



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Belmarsh

**For reporting year
1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the Independent Monitoring Board

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 Belmarsh opened in April 1991, at a cost of over £105m. It occupies some 60 acres on the old Ministry of Defence Woolwich Arsenal site in south-east London, 47 acres of which are within the perimeter wall. It is located alongside HMP Thameside, HMP/YOI Isis and Woolwich Crown Court.

It is a category A men's prison, and a core local prison within the high security estate. It primarily serves the Central Criminal Court and magistrates' courts in south-east London and parts of Essex, as well as holding high security risk prisoners on remand and awaiting trial. Prisoners of all categories may be housed in Belmarsh.

At the end of June 2021, the certified normal accommodation at Belmarsh was 774 and the operational capacity (the maximum population it can hold) was 814. This was a reduced operational capacity from the prison's original capacity of 910 as a result of the removal of three-man cells.

The accommodation is spread across four equal-sized houseblocks, a healthcare centre, a segregation unit and a high security unit (HSU).

During the reporting year, the Governor left the prison and his deputy took on the role of acting Governor with others stepping up within leadership. All these roles have now been fully appointed with smooth transitions to new posts during a turbulent and challenging period.

The main providers of contract services to the prison are:

- Maintenance: Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL)
- Healthcare: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- Education: Milton Keynes College

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Undoubtedly a main feature of the monitoring during our reporting year has been Covid-19. It has had a deleterious effect on our being able to monitor as effectively as we should. It has also dominated the way the prison carried out its functions.

Below is a description of one period during the past year and how the prison managed the pandemic.

In November 2020, HMP Belmarsh was declared an outbreak site. Up to that time the prison had managed to keep numbers of infected prisoners very low – to no more than five at any one time. The vast majority of infections were brought into the prison by transferred prisoners. There were occasions when staff were responsible. The most notable of these was when an employee of a contractor entered the prison in mid-November, suffering symptoms and having had a test but awaiting the results. It was soon declared that he was positive and the consequence was a large number of officers had to self-isolate.

The outbreak started in Houseblock 1 with 15 prisoners. The prison was quick to introduce measures. All social visits were cancelled but Purple Visits (a secure video link with family, legal advisers and authorised others) continued except in the affected houseblock. Masks were made compulsory across the prison. A gatekeeper at Houseblock 1 was set up and attendance in the houseblock was restricted to staff working there and the rota ensured it was the same staff.

On Houseblock 1, prisoners were retained in their cells. Food was served at the cell door. The regime for the houseblock was for 30 minutes' exercise in groups of 12 and for each prisoner to have three showers per week. All showers were cleaned after each cohort of prisoners. Medications were received at the nurses' hatch but this greatly increased the time taken because of the need for very strict social distancing. Consequently, some medications were not received at the appropriate time. All staff had weekly testing, and for Houseblock 1 full personal protective equipment (PPE) was required.

By late November 2020, the number of positive prisoners had risen to 44. Some prisoners had been transferred to a special wing but accommodation there was limited. Three prisoners were hospitalised. Over subsequent days numbers continued to rise, reaching 71 by the end of November 2020.

Of course, prisoners were not the only ones infected. There was a toll on staff. Numbers off either sick or self-isolating rose to over 100 at one point. This put pressure on the regime. The staffing problem was exacerbated by the need for remand and other prisoners to attend court, sometimes in faraway places (such as Bristol). As these were category A prisoners, transport and accompanying staff came out of the Belmarsh complement, causing further shortages. The number of category A prisoners increased significantly at this time. This put an additional strain on staffing.

Phones had been fixed in all cells across the prison and prisoners were allowed additional phone credit in order to phone home in lieu of the lack of social visits. The phones also allowed prison staff to phone in to prisoners and this was useful when conducting assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews.

On 7 December 2020, it was noted that no further positive cases were recorded. On 15 December 2020 social visits recommenced. The prison was then able to move to a more normal regime, but only for a short time.

We now know that the events following this period were equally challenging. The Board continued to function, attending meetings remotely and reading all information such as daily briefings on a regular basis, but it became clear that triangulation was not possible without interaction with prisoners. Therefore, those members who could continued with visits until at the height of the pandemic there was an agreement with the prison that the Board would not visit due to the risk of bringing infection in.

Physical Board visits resumed in March 2021.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Conflicting information and factors such as changes in prison capacity as well as the effects of lockdown have made it difficult to ascertain levels of violence during the past year, but data suggest it remains similar to the previous year. The prison's strong reaction to Covid-19 kept the majority of prisoners safe from infection, and this is commendable. Also, the care of those prisoners who are most vulnerable was welcomed. However, more generally, the fear of violence from gangs remains in the form of conflicts across the prison. Plans to involve outside agencies to engage with gang members and improve relationships are promising, and the Board is hopeful that these will materialise in the near future.

The reduction in key worker support has left some prisoners unable to share their concerns on a regular basis or find out basic information that would lessen their stress. While some officers go out of their way to be supportive, others have been seen to be dismissive.

There have been discussions concerning a new regime, which it is hoped will reduce violent encounters as prisoners move about the prison but the Board has yet to hear how this will be arranged or when it will commence.

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The Board is concerned that the prison has insufficient knowledge of the experiences of those with protected characteristics to ensure that outcomes and opportunities are equal for all. It has been difficult to access meaningful figures and

comparative data in these areas, which could drive improvements in the fair treatment of some prisoners. Therefore it is not possible to state that all prisoners are treated fairly and humanely.

Some prisoners have been seen to be treated with care, especially those identified as most vulnerable, but this is not the case for all prisoners.

Efforts to treat prisoners humanely are reflected in improvements in the fabric of the prison including the cleanliness of outside areas. However the slow progress of the shower installations is of concern, especially as some of the new areas are out of use due to plumbing issues. The shower units available for use by most prisoners are still in a wholly unacceptable condition.

The removal of three-man cells is at long last complete and the Board would be strongly against any reintroduction of this inhumane practice in the future.

In-cell telephony gave prisoners the opportunity to maintain vital contact with families when visits were suspended.

The majority of prisoners have a TV in their cell, which helped to pass the time during lockdown, but many prisoners are now keen to get out of their cells more and take part in activities. The provision of various activities has been slow to restart and this has caused some frustration for prisoners. Staff shortages, and staff redeployment for cover, has meant that prisoners have sometimes missed out on basics such as showers and exercise.

Staffing issues in the business hub have meant unacceptable waits for canteen, responses to complaints and other requests, which have caused unnecessary frustration for prisoners.

Prisoners who do not speak English have been at a disadvantage, having to rely on others to support basic issues for example ordering meals and to speak up for them if they have a problem.

The Board is satisfied that prisoners in the segregation unit are treated humanely, with complaints to us being few, and relationships between staff and prisoners appearing to be generally good. Good order or discipline (GOOD) reviews have taken place throughout the year and the majority of prisoners have only remained in the unit for a short time.

Prisoners in the high security unit have suffered due to a lack of ventilation since new windows were installed. The in-cell telephony is not available to them; their exercise time is short; and adherence to a full regime is thwarted by staff shortages.

Despite the lack of collective worship over the year, the chaplaincy is to be commended for its good work amongst the prisoners on houseblocks including support with online funerals.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

While efforts have been made to meet prisoners' health and wellbeing needs, provision has not been consistent across the prison.

The provision of healthcare services at Belmarsh by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust is of a satisfactory standard, and liaison between prison discipline staff and healthcare staff works well.

The healthcare centre is a busy, noisy and challenging area where staff have been seen to be patient and caring even when under great pressure.

Mental health issues among prisoners in healthcare, the segregation unit and on houseblocks is of similar concern to last year. The length of time taken to assess patients and move them on to a more suitable environment is unacceptable. While prison and healthcare staff do all they can to support these very sick prisoners, it is not of a sufficient standard to aid recovery.

Concerns raised last year regarding cancellation of hospital appointments, non-attendance at outpatient clinics and medicines given out at inappropriate times appear to continue according to prisoners, but there are no figures or data to evidence this.

Patient Council meetings and audits of prisoner complaints have not yet restarted. This is unfortunate as both evidence the prisoner voice, which would have been useful.

Prisoners receiving social care are identified and monitored, as are those on ACCTs, constant watch and in self-isolation. The wellbeing of these vulnerable prisoners is regularly reviewed in weekly meetings where staff are seen to be involved and caring.

Drug use remains a problem in the prison, in particular 'spice'.

There have been no soft skills available in the past year to occupy or interest prisoners apart from items such as origami or simple art materials provided to individuals in cells by officers or the library.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Progress in prisoner progression and resettlement was severely hampered during the past year as outside agencies did not come in, were working remotely or not at all. The majority of purposeful activity ceased, family contact was limited and staff shortages restricted the work of the offender management unit (OMU).

