



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Whitemoor

**For reporting year
1 June 2020 – 31 May 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, of any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Whitemoor lies outside the Cambridgeshire town of March. Opened in 1992 as a maximum security prison for men in categories A and B, it is one of eight high-security prisons in England within the long-term and high-security estate (LTHSE). On 31 May 2021, the prison held 388 prisoners, against an operational capacity of 458. A total of 139 were category A, of whom 11 were high risk. All Whitemoor prisoners are accommodated in single cells, with integral sanitation but separate shared external showers.

A major construction project beginning in August 2021 to replace and upgrade electrical fittings and alarms requires prisoners to be decanted from one wing at a time; the decanting process from B wing started towards the end of the reporting year and has resulted in a progressive reduction in prisoner numbers.

2.2 The prison comprises the following units:

- three main residential wings (A, B and C wings)
- the Fens unit, accommodating up to 70 prisoners diagnosed with a personality disorder and undergoing psychological treatment, delivered in partnership with the National Health Service (NHS) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service professionals (D wing)
- a close supervision centre (CSC) holding up to 10 prisoners, managed under a nationally coordinated strategy to provide a secure location for the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners (F wing)
- a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) unit, designed to enable prisoners to maintain and build on developments they have previously achieved in prison, holding an average of 19 full PIPE prisoners (out of a capacity of 30) and 11 lodgers at the end of the reporting year
- the Bridge unit, opened in April 2019, designed to support prisoners progressing out of segregated conditions, with a capacity of 12.

2.3 Healthcare services are provided by Northamptonshire NHS Foundation Trust and dentistry by Prison Centred Dental Care; education and the library are delivered by Milton Keynes College and maintenance by Government Facility Services Ltd. Cambridgeshire County Council provides adult social care services. Psychological services in the Fens unit are provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but, inevitably, there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the prison's response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally.

Board members have not been able to visit the prison since mid-March 2020, but monitoring has continued remotely; monthly conversations have taken place between the Board and the Governor or her deputy; and Board members have been in telephone contact with many of the senior officers of the prison. The Board has taken advantage of the arrangements made nationally for email contact with prisoners and has made similar arrangements locally to communicate with prisoner representatives.

The Board recognises that members' absence from the prison may have reduced prisoners' awareness of its role and readiness to turn to the IMB for assistance. We will work hard to raise our profile during the recovery process.

Throughout the pandemic Whitemoor has operated in compliance with the requirements of the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services Exceptional Delivery Models. These have provided a valuable framework for keeping the prison safe and secure. The amount of work required of staff at all levels to draw up, review, refresh and implement the ever-changing plans should not be underestimated.

The anticipated inquests into the deaths at London Bridge at the end of 2019 hung over the prison for much of the year. The tragic deaths of Jack Merritt who worked with Whitemoor residents as part of the Learning Together team, and Saskia Jones who took part in Sing Inside at Whitemoor, affected members of the Whitemoor community in different ways, in some cases profoundly. The Board offers its condolences to the families of those who died and commends the professionalism of the prison staff who gave evidence at the inquests.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the prison?

Whitemoor continues to be a reasonably well-ordered prison: the constrained conditions caused by the pandemic have reduced the opportunity for bad behaviour with men having been locked in their cells for 21 and a half hours per day and released for wing activities in groups of 21 to enable social distancing on the narrow landings. The prison used a bubble system to limit contact to groups from the same wing. This was successful in keeping infection under control: prisoners recognise and appreciate the efforts made to keep them safe.

However, the impact on mental health and wellbeing is a different matter. The use of illegal substances appears to have increased. With the cessation of social visits and the use of the Rapiscan itemiser to screen mail closing (two of the habitual routes for the entry of drugs) it became increasingly clear that there was an issue of staff corruption leading to the suspension of one member of staff.

It has been suggested that the prospective review of regime conditions in prisons will draw from the lessons learned during lockdown. We hope that HMPPS will take a balanced view of the needs of all groups of prisoners. We have heard younger prisoners expressing concern about the reduced opportunities to socialise caused by the restricted conditions. The newly formed prison rehabilitation culture council (see below and para. 6.7) will be helpful in advising on the way forward for Whitemoor.

There were two deaths in custody. (para 4.2)

How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

The prison's commitment to a more rehabilitative culture has been maintained during lockdown. A prison rehabilitation culture council has been established, coordinated by two prisoners. The council forms an umbrella for the other consultative bodies involving prisoners and appears to have the potential to generate open and productive conversations about ways in which prison life can be made more secure and purposeful.

The Governor has personally met prisoners to explain the council's role. Covid-19 restrictions mean that other consultative meetings have had to take place on a wing basis; this is time-consuming for the governor responsible for residence, who attends all such meetings, but facilitates thoughtful and constructive dialogue with the relevant wing custodial managers (CMs) present.

The amount of time that prisoners have spent in their cells is a major cause of concern with much valuable activity suspended. The inability to use wing kitchens and gyms has been felt keenly. Delivering the regime in a period of two and a half hours has led to tension and stress for both staff and prisoners. The requirements of the exceptional delivery models were scrupulously met but evening telephone calls were a constant struggle leading to the serving of food in foil containers to stop time being lost at the serveries.

