore, the prison cannot analyse or know the impact on this group of prisoners.

5.2.17 The willingness of senior managers to discuss issues about long-term CSU prisoners and prisoners in the unit for 'security' reasons is strong evidence of the willingness to work positively with the Board.

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

5.3.1 Board rota reports regularly comment on the good relationships between staff and prisoners.

5.3.2 It has not been possible to monitor the impact of key workers in a direct manner with prisoners due to Covid-19. The key worker programme was halted at the start of the first lockdown in 2020, but only for a few weeks, so for the majority of the pandemic to April 2021, a minimum of 20 sessions took place on each wing, and in April plans were in place to extend the programme. A senior leader was able to evidence this with readily available documentation.

5.3.3 The expectations hub, a group of prisoners, monitors decency, and their overall findings match those of prison staff monitoring and the decency tracker, thus providing evidence of credibility of both processes.

5.3.4 By June 2021, staffing resources were at an all-time low, such that about 25% were off work. This impacted on staff at work, who had to work longer hours and be redeployed to cover shortages, which meant less coverage of some key areas. This put a strain on relationships and threatened stability.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) meetings use detailed data to good effect and generate actions. Data has identified prisoners of mixed race as being subject to disproportionate use of force, adjudications and complaints. This corroborates the Board analysis of rates of residence in the CSU (see paragraph 5.2.11). Consequently, the prison has set up face-to-face work with mixed race prisoners, in an effort to understand and resolve these inequalities.

5.4.2 At the October 2020 EDI meeting, the issue of possible ethnic discrimination in the allocation of the most sought-after jobs was discussed, following complaints. On occasion, applications to the Board have raised the same matter. The prison responded by reviewing and communicating the work allocation process and 'dip testing' with regard to the ethnicity of workers.

5.4.3 Direct consultation took place in March 2021, when five prisoners selected to represent the diversity of prisoners took part in a 'Lammy IEP Forum'.

5.4.4 Further evidence of proactive work was the report, at the April 2021 EDI meeting, of the results of a locally inspired prisoner questionnaire about the protected characteristics.

5.4.5 The EDI charter was praised in the operational and system assurance group (OSAG) level 3 remote assurance report:

'The prison has recently launched an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Charter for West Midlands. It reflects the commitment in ensuring no form of racism or discrimination will be tolerated and sets out the expected behaviours of staff, prisoners and partners to support it'.

5.4.6 There is evidence that discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) are effective. One example is a complaint about a senior manager that was investigated and upheld. The manager concerned was given advice by the equalities lead, the lead chaplain, and there was also a management response.

5.4.7 In January 2021, however, the OSAG level 3 remote assurance report stated that, during Covid-19 restrictions:

'Although the number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRF) submitted is low, they are not answered within the same timescales as complaints, no interim response is provided and are generally taking three weeks to complete'.

5.4.8 Following this, the Board attempted to monitor DIRF response times but was initially frustrated by the non-availability of EDI staff due to sickness absence and staff shortages as a result of Covid-19. Therefore, the practice of allowing protected characteristic leads three weeks to respond continued until

22 February 2021, when new staff were allocated to this area. Protected characteristic leads are now being told to provide a response within five working days and are instructed that if an extension is needed, the prisoner needs to be told this, and an explanation given.

5.4.9 Board monitoring has found that response times have improved as a result. In February, for example, five DIRFs were received, three of which were responded to within five days. In cases where there is an extension, complainants are now informed of this and given an explanation. Improved response times were monitored throughout spring 2021, and the Board is satisfied that the management response to the OSAG report was positive, appropriate and effective.

5.4.10 Expectation of prompt investigation and reporting are now evident and the Board is confident that a sustainable improvement has taken place. When the Board alerted the equalities team to a lack of accessibility of a complaints box on one particular landing, the problem was rectified immediately.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The chaplaincy continued to work without interruption during the whole of the pandemic, although there were no groups or services taking place. All faiths, other than Rastafarian, are receiving support, and all those who have registered a faith are visited once a week. In January 2021, the OSAG level 3 remote assurance report made positive comments about the chaplaincy input during Covid-19 restrictions:

‘Prisoners can access chaplaincy services and/or pastoral care. There is clear evidence of pastoral care and support being offered to prisoners during the restricted regime. This includes support during bereavement, seriously ill relatives, pastoral visits after a self-harm incident, to those that are shielding and in helping maintain family contact.

