



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Usk and Prescoed

**For reporting year
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the 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 to the prison's records.

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

A short glossary is included at the end of this report in section 8.

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 HMP Usk and Prescoed comprises two prisons located around the town of Usk (south-east Wales). They are managed by one Governor supported by a senior management team (SMT).

- HMP Usk is a category C prison.
- HMP Prescoed is a category D open prison.
- HMP Cilwrgi Farm enables prisoners from Prescoed to work and receive training in agriculture, operating farm machinery and warehousing.
- In common with the rest of the prison estate, HMP Usk and Prescoed operated at regime stage 4 lockdown during most of this reporting period (RP) due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A complex mix of prisoner is supported by:

- The delivery of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) which involves prison officers delivering key work (HMP Usk) and Prison Offender Managers delivering case management (HMP Usk and Prescoed)
- A resettlement team and associated caseworkers.
- The health provider is the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.
- The psychology department.
- A substance misuse team provided by Dyfodol.
- The chaplaincy.
- A healthcare department which provides a day care facility at Usk and Prescoed.
- Libraries and gyms at both HMPs Usk and Prescoed.

2.2 HMP Usk first opened in 1844. Located in the town, its three main wings fan out from a central control point. These now house vulnerable prisoners, the majority being men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSO), approximately 20% of whom are over 60. During the 2020/21 reporting period the operational capacity (OPCAP) was reduced to an average of 220 compared to 276 the previous year. The certified normal accommodation (CAN) for most of the reporting period was 278.

In normal circumstances men who qualify for 'enhanced' status under the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme can apply to live in the Comber wing, which is a separate dormitory style unit.

The regime is designed to prepare prisoners for safe release and reduce the risk of reoffending:

- The sex offender treatment programme was available to all inmates until it was terminated (nationally) in March 2017. This has been replaced with the Horizon and Kaizen programmes.
- There is a thriving education department, together with carpentry, bricklaying and plastering workshops.

- Objectives are to hold prisoners securely and safely, and to provide a well-ordered establishment, where prisoners are treated humanely and with decency and respect.

2.3 HMP Prescoed is situated in open countryside, some three miles outside Usk town, on the site of a young offender institution which opened in 1939. Since 1993 it has functioned as an open resettlement establishment for male adult category D residents.

For the majority of 2020/21, the OPCAP has been at reduced levels. This was to enable an increase in single occupancy as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Previously the OPCAP was 260; during the 2020/21 reporting period the average has been 210.

It includes 11 detached accommodation blocks housing approximately 20 residents each. During the RP 40 single occupancy pods have been added and are plumbed in and working well.

The regime is designed to rehabilitate and educate through structured sentence and resettlement plans, and to reduce the risk of prisoners reoffending when they return to their communities. Opportunities exist for education, training, and work placements, with resources allocated for the resettlement of prisoners. The regime at Prescoed includes a range of industries and activities. The Board is impressed that despite Covid19 restrictions the prison has been successful in maintaining the number and variety of paid work placements. (See section 7.2.)

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

3.1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to research the contents of this annual report, which presents our findings for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The Board has covered as much ground as it can in the circumstances, but there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual – as will be noted, this period was completely covered by the varying stages of lockdown.

3.1.2 Ministers are aware of the constraints described but it is important to note that as far as the findings of this report are concerned:

- The Board continued to collect and analyse data throughout the period.
- Whilst regular physical monitoring was limited, we were still able to conduct some rota visits during the differing waves and stages of lockdown.
- Visits were supplemented by:
 - regular weekly telephone contact with staff
 - some (but infrequent) telephone contact with prisoner representatives
 - attendance at weekly prison management meetings
 - increased levels of data and feedback from the senior management team (SMT)

- The Board wishes to record the high level of cooperation it has received from the prisoners, staff, and the SMT in collecting information for this report.

From this the Board:

- Has triangulated our previous regular contact in the prison with the more limited monitoring we have been able to accomplish during the year.
- Derived information from data we and others have been able to collect.
- Considers its conclusions to be valid in that we have attempted to extract a realistic picture from evidence and experience. (See section 8.1 for a description of monitoring during lockdown.)

3.1.3 In addition, regular information is being collected on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

3.1.4 Throughout this report, the Board has used phrases such as 'in general' and 'in the main', and we wish to specify what is meant by this. It is intended to indicate an informed 'real-world view' of the prison – things can occasionally go wrong, and it would be naive to suggest that any prison could get everything right all the time. The Board accepts this corrective to be true of all organisations, bodies, and individuals.

3.1.5 As can be seen from the entirety of this report, the Board considers HMP Usk and Prescoed to be effective, well-run prisons, following the concept of transparent review and continuous improvement.