The response of the education provider to the need to find appropriate alternatives to classroom learning was disappointing in the early stages of lockdown. However, with the help of HMPPS advisers, the low-level distraction packs which were initially provided evolved into learning packs specifically related to some of the courses. The librarian's commitment to ensure that books and DVDs continued to be made available was exemplary and he received good support from prison staff. The opportunity for families to send in recreational packs was welcomed.

Corporate worship was another casualty of Covid-19 with only limited services taking place in the course of the year on a wing basis. Worship took place fortnightly instead of weekly because of the need to preserve wing-based bubbles. Some residents felt it was unfair that corporate worship came out of regime time but the logistics of managing movement seemed to make that necessary.

On a more positive note, the Board noted the impact of good team-working between the new CM and a dedicated psychologist in the segregation unit. The CM has energetically shared a vision for a more humane segregation regime with his colleagues and the prison as a whole, but there is some way to go to achieve the cultural change he seeks. However, although seg numbers fell at the very end of the year, for most of the time they have been too high, far in excess of the 18 for which the segregation unit is staffed and impacting negatively on the capacity of the next-door Bridge unit to fulfil its role. Men are kept in segregation for too long. The chairing of segregation review boards and attendance by other departments has improved, but action points are not always promptly followed up, and not all attendees are appropriately prepared.

The inevitable monotony of the working day with reduced opportunities for officers to work supportively with prisoners did little to encourage staff retention. Given the recent heavy recruitment into the prison service as a result of government policy changes, the prison is inevitably reliant on less experienced officers who through no fault of their own lack the inter-personal skills and jail craft of more experienced colleagues and this sometimes led to friction with prisoners.

How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

Whitemoor managed the Covid-19 pandemic extremely well with very few cases of the illness reported. An unfortunate consequence of the limitations on the cross-deployment of officers was the decrease in the number of key worker sessions delivered, though vulnerable prisoners were given priority.

Healthcare staffing increased, welcome progress in an area which has concerned the Board for a number of years. Waiting times for appointments in general healthcare were similar to those in the wider community and 80% were fulfilled, with much lower levels of complaint than in the past. Mental health was an area of particular improvement with 88% of referrals seen within the target time of five days and a weekly mental health visit introduced for segregation unit prisoners.

The review of food provision took place as planned, resulting in a wide-ranging report which referenced best practice in other prisons. The Board was pleased to note the priority given to issues like the motivation of kitchen workers and the opportunities presented by the kitchen for prisoners to train in employment skills, as well as to the fabric of the main kitchen and the quality of food produced.

How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

As a high security prison, Whitemoor seldom releases prisoners directly to the community but takes seriously its residents' need to take some early steps towards rehabilitation. Initiatives like the prison rehabilitation culture council are important in allowing prisoners to feel a sense of responsibility for their actions and for building the sort of community in which they feel safe and have a sense of purpose about their futures.

The Board welcomes the progress that has been made in promoting family contact through the introduction of Purple Visits video technology to enable prisoners including foreign nationals to connect with their homes. Whitemoor was proactive in seeking priority for access to the system because of limited personal identification

number (PIN) phone availability. It should be regarded as a very high priority to keep this going after the pandemic is over. Equally the installation of cabling so that prisoners can use telephones inside their cells is an urgently needed improvement which would enable easier communication with families (including young children) at times convenient to them, reduce the stress caused by the competition to make calls on wing telephones during association, and lessen the temptation to trade in phones as contraband. The value of in-cell telephones emerges clearly from a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons on the first six months of lockdown, 'What happens to prisoners in a pandemic?'. We call on HMPPS to take the opportunity created by the major electrical works which are imminent to install in-cell telephone cabling.

The closure of education classes and workshops during the pandemic has meant significant disruption to men's learning and the prison will need to make a huge effort to restore these activities and reignite men's interest in them.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Will the Minister please give personal attention to ensure:

- that HMPPS installs the cabling for in-cell telephones as part of the major electrical project currently taking place at Whitemoor?
- the continuation of Purple Visits technology to allow prisoners to communicate by video conference with their families, both in the UK and, for foreign nationals, overseas?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will the prison service please review urgently the use of specialised units in order to ensure that better and speedier arrangements can be made for prisoners whose needs are difficult or impossible to meet in a prison like Whitemoor? This would avoid the sad spectacle of men languishing for months at a time in demoralising and degrading conditions.

Will HMPPS please give urgent attention to supporting prison governors in the battle to stop the importing and manufacture of illicit substances including hooch within the prison? These substances endanger the health and wellbeing of prisoners and the safety of officers and their wide-spread use should be a cause of national concern.

Will the prison service please bring to a conclusion the protracted review of a system for managing prisoners' property, the lack of which causes so much distress and frustration at all levels of the service at present?

Will the prison service please review its approach to securing value for money in contracts for building works? Yet again a refurbishment project (this time of the main kitchen at Whitemoor) has been delayed by sub-contractors passing work from company to company until the job reached a firm whose staff did not have the

necessary security clearance; the cladding appears to be of poor quality and is already breaking up before it has been fully installed.

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will ~~the Governor~~the Governor please ensure that the key worker scheme which has the potential to make a very positive contribution to staff/prisoner relations is resourced appropriately and supported from the top down to do the job it was created to do?

The Board strongly supports the establishment of the prison rehabilitation culture council and would encourage the Governor to continue the positive work she has begun to ensure that it is seen by prisoners as a significant force for the improvement of prison life in Whitemoor.