5.5.2 Services for all faiths were not reintroduced when this became possible in the community, on the basis that: ‘...we do not have the required space to provide equitable services to everyone...’ (NTR 121/2020). Chaplaincy services resumed on 16 June 2021, initially with corporate worship and then followed by teaching groups.

5.5.3 Much of the chaplains’ time has been spent providing bereavement support to prisoners following the (mainly Covid-19-related) deaths of relatives on the outside. In February, the new lead chaplain initiated webcast funerals in real time, where possible, allowing bereaved prisoners to take part in the service virtually.

5.5.4 A hardship scheme to support prisoners on release was established through the charities New Leaf, Islamic Help, Himaya Haven and Prison Fellowship, to support families and prisoners on release.

5.5.5 The HMIP scrutiny visit report included the following comments:

‘The chaplaincy provided for the varied religious needs of the population throughout the national restrictions. Although corporate worship has been

suspended since March, the team had continued to carry out their statutory duties. The chaplaincy provided in-cell worship packs to prisoners who would otherwise have attended services, with a take-up by around 100 prisoners from a variety of faiths. Critical pastoral care had continued, with prisoners who needed support allowed to attend the chapel on an individual basis. The prison had also facilitated virtual attendance at funerals through use of computer tablets’.

5.5.6 During the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccinations, the chaplaincy worked proactively to provide reassurance and factual information to try to maximise the take-up of the vaccine among prisoners.

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)**

5.6.1 A prisoners forum in June 2021 discussed the IEP policy. Some of the issues raised by the group were:

- ‘Many residents are not aware of their IEP status’.
- ‘Foreign nationals are unaware of the process due to a language barrier’.
- ‘It can be difficult to gain positive case note entries to apply for enhanced status’.
- ‘There is no incentive to work towards enhanced’.

5.6.2 Resulting action points included updating the information for prisoners on ‘How to gain enhanced status’, a commitment to translate the main notices into the top three most widely spoken foreign languages, the provision of pocket translators to aid communication with foreign nationals, and consideration of a process for informing family members of positive behaviour.

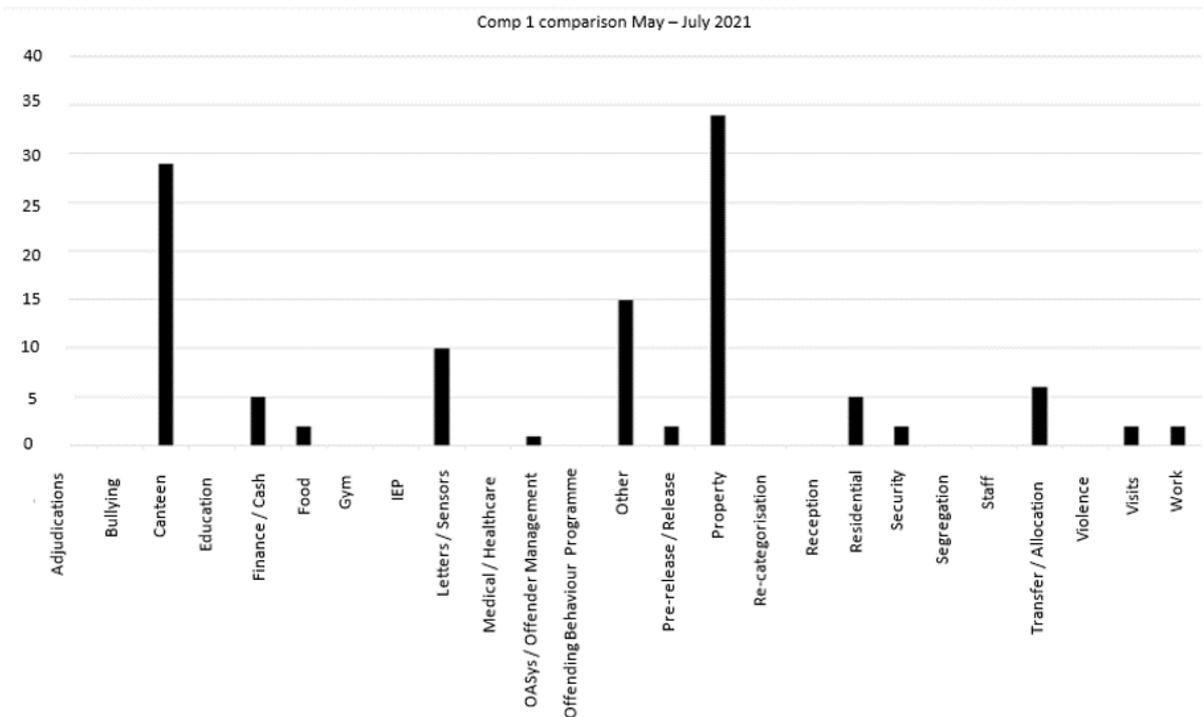
5.6.3 The Board has concerns about disproportionality within the IEP scheme: From January to March 2021:

- white prisoners comprised 46.41% of the population but 54.1% of prisoners with enhanced IEP status.
- black and minority ethnic prisoners comprised 53.59% of the population but 45.9% of prisoners with enhanced IEP status.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 Property and canteen constitute by far the greatest number of complaints (see paragraph 5.8.1). This mirrors the top issues in applications to the Board (see section 8). The graph below shows the number of prison complaints by subject, from May to July 2021.

5.7.2 There was an improvement following the introduction of a property officer and there have been fewer complaints about cell clearances.



5.7.3 Catalogue purchases from MandM have been the cause of many complaints and applications to the Board, and of much prisoner frustration, owing to a lack of choice and many items being out of stock.

5.7.4 There are unreasonable delays. Money is taken from the prisoner’s account at the point of ordering. Quite often, an item is not available, and it may be weeks before he is informed and the money repaid.

5.7.5 When the spending limit on the prison credit card for catalogue purchases is reached, orders go into a waiting pile. It is not clear if there is a system to process these delayed purchases in the order in which they were received, resulting in even more extended delays and frustration.

5.7.6 Complaints about canteen increased when management transferred from HMPPS to DHL. This involved a different computer system, different working hours and personnel. Initially, the disruption to established routines led to delays in delivery, frustrating many of the prisoners. This now appears to have been resolved.

## 5.8 Property,

5.8.1 The extent of complaints across all prisons in the region is such that it has led to an HMPPS Midlands regional review. Many of the concerns raised have been experienced at HMP Birmingham, including:

- ‘Escorting agency refuses to take’.
- ‘Receiving establishment refuses to accept’.

- 'Property being issued to prisoners (predominantly catalogue orders) but not being recorded on property cards'.
- 'Cell clearances not carried out correctly'.
- 'Time taken to process catalogue items'.

5.8.2 The Board regularly receives applications from prisoners who have transferred out, or in, and property has gone missing between establishments.

5.8.3 In response, HMP Birmingham appointed a dedicated property officer in reception. The impact was positive. The Board observed an improved response to the follow-up of property applications, and several, but not all property issues were successfully resolved. Staff resource pressures have now forced the redeployment of the property officer, leaving no one individually responsible for property in reception. The impact of this will be monitored closely.

5.8.4 In response to the high number of property complaints and Board applications about property within the prison, the SLT reviewed its cell clearance policy.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

6.1.1 There has been on-site GP availability, including remote triage, from August 2020 onwards.

6.1.2 The average number of prisoners seen by the GP, including remote triage, was 793 per month, with a big dip in numbers in January and February 2021, coinciding with the second wave of Covid-18. The total for the year was 8,731.

6.1.3 In total, 573 routine outpatient appointments were scheduled between July 2020 and June 2021, with 116 cancellations.

6.1.4 Emergency care and referrals to hospital continued from the start of the restrictions. There were 134 emergency escorts.

6.1.5 Terminally ill patients were transferred to a hospice for end-of-life care, as and when appropriate.

6.1.6 The dentist was available from November 2020 onwards for non-aerosol-generating procedures and emergencies only. In total, 1,000 dental appointments were made between July 2020 and June 2021, with 722 actually seen in clinic. There were 12 cancelled appointments.