Gains made in purposeful activity were lost and the revival of these seems a long way off. Prisoners were initially happy to work through education packs in their cells but more recently they are keen to receive a more supportive and personal approach

to learning. Those prisoners who do not speak English have been at a disadvantage during this period, although support for ESOL prisoners is about to restart on houseblocks.

Resettlement meetings restarted earlier this year and there is a strong commitment from many agencies to get things moving again in areas such as finance, housing, health and employment. Many practical and straightforward ideas have been put forward; these are yet to be seen in action.

New workshops, such as textiles and horticulture, show great promise as they are well equipped and instructors are in place ready to begin as soon as they are given the go-ahead. The fact that category A prisoners can attend the textiles workshop is also promising. The Board is hopeful that the ambitions around matching provision to employability on release will result in positive action.

The impact of the new Probation Service is yet to be seen but it is unfortunate that St. Mungo's is no longer contracted to support remand prisoners with housing and the Board is concerned that this will have a detrimental effect on those remand prisoners who have lost their home after a prolonged stay due to court backlogs.

The work of the library over the year, supporting education, providing distraction packs and facilitating regular reading, and helping prisoners with little or no English, is to be commended.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the minister discuss with colleague health ministers the provision of proper appropriate service outside of prison for those prisoners suffering from severe mental ill-health and the need for this to increase as a matter of urgency in order to provide the best opportunity for recovery (see section 6.2 Mental healthcare)?

Will the minister look urgently at the provision for those prisoners on remand in order to

- speed up the courts process so that prisoners are not kept on remand for a prolonged period
- ensure that those prisoners on remand who stand to lose their accommodation due to longer stays in prison, have housing support from St. Mungo's or another suitable agency (see section 7.5 Resettlement planning)?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will HMPPS confirm that there are no plans to reintroduce the use of three-man cells in Belmarsh under any conditions (see section 5.1 Accommodation)?

Will HMPPS improve the length of time those prisoners who are very unwell wait for mental health assessments and the transfer to more suitable accommodation (see section 6.2 Mental healthcare)?

Will HMPPS reform the system of handling prisoners' property throughout the prison estate, so that it works effectively at ensuring that prisoners are united with their property swiftly and correctly whenever they move in the prison system (see section 5.8 Property)?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will the prison appoint champions in each houseblock to be responsible for care leavers (see section 4.4 Safeguarding)?

Will the prison ensure that the key worker scheme reverts to the initial planned level, whereby all prisoners have a named key worker, time is allocated for key worker duties and key workers remain constant even when prisoners transfer within the prison (see section 5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers)?

Will the prison ensure that diversity and inclusion is given a much higher focus than in recent years, and that detailed measures are introduced to ensure equality of outcome and opportunity for all relevant protected characteristics (see section 5.4 Equality and diversity)?

Will the prison ensure that updated prisoner induction packs are made available as a priority and the means to translate these as necessary are readily available (see section 7.1.1 Education and section 7.1.2 Library)?

Will the prison review conditions in the HSU regarding the following issues:

- Temperature due to lack of ventilation after window refurbishment
- Use of in-cell telephony
- Staffing and regime
- Education and activities
- The provision of suitable interpretation services for ESOL prisoners

(see section 5.2.2 HSU)?

Will the prison review the prisoner complaints process, as suggested in the IMB Annual Report of last year (see section 5.7 Complaints)?

3.4 Progress since the last report

| | 2019 to 2020 Areas for Development | To Date June 2021 |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| To the Minister | Direct funding for refurbishment of showers and ensure works take place | Showers still not complete |
| To the Prison Service | Work with SERCO and the prison service to ensure prisoners are not delayed after attending court | This problem has not been so great this year due to limited court attendance |
| | Take steps to achieve improvement in efficiency of facilities management at Belmarsh | Some improvement seen – several new security initiatives completed |
| | End three-man cells | Removal completed |
| | Reform property system across the estate | Issues with property remain as a great frustration for prisoners |
| To the Governor | Encourage greater use of body-worn cameras in HSU and segregation unit | Much improved |
| | Review policy relating to provision of in-cell telephony in HSU | While lines have been installed, prisoners in HSU are not allowed use of phones |
| | Remedy poor ventilation in HSU | Poor ventilation remains, resulting in sweltering conditions |
| | Ensure all prisoners in segregation receive daily entitlement of exercise | Daily entitlement has been provided where possible |
| | Review and change process for complaints as recommended in Lammy Review | This has not taken place |
| | Take steps to improve the environment of the | This has not taken place |

outpatients holding room

Ensure that education is tailored to the needs of prisoners and is available for those in HSU and segregation unit

Education has not taken place this year apart from packs, which have been given to those in HSU and segregation unit if required

Use effective risk assessment to increase the number of prisoners with access to meaningful work experience and training

No progress due to pandemic, hopefully this will be the case in the coming year

Unfortunately, there was no response to the previous year's report from the prison. The Board will ensure that a response is received this year.

For the second year, it is difficult to compare the fairness and decency of treatment of prisoners at Belmarsh with that of the previous year. In fact, some of the progress recorded last year has been halted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several positive initiatives including the key worker scheme and the incentives and rewards policy have stood still over the past year. While the most needy prisoners continue to receive regular care, others are no longer receiving the one-to-one support that was so helpful.

It is only recently that purposeful activity, visits and association have begun to open up and these areas are still limited.

Progress has been clear, however, in the following areas:

- Cleanliness of the prison has improved. Areas inside and outside are kept tidier and well maintained.
- Several areas have been made more secure, facilitating movement of prisoners around the prison.
- While gang activity remains a concern, the prison is now working on plans for regime changes that will minimise the opportunity for those with conflicts to meet in transit.
- Digital recording of use of force is now in place.
- The management of the segregation unit, and the behaviour of the officers within it, is a good model for other areas of the prison.
- The use of in-cell telephony has had a positive impact across the prison.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The good practice instigated in reception last year to prevent the spread of Covid-19 continued throughout this year and thereby prevented any major outbreaks and successfully contained those prisoners arriving from court or other prisons carrying the infection.

After a serious incident in reception in March 2021, where five members of staff were injured, a new discharge process was put in place. This has so far prevented further incidents.

The new scanner in reception has been up and running and according to one member of staff is a 'game changer', as it is easy to spot phones inside the body as well as organic materials and metals. Those prisoners who are holding something inside their body will go to segregation until it emerges, although some prisoners are happy to retrieve items immediately. A doctor must be present in this case. Officers must receive special training to use this scanner.

Those prisoners who arrive at the first night centre continue to be met by Listeners where possible although this valued group has diminished due to the removal of most category D prisoners and no further training during lockdown. Now that the Samaritans are back in the prison, training will take place for a new group of Listeners who should be available in the near future.

On arrival at the first night centre, prisoners receive induction and any issues are reported, for example, substance misuse and non-English speakers. Prisoners are expected to disclose any conflicts they might have across the prison. More frequently prisoners are not declaring this information as they plan to continue any grievances while in prison.

There is a variety of reading material for prisoners but unfortunately the induction packs are out of date. These have very recently been updated and should be ready in the near future. It is not clear at this point however if this material will be translated and if so into how many languages. Several prisoners have pointed out that material given at other prisons has been of better quality. There is a lot of information given to new prisoners and they have shown concern over property, family and forgetting their prisoner number.

Channel 31, a prison information channel, is frequently updated to share useful information but again it is so far only presented in English.

Plans have been put forward by Acorn Training Limited, who have a recently appointed advisor in the prison, for a sequencing approach to the provision of information, advice and guidance at induction. This aims to order the needs of the prisoner, based on information from various agencies, with priorities in place where

necessary. Prisoners who are below academic Level 1 will begin with English and maths. However, those who have a substance issue will begin with the Pathways to Recovery project. Prisoners who are identified as having special needs will be supported through education. This approach is in the very early stages and is a good attempt to manage the progress of prisoners through the system. Regime clashes, transiency, conflicts and risk assessments could stand in the way of success and it will be interesting to report on this throughout the coming year.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There was one death in custody in the reporting year. The inquest has not yet been carried out.

As in the previous year, most incidents of self-harm were attributable to a small number of individual prisoners who repeatedly harmed themselves. There were 324 reported incidents over the reporting period compared to 444 in the previous year.

A new system for version 6 of the ACCT reviews will be introduced in the next reporting year. Training is being provided but so far the uptake is quite low which is unfortunate as the changes are substantive. From what the Board has seen of version 6, while it is more detailed, its sharper focus on careful monitoring and good outcomes for prisoners is commendable. Over the past year, the Board has generally been impressed to see the swift movement onto an ACCT where deemed necessary and the management of these over time. Likewise, those prisoners on constant watch are monitored carefully and seriously. Due to the nature of their needs, a few of these prisoners have been aggressive, rude and inappropriate. Staff have been seen to manage and tolerate this behaviour with patience.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The safer custody team comprises one custodial manager, four officers and one administrator. The team is supplemented by one custodial manager and one officer from equalities.