3.4 Progress since the last report

We are pleased to have seen the following improvements since last year:

- the introduction of Purple Visits technology to enable prisoners to make video contact with their families;
- the establishment of a prison rehabilitation culture council;
- the reduction in segregation unit numbers towards the end of the year;
- the efficiency of the complaints system with 70-75% of complaints being answered within target;
- the increased number of mental health staff and the introduction of a weekly mental health visit to the segregation unit;
- the beginning of the implementation of the recommendations of the food review;
- the refurbishment of four shower units;
- plans to install an additional phone on each wing and in the segregation unit;
- preparations for a major project to refurbish electrical and alarm installations on the wings (but it is vital that this project should include the cabling for in-cell telephones).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Reception has benefited from stable and energetic management with the same CM in charge as last year; the CM reports that his staff work hard. He speaks of an effort to show care for prisoners' needs, which we commend.

Movement has been restricted because of the pandemic: the number of prisoners arriving and leaving has been only in the low 20s over the year but the process of decanting prisoners to clear B wing has created a good deal of work. Nonetheless, reception has, as before, been closed for some weekends and sometimes during the week when there are staff shortages in the prison generally and this impedes its work. Property has had to be held for three days to allow for Covid-19 checks and the prison continues to be short of one drug dog. An itemiser for checking items for drugs would enable staff to improve efficiency but it is a costly machine and there is no budget available. However, mostly, deadlines for delivering property to prisoners have been met. Newly arrived prisoners receive a box of kit to see them through the first few days. During lockdown prisoners' families were allowed to send in recreational packs with up to nine items in them. This proved rather challenging to handle and books and magazines had to be stopped because of intelligence that they were being used for conveying drugs.

Reception staff reclaim items of clothing no longer needed by prisoners and store them so that they have something to give to men in need who have no families to help them out. It is estimated that at least five prisoners have benefited in the past year.

The decanting of prisoners from B wing to prepare for the major building project has resulted in an added challenge. Men are ordering extra items to take with them when they move and this increases the workload of reception.

The Board commends the proactive initiative taken by reception staff to help wing staff with cell clearances in order to speed the process up and better protect prisoners' property. A small number of thank you letters from prisoners is displayed on the reception notice board.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

In the year under report, 202 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened. Some of these were for prisoners low in mood, some were to deal with cases of actual crisis and self-harm, and some were for ligatures made or threatened to be used. The small increase of 4% from last year's 194 was a result of more mental health assessments, increased officer time spent on welfare checks and staff caution. The Fens unit for prisoners with a personality disorder had the highest number again, accounting for 37% of the total. This reflects the mental state of these prisoners and the challenging nature of the therapy which they are undertaking. On 47 occasions segregation and Bridge unit prisoners were the subject of open ACCTs, an increase from the previous year. Prisoners on ACCTs should only exceptionally be segregated. During the period of lockdown, when more

anxiety and need for support might have been anticipated, the number of incidents of self-harm and of ACCTs opened remained stable. It is reported that attendance at ACCT reviews was constrained by the limitations on other agencies attending the prison, and the need for adequate social distancing in rooms. The attendance level of 22% by mental health or healthcare personnel at the ACCT reviews was disappointing as was the 30% attendance of prisoners under regular observation.

A number of prisoners at Whitemoor experience high levels of distress and disturbance but there was a reduction of 96 (34%) in the number of incidents of self-harm, down from 284 last year, with 14 of the incidents leading to hospital attendance. (Several of these incidents were related to a small number of individuals who are regular self-harmers.) These ranged from serious cutting and ligaturing to incidents of swallowing, inserting items and head-banging. All such instances are a cause for concern, and the safer custody team works with diligence and empathy to keep these prisoners safe.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions no Listener hours were formally recorded or collated this year. Listeners were not used at night due to Covid-19 requirements to maintain social distancing, but requests were fewer than before the pandemic. Casual chats with Listeners on the wings happened but not to any great extent as reported by the Listeners. The training and supervision offered by the Samaritans did not take place but the safer prisons team maintained contact with the Listeners, and the Samaritans provided a confidential mobile phone number for Listeners to use to debrief.

There were two deaths in custody in the course of the year, for which the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) report and inquests are pending, and there is one inquest awaited on a man who died in 2019.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Despite the stressful conditions of lockdown, the number of prisoner-on-staff assaults has increased by only three to 49 and the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults has decreased by one to 28; of these 13 were classed as fights and 15 as assaults, with weapons used on five occasions. Prompt recourse to the most appropriate action and sanction appears to have maintained good order for the majority of the time.

The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) process was suspended during lockdown as it was not possible to maintain its effectiveness. However, since it was restarted in September 2020, 111 CSIPs have been considered and 22 were formally opened, with all violent actions having a completed CSIP referral.

During lockdown the vulnerability of prisoners was reduced by circumstances, there being fewer opportunities for bullying and debt. The issues faced by men who were locked up for more than 21 hours a day were more about coping with confinement, the lack of purposeful activity, and the temptations of drugs and hooch than about fear of physical harm.

4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities

When prisoners arrive at Whitemoor, they are screened for any difficulties they may have: hearing or speech difficulties, mobility or coordination problems, learning difficulties or mental health issues. There were again eleven prisoners in the total population who had a disability/ medical condition which qualifies for support under adult and social care legislation and who received some intervention to help them to maintain their independence. Thirteen men are registered diabetics.