6.1.7 Moving the dental surgery to the healthcare department was a positive step but there were delays for avoidable reasons, such as not having locks on cupboards containing sharps.

6.1.8 Testing for, and vaccination against, Covid-19 have been comparable to that in the community, and well managed by the prison. The prison has had three Covid-19 outbreaks, with no prisoners being seriously ill only as a result of Covid-19.

## **6.2 Mental healthcare**

6.2.1 There were 1,485 mental health assessments from July 20 to June 2021. There were 2,751 cases of structured treatment activity delivered as a result of assessments.

6.2.2 There were 70 referrals as a result of mental health transfer assessments in the reporting period. Half of these prisoners had to wait some time for a second assessment following referral. On average, two or three prisoners per month were waiting for a mental health transfer after completion of all assessments. Fifteen transfers took place within 14 days, and only five took place within three to four weeks. The Board considers this to be an improvement.

6.2.3 The team of psychologists has a positive impact on many individual outcomes, particularly in challenging cases in the CSU. These staff have continued working throughout the pandemic.

6.2.4 Training for mental health staff took place, to support prisoners while they were waiting to be assessed by the clinical psychologists.

6.2.5 Peer support is used to good effect, provided by the expectations hub and wellbeing navigators trained in basic mental health first-aid. They continue to support prisoners on an ACCT or CSIP, and in segregation.

## **6.3 Social care**

6.3.1 The social care wing for elderly prisoners and those shielding from Covid-19 is well run and caring, benefiting from a garden.

6.3.2 Throughout the pandemic, prisoners on the social care wing have spent up to four hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon out of their cells. The feedback from prisoner conference calls with the Board has been positive and appreciative.

## **6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym**

6.4.1 Early into the Covid-19 lockdown, the prison provided daily half-hour circuit gym sessions on the exercise yards of most wings while the prisoners were out of their cells. This was a positive step, at a time when other physical exercise was not possible, and prisoners appreciated it.

6.4.2 Prisoners have experienced being locked up, often in shared cells, for 22 and a half hours per day for over 16 months, with no easing in sight. The long-term impact of this on mental and physical health cannot yet be assessed. Although compliance has mostly been good, the Board believes that this amount of lock-up time is not humane.

6.4.3 Time out of cell, although severely limited, has been well managed, with daily access to showers, fresh air, exercise, the kiosk and domestics.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 Prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, education had a low overall success rate of 77.11%. By the end of the contract year, this had risen to 96.95%, a marked improvement, despite the many obstacles arising from lockdown.

7.1.2 In-cell education at the start of Covid-19 restrictions saw significant drops in learner engagement. Although distraction packs were being sent out to prisoners on the wings, it was identified that these were not sufficiently challenging for many learners, and this appeared to be exacerbated by the lack of accountability, in terms of incomplete work and, in the early stages, lack of access to teacher support and feedback. When teaching staff returned to work, subject-specific work packs were introduced, and from September 2020 an amended curriculum plan included accredited in-cell learning.

7.1.3 Pack trackers are now being used, which can show each learner's journey. This improvement is reflected in the statistics from 1 April 2021 to 2 June 2021. For instance, there were 238 starts during this time.