This opinion is derived from our direct observations, the views of prisoners as expressed to members and our triangulation of data supplied by the prison. It is supported by the reports of other bodies monitoring or inspecting the prison. These include Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the Welsh Prison Group Director's quarterly reviews. (See section 8.1.)

In addition, in 2020 the prison was awarded the College Centre for Quality Improvement's (CCQI) Enabling Environments award. This is awarded by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. See glossary section 8 for an explanation of what this means.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

3.2.1 The Board considers that both Usk and Prescoed are safe prisons, with low levels of violence, bullying and self-harm. Most men report feeling safe.

3.2.2 The prison had an effective strategy to respond to Covid-19 which was robust and well communicated. Clinically vulnerable prisoners have been shielded and its men were amongst the earliest (in the prison estate) to be vaccinated (however see section 3.3: To the Minister).

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

3.2.3 Due to Covid19, safety, fairness, and health in prisons were uniquely linked over the last year. It is the Board's view that the prison should be commended in the way it has managed the pandemic and considers this to be indicative of its wider

management ethos. Despite lockdown the Governor has managed to prioritise the principle of risk management rather than mere risk avoidance. This means that, whilst men have paid a high price for their safety, they have not seen these constraints as compromising either fairness or their humanity. Practical examples of this include:

- The prison was one of the first to be allowed to move to level 2 and increase the amount of time out of cell. (Not within the reporting period, but a useful indicator, the prison applied to move to stage 1 on 2.9.21)
- At HMP Prescoed 80 prisoners have opted to engage in the “Thursday food shopping day” – this is available to fully paid outworkers on ROTL. A step towards normality, it allows them to store a selection of sandwiches and microwavable meals for the evenings should they miss the hot meal service in the evening.

How well are prisoners’ health and wellbeing needs met?

3.2.4 The Board considers that the prison has coped well with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and that it has provided healthcare comparable to that available in the community.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

3.2.5 Considering the restrictions operating during the reporting period, the Board considers that the prison has been successful in progressing men towards resettlement. In fact, many of its effects appear to have been ameliorated by the work of the prison (see section 7.5) and it is notable that workers from HMP Prescoed were enabled to continue their off-site placements throughout the period.

During the pandemic the prison has continued to work with the Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT: see section 8.2) to ensure that support is available to both families and men during Covid19 restrictions.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER and the Minister of Health and Social Services of Wales

3.3.1 Stage 4 lockdown (prisoners confined in their cells for 23 hours a day) succeeded in its aim to protect prisoner safety during the Covid19 pandemic but the consequences for these often-vulnerable people have been significant. The Board asks that the Minister recognises this and secures raised priority (through the JCVI) to enable officers and men to be included in future vaccination priority lists.

The current state of vaccine development in the UK suggests that other groups would not be disadvantaged by this policy. Future choke points are unlikely to be in vaccine design, testing, manufacturing, or the logistics of bulk delivery but in the final stage – getting it into individual arms. Prison healthcare professionals and trained officers are already in place to accomplish this task, without compromising community programmes.

TO THE MINISTER for Education and Welsh Language

3.3.2. Education is a key element in improving prisoner rehabilitation. After accounting for staff salary pay awards (mandated over the last few years) the Board is concerned that there has been an effective decrease in the value of funding the education department receives and that this will have a negative impact on prisoner outcomes.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

3.3.3 As reported in our 2020 report, up to fifty per cent of the OASys documents received in HMP Usk vary in quality with the “start custody” section either remaining blank or the quality of recording falling short of expectation. See 7.3.3

3.3.4 The Board would suggest that ways be explored to retain experienced and effective officers in HMPPS. The Board recognises the high level of skills required that enable an officer to facilitate a safe and rehabilitative culture.

3.3.5 With respect to the promotion of prison safety, the Board supports the concerns of Dame Anne Owers (letter to the Director General of Prisons, November 2020) regarding the decision that making a ligature (also known as noose making) by prisoners should no longer be a nationally reportable self-harm incident.

TO THE GOVERNOR

3.3.6 Referring to our comments in the executive summary at **3.1.5**, **3.2.1**, **3.2.2** and **3.2.3** we have not much to add here other than to ask that the team expands their efforts to improve telephone access for the men in Usk.

3.4 Progress since the last report

3.4.1 Since both HMP Usk and Prescoed have operated under atypical Covid-safe regimes throughout the period of this report, making comparisons with earlier years is probably unproductive; however, the Board has noted the high level of productive cooperation between staff and men that has characterised this lockdown. Other progress includes:

- HMP Usk has gained the Enabling Environments qualification. (See 5.4.)
- Residential custody managers at Prescoed held regular update and Q & A sessions to keep men informed on what was happening during the Covid-19 lockdowns and why.
- Investment has been secured by the SMT to improve the fabric of both prisons. This has been noticeable in the refurbishment of the some of the toilets and showers in HMP Usk and the decommissioning and future replacement of the unsatisfactory Lester unit in HMP Prescoed.