Whitemoor has 15 prisoners with diagnosed attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This and autism and Asperger's syndrome are managed and supported by healthcare staff and the mental health team.

4.5 Use of force

There have been slightly fewer incidents requiring the use of force: 240 as opposed to 251 last year despite a peak of 40 incidents in July 2020. The majority continue to be in response to non-compliance, fighting with another prisoner or dealing with a spontaneous act which is perceived to be a threat to the individual concerned or to others. The number of attacks on staff remains fairly low although there were occasions when a member of staff needed hospital treatment.

Incidents at height (32 in the year) remain the most common reason to use force. Handcuffs were used 114 times this year, an increase of nearly 50% from 82 last year. The refusal of 14 residents to leave a shower area in protest at Covid-19 conditions resulted in 14 of these incidents as every prisoner involved was handcuffed, whilst the moving of two residents around the segregation unit as part of their unlock protocol accounted for 10 more.

PAVA is now a regular part of the tool kit which can be used to maintain order and the number of officers trained in its use was similar to last year at 123. (Training was suspended owing to the pandemic.) It was drawn on 12 occasions and used on eight. Batons were drawn six times in June 2020 in response to a particular incident and since then they have been drawn five times and used twice during a planned removal when the resident became violent towards staff. No clear patterns are apparent in terms of time, place, ethnicity or religion to give cause for concern when force is used.

We are pleased to note that body-worn cameras are being used more regularly and they play a useful part in recording the details of any incident. The number of officer statements not completed within the required 72 hours after the report is generated improved after an IT solution was introduced to coordinate and track reports.

4.6 Substance misuse

It is perhaps inevitable that, with men locked up for long hours during the pandemic, substance misuse has been a cause of concern. The level of risk posed was assessed as serious for three months of the year and as significant for another five. Social visits were not allowed for much of the year so one of the traditional routes for importing substances was closed. However, the Rapiscan itemiser, an invaluable tool, detected illicit substances, usually spice, on incoming mail particularly in the early part of the reporting year. This seemed to be particularly associated with bogus Rule 39 (legal) letters, though domestic mail and mail exchanged between prisoners was not exempt. Once it was clear that contaminated mail was being detected regularly by the itemiser, the perpetrators switched to other supply routes. Sadly, a pattern was detected that led to suspicion falling on a member of staff who was escorted from the prison and reported to the police in the late spring of 2021. The signs of drug use have been less prevalent since then. However, over the year the number of prisoners who have shown visible signs of being under the influence of illegal substances, or sometimes of hooch rather than drugs, has been a risk to the stability of the prison and the wellbeing of prisoners and staff. Prisoners have been found unconscious on several occasions.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

It is impossible for us to comment directly on the condition of the wings because we have not visited the prison during the year. We are told that the full refurbishment of four sets of showers has taken place as well as work to shower ceilings in four areas. This work is welcome but it should be borne in mind that there are 30 shower rooms in the prison and only four have been refurbished to full Ministry of Justice standards so the refurbishment programme always lags well behind need. During the pandemic the prisoners have greatly missed being able to use the spur gyms and above all the kitchens, where cooking food, often in social groups, is a highlight of the day for many. The prison has done its best to maintain cleaning standards but the limitations of time out of cell even for cleaners has at times made this difficult. The fitting of a second phone on the first floor landings of the wings, currently taking place, is to be welcomed but we feel very strongly that the opportunity of the major electrical work about to begin on B wing, which will proceed wing by wing throughout the prison, should be taken to install the cabling for in-cell telephones because contact with their families is probably the single most important factor in safeguarding prisoners' mental health and encouraging a sense of purpose during their time in jail. We have drawn this to the attention of the Prisons Minister so far to little effect.

In the past year the prison has conducted a wide-ranging food review which reported in November 2020. The Board was given access to the findings and invited to offer observations. The review looked carefully at prisoners' complaints and covered everything from menus and serveries to food ordering, staff training and the equipment and cleanliness of the main kitchen. Unfortunately, the pandemic has impeded delivery of the action plan. But a new food manager has been appointed and is energetically reviewing practice, including the way sealed meals, which have

been a significant drain on the budget, are provided. The budget allocation for all food items is £2.08 per day per person, but a single kosher meal can cost as much as £6. Kosher meals continue to be supplied to men who require them for faith reasons but in other cases a more economic type of sealed meal has been sourced.

In order to protect the regime on the wings, and in particular evening phone calls, it was decided to serve food at cell doors from foil containers rather than from the serveries. The additional work involved stretched the kitchen very considerably because up to four containers were required for each resident, all to be filled and sealed by hand. The amount of food used also increased because allowance could not be made for personal preferences as is possible when the food is served from large dishes in the serveries. Despite all the extra effort, complaints about food continued throughout lockdown. Arising from the review, the Athena software system for ordering ingredients and managing the kitchen is ready to be implemented which it is hoped will ensure greater economy and efficiency.