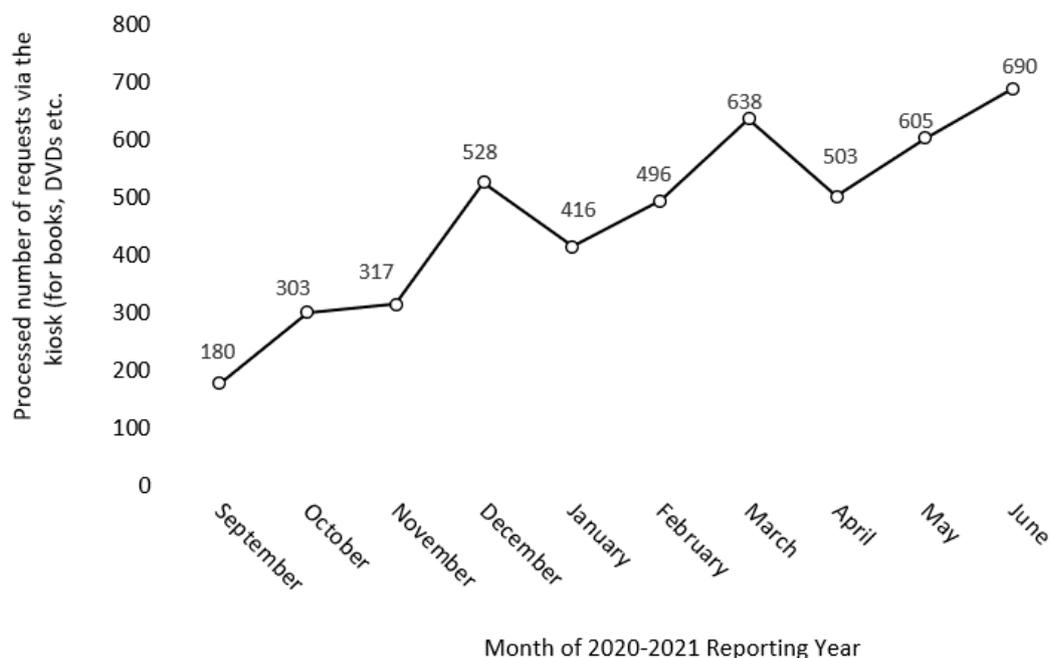
7.1.4 The recently implemented education telephone helpline has seen notable engagement, with the number of calls increasing to 157 in the month of June 2021.

7.1.5 With respect to learning disabilities and difficulties (LDDs), between January and May 2021, there were 268 screenings, with 51 LDD plans (19% of those screened) subsequently being written. Twenty-nine of those with plans written in this time period were education students.

101 adjudications from November 2020 to January 2021 were for prisoners identified as having LDDs or those who had been screened for them

7.1.6 By June 2021, a limited amount of small group teaching was starting up again.

7.1.7 There was no library provision from March 2020 until August 2020, as the library staff were withdrawn because of Covid-19. Since returning in August, the library has processed a rising number of requests, via the kiosk, for books, catalogues, distraction sheets, DVDs and various printouts:



## 7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Most workshops, other than retail, have remained closed since March 2020. Essential workers, such as those in the expectations hub, wing orderlies, and kitchen and laundry workers, were quickly returned to their roles.

7.2.2 It was noted that there was a lack of training for industry staff in regard to LDDs

## 7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Offending behaviour programmes were all stopped in March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. The impact of this has been that prisoners have not received rehabilitative courses. Courses only resumed on a one-to-one basis in September 2020, when the prison had to prioritise based on the assessed risk of reoffending. Since then, a total of eight prisoners completed the thinking skills programme. The COVAID (control of violence for angry impulsive drinkers) programme stopped completely.

7.3.2 'Inside Job' works with a prisoner representative, and together they have secured job offers for 39 prisoners, job interviews for 50, helped prepare CVs for 58 and disclosure statements for 56, and have held five interview surgeries. These achievements are impressive.

## 7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Purple Visits (a virtual system for connecting prisoners and visitors) started on 1 July 2020, and in the 12-month period has delivered 6,157 online 'visits'. After a

slow start, with some early technical problems, the system has bedded in to an average of 850 virtual visits per month. There are now five laptop computers dedicated to Purple Visits. HMIP commended the prison for providing a set of children's storybooks for fathers to read to their child during a video-call visit.

7.4.2 The Board was told that Albanian and Greek foreign national prisoners have been disadvantaged by not being able to achieve connectivity. This is thought to be the result of information technology issues in the receiving countries.

7.4.3 Social (face-to-face) visits restarted on 24 May 2021, and in the following five weeks enabled 275 visits, even though there is a maximum of 10 per session, to allow for social distancing.

7.4.4 'Storybook Dads' has resumed in the library, enabling some fathers to record stories for their children to listen to at home. However, only one wing can benefit from this, owing to the logistics of movement around the site during Covid-19 restrictions. It would have been invaluable to many others who were unable to access the service for this reason.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 Management of the seven pathways to reducing reoffending has developed significantly in the last year. The sharing of information and collaboration between the prison and partner agencies is good. Monthly meetings ensure that the various stakeholders work in coordination. In this way, they can plan strategically and support individuals.