- The additional 40 Bunkabin accommodation units in HMP Prescoed have worked well and allowed the prison to offer more single room accommodation during the pandemic. Twenty of these were used for stage 2 outworkers and the other 20 became a protective isolation unit (PIU). **It would be good if the prison was allowed to keep these units permanently.** See section 5.1.
- In HMP Usk the prison was innovative in maximising possible exercise time for the men. For example, the sports field was split into areas to allow walking groups, group circuits and weight sessions and, depending on the weather, five sessions a day were run.
- To promote equality and diversity at Prescoed “Let’s Talk” events were delivered on race and disability. Events celebrating Black History Month and Women’s History Month were conducted for both staff and prisoners.
- The level of cooperation and trust between men and officers required to maintain a protracted lockdown is considerable. The fact that this has been achieved in a positive spirit is noteworthy.

3.4.2 HMP Prescoed had its operational capacity increased for men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSO) from 20 to 25.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

During this reporting period, reception processes changed due to the pandemic. Inter-prison transfers were approved by central command and men were reverse cohorted for a period of 14 days from arrival; welfare checks were carried out throughout their first night.

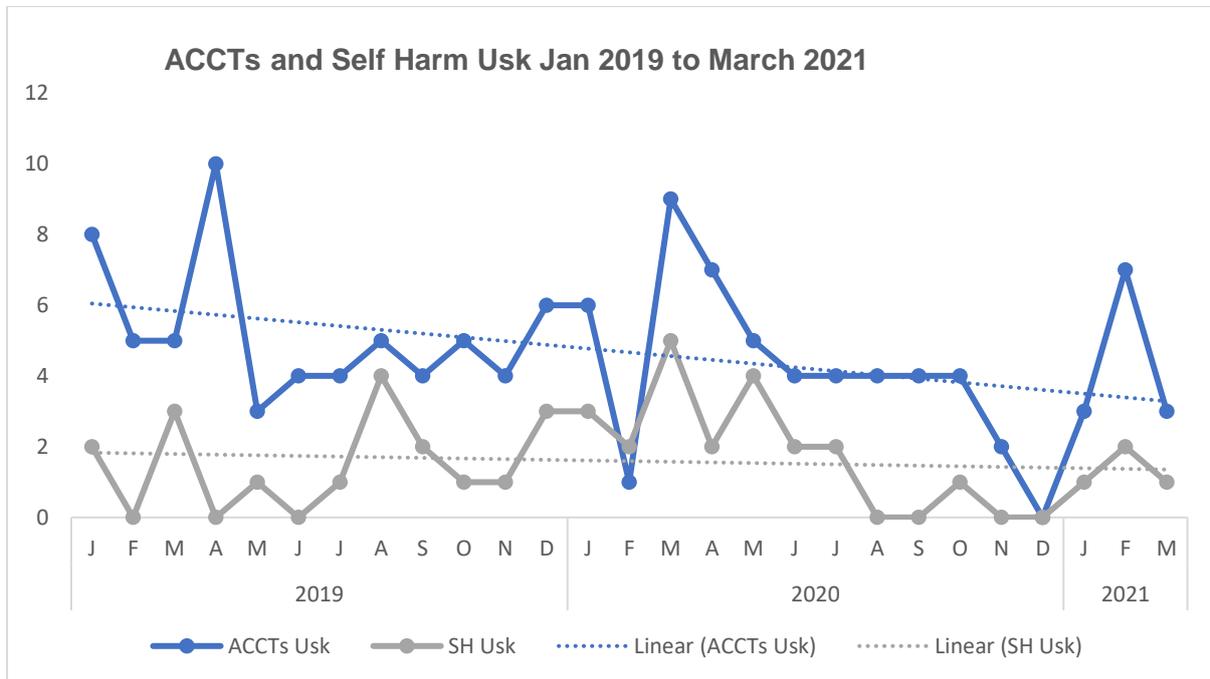
4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There were no deaths in custody, no acts of self-harm and only one ACCT was opened at HMP Prescoed during this reporting period. In fact, the number of incidents reduced during this period.

4.2.2 At HMP Usk one self-inflicted death occurred on 21 September 2020. The Prison and Probation Ombudsman's and the loss of life on 17th April 2020 have not been published at the point this report has been written.