The safer custody team continue to maintain a support log detailing and providing support to prisoners with complex needs and vulnerability. Last year a friends/family hotline and functional email were introduced, and these are very widely used and popular with prisoners' key contacts. The Board is pleased that the prison will keep these facilities in place even after the pandemic is over.

The figures for assaults on prisoners/fights and staff are shown below:

| | April 2019 – March 2020 | July 2020 – June 20 21 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Assaults on staff | 105 | 77 |
| Assaults on prisoners | 267 | 200 |
| | | 22 incidents deemed as serious. |

All the extra support provided to prisoners, increased use of body-worn cameras and better management of complex-needs prisoners are all factors contributing to this slight decrease. However, in the reporting year, prisoners were locked up for long periods during the day and there was no mixing of prisoners between spurs and houseblocks. There was also no freeflow and association, while the capacity for prisoners on roll has been reduced from 910 to 774. Therefore, although a slight decrease is apparent, in reality a better picture would be expected.

Over the last few months, there has been a large influx of prisoners with gang affiliations causing some issues on their arrival in reception. The figures for the four months for gang-related violent incidents are:

- April 2021 – 17 violent incidents, 13 were gang related
- May 2021 – 19 violent incidents, 9 were gang related
- June 2021 – 25 violent incidents, 12 were gang related
- July 2021-present day – 10 violent incidents, 3 were gang related

There are currently 164 known gang members in Belmarsh and 62 different gangs in the establishment.

The prison is looking to outside agencies to share information and improve the service within the establishment. The security department have taken over the conflict list from safer custody on a permanent basis. It is hoped to start a Prevent workshop, doing motivational work for gang members or people affiliated to gang issues.

The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) system for violent individuals is still considered successful and there have been changes to the way these prisoners are managed throughout the year. Only the complex cases are now recorded on the CSIP log, i.e. those requiring a support plan. Each custodial manager is assigned one CSIP prisoner and retains responsibility for managing this relationship, wherever the prisoner is located in the prison.

The number of prisoners self-isolating was very low again this year, mainly due to the lockdown situation and feeling safer because of this. Self-isolation evidenced by the IMB this year has been due to debt, nature of offence and conflicts due to gang activity.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

There have been low numbers of vulnerable prisoners (VPs) throughout the reporting year, so it has been easier to keep them separate from other prisoners as there is space for them all on one spur in Houseblock 4. This has also made it easier for VPs to receive the same regime, and to have access to activities, as other prisoners.

The work done in the VP workshop is considered essential (collating breakfast packs), and so it has remained open during the whole year with 10 prisoners in the morning, and 10 again in the afternoon. In general, everything else on offer to other prisoners has been available to VPs. Access to the Astro turf for outside exercise restarted in May 2021 and it is expected that the prison will move to structured association being included in the regime. ('Structured association' is the initial return

to full association, whereby prisoners remain in groups for specific association activities, such as pool and table tennis).

Safeguarding

This section refers to young people aged under 18 and to young adults aged under 25.

This is managed by the public protection and safer custody teams. In public protection, the concern is for the victim of the crime allegedly committed by the prisoner. Where there are restraining orders in place or 'no contact requests' relating to members of the public, the prison will notify outside probation services for the area the prisoner comes from. The age of the victim is relevant if under 18. The prison will follow up periodically and the prisoner offender manager (outside probation services) will be notified when the prisoner is sentenced.

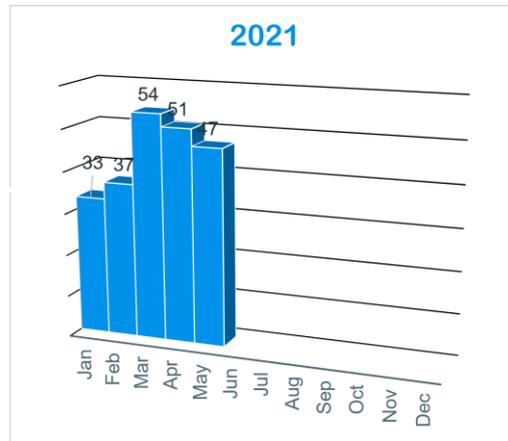
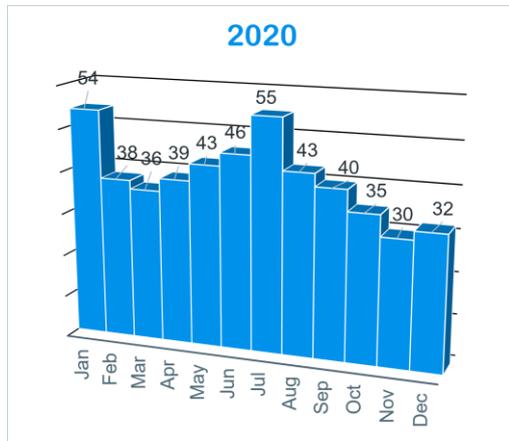
With regard to safeguarding, the safer custody remit relates to prisoners under the age of 25. If the prisoner has been in local authority care or comes from a secure unit for young offenders, an alert is created on the system "Care Leaver". Local social services will be contacted to advise them that the individual is in prison and to check if the prisoner needs money or clothing. A pathway plan will be created, and social services will make regular contact with the prisoner. The safer custody officer indicated that it would be helpful if champions could be appointed on each houseblock for care leavers. When a young prisoner, over 18 and under 25, is still in education or training, they will remain in the care leaver programme.

4.5 Use of force

A significant improvement in recording use of force (UOF) has been introduced whereby all records are now maintained digitally. The Board is requesting access to these records. A report is produced monthly for presentation to the prison's UOF committee. This report is very comprehensive, comparing the figures to previous periods, showing the types of UOF employed and with a detailed analysis of the timings, locations and impact on different groups of prisoners.

During the Covid-19 period the UOF figures remained high. One reason for this could be the technique followed for directing prisoners by touch and a new technique is being introduced called a 'guiding hold', with officers placing a hand lightly on the forearm of a prisoner to direct them, rather than on the back. It is expected that this may improve the management of difficult situations and non-compliance.