7.5.2 It is commendable that the CRC has been present in the prison throughout the pandemic, initially seeing prisoners at their cell doors, and later face-to-face. This has provided prisoners before release with access to support and guidance regarding a number of issues, including accommodation, debt and finance.

7.5.3 Housing on release continues to be very good, with a continued success rate above 90%. All accommodation identified is accredited, and is said by the CRC to meet required standards. This has resulted in some out-of-area prisoners being transferred to Birmingham, where the authorities know they will be rehoused. Adversely, if these prisoners reoffend, they are admitted back into HMP Birmingham.

7.5.4 It is a major concern that since the reunification of probation services, the contract with NACRO for resettlement services in the West Midlands requires them to find accommodation only for prisoners on probation or being released on probation. There is no provision for the remand cohort or immediate releases from court, or for prisoners being released at the end of their sentence. This has serious implications for the intended 80% remand, 20% resettlement population of the prison and will undo the existing good achievements of the CRC regarding accommodation. A six-month delay in implementation has been agreed, but beyond that date there will be no resettlement probation workers in the prison.

7.5.5 Debt management is substantial, and possibly better than in the community; Birmingham Settlement, working within the prison, has managed to deal with a total of £454,874 debts in the reporting period. Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) staff working inside and outside the prison have dealt with a total of £333,556 debt. Between CAB and Birmingham Settlement, over £81,000 of debt was actioned on behalf of prisoners in June 2021.

7.5.6 Every prisoner is seen on the day of his release by the CRC. Basic mobile phones, with £10 credit, are issued to prisoners who have no other means of making contact with their probation officer. This is reported to have been highly effective in maintaining contact. In the reporting period, CRC staff have met 74 prisoners at the gate on their release who have been identified as requiring further support, and have referred a similar number to community support workers where they consider additional assistance is needed.

7.5.7 CAB was due to implement a new and much needed course for long-serving prisoners about to be released: 'Helping you get by in the changing modern world'. This has had to be postponed because of Covid-19 restrictions.

7.5.8 'Treads and threads', a new initiative set up in reception, is a clothes bank for prisoners leaving prison without any appropriate clothing. It has also been used to help prisoners dress appropriately for interviews and for attendance at court.

7.5.9 The 'Departure Lounge' opened in October 2020, as a service for prisoners 'through the gate', set up by New Leaf, a community interest company, and commissioned by the prison. Since it began, 179 prisoners have been engaged at the gate by New Leaf resettlement support staff. Of these, a total of 113 prisoners have gone on to be registered for further and ongoing support. There is an active caseload of 42 currently engaged between three peer resettlement support workers.

7.5.10 HMP Birmingham is still having to manage late releases by the courts, which can leave short notice to find housing. The CRC responds to all such cases as they happen, and every prisoner who has engaged with the team has been found suitable accredited accommodation, often late in the day. This is not a sustainable way of supporting prisoners into accommodation. It is crisis management, as a result of immediate release from court to no fixed abode. The CRC has met the magistrates' representative to try to resolve the issue, but no solution has yet been found.

7.5.11 There have been some issues with the return of bank account applications. The bank says that it has posted confirmation of successful applications to the prison. However, some of these letters appear either to have gone astray or not to have arrived. Without a bank account, it is much harder for prisoners to receive benefit payments.

## 8. The work of the IMB

In July 2020, the Board resumed visits to the CSU three times a week. Five members continued with this until March 2021, when most members returned to on-site monitoring but avoiding direct contact with prisoners on the wings.

Teleconference Board meetings were replaced with blended face-to face and teleconference meetings from March 2021 onwards.

Five newly appointed members have started an intensive induction programme, and the Board now has a 'training tracker'. Success in developing, motivating and retaining new members is largely attributable to the work of the Board development officer.

Four experienced members have left the Board in this reporting period.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the establishment	303
Total number of segregation reviews attended	364

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
C	Equality	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
F	Food and kitchens	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>
H1	Property within this establishment	<b>54</b>	<b>16</b>
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	<b>48</b>	<b>20</b>
K	Transfers	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>
	Total number of applications	<b>316</b>	<b>201</b>



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