4.2.3 The Board had expected a significant increase in the number of ACCTs and

self-harm at HMP Usk during the Covid-19 lockdown, in fact – see the 27-month Usk comparator graph below – numbers reduced. During this reporting period a total of 16 incidents of self-harm have been reported, the number varying between one and four per month with none in August 2020. This compares to 25 for 2019/20.



During the reporting period, of the 42 officers at HMP Usk, four had not received any form of ACCT training. No such training had taken place since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 till the end of the reporting period, but the Board has been informed that such plans are in place.

4.2.4 Listeners are supported in both establishments by the Samaritans and safer custody case managers.

During Covid-19 Listeners in HMP Usk have been recording 'Stop and Chats' to assist prisoners with various logistical problems. IMB members are attempting to set up regular informal meetings with Listeners to gauge ongoing issues within the establishments.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 HMP Usk: assaults remain low, with three on staff and ten on prisoners recorded during the reporting period. Levels of bullying remain low and most prisoners report that they feel safe.

4.3.2 HMP Prescoed: assaults on both staff and prisoners remained at zero for the reporting period.

4.3.3 Challenge, support, and intervention plan (CSIP) documents are occasionally opened at HMP Prescoed where zero tolerance on bullying is practised.

4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities

Increased discussions between HMP Prescoed and the main feeder prison for higher risk cases ensures the appropriateness of transfer, lessening the possibility of failure in the open establishment.

4.5 Use of force

This figure is extremely low at HMP Usk. There was a total of 10 incidences. Two were planned with rigid bar handcuffs being applied and eight were unplanned and involved a guiding hold.

Use of force was equally low in Prescoed and recorded (one occasion) as use of mechanical restraints prior to a prisoner being returned to closed conditions.

4.6 Substance misuse

HMP Usk: during most of the reporting period Covid-19 restricted regimes did not allow for mandatory drug testing (MDTs) to take place. Between August and October, 21 random MDT tests and three suspicion tests were carried out. All proved negative. The prison links this with their low reported incidents of bullying and it is agreed that drugs are often a cause for violence and bullying in prisons.

HMP Prescoed: as above, Covid-19 restricted regimes did not allow for MDT testing to take place. Between August and October, 36 random and 17 suspicion tests were carried out. Of those, one of the random tests and two of the suspicion tests proved to be positive. Prescoed's zero tolerance on substance misuse meant that several men were returned to closed conditions based on intelligence gathered and suspicion testing taking place. As reported last year, the prison cites a causal link between this policy and the low level of violence and bullying in the prison. See sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

5. Fair and humane treatment

The prison was one of the first to be allowed to move to level 2 and increase the amount of time out of cell.

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 It should be emphasized that the pandemic significantly reduced the number of physical visits to both prison sites by Board members over the reporting period.

5.1.2 Usk Prison was built in the 19th century and has the inevitable challenges associated with that. Strong efforts have been made to mitigate these, however its Grade II listing requires approval for major works. It provides a monitoring paradox – although most prisoners live in cramped conditions, sharing a cell designed for one, the outcomes continue to be good, and men routinely provide positive feedback to Board members. Physically the prison is clean, and staff undertake regular decency checks. In addition, communication between staff and the men appears to be good

and there are regular opportunities for representatives to meet with managers to raise problems or suggestions.

5.1.3 Prescoed prison is of more modern construction and originally opened immediately prior to the last war.

5.1.4 At Prescoed, the impending demolition of the Lester Unit is welcomed by the Board, which has highlighted its poor condition and unsuitability in previous reports. The precise replacement arrangements are currently unclear.

5.1.5 Forty individual self-contained accommodation 'pods' were set up at Prescoed. This assisted greatly in the exceptional circumstances of Covid-19, and it is hoped that these will be kept in the longer term.

5.1.6 Operational capacity has been adjusted downwards in both prisons. This has resulted in a significant reduction in cell sharing and helped to facilitate shielding, cohorting, isolation and other Covid-19 compliance arrangements.

5.1.7 The Board has noted that cleanliness has been maintained at a high standard, not least through the efforts of industrious orderlies, who have done sterling and vital work throughout the pandemic.

5.1.8 The Board is unaware of any difficulties with the heating and hot water systems that have affected prisoners. A programme of cellular upgrade will be undertaken throughout the 2021/22 reporting period.

5.1.9 Key performance indicators (KPIs) within the maintenance contract have been suspended, though the Board has been told that standards have been maintained. A full accommodation review at both prisons is planned but has been delayed owing to the pandemic.

5.1.10 The Board has not been made aware of any ongoing concerns over clothing and laundry. The Prescoed laundry has been upgraded and runs well.

5.1.11 The fire alarm systems in both prisons have recently been upgraded.

5.1.12 The main kitchen at Prescoed seems to be well organised though staffing shortages (staff and prison workers) present ongoing difficulties. The Board has not received any applications about food during the RP. The catering comments book in both prisons has very few observations. Supplementary food packs continued to be supplied through the pandemic. Special diets seem to have been satisfactorily catered for.