Much work is needed to bring the physical state of the kitchen up to an acceptable standard. This has started with the replacement of cladding on the main kitchen walls, though delays with sub-contractors' security clearances meant that it had to be left unfinished for the whole of Ramadan and it remained unfinished a month after the end of the reporting year. The quality is poor and the cladding that has been fitted is already beginning to crack with pieces of the moulding around its edges breaking off. The prison will do its best to ensure that the work is brought up to an adequate standard before the contract is signed off, but we remain concerned about the use of low-grade materials in a busy kitchen where we would have expected stainless steel to be used to optimise hygiene. During the building work in the first week of Ramadan, prisoners were unable to be drafted into the kitchen to help with food preparation but after a survey of prisoners was carried out, it was decided that the first week's food would be prepared by Muslim prisoners and frozen ahead of time. Officers had to be brought in to help from the rest of the prison. The kitchen was close to breaking point but nonetheless ensured that the residents were fed.

We hope that as soon as possible priority will be given to implementing the changes recommended by the food review, not least the crucial matter of linking the training of prisoners in catering skills to the work that they do in the kitchen, something that will have benefits both in the quality of food served and the availability of purposeful work for prisoners.

At the commencement of the Covid-19 management regime an initial one-off opportunity for families to send in items from approved suppliers was well used. This was repeated later on in the year along with the opportunity to have a one-off comfort parcel consisting of a robe, slippers, towel etc. Provision was made to allow for those without families and foreign nationals to purchase items using their private cash.

5.2 Segregation

Throughout the reporting year, the segregation unit was once again full, causing continuous regime restrictions. Occupancy fluctuated between 34 at the start of this reporting period at the height of the pandemic, reducing at times to 24, but never as low as 18 (its allocated capacity) until the very end of the year, with the overflow

occupying cells in the adjacent Bridge unit or the healthcare unit. Throughout the year, the regime was compromised: prisoners had to choose between a daily shower and a telephone call; television and radios were sometimes not available for all who were entitled to them; prisoners were locked up for in excess of 23 hours a day, with limited human contact; supplies of clean clothes and bedding were often limited; few prisoners could take part in corporate worship; and there were extremely limited opportunities for work or education.

However, for the first time in many years there are signs of the positive changes that have been initiated being sustained in the unit. The CM and his staff team, with the embedded psychologist, worked to provide a more supportive and humane regime than in previous years. A presentation was made to the senior management team of the prison to highlight this new approach and it was very positively received. Adjudications were successfully moved to the wings instead of being carried out in the segregation boardroom, necessitating less movement during the pandemic and reducing the likelihood of men refusing to return to the wing and thus having to be segregated. The effect was to return the management of behaviour to the wings. The mental health in-reach team (MHIR) became more involved in the management of segregated residents, introducing a weekly wellbeing round to speak to each prisoner, and it is hoped that it will be possible to have an embedded mental health worker in the future. The use of dry cells was reviewed in line with national requirements and these cells were only used in exceptional circumstances, rather than as part of routine accommodation when numbers were high. Plans for changes to the accommodation to enable a separation from the adjacent Bridge unit were partly achieved when the shower units were refurbished and capacity increased; a plan for an additional secure phone box is in hand but not yet implemented. The installation of a video facility in the segregation meeting room enabled outside specialist units to be involved in assessments and other external appointments to be more easily facilitated.

During the reporting year, there was a decrease in the number of men segregated. 75 men were segregated, with 25 experiencing segregation periods of over 42 days (the point at which authorisation is required by the deputy director of custody (DDC)), compared with 98 in the previous year, and 19 of over 126 days. Of these, four lasted for over 300 days, and one for more than a year. Thus, whilst fewer men were segregated in total during the year, all were there for long periods, reflecting the lack of movement during the lockdown period. The average time spent segregated was 88 days. However, the Board has for many years been concerned about the long periods that some prisoners spend in segregation, and the continual difficulty in arranging transfers to other establishments or, in particular, to specialist units. There has been a notable number of men who, once segregated, refuse to locate back to the wing at Whitemoor, insisting that as category B prisoners they should be in the category B estate, and yet who do not have the necessary RC1 form to authorise such a move. These men can remain segregated for months in this stalemate, until they achieve their aim eventually, are moved to another establishment, or are successfully encouraged to locate.

Segregation review boards (SRBs) were well chaired. Representation by psychology and mental health staff improved greatly, is now routine and makes a significant contribution to each review. SRBs have been held by teleconference throughout the year, attended in person by the chairing governor, the segregation unit supervising officer (SO), the psychologist, a mental health team representative, and the prisoner and his escorts. The offender management unit (OMU), IMB and the segregation unit administrator attend by phone; discussion would benefit from more regular attendance by the safer custody team and the chaplaincy. A welcome addition has been the formalisation of 72 hour reviews which are conducted as part of the Tuesday SRB or as part of an additional Friday meeting. However, the Board remains frustrated by the limitations on what can be achieved. Progress for prisoners was frequently limited during this period when transfer was difficult, with no change for many months; at times agreed actions were not carried out, or recorded and reviewed; transfers to other prisons or hospitals were very difficult to arrange, with long waits even when agreed; and segregated prisoners who had to be housed in the healthcare unit owing to capacity constraints were not always reviewed. When the Board declined to concur with the outcome of the review, it was most frequently because segregation had exceeded 42 days and was not authorised by the DDC, but also in a number of cases because of insufficient progress on an exit plan, or minuted actions not being completed.