Use of Force statistics per Month 2020/2021

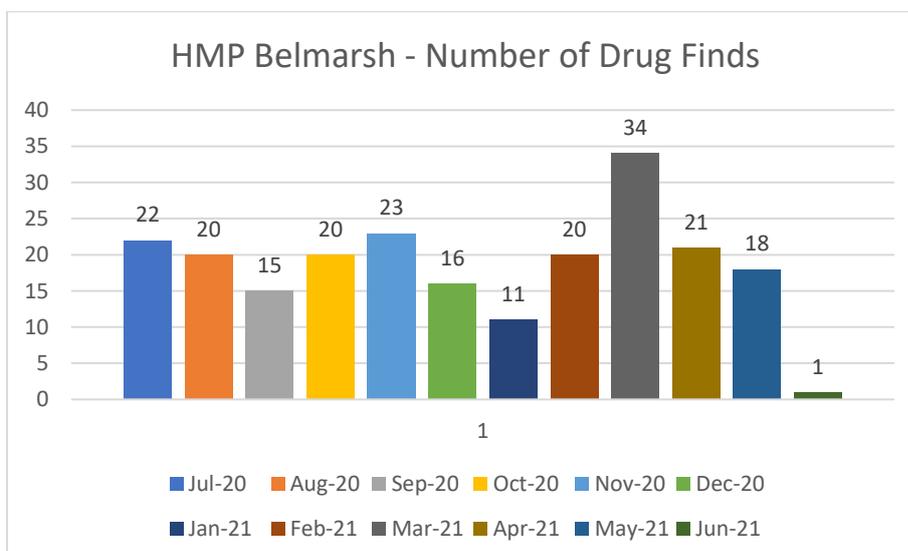


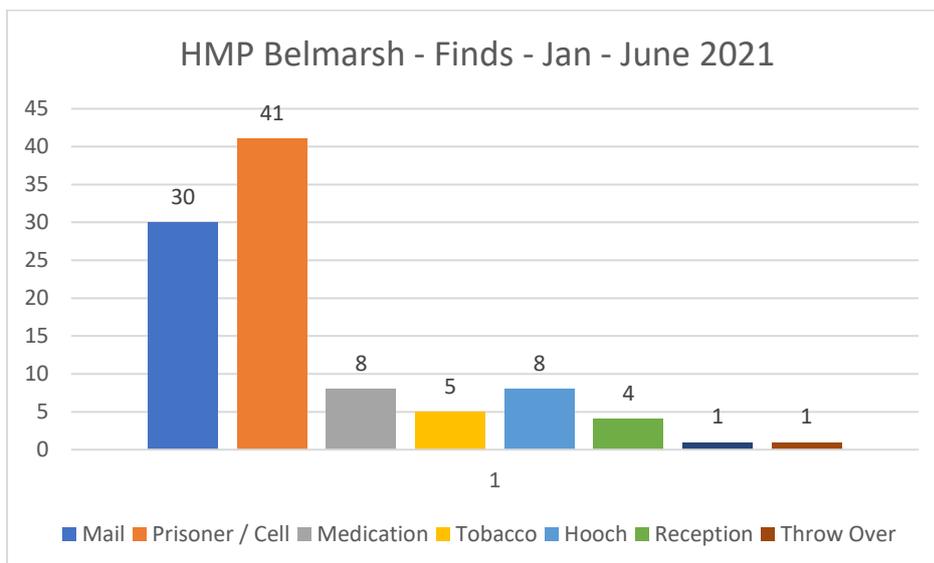
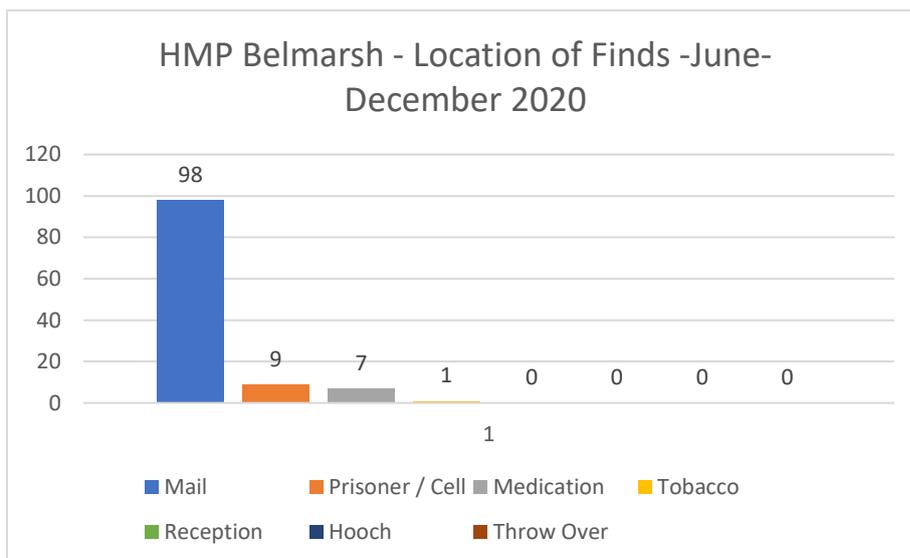
4.6 Substance misuse

The figures below show records of drug finds over the past year. Why there were so many more in-cell finds in the latter part of the reporting year is a question yet to be answered.

During Covid-19 there were no mandatory drug tests (MDTs) carried out as directed nationally due to the pandemic. MDTs have now started up and we will start to see the results of this testing from July 2021. The main drug in the prison remains spice, and the preferred trafficking route into the establishment remains the mail. Staff are able to recognise the effects of this drug and act to prevent escalation. In addition to this there has been a recent rise in the fermentation and consumption of 'hooch', which has risen over recent months. The one 'throw over' (a package thrown over the prison outer wall), received was intended for HMP Isis.

Support programmes from outside agencies were limited during the year but have now restarted.





5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

In the past year, the prison’s operational capacity has been reduced to 774. This reflects the removal of three-man cells across the prison. The Board has adversely remarked on the inhumane nature of keeping prisoners in such cramped conditions and is pleased to note that this unsavoury part of prison life has at last been removed. There is, however, one note of caution in that cell certificates remain extant, meaning that HMPPS could, should it so wish, increase the operational capacity and reinstate three-man cells. The Board wishes to draw this to the attention of the Minister and resolutely, as it has done for a good number of years, states its objection to the reinstatement of these inhumane and overcrowded cells.

Of note is that the reduction in operational capacity at Belmarsh has not caused a reduction in staffing levels, which is to be welcomed.

The occupation of cells has much improved over the reporting period with the introduction of a mandatory pre-occupancy check being put in place. This in effect means that all cells are inspected, and infrastructure checked prior to being occupied, and any problems rectified at the earliest opportunity. The Board has not been able to monitor cells due to Covid-19 but will do so once the situation returns to normal on houseblocks.

A good deal of work has been undertaken within the prison to improve the cleanliness and state of prisoner accommodation. Self-help painting schemes are now in place across the prison, a very welcome initiative, and the Board has noted tangible results from this ongoing process. Covid-19 has clearly placed restrictions on a number of self-help activities, but the fact that prisoners are now made available to clean outside areas is a major step forward. The industrial cleaning and bio-hazard workshop skills prisoners to provide a valuable service within the prison, although it does not lead to a recognised outside qualification at the moment.

At the time of writing there are no cells out of action due to damage. This situation is to be applauded and is due to a much better relationship between the prison and GFSL. The appointment of a new manager and greater cohesion and reporting from the prison has made for a huge improvement in repair timings and returns to action of damaged cells. Each cell has a TV system with 31 channels and a prisoner information page.

Public areas are in general reasonably well maintained but much of the paint on ceilings is flaking and looks unsightly. Although prisoner artwork is hung on walls the Board recognises that there is little that can be done to improve vast tracts of corridors. But as reported above the general cleanliness of outside areas has much improved and this does make for an overall better impression of the prison. However, rubbish is routinely thrown out of houseblock cell windows on to the concrete/grass areas below.

The condition of the communal showers across the prison has slightly improved with those in Houseblock 4 being completed, after a great deal of additional works and building services. The remaining showers are disgusting, and are the result of years of neglect, poor management by central budget managers, and a lack of political and operational will. That position has now been rectified and all showers across the prison will be comprehensively refurbished over the next 18 months. It is a long overdue initiative with Houseblock 4 and the gymnasium having been completed, and work on Houseblock 2 to commence shortly. There are issues surrounding the project and it remains to be seen if it can be completed on time. The Board will continue to monitor this most important project.

With regard to other aspects of accommodation, the Board can report a much more positive picture across the prison, than was hitherto possible. For example, the washing machines and tumble dryers have been replaced over the past year. In

addition, painting teams continue to make important improvements to prisoner accommodation.

The prison is allocated £2.19 to feed each prisoner per day. In general, the food is adequate and very few prisoners complain about the quality of food. The introduction of a prisoner and staff partnership meeting in the kitchen is a welcome initiative. It means that prisoners can directly discuss any concerns with staff.

5.2.1 Segregation, special accommodation

HMP Belmarsh segregation unit has 16 cells available. This comprises two designated cells for Rule 46 prisoners and 14 cells for prisoners on Rule 45, Rule 55 and Rule 53. All cells were in use for the most part of this reporting year. 'Dirty protests' were kept to a minimum throughout the year and with a number of very challenging prisoners in the segregation unit, staff have managed some very difficult situations well. Cells are set aside for close supervision centre (CSC) prisoners throughout the year for which additional staff are allocated by HMPPS.

Recently there has been an increase in numbers of prisoners occupying cells within the segregation unit and it has operated at three-quarters to full capacity (12-16) for the majority of the time. It has been difficult to maintain the regime at times, but this has been managed well by the segregation staff. Should all residents wish to take their entitlement of exercise there would not be enough space or time in the day to facilitate the full one hour for each prisoner.

The use of segregation throughout the year has functioned well with most prisoners only staying for short periods of time. While some prisoners have remained in segregation for longer, the Board are satisfied that all alternatives were found to be unworkable. There have been no occasions where accommodation was lost due to damage; any damage has been quickly repaired and the accommodation back in use.

The segregation team is still under-staffed. Although they have gained one new member, four officers have been promoted to other positions. Despite this the dedicated staff on the unit have dealt with difficulties brought about by Covid-19 as they appeared. During the year, prisoners were visited daily by medical staff and chaplaincy staff. Weekly GOOD reviews continued, as did adjudications.

5.2.2 High security unit

Throughout the reporting period the HSU has continued to house those prisoners undergoing isolation due to Covid-19. These prisoners were kept on separate spurs to those HSU prisoners who were not infected. This has worked well and the prison is to be congratulated on how it managed infected prisoners and isolation.

During the year the Board has not been able to regularly monitor the HSU but now that the Covid-19 situation is showing signs of stabilising, the Board's monitoring has resumed in full along with other agencies that were advised not to visit.

It was unfortunate that there were some applications in the unit's IMB box that had not been collected for several months. Also prisoners were frustrated that their complaints to the prison about various issues had gone unanswered or been delayed by several months. They also complained about their property being lost or irretrievable within the prison. Prisoners in this unit who do not speak English feel they are at a disadvantage as they do not have regular access to telephone translators.