5.1.13 At HMP Prescoed 80 prisoners have opted to engage in the "Thursday food shopping day" – this is available to fully paid outworkers on ROTL. A step towards normality, it allows them to store a selection of sandwiches and microwavable meals for the evenings should they miss the hot meal service in the evening.

5.2 Segregation

There are no segregation facilities at either Usk or Prescoed.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff/prisoner relationships appear to be sound.

5.3.2 The key worker system continues to operate in Usk, though clearly the special circumstances and staff absences have somewhat disrupted the system, but basic contact and welfare checks have continued.

5.3.3 At Prescoed, OMiC in the open estate is being piloted and all prisoners have the opportunity of regular contact with a prison offender manager (POM).

5.3.4 Effective efforts seem to go in to ensuring good communications with prisoners and there are several consultation forums.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison staff have continued to support prisoners who have protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act during this last year. The prison is to conduct an equalities survey to compare Covid-19 and pre-Covid-19 conditions to identify if any specific groups feel they have been treated differently during the pandemic. The prisoners consistently state that they feel safe in both prisons. The results of the HMP Usk protected characteristics questionnaire were positive overall but slightly less so in Prescoed. Given that the Usk residents had the harshest conditions during lockdown this is something to celebrate.

HMP Usk, Prescoed and Cilwrgi Farm Training Centre excellence strategy was agreed in January 2021. This highlights the specific needs of older people.

HMP Usk has gained the Enabling Environments qualification. This includes having prisoner representatives on various boards and being encouraged to take an active role. In addition, prison community councils have been introduced, where there are representatives from minority groups. This will include encouraging support and development for prisoners by prisoners, involvement in decision making about the prison environment and maximising key worker engagement with prisoners.

There are a range of events during the year that reflect the diversity of the prisoners. Whilst these have been different during the restricted regime, the prisons have continued to recognise and celebrate a range of areas. This includes Black Lives Matter, LGBT awareness, Roma and Gypsy Week, World Suicide Prevention, mental health and disability awareness. Display boards have been in place to promote these events, films available and prisoners have had a choice of celebration meals to reflect the respective cultures.

There is an aging population in HMP Usk, where 46% of the prisoners are over the age of 50 and 41% of prisoners have one or more disabilities. In HMP Prescoed, 20% of the prisoners are over the age of 50 with 32% having one or more disabilities.

Access for prisoners with physical disabilities can be challenging on both sites. Whilst there have been adaptations to the shower rooms, there is only one stair lift for the three wings in HMP Usk.

The Cameo Suite, developed to provide an activity centre for older prisoners in HMP Usk, has been closed due to the lockdown, with some specific exceptions such as faith-based activities. The prisoners are keen that this reopens with a range of events, when the prison regime allows.

The LGBT forum has continued during the year.

During the year there were two transgender prisoners, one of whom has now left. Transgender case boards have been held, but the IMB was not able to attend these.

The recommendations from the Lammy Report continue to be monitored by the equalities and diversity board. These have been held by teleconference, with Board members present. Whilst not ideal, as prisoners are not involved, they have kept this agenda progressing.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

This has been challenging to monitor during the pandemic and lockdown. Most of the information has been either reported by the chaplaincy or through the equalities board.

During visits, the prisoners report being able to continue to observe their faith. The religious festivals have been celebrated as much as possible, whilst ensuring Covid-19 security.

The prisoners have a range of faiths and beliefs. These include Buddhism, Paganism, Judaism, Hinduism, Muslim, Sikhism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, and various forms of Christianity. The prison chaplains have continued to visit during the pandemic. Whilst they can no longer offer group worship, such as Friday prayers, unless prisoners are from the same cohort, they have continued to offer individual prayer and worship, where requested.

A soft survey in HMP Prescoed highlighted the work of the imam, who continued to offer spiritual and emotional support to people of all faiths, including those with none.

The monthly Prescoed newsletter now includes a section called 'Faith in You', where resources, faith support groups, faith book clubs and prayer lines with Prison Fellowship are all listed. Prisoners are being encouraged to submit articles, explaining why their faith matters to them.

Unfortunately, the multifaith room in HMP Usk has remained closed because of damage. Previously it was accessible to all prisoners. Non-Christian service or faith groups who prefer not to use the chapel are able to use the Cameo suite.

5.6 Incentives schemes (IP)

5.6.1 At HMP Prescoed an indicative snapshot for the period showed that 190 prisoners were on enhanced, 12 on standard and 0 on basic.