Close supervision centre

The close supervision centre (CSC or F wing) holds up to 10 prisoners, managed under a nationally coordinated strategy to provide a secure location for the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners. The unit had five prisoners between June 2020 and February 2021 when a sixth transferred in. Covid-19 protocols meant that regime, activities, and programmes were restricted. Prisoners were unlocked in the morning for three and a half hours for their regime (shower, exercise and phone calls) and to collect their lunch; at weekends this was reversed with regime taking place in the afternoon. There was no opportunity for evening phone calls as in the main prison. During the Covid-19 period, one wing of the unit was cleared, with good cooperation from the prisoners, to become a safe area for individuals from main location who needed to shield, but all those who were eligible declined to move there. Non-CSC prisoners were held in the gated cell at times.

Work opportunities were provided by dividing the cleaning roles, an unsatisfactory solution, and two of the five residents participated in educational activities. The outside garden area and greenhouse, which in previous years had been cultivated, but then neglected, were worked on by a national charitable organisation, Greener Growth, and will provide activities as soon as staffing levels allow tools to be used safely. Provision for worship is limited. Association spaces are reasonable, but the Board has previously commented that the central recreation area has been underused as an area to promote engagement between staff and prisoners as part of the intended enabling environment.

Bridge unit

The Bridge unit has a capacity for 12 residents one of whom can be a peer supporter. During the year all 12 spaces have at times been used, although occupancy was reduced to seven after four men were deselected for poor behaviour and one progressed. Of the seven prisoners, two men came from Whitemoor and five transferred in. It seems that it has been difficult for the Bridge unit to fulfil its potential and role as a national resource to help men prepare for a move to normal location. Its residents sometimes express dissatisfaction with the regime and a number are deselected, returning to be segregated.

The unit's physical proximity to the segregation unit and historical use as part of that unit, has discouraged the reduction of numbers in the segregation unit to its established complement of 18, a necessary step towards enabling them both to function as discrete units. High level commitment is needed for this to happen, and the difficulty has been compounded by the staffing detail needs during the pandemic when staff have been transferred to allow the regime on the wings to function, leaving the Bridge unable to carry out its therapeutic role.

5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers

The Covid-19 lockdown played havoc with the key worker scheme. Nationally the scheme was suspended on 24 March 2020 and then resumed on 20 July. Whitemoor made the decision to continue with arrangements based on the approach it had adopted pre-lockdown. This entailed fortnightly key worker sessions rather than weekly ones as prescribed nationally. The purpose was to get support to as many men as possible. A clear list of priority groups was drawn up which included prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm, extremist prisoners convicted under the Terrorism Act (TACT), clinically extremely vulnerable prisoners, and others deemed a priority by staff or through wing requests. Special Covid-19 key workers had to be allocated to work with prisoners within their own wing to avoid the risk of cross-contamination. Towards the end of the reporting period, the decant of prisoners to clear B wing for building work and the consequent moves of prisoners within the prison made the management of the scheme even more complicated. Despite all of this, the CM responsible for the scheme remained focused and committed, ensuring that the number of key worker sessions delivered was increased by 10 on each wing each month until all the available staff were used. The proportion of the total population of the prison receiving key worker sessions rose from only 6.6% in June 2020 to 63.4% in April 2021, a considerable improvement but still well below national targets. Sadly, surveys of prisoners and staff carried out towards the end of our reporting year showed disappointing results in terms of satisfaction with the scheme. The main issues were consistency of key worker support, frequency of sessions and staff training, inevitable areas for improvement after such a challenging year. It is to the credit of the scheme manager that surveys were carried out and the results shared as a basis for moving forward.

We are told that the prison has become more efficient at delivering wellbeing checks for men who are not benefiting from key worker sessions. These will be tapered off as the key worker programme resumes.

Relationships between staff and prisoners generally were mixed. We noticed a number of occasions when prisoners made the effort to thank staff for their support,

for example thank you letters in reception and 'shout outs' in the prisoners' newspaper, Moor News. However, there has been considerable staff turn-over during the period of lockdown, and inevitably less experienced staff, some of them quite young, lack the jail craft and interpersonal skills of those who have worked in the service for a number of years. We have heard prisoners comment in a consultation meeting that some officers are too rigid, for example in their use of incentive and earned privileges (IEP) sanctions when men are slow to move at the end of a regime period. The prisoners who take part in consultations tend to be reasonable men who can understand the CMs' point that everybody suffers if the regime cannot be kept on time, but not all prisoners are reasonable. There is a risk that tension will increase as lockdown is eased in the wider community while conditions within the prison continue to be more tightly controlled.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Equalities meetings are yet to restart as they involve the mixing of prisoners from different wings. The equalities team have used Wayout TV, noticeboards and Moor News to maintain contact with residents and continue their work on family and cultural links.

The number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) logged and considered over the last year was 204; three were upheld whilst another two were partially upheld. Work is continuing to improve the process of ensuring that complaints which claim or imply discrimination are recognised and converted into DIRFs by the complaints clerk and the equalities administration staff.

There are currently 28 different nationalities housed in Whitemoor, excluding those with dual nationality. The problems encountered by foreign national prisoners trying to phone their embassies remain unchanged, because the PIN phone system does not allow them to enter extension numbers.

The prison has used the Purple Visits video system to help keep families in touch throughout the pandemic. This is something that the Board has been calling for over a number of years and it is pleasing to see the benefits for foreign nationals. We hope that HMPPS will make it a priority to keep the system in place in the long term.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Inevitably links to community groups have been very limited owing to the pandemic. The chaplaincy has continued to offer support to all residents and staff who require it, but this had to be generally on a one-to-one basis. The regular classes and programmes offered, for example as part of the restorative justice programme, had to be suspended. Corporate worship and faith celebrations were massively curtailed. Corporate worship resumed in September but groups were limited to 30 and had to come from the same wing. Prisoners had to use regime time for corporate worship and some thought that this was unfair. However, we accept that it was necessary for the prison to keep to a minimum the movement of prisoners for activities of relatively short duration (corporate worship takes about 30 minutes) in order to maintain social distancing and maximise time out of cell for all.