At the time of writing, the Covid-19 spur is closed and there are HSU prisoners across two spurs. While it was good to see some refurbishment in this block, the repairs to the windows have decreased ventilation and cells are unbearably hot on warm days. While all cells have been fitted with sockets for in-cell phones, the prisoners are still not allowed to use them.

There is a split regime in HSU with all prisoners getting 30 minutes out on the yard a day. However, the time taken to arrive and get back to cells is included in this, which reduces exercise time considerably. Prisoners complain that they spend too long in their cells.

A horticulture workshop is being reintroduced for the prisoners in HSU. A tutor is in place and ready to start. However risk assessments are yet to be completed. This new venture would be beneficial in so many ways and the Board is eager to see it up and running.

Staff in the HSU appear frustrated by shortages in personnel – the numbers needed to run the spurs efficiently are rarely available and this has a detrimental effect on regime. The Board has been impressed at times as staff have gone out of their way to look into issues raised by prisoners, but at other times they appear disinterested.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

The key worker scheme was restarted in March 2021, this work previously being overseen by safer custody and only to provide welfare checks of the most vulnerable prisoners. Not all prisoners are assigned a key worker currently and with high levels of staff absence, it is only possible to allocate time for key worker duties when the number of staff on a houseblock is 11 or higher. During the Covid-19 period, to keep groups static, key workers have been assigned from the houseblock in which the prisoner resides. When the rules concerning Covid-19 are relaxed, the key worker scheme will revert to normal, and a key worker assigned to a prisoner will remain with them even if they transfer to another location in the prison.

In general, it is considered that staff/prisoner relationships are good. Getting rid of triple cells has made a huge difference, with prisoners feeling less stressed and less threatened, with more space, and it is easier to keep cells clean. Community meetings on the houseblocks have been restarted and there are now kitchen and canteen meetings, giving prisoners the opportunity to influence what is on offer. Additional TV channels have been introduced.

5.4 Equality and diversity

During the reporting year, it has not been possible for a strong focus by the prison on diversity and inclusion. The safer custody unit has done much of the work that would have been covered by the equalities team, while supporting prisoners on their Covid-19 support list. Over the year, the team have spoken to the prisoner equality

representatives periodically. Work on monitoring discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) has been managed as in normal times.

Whilst it is appreciated that there could not be the normal focus given to this work, the Board has been concerned that during this year and two previous years there has been little attempt to do any work on analysing areas where prisoners may be receiving unfavourable treatment due to specific protected characteristics, and this includes the lack of focus by governors assigned to manage the individual strands of protected characteristics. The Board requested a report on the ethnic breakdown relating to UOF and cell searches. It was eventually provided, but in a format that was hard to analyse. When the information was analysed there did not appear to be any issues, but the concern was that these questions are not being asked by the prison, no one seems able to produce meaningful reports and no active analysis is being done in any area.

Few equalities action group reports and newsletters have been produced in the reporting year. There was a good document produced in October to celebrate Black History Month, with a booklet of articles and puzzles about black history.

Also, celebration of LGBTQIA+ people and culture was encouraged at the end of June 2021.

The picture looks more positive for the future as there will now be a much stronger focus given to diversity and inclusion, with the following changes promised:

- a proactive manager appointed in charge of equalities and diversity
- the work of strand managers to be overseen by the equalities governor and additionally the deputy governor
- arrangements to be put in place for there to be external independent assurance of the DIRF process
- regular quarterly prisoners equalities action group meetings to be held
- an event to be arranged to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Samaritans
- investigation to see if cell searches can be recorded on Nomis (DPS)

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Throughout the year, although there was no collective worship, support from the chaplaincy was present and strong. This is to be commended, especially as there was serious illness amongst the staff. Prisoners were visited regularly and some classes continued on houseblocks when it was possible.

Religious festivals were marked during the year, mainly with food prepared in line with faith requirements but also with changes in regime to allow for prayer and holiday. Other days were marked, for example, Remembrance Sunday, and two minutes' silence for those affected by the events at Fishmonger's Hall.

During Ramadan, several prisoners stated that they were happy with the systems in place to provide them with food to eat as required. Some prisoners in the segregation unit complained that there was cross contamination of serving utensils, and officers then separated these by colour, and stored them separately.

Some prisoners who could not attend funerals of family members were supported by chaplaincy staff to attend via video link; this was greatly appreciated.

At the time of writing, there are now limited services in the chapel as well as religious discussions. Covid-19 rules, including social distancing, are in place in the chapel, and prisoners are respectful of these.

The Board is grateful to the chaplaincy staff for facilitating its meetings in the chapel, which allowed us to remain socially distanced in the larger space.

5.6 Incentives and earned privileges

During the Covid-19 pandemic a national instruction was given that no prisoner be placed on basic level unless in exceptional circumstances. Belmarsh has adhered to this instruction on the whole, although there were some cases when it became necessary to downgrade a prisoner. This could only be carried out by a custodial manager and after a 'defensible decision log' was completed. Any downgrade to basic level was to be reviewed every 72 hours, until progress had been achieved.

Likewise, in the face of poor behaviour, and reduction to basic level, removal of a TV was no longer automatic and could only be actioned by a custodial manager.

The 'goody bag' system whereby visitors could purchase refreshments for prisoners to take back to cells could not proceed, as visits were cancelled and when they restarted the Samaritans did not open the refreshments kiosk.

As all prisoners were given a TV, this could no longer be an incentive to improve behaviour. As most prisoners were kept in their cells during the pandemic with limited time for exercise and very little association, there was less opportunity for poor behaviour. However, now that there are plans to get the regime up and running it would be very unfortunate if the incentives policy, which was so promising last year, were to be disregarded.

5.7 Complaints

During June 2020 to June 2021 total of 2850 complaints were logged as shown in the chart below. While some responses were delayed for some considerable time due to staff shortages, sickness or self-isolation, all complaints were answered. Prisoners expressed their frustration, as the process was so slow.

The most complaints were residential and were in relation to various issues on all of the houseblocks. A total of 362 were received.

Property complaints continued to be high with a total of 298 complaints received. Complaints that have been passed to the Board after prisoners felt they were not resolved have mostly been due to property lost in transit or in the prison. Other complaints seen relate to the purchase of articles, PIN numbers and sentence plans. Several prisoners have stated that their complaints have not been responded to, or they have received interim responses, which have not been followed up. The Board has seen complaints returned without signature or date. They are aware of the difficulties experienced this year in the Business Hub. Staff have more recently been reminded to date and sign all complaint forms.

It should be noted that some responses to prisoner complaints have been detailed and clear, providing a resolution for the prisoner, even if it is not that which they wanted. Such responses could be a good model for others.

A suggestion made by the Board last year relating to the Lammy Report has been ignored; and several responses to complaints seen were unhelpful and lacking in resolution for the prisoner.

The final report of the Lammy Review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system, published in 2017, made the following two recommendations regarding the management of complaints:

Recommendation 26: HMPPS should clarify publicly that the proper standard of proof for assessing complaints is ‘the balance of probabilities’. Prisons should take into account factors such as how officers have dealt with similar incidents in the past.

Recommendation 27: Prisons should adopt a ‘problem-solving’ approach to dealing with complaints. As part of this, all complainants should state what they want to happen as a result of an investigation into their complaint.

In the context of the Lammy Review, these recommendations appear to be intended to apply to complaints of discrimination incidents, but the Board considers that their application to all complaints would be welcome. The Board asks the prison to implement these recommendations for complaints in general, and to change the process for complaints to accommodate them.