5.6.2 At HMP Usk an indicative snapshot for the period showed that 215 prisoners were on enhanced, 2 on standard and 0 on Basic.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 HMP Prescoed: there were few complaints during the reporting period (89). Peaks (the mode) were centred around property (16) and residential (17). It is of note that there were no complaints around violence or visit limitations.

5.7.2 HMP Usk: there were 300 complaints during the reporting period and it is of note that over 30% came from one individual. The peak (mode) was around residential issues. Again, there were no complaints around violence and only four regarding visits.

5.8 Property

Many complaints, in both Usk and Prescoed, came from issues surrounding the transfer of property from other prisons.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 General healthcare

The Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) provides all health services for both HMP Usk and HMP Prescoed. GP, dental and optical services are outsourced.

Throughout the pandemic members of the IMB have been in regular contact with healthcare and it is the Board's opinion that good collaboration between officers and healthcare staff has resulted in effective management at both sites. Moving forward the main objective in healthcare will be to restore the service to pre-Covid-19 levels.

Covid

During the pandemic, partnership working within the establishment and with external agencies has been strengthened, and staff should be commended for their hard work throughout the pandemic.

There were many challenges, initially due to the ever-changing nature of the virus, the lack of technology within the prison and the constant need to share information with many organisations. Time out of cell provision was severely constrained due to Covid-19 regime requirements.

Staff adapted to new ways of working and developed an enhanced care unit in the visits centre of the prison, to provide for increased in-patient care when hospital admission was not appropriate.

At a senior level everyone worked together to ensure a safe environment for very unwell patients. The senior prison team regularly joined meetings with Public Health Wales, out of hours services, and infection control teams to develop pathways. Queries could be escalated to HMPPS Bronze team and there was a quick response.

There was effective collaboration with the local Public Health Wales team, who participated in weekly outbreak control team meetings. Queries regarding prisoners were always discussed before being acted upon, and feedback regularly shared.

Monmouthshire County Council's integrated team (consisting of social workers and the occupational therapist) were unable to visit, so made themselves available via the phone. They undertook much of the liaising between the hospital and healthcare.

Usk and Prescoed were the first prisons in the UK to administer Covid-19 vaccinations. They received a High Sheriff Award recognising the valuable work undertaken in the prison community during the pandemic.

Despite the development of services being on hold, some plans previously made did progress using monies from Welsh Government (WG).

Recruitment and training

Another band 6 nurse has been recruited taking the total to four.

The band 4 nurse who was employed has started the level 4 certificate in healthcare assistant training, while the healthcare social worker who was redeployed to the

team during the pandemic filled that band 3 position. She wishes to undertake the same level 4 training which means in two years she will qualify as a nurse.

The band 7 has successfully completed the non-medical prescribing course and will undertake her dissertation to complete an MSc. This will further enhance the nurse-led service.

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to start the planned sexual health training that was due to provide weekly clinics across both sites. However, dialogue has now been re-established with the relevant services.

Healthcare has not been able to accommodate student nurses during the pandemic. However, this will recommence as soon as it is possible. Staff mentors have recently undertaken updated sessions on new requirements for assessing students.

6.2 Physical healthcare

General medical services

General medical services continue to be provided by Malpas Brook Health Centre. There are three surgeries a week in Usk and two in Prescoed. The contract runs to March 2024.

End of life/ palliative care

The end-of-life pathway has officially been agreed by the Prison Partnership Board and ABUHB senior leadership team with support from all partner agencies. During the pandemic, the nursing team had to adapt their shift pattern and the service flexed up to cover 12 hours, 8am – 8pm to provide nursing needs when required for palliative care. Outside these hours partner agencies would support.

Ophthalmology

PenOptical continue to provide two sessions a month on each site. Once seen, men usually receive their glasses within five days.

Dental services

Time for Teeth Ltd provide the dental service and have a fixed term contract until 31 May 2023. They continue to provide two dentist sessions a week at both Usk and Prescoed. There is also a dental hygienist session one morning a week in Usk. The men at Prescoed are encouraged to attend their own dentist when on home leave (which did not occur for most of the RP) but both sites can access emergency services as required.

Pharmacy

Raglan pharmacy continue to provide the service from 9am to 5pm, excluding Wednesday afternoons. The contract was extended due to Covid-19 but will be coming up for tender in August 2021.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health services continued throughout the pandemic, initially via the telephone, and later as restrictions were relaxed, in face-to-face sessions with the correct PPE and social distancing.

As part of service development, a six-month pilot has been undertaken looking into older adult mental health. Twelve patients have been identified and the recommendations made included a referral, assessment and treatment pathways, and the need for cognitive stimulation therapy. This work has resulted in partnership working with a consultant from neuropsychology.