5.6 Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme (IEP)

Of the three levels of the incentives and earned privileges scheme (IEP) traditionally used, entry (basic) level was removed following publication of the policy framework for the management of prisons during the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020.

Before the pandemic the Board's observations suggested that fairness and a consistency of approach were maintained in adjudications and the scheme appeared to be used positively to manage behaviour and minimise segregation.

In view of the restricted conditions experienced by all prisoners and in order to incentivise good behaviour as well as censuring bad, in the initial stages of the pandemic staff were advised to use IEP warnings and NOMIS entries instead of holding adjudications except in cases of extreme misconduct such as violence.

Adjudication tariffs were reviewed and changes made to punishments given in recognition of the effects of Covid-19 restrictions. The prison followed national policy in making televisions and other electrical items available to residents because of the long periods they were locked in their cells. IEP basic policy was reviewed in line with national guidance and used only in exceptional cases. The head of residence and services maintained a decision log, in accordance with national requirements, to justify the continued use of basic. The decision log is open to scrutiny in the command suite.

5.7 Complaints

There was an increase of 24% in the first level of complaint (Comp 1) from 2,333 to 2,893, and a 17% increase in the follow-up (Comp 1A) from 508 to 595; 75% and 70% of these respectively were responded to within the time limit. These complaints were about a wide range of issues: the most common were residential (18%), with the majority about telephones and accommodation; property (17%), half about missing property; and food (11%). Thirteen percent are classified under 'other', with half of them about applications and complaints not being responded to. There were particularly long delays and unsatisfactory answers, causing anger and distress, when the complaint had to be sent to a previous establishment, often concerning missing personal property. Fifty percent of overdue complaints were in this section.

The Board is encouraged to note the attention given in the past year to getting complaints answered in a timely fashion. Weekly statistics are sent to managers with complaints overdue and prisoner complaints are discussed and trends noted at monthly SMT meetings. Attention has been focussed on addressing the motivations and triggers of prisoners who submit frequent complaints to help staff better understand how to address them, and reduce the number submitted.

5.8 Property

The number of prisoners admitted to the prison has been considerably reduced by the pandemic. The CM in charge of reception believes that the property of incoming prisoners has been handled more efficiently (see para. 4.1 above) though the need to hold items for three days to prevent infection has slowed movement down. Nonetheless the number of complaints about property has been substantial (see para. 5.7 above). The installation of an itemiser to check for illicit substances in reception would assist in the faster handling of property but it is a costly piece of kit and we are told that there is insufficient justification for a second machine. The Board strongly supports the efforts of the IMB Management Board to improve the management of property moving between prisons, which is a continuing cause of frustration.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT) and, after a break in coverage of approximately five months with no dentist in post, a new dental service provider, Prisoner Centred Dental Care (PCDC), was appointed from 1 April 2021. Staff shortages appeared to be less of an issue this year with the service running on average at 7% below complement, though this reduced towards the end of the year. Coverage was maintained by agency staff though they accounted for less than 5% of total staffing at peak.

Complaints received were relatively low and fewer than in prior years running at less than 1.5% of the total appointments made, based on the data provided, with 94% being handled and responded to within the designated time period.

6.2 Primary healthcare

There was, despite Covid-19 restrictions and general staff shortages in the prison, a high number of routine clinic appointments made and completed with just over 80% of appointments fulfilled. Of the cancellations 13% were due to the prisoner not attending or being in isolation with the remainder being associated with healthcare staff availability.

Waiting times for GP appointments varied through the year but averaged five days which is comparable to the general community. However, there were long waiting times for dental and optical care, physiotherapy and podiatry with some up to ten weeks and this, despite the lockdown, is worse than outside.

During the break in the dental contract from November 2020 to April 2021 the dental service was reduced to a maximum of one clinic per week when a locum or pool staff member was available. Secondary healthcare appointments continued throughout the year though, as on the outside, a number of these consultations were performed by telephone.

Secondary healthcare (hospital and specialist appointments) suffered the effects of Covid-19 in the same degree as outside. Only 40% of the appointments made were fulfilled and many only after repeated cancellations. Of the cancellations, over 25% were made by the hospital with 7% due to the lack of prison resources for escorts.

6.3 Mental healthcare

There was no substantial increase in the number of mental health referrals during the year and improved staffing meant that over 86% of referrals were seen within five days of the referral as targeted.

The prison introduced a weekly visit by the mental health team to all prisoners held in the segregation unit and this was a valued and useful addition to the residents, many of whom have some form of mental health challenge.

6.4 Social care

Social care is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council. There are 11 prisoners who are eligible. We are not aware of any problems with the service.