Breakdown of Complaints Belmarsh Prison

| Year | 2020 | | | | | | | 2021 | | | | | | Total Complaints |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------------------|
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | |
| Adjudication | 2 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 33 |
| Activity Allocation | 4 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 66 |
| Application System | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Bullying | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 21 |
| Canteen | 5 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 75 |
| Catalogues | 15 | 27 | 11 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 0 | 27 | 19 | 0 | 150 |
| Cleaning/Hygiene/Supplies | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Closed Visits | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Complaints | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Disability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Education | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 30 |
| Employment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Equalities-non racial | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Equalities-racial | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Finance / Cash | 12 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 17 | 12 | 18 | 145 |
| Finance/Cash (Other Establishment) | 0 | 13 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 37 |
| Foreign National | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Food | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 45 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Gym | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| HDC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| IEP | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 15 |
| Letters / Censors | 11 | 6 | 22 | 19 | 14 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 138 |
| Library | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Newspapers / Magazines | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 43 |
| OASys/Sentence Plan | 12 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 17 | 15 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 100 |
| Other | 23 | 7 | 14 | 29 | 27 | 4 | 14 | 6 | 10 | 23 | 14 | 35 | 93 | 299 |
| Other Prisoners | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Own accommodation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Parole | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pay | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pay (Other Establishment) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pin Phones | 20 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 111 |
| Post (Incoming) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Post (Outgoing) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Post Rule 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Property Damaged | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Property Lost/Stolen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Property (Other Establishment) | 23 | 16 | 11 | 4 | 11 | 11 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 113 |
| Property Reception | 0 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 13 | 20 | 31 | 30 | 21 | 43 | 34 | 46 | 44 | 298 |
| Property Houseblock | 17 | 13 | 27 | 12 | 17 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 20 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 153 |
| Property DST | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Property HSU | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Re-Categorisation | 2 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 34 |
| Reception | 10 | 20 | 16 | 28 | 18 | 2 | 20 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 7 | 168 |
| Regime | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Religion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Residential | 39 | 31 | 41 | 33 | 23 | 19 | 26 | 20 | 18 | 39 | 0 | 39 | 34 | 362 |
| Security | 18 | 16 | 13 | 2 | 13 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 90 |
| Segregation | 1 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 37 |
| Sentence Calculations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Showers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff | 11 | 10 | 5 | 11 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 62 |
| Transfer/Allocation | 8 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 |
| Visits | 4 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 71 |
| Visits Booking | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Violence | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Write-Up | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Work | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 56 |
| Totals | 249 | 237 | 258 | 237 | 264 | 166 | 212 | 169 | 133 | 238 | 180 | 239 | 268 | 2850 |

5.8 Property

Several issues arose over the year to compound the already problematic area of prisoners' property. As there were no physical visits, relatives were sending property in to prisoners. This produced a backlog for checking and on several occasions property did not arrive at all. Some was sent back as prisoners had to make an application before items could be sent in; hence, parcels were only accepted if they had been requested. A national instruction stated that property was not to be handed personally in to the prison. As the induction booklet was out of date for most of the year, many new prisoners were not aware of the rules and were naturally upset to hear property had been returned.

A new initiative was for reception staff to visit houseblocks at lunchtime on a rota basis to answer queries about property. This was mostly unsuccessful as one officer stated, 'the prisoners see me standing there but don't know why I am there'. Also, reception staff were not able to retrieve property through this initiative, as they just took requests for information. Staff shortages meant that this initiative did not really take off, and prisoners were more frustrated when they knew their property was in the prison but had to wait, sometimes months, to receive it.

The Board received several applications over the year regarding property, often that was lost in transit from one, or several prisons. Efforts to contact other prisons were fruitless as their officers were too busy to engage with us or didn't even respond to our e-mails, phone calls and letters. Even attempts to contact other members of IMB Boards were unsuccessful.

It is unfortunate that at a time when prisoners could not receive visits from family members, better systems were not in place for them to at least receive property, especially clothing for court and paperwork needed to support their case.

6. Health and wellbeing

Healthcare in Belmarsh continues to be run by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust and Change Grow Live, who provide social care services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Issues with the timing of medication dispensing, such as variations in timing or sedating night-time medications being given early in the afternoon, have been raised in the Board's last two annual reports. Despite the introduction of some changes in the last reporting year, including an increase in in-possession medication, this is an area that has still been raised as a complaint to the Board. The issue was compounded in this reporting period, during Covid-19 outbreaks on the houseblocks, when medications were delivered at the nurses' hatch and the process took longer than usual due to social distancing requirements, which reportedly resulted in medications not being given at the correct time.

At the beginning of 2020, the healthcare centre began to audit their processing of prisoner complaints. The plan for the Board to contribute to this audit process has remained on hold this year, due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, monthly patient council meetings also provided a forum for prisoners to feedback about healthcare in the prison. Such meetings were attended by Board members and included prisoner representatives from the houseblocks and the head or deputy head of healthcare, as well as healthcare and pharmacy staff. Unfortunately, these meetings were suspended at the start of the first lockdown and have not been restarted.

6.1 Physical healthcare

The prison's management of the Covid-19 pandemic is addressed elsewhere in this report. This section covers other issues relating to the delivery of physical healthcare within the prison, including the impact of the pandemic on normal healthcare provision.

As noted in the annual report for 2019/20, all outpatient clinics except emergency dentistry, podiatry and ultrasound were suspended at the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown. In the middle of June 2020, just before the start of this reporting period, additional clinics, including optician, genito-urinary medicine and physiotherapy, restarted with reduced lists. By the end of the same month, the GPs commenced some face-to-face consultations, although many appointments have continued to be delivered via in-cell telephones during this reporting period.

The Board raised concerns about the level of non-attendance at outpatient clinics in annual reports for 2018/19 and 2019/20. Gathering attendance statistics has proven difficult this year, both due to the impact of the pandemic on our monitoring and such data not always being available when requested. The figures that have been obtained have been variable. For example, on 2 June 2021, of the six prisoners due to see the dentist in the afternoon clinic, only one did not attend, but on 15 June 2021, only about half of the prisoners booked in for the morning outpatient clinics turned up. On the latter occasion, conflicting priorities were cited as a reason for non-attendance and no issues with movements were reported. This is an area that the Board will continue to examine as the number of in-person outpatient clinic appointments increases.

The inpatient unit at Belmarsh has been under pressure this year, with demand at times outstripping capacity. In October 2020, the Board was informed that the pressure on healthcare centre beds was such that there were prisoners waiting on the houseblocks for space to become available.

Cancellation of outside hospital appointments was raised as an area of concern in the 2019/20 annual report. This was an issue before the pandemic, but there was a further increase in the number of cancelled non-emergency appointments with the onset of the first lockdown. In October 2020, the Board was informed that there were not too many difficulties with external hospital appointments and that prisoners were required to have a Covid-19 test a few days prior to their appointments.

In terms of emergency appointments, it is notable that on 31 January 2021 an ambulance was called for a prisoner, but none arrived due to reported ambulance shortages.

6.2 Mental healthcare

The demand for mental healthcare at Belmarsh has continued to be high. A feature of this reporting period has been delays for prisoners awaiting transfer to secure units, with such prisoners generally remaining on the inpatient unit during that time and often on multi-unlock. Since May 2021, the Board has received reports that staff at the healthcare centre have not been able to deliver everything to which the prisoners are entitled, due to insufficient numbers of officers given the number of prisoners on multi-unlock. For several months now, a prisoner with complex mental health problems, on the segregation unit has been waiting for transfer to a high-security psychiatric hospital.

6.3 Social care

Social care needs are managed by the prison, supported by Greenwich Council on an individual basis. Numbers have varied but there have been generally about 20 prisoners receiving social care over the year. The majority of these have the support of a care and support orderly. Some use a wheelchair or crutches. There are a few larger cells to accommodate a wheelchair, but there have been occasions when these have not been sufficient. A personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP), is drawn up for all those disabled prisoners who may need it. On at least one occasion, houseblock staff were not aware of the existence of this PEEP. However, most prisoners under social care who were spoken to have been satisfied with the support they have received.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gymnasium

Opportunities for exercise have been limited for most of the year. Prisoners were in their cells for most of the day, for the majority this was up to 23 hours. They were allowed onto the exercise yard daily, staff levels permitting, in small groups and for short amounts of time. Prisoners reported that they accepted the lack of association as it was preventing Covid-19 infection.

Prisoners are more recently able to use the Astroturf in groups of ten. There is also a timetable for the gymnasium, which include weights, cardio and football for 16 prisoners a day from one spur. Houseblocks are given this opportunity in rotation.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

Prisoners are assessed on arrival at Belmarsh and referred to relevant agencies as needed. Agencies such as Change, Grow, Live and Pathways to Recovery support those who have problems with substance abuse. However, agencies have not been readily available during the past year and have not held group sessions. One-to-one sessions have been held on occasion, but mostly prisoners have been given packs to complete in cell and distraction packs. More recently small group sessions have restarted but there have been difficulties getting prisoners to the relevant area and on time. This is sometimes due to staff shortages, but at other times there appears

no valid reason for a no show and despite efforts to improve the situation, attendance has remained low. It has been suggested that the presence of Pathways to Recovery on houseblocks, maybe for 'pop up' sessions, would be a valuable support for prisoners.

Several prisoners are in drug related debt and this can lead to violence and self-isolation. The prison keeps a record of those known to be in debt and aims to support where necessary. However, some prisoners remain in debt over several months or longer.