There are also discussions with the integrated autism service to part fund a vacancy for a registered nurse and consultant to assess and review patients with this diagnosis and to identify those undiagnosed.

6.4 Social care

The work with Monmouthshire integrated team continues and regular meetings are held to discuss any issues. Physiotherapy In-reach ended due to the physio changing roles, however as part of WG funding an advertisement has been placed for an in-house physiotherapist and a part-time occupational therapist. Both these roles will assist in delivering more complete patient wellbeing and implementing recommendations from the extended mental health services.

6.5 Exercise, regime

During part of the lockdown due to Covid-19 this was restricted to half an hour a day as men were spending up to 23 hrs per day in their cells.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

As part of prisoners' induction, they are immediately categorised by the DYFODOL as being high, medium, or low in terms of their need for ongoing support. (Please see the glossary in section 8.2.)

Throughout the period there were only three members of staff delivering this essential service to the prisoners in Prescoed and Usk. They carried a consistent caseload of 40 prisoners each. This proved to be very challenging, and it is very much to their credit that they were able to keep on top of this workload. Most of the time the staff worked from home.

The team were forced to adjust their working practices due to the impact of Covid-19 and during most of the reporting period were unable to provide prisoners with either group or one-to-one sessions. These were reinstated on 19 April 2021.

Nevertheless, the team were able to provide support to the most vulnerable prisoners over the phone and were also able to issue workbooks to be completed in the cells.

6.7 Soft skills

Again, due to the restrictions of Covid-19, there were virtually none apart from access to distraction packs and access to Open University learning.

7. Progression and resettlement

This is the area where prison life has been hit hardest during the lockdowns.

7.1 Education, library

Clearly lockdown has had a huge negative effect on education delivery during the reporting period – this was a year like no other and our altered reporting reflects that.

Notable positive elements were:

- Several distance learning courses were funded and set up through the Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Open University students were able to continue study throughout with laptop loans.
- In-cell educational TV was set up supported by workbooks.
- A variety of wellbeing and activity packs were provided – some devised and produced by the men themselves. Feedback to the Board confirms that these were valued by most of the men.
- Despite long periods when a librarian was not present on site, library services in both prisons were maintained by prisoners and the order and delivery programme they managed was successful and valued.
- Many education officers were redeployed throughout lockdown providing and facilitating Covid-19 testing for staff and men.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Despite the lockdown HMP Prescoed has been successful in providing work placements for prisoners. Until the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown Prescoed had over 100 men working off-site on ROTL every day. Most of these jobs (approximately 70%) are paid and include occupations in construction, rail maintenance, manufacturing, warehousing, and agriculture. This is important as it enables men to gain profitable long-term employment when they are released. The Board has been impressed with the results that the team have made in protecting and developing these jobs. During the pandemic many workers continued to attend their placements – for example helping to build the new University Hospital in Cwmbran - and this has benefited both them and the local area.

NEBOSH health and safety exams continued throughout lockdown (24-hour open book in-cell exams with loaned laptops).

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Contact between prisoners and probation officer managers was severely affected by Covid-19 restrictions and low staffing levels.

7.3.2 The comprehensive reception process undertaken at HMP Usk, involving dual prison staff welfare assessments and health care assessments to identify existing vulnerabilities, as well as recorded documentation of risk contributes successfully towards wellbeing and welfare. During this reporting period:

- HMP Usk MAPPA meetings were mainly conducted via Microsoft Teams or via teleconference.
- MAPPA meetings at HMP Prescoed are conducted via Microsoft Teams with

the occasional face-to-face meeting for level 3.

- An implementation subgroup has been set up in Gwent to audit both MAPPA attendance and quality assurance.

7.3.3 Up to fifty per cent of OASys documents received in HMP Usk vary in quality with the “Start Custody” section either remaining blank or the quality of recording falling short of expectation. It is accepted that this is contributed to by lack of resources. The timeliness of OASys reviews is improving at HMP Prescoed driven by the OMiC model.

Accredited interventions resumed during the reporting period following the end of stage 4 lockdown. Usk was one of the first to do so and forensic psychological services (FPS) continued to provide updates relating to programmes.

7.4 Family contact

During the pandemic the prison has continued to work with the Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT see section 8.2) to ensure that support is available for families and men during Covid-19 restrictions.

In Prescoed during the reporting period nearly 1400 Purple Visit (video visit) sessions have taken place with an average of over 150 per month.

7.5 Resettlement planning

During the Covid-19 lockdown, partners have continued to assist with release plans.

- Prisoners continued to be helped to open bank accounts and credit union savings accounts.
- Citizen cards and DVLA licence applications were processed to assist with identification on release.
- Interdepartmental work continued with the offender management unit (OMU), social services and resettlement to maintain accommodation under the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Pre-release meetings for prisoners within the twelve-week window of release continued via e-mail throughout the pandemic.
- The veterans’ services continue to offer services to ex-armed forces prisoners on release.
- Coffee mornings and drop-in clinics were suspended due to Covid--19.
- Contact between prisoners and the following agencies continued during this period: St Giles, PACT, Dyfodol, Careers Wales, Department of Work and Pensions, Christians Against Poverty.
- When the prison was at level four, this contact was maintained using a phone line via a prisoner self-help unit sponsored by the prison.
- During level three restrictions, St Giles, PACT and Dyfodol provided face-to-face contact with prisoners

8. The work of the IMB

8.1 During the Covid-19 lockdown period the Board's evidence has been derived from:

- contact with prisoners and staff made during physical monitoring
- regular weekly remote monitoring of units and wings
- limited conference calls with the Listener and other prisoner representative groups as lockdown prevented many of these
- continued remote meetings and updates from the Governor and SMT
- analysis of prison management information against Board records and rota reports
- review of prisoner applications to the Board (see section D and our supplementary comment)
- review of the prison's complaints system, together with the quarterly discrimination incident report form (DIRF) reviews
- remote attendance at key meetings – for example:
 - equalities meetings (which include staff and prisoners)
 - quarterly use of force meetings

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	35
Total number of segregation reviews attended	Not applicable

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	4	0
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	0	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food and kitchens	5	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	0
H1	Property within this establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	4	4
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	1	2
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	0
K	Transfers	1	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	2	0
	Total number of applications	18	12

8.1 Supplementary comment about applications:

In 2019 and 2020, the Board commented on the small number of applications lodged by prisoners. In 2021 it reinvestigated whether this should be a cause for concern. The Board is aware that the spectrum of possible reasons could include one of the following conclusions:

- That the numbers are an indicator implying that prisoners are well managed and relationships between prisoners and staff are good. The suggested conclusion in that case is that prisoners do not feel the need to submit applications.
- That the numbers are a negative indicator implying that prisoners are so disengaged with the prison regime, so fearful of possible consequences (for example, being moved to another prison) or so disillusioned with the effectiveness of the Board that they do not bother to submit applications.

The Board has investigated what it sees as the relevant elements, which include, but are not limited to:

- the category of the prisons – in open prisons and those holding MCOSO, a low number of applications is not unusual
- the nature of the relationships that Board members have observed between prisoners and staff
- in-depth conversations with prisoners
- consultations with prisoner representatives including Listeners and Buddies
- a systematic review of management information on those return to closed conditions, linked to focused observation on-site
- regular review of DIRF reporting and outcomes
- regular attendance at equalities and use of force meetings

In addition to the above, a minority of prisoners at Usk and Prescoed suggested that those who submit applications may be ‘shipped out’ as a punishment for complaining to the Board. In the reporting period 2017/18, 2019/20 and again in 2020/21 the Board conducted a 12-month review and found no correlation in either establishment between those submitting applications and removals to other prisons or (in the case of Prescoed) a return to closed conditions. These findings have been communicated within the prison.

Following this investigation, the Board finds no evidence supporting the view that the small number of applications we receive is a negative sign. The Board’s view is that prisoners are comfortable in submitting applications and would do so should they feel the need. Prisoners do use the prison Comp 1 system and in addition discuss matters of concern with the Board verbally. Complaints are usually resolved before an application becomes necessary. The Board will keep this situation under critical review.

8.2 Glossary

ACCT	Assessment care in custody and teamwork
CCQI	College Centre for Quality Improvement. The Royal College of Psychiatrists works with mental health services to assess and improve the quality of care provided. To achieve and maintain accreditation a service needs to demonstrate consistently high standards over time. These are reviewed at regular periods. See rcpsych.ac.uk/improving-care
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales
CRC	Community rehabilitation company
CSIP	Challenge, support, and intervention plan
DYFODL	DYFODOL is part of the criminal justice harm prevention provision in Wales and offers assessment, treatment and support for those involved with the criminal justice system
HMI Prisons	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IEP	Incentives and earned privileges
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
JCVI	Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.
MAPPA	Multi-agency public protection arrangements
MCOSO	Men convicted of sexual offences
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OASys	Offender assessment system
OMU	Offender management unit

Op Cap	Operational Capacity. This relates to the total number of prisoners an establishment can hold without serious risk to the good order, security, and proper running of the prison.
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatments or Punishment
PACT	The Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT) is an independent national charity working with prisoners and with prisoners' families. Its mission is: to support prisoners and their families to make a fresh start and to minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment to offenders, families, and communities.
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 - the virus causing Covid-19



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