6.6 Soft skills

In the previous year, good progress was made towards providing opportunities for music and art. These have been curtailed this year and there is, as yet no sign of their return. There were also plans to introduce soft skills into vocational activities and the Board is hopeful that these plans will be revisited once all activities are up and running. It is clear that those responsible for progression and resettlement recognise the importance of this area for personal development.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Purposeful activity

Attendance at purposeful activity has been limited during the pandemic. A prisoner survey organised by the Learning and Skills Manager in February 2021 received 152 responses. Responses showed a large majority of prisoners were unaware of the opportunities open to them in education or vocational activities. Others said they had applied and were ignored, while prisoners in the HSU, on the VP spur or designated category A were ineligible. It is unfortunate that a large percentage of prisoners continue to be excluded from purposeful activity. Suggestions in the survey for provision with regard to future employability were realistic, but possibly not practical due to risk assessment. They included plumbing, electrical work, barbering and gaining a construction skills certification scheme card. Since then, the prisoner Channel 31, which is available to all with a TV, has provided more information about opportunities. The education provider is keen to promote successes more widely across the houseblocks and publicise what Milton Keynes College has to offer.

7.1.1 Education

Milton Keynes College has remained closed for prisoners throughout this year and at the time of writing there is no definite date for reopening.

In order to improve education provision at Belmarsh, the College is working through a quality improvement plan with a red-amber-green rating. All agencies involved in education and activities contribute to this, and meet regularly to discuss and update it. Several areas have been severely restricted by Covid-19, but others are moving forward, albeit slowly. For example, there are efforts to celebrate the success of prisoners including 'learner of the month', to improve the identification of and provision for prisoners with learning disabilities or difficulties and to source suitable accredited learning. Agencies involved are aware that a better use of comparative

data with regard to equalities would support the quality improvement process and give it a more strategic focus, but this information has not yet been forthcoming.

Education has been provided over the past year through learning packs, which are prepared by staff onsite working in an administrative area. These are marked regularly and returned. Recently they have included a feedback form, and the contents of these are being collated. Prisoners have stated that they would prefer to be out of their cells for learning as this gives them a chance for further association but also provides learning support if they encounter challenges. However, some prisoners have stated that in the circumstances the packs have provided a good in-cell occupation. One-to-one education sessions are provided now on houseblocks during lunchtimes, and there is some 'outside the door' support. This is a step in the right direction but still very limited. Over the year, about 77% of prisoners have engaged with the learning packs. There has been no higher level accredited learning over the past year, partly due to lack of engagement by outside agencies but also due to the fact that the majority of prisoners do not meet the eligibility criteria for such courses.

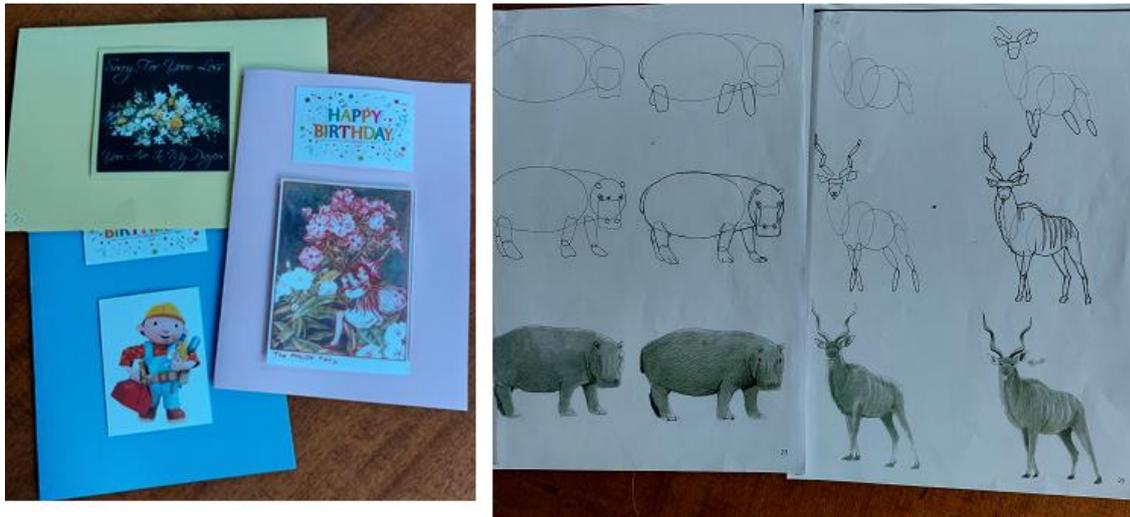
In the past, the Board has questioned the provision for ESOL prisoners, and this has been emphasised during the last year. These prisoners cannot successfully access the learning packs and there do not appear to be any translated support materials. New induction materials are being developed for prisoners but it is not clear if these will be available in translated form. Prisoners who understand little or no English are at a disadvantage on a daily basis. While some instances of great support have been seen from individual officers who have provided translated materials or taught vital vocabulary, there is no formal arrangement at present for progression in education for these prisoners.

7.1.2 Library

The library has remained closed to prisoners throughout the pandemic. However, the ongoing work of the librarians has been welcomed by many prisoners. Just under half the prison population is a library member. Staff visit the houseblocks regularly delivering requested books, Inside Time and Converse. The library has many foreign books and easy-read books on offer. Additional provision has included word searches in different languages, puzzles, origami, and calendars as well as legal research. A selection of handmade cards is available for birthdays, bereavement and other occasions as seen below.

Safer custody continues to make effective use of the library provision when supporting individual prisoners. A library newsletter is sent to each cell on a monthly basis aiming to encourage further engagement in reading groups and or mentoring although take up is low. A learner voice summary is also being prepared for distribution throughout the prison.

After a period of absence, the Shannon Trust – a national charity that encourages prisoners to read – has returned to the prison with plans to increase their impact. So far, a small group of prisoners are being trained to be mentors.



7.2 Vocational training, work

The majority of vocational work was halted during the pandemic and a return to normality has been in line with national guidance. The tea-bag workshops are up and running. Although the work continues to be monotonous, the prisoners, who work as separate houseblocks to avoid infection, are generally happy to be out of their cells and busy. The atmosphere and conviviality seen in these sessions, which have almost 100% attendance over time, is evidence of this.

A return to accredited qualifications is expected soon in the industrial cleaning and biohazard workshop. Prison qualifications have been awarded in the meantime.

Recycling now has good attendance although their work has been hampered by the lack of a compactor, which has been broken for over a year.

Some new initiatives have been set up during the pandemic. For example, there is a textiles workshop, which is well equipped and up and running for a few prisoners. All those working there, who are making sandbags for the army, are enjoying the new experience. Work in this area can lead to various assessment and qualifications alliance (AQA) qualifications, which can be collected. There is at present one category A prisoner attending the textiles workshop, and there is room for more once risk assessments have been carried out. This move to inclusion is a small but positive step.

Horticulture is another new initiative; tutors are trained and in place and workshops will begin for HSU prisoners in the near future, also providing the opportunity to gain AQA qualifications.

Other initiatives under discussion are barista training and dry lining; it is just unfortunate that risk assessments and preparation are so long winded before materialisation.

7.3 Offender management, progression

As with other areas of the prison, the Covid-19 pandemic frustrated the work of the OMU. Staff absences together with remote working by probation officers and

immigration personnel affected work on progression. At the end of the year, there were nine prisoners held for immigration reasons. Parole board activity was supported remotely with face-to-face meetings taking place only when safe to do so. Transfers to more suitable locations were delayed and reduced in number.

In October 2020, the challenge, support and intervention plan was launched which addresses the behaviour of violent individuals.

In December 2020 a bulletin was issued announcing 16 days of action against domestic abuse.

One other initiative deserves special mention. A resident of Belmarsh put forward the idea of helping the local community by making food donations. Staff helped to make this happen and in December 2020, prisoners and staff began giving food to Charlton Athletic community hub. Subsequently, a prisoner asked if money could be donated and this was set up. Prisoners gave generously and enthusiastically and received plaudits for the success of the enterprise from the organisation running the hub.

As an example of the success of the action, between December 2020 and March 2021 one houseblock raised £200. As well as parcels for the community, care packages were made up for nurses and doctors at Queen Elizabeth hospital at Woolwich. This was an original and worthwhile initiative and the Board commends all those involved in it. It would have been valuable for prisoners' self-esteem and would have helped improve mood.

The labour board, looking at applications from prisoners for work, met remotely rather than face-to-face and at the end of the year continues to do so. There is no evidence that this had a detrimental effect on either applications or placements, although there were far fewer jobs available during the year apart from orderlies.

7.4 Family contact

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic had a damaging effect on prisoners' contact with their families and friends. That being said, the Board is impressed by Belmarsh's efforts to mitigate the effect. Face-to-face visits were a casualty of the pandemic, remaining suspended for most of the year. Anecdotally, prisoners were supportive of the suspensions because of their concern for the health of themselves and their visitors. Resuming face-to-face visits would have involved the prison in extensive preparations for the provision of face masks and visors for all involved and the cleaning of visitors' areas which could not be carried out in-house.

Visits recommenced in May 2021 under strict rules to contain the risk of infection. Visits are now restricted to a single houseblock spur at a time. Numbers of visitors have been reduced to 45 per session and the duration reduced to 45 minutes from two hours. Prisoners are allowed only two visitors, no physical contact, no use of toilets, no handing over of property and no refreshments.

The ban on property was mitigated by a national instruction allowing prisoners to make an application for such property to be brought to the prison for security check through the receipt inspect despatch (RID) store.

The Board welcomed the introduction of Purple Visits conducted by secure video calls, although the uptake at first was disappointingly low. The prison tried to maximise use by introducing a prisoner application system which, once the necessary security issues had been resolved, improved matters. The Board understands that Belmarsh was one of the first to implement Purple Visits and commends the prison for their quick action and for their efforts to encourage their use. The prison will continue to use Purple Visits where it is not possible to organise physical visits, for example if the prisoner's family live abroad.

The Board is pleased to report that, at the end of the reporting year, children are being allowed to visit and physical contact allowed for those under age 12. One prisoner remarked on his joy at being able to cuddle his young child.

7.5 Resettlement planning

During the Covid-19 lockdown the outside agencies/teams that had begun resettlement work with HMP Belmarsh so effectively in the previous year did not come into the prison. The regular monthly meetings between them restarted in March 2021 but were forced to stop again and at the time of writing continue to be held by teleconference.

Most agencies, as shown below, are now returning to the prison after working remotely for several months.

Change, Grow, Live (dealing with substance misuse, supporting prisoners while in prison, and preparing for release) have, at the time of writing, a caseload of 213 prisoners. Three new peer mentors have recently qualified. Unfortunately, the regime means that prisoners are not always available when classes are running. This is frustrating as is the failure of houseblock officers to take prisoners to courses. As a result, attendance is hit and miss. The agency's view is that they do not always receive the cooperation they expect. Recent surveys show that prisoners have enjoyed in-cell work but prefer group work. The agency hopes to have more presence on houseblocks in the future.

The community rehabilitation company (CRC) gives out 'Getting It Right' journals for those prisoners in the last 12 weeks of their sentence and participants receive a certificate for completing it.

The Jobcentre prison worker has said that he has few ex-prisoners to work with and has asked for more referrals. He has also highlighted a claim line number for prisoners to use to obtain a first payment of benefit after release. The prison is planning to put this information onto the prison's television channel. The Board urges the prison to make better use of this resource.

St Mungo's is now onsite and contacting prisoners using in-cell telephones. The most recent data shows that, out of 27 releases referred to them, 23 went into some form of accommodation. The remaining four left with no fixed address. At the end of the reporting year, St Mungo's are no longer supporting remand prisoners because referrals must now be made by the probation service and remand prisoners are not covered in the probation contract. Previously, referrals would be accepted from

anywhere. As a result there will be no support for those who could lose their tenancy due to staying too long in prison. Support for prisoners on remand accounted for 60% of St Mungo's work. This will be a significant change with wide implications and the Board is concerned about the impact on prisoners.

A contract to provide the information, advice and guidance service has been awarded to Acorn Training Limited, which started coming into the prison in May 2021.

Activity by the New Futures Network, partnerships between prisons and employers giving support for resettlement, has waned over the past year. The restart has been slow with some surprising gaps in communication and processes despite the enthusiasm shown by the agencies and prison staff. The Board hopes to see an improvement during the next year.

There is no doubt that vital aspects of resettlement planning, such as adequate finance, suitable housing, and access to helpful organisations giving support in education and training, has suffered setbacks this year. Belmarsh encouraged staff to use the facilities available by, for example, reminding them (in November 2020) about the presence in the library of the Hardman Directory 2021. This directory is a practical guide, which helps those in prison to think about financial planning and finding the resources they need to make the best use of their time in prison and immediately afterwards. This guide is of particular use by key workers and those staff working in the OMU. Also, staff were reminded (in January 2021) about the Switchback Mentor Team, a referral process for prison leavers in London aged between 18 and 30 years. The team provides six-week intensive one-to-one support after release. These are good facilities which the Board hopes staff are taking advantage of. A reminder was also issued (in March 2021) about referrals to Greenwich Council for social care.

Some particular difficulties for prisoners were raised in meetings during the year. Identity cards, called citizen cards, issued on leaving prison, are not accepted for finance, housing and employment. To compound the problem, prisoners have difficulty in obtaining alternative identity documentation while in prison. HMP Belmarsh issues a discharge letter with a photograph, but it seems that outside bodies are unaware of it. The Board hopes this problem can be addressed locally.

Prisoners do not always use the housing services available to them because they believe that family and friends will accommodate them. This is not always the case, especially during the pandemic. During the year, one prisoner was released without accommodation so late in the day that no agencies were onsite. The prison had no contact details for him and had to telephone local authorities to find him a bed. The Board is pleased that there is now an out-of-hours guide and a list of contacts available.

Prisoners on shorter sentences should be able to retain their tenancies for six months but the backlog in the courts means some remain in prison on remand and lose their accommodation as a result. The Board recommends that this problem be addressed centrally to prevent this happening.

Some prisoners need a medical certificate on leaving prison to claim financial support if unable to work due to ill-health. The arrangement for the healthcare centre to provide this broke down during the year but the Board is pleased to report that it has now been corrected.

Curriculum vitae (CVs) are universally required for work, but prisoners are unable to create them online or send them out before release. Prisoners need support to construct a suitable and practical CV and personal statement. Work is being carried out for staff in the new employment hub to go into residential units to assist prisoners. The Board looks forward to this development.

While the picture looks promising for a future of working together to provide strong opportunities for prisoners on resettlement, there is a different view among prisoners themselves. Complaints have suggested that some have not been clear about how to prepare for release, not having been informed of the processes and opportunities available. Discussions with Listeners in the first night centre have suggested that they see the same prisoners coming back time after time. The Board hopes to see a rigorous approach to this important area during the next year.

8. The work of the IMB

This has been a turbulent year for the Board, notwithstanding the pandemic. At the end of the previous year, our chair had to stand down for health reasons and a temporary chair and vice chair were elected. In this reporting year, our previous chair decided to leave the Board altogether and not long after we lost two other members. Another member has been absent for at least half of the year due to no progress with her counter terrorism check (CTC) renewal. Fortunately, a member who had recently left due to completing her 15 years agreed to return for a temporary period of 18 months.

In November 2020 we began a recruitment campaign, interviewing sixteen candidates and appointing some excellent new members. It is unfortunate that the CTC process has taken so long and we are, six months later, enjoying the company of just two of our new recruits. Others will arrive eventually but there has been much work behind the scenes to keep them interested in our work while they wait for clearance.

The shortage of members has meant that those remaining members have had much more to do. As visits to the prison were limited it has been necessary to attend regular meetings remotely to find out information over the year and triangulating this has meant much more information sharing and comparing of notes amongst the Board. Hopefully this positive element will continue.

The Board is grateful to the Governor's secretary for her efforts to keep members informed of prison activity when visits were not possible.

Monthly meetings were held throughout the year, by telephone initially and usually without a clerk for various reasons. It should be noted that the Governor communicated with the Chair every fortnight when members were not able to go into

the prison and also attended remote Board meetings regularly. Now the Board is meeting physically again and making use of the prison chapel as a larger area for us all. Training slots in meetings will resume in September 2021.

All members are pleased to be returning regularly to the prison and continuing our work. It is also pleasing to have a substantive and reliable clerk.

Board statistics

| | |
|--|---|
| Recommended complement of Board members | 16 |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period | 11 |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period | 8 |
| Total number of physical visits to the establishment | Approximately 170 (plus remote attendance at meetings and interviews) |
| Total number of segregation reviews attended | 14 attended in person Several attempts at remote attendance – lack of appropriate technology made such attendance impossible |

Applications to the IMB

| Code | Subject | Previous reporting year | Current reporting year |
|------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| A | Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions | 13 | 8 |
| B | Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions | 4 | 4 |
| C | Equality | 17 | 6 |
| D | Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell | 13 | 7 |
| E1 | Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions | 32 | 17 |
| E2 | Finance, including pay, private monies, spends | 45 | 3 |
| F | Food and kitchens | 3 | 8 |
| G | Health, including physical, mental, social care | 43 | 26 |
| H1 | Property within this establishment | 30 | 27 |
| H2 | Property during transfer or in another establishment or location | 30 | 24 |
| H3 | Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s) | 8 | 5 |
| I | Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation | 41 | 13 |
| J | Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying | 67 | 66 |
| K | Transfers | 18 | 10 |
| L | Miscellaneous, including complaints system | 0 | 0 |
| | Total number of applications | 364 | 224 |



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