6.5 Exercise, regime

Lockdown conditions impacted severely on time out of cell with prisoners generally locked up for over 21 hours per day and segregation unit prisoners sometimes for 23 hours. Conditions for those who needed to isolate were even more restricted. There is no doubt that the prison (and HMPPS as a whole) did their best to keep prisoners safe but our limited observations lead us to concur with the statement by HMIP in a recent report that 'the impact of isolation, chronic boredom and heightened anxiety took a heavy toll on both physical and mental health'.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

As last year, the integrated substance misuse team did not attend the prison. The increased use of hooch and drugs of various kinds by prisoners suggests that their intervention will be badly needed as part of the recovery.

6.7 Soft skills

The establishment of a prison rehabilitation culture council is a major step forward in the programme of cultural change at Whitemoor. Its role is 'to look at long-term changes and improvements, to appropriately challenge new process and to be part of the consultation process'. There are two paid prisoner coordinators and it is supported by a structure of council members, peer supporters and mentors. One of its aims is to link up all those prisoners who have taken on roles as wing representatives and champions of various aspects of prison life to make them part of a coordinated structure which can make a difference to the quality of life in the prison. The council is supported by senior staff who work independently of the Governor. Its arrival is timely given the focus nationally as well as locally on designing a new regime which is characterised by purposeful activity differentiated to

meet the individual needs of prisoners. Training and support are provided to help those involved gain the skills required to develop a responsible community with greater capacity for self-regulation.

During the pandemic a new prisoner newsletter, Moor News, was developed to provide information about Covid-19 related issues. It has rapidly taken on a wider role with book reviews, word searches and information about various aspects of men's health and prison life. Around 7,000 comment bubbles had been completed and sent in by the end of our reporting year to the editor, an administrator in the psychology team, to whom everyone in the prison owes a considerable debt of gratitude.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education provision has continued through Milton Keynes College. Over the year the college engaged with 90 learners (about the same as under normal conditions) who enrolled on a total of 226 courses. Sixteen of these enrolments came from eight learners who completed emergency initial screening on entering Whitemoor to identify their starting levels and additional needs or requirements.

Of the 125 courses completed most were unaccredited. However, 19 learners were accredited for completing the level 1 course in citizenship, a component of the Award to Progression programme; six completed level 1 construction and building; and 13 learners received centre assessed grades (CAGs) for GCSE psychology.

It was disappointing that Gold Command of HMPPS ruled that education staff should not attend the prison in the early months of lockdown. The provider, Milton Keynes College, quickly introduced low-level distraction packs to be used by prisoners in their cells. Initially they were rather superficial but they developed into more focused learning packs designed to support all levels of course from entry to accredited level 2 by September. Quality assurance support from HMPPS and senior staff at Milton Keynes College improved the quality of the packs. Feedback from the residents was invaluable in the quality assurance process. The packs were tailored to suit the needs of each group or resident with one-to-one support available if needed from February 2021. Special arrangements were made for those with dyslexia who had their work issued on different coloured paper or were provided with colour overlays to assist with their learning. However, prisoners were not always sufficiently motivated to complete their packs despite the attempt to incentivise this with a £5 reward.

Key education areas have had new computers and larger wall mounted screens installed over the last year so staff are keen to put these to good use as soon as possible. Way-out TV was used to deliver learning videos into cells, and it is hoped could be used more in future.

The librarian attended throughout lockdown and the service he provided was very much valued. Residents were supplied with books and a new selection of DVDs

which were delivered to the wings by officers. The request and delivery system worked well and was appreciated by the prisoners. We wonder whether this could be a more efficient way of working to replace the evening library sessions, though this would reduce time out of cell. A remote book club is encouraging residents to write their own book reviews. Those who need to improve their reading skills can contact the librarian for support. Storybook Dads was temporarily replaced by the Swaps initiative which enabled residents to exchange worksheets with children in their family.

7.2 Vocational training, work

At the end of the reporting year most areas were still not operating due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, the main kitchen was employing a reduced number of workers as were the wings, and wing barbers began to operate again before the end of the year. Some prisoners have obtained a food hygiene certificate while working in the kitchen, an indication that one of the proposed outcomes of the food review is beginning to be delivered. The prison has a new training plan for cleaners.

The road map to recovery which specifies risk assessments and safe working practices is updated regularly and will facilitate the opening of workshops and training areas as soon as possible. The workshops which have priority such as the laundry and the Max Spielmann photographic workshop are due to restart with reduced numbers.

Those who were employed at the start of the pandemic had their pay frozen, whilst those who were unemployed were given a substantial increase in recognition of the unavailability of work. All prisoners were given extra PIN phone credits. These arrangements are due to be phased out shortly.

7.3 Offender management and progression

Taking into account the challenging conditions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic the prison is to be congratulated on the progression statistics from March 2020 to April 2021 with 12 category A downgrades, two high risk category A downgrades, nine re-categorised to C and one re-categorised to C/D (parole). In total there were 61 progressive moves.

The major decant project to empty B wing was designed to relocate 126 residents to other sites across the prison estate in readiness for planned work to upgrade electrical installations including fire and general alarm systems. Residents were kept informed about the arrangements for the decant and invited to apply to be considered for relocation to an establishment of their choosing. Applicants were required to meet a number of stated criteria in order to be accepted for a transfer. These criteria include category, sentence and the type of offence as well as other factors. The Board was updated on a regular basis in respect of progress, issues and developments associated with this complex and detailed project.

During restrictions and lockdowns caused by the pandemic the offender management unit (OMU) appears to have maintained contact with residents in line

with the EDMs. The workload of the OMU was much increased by the need to update OASys reports for prisoners being transferred out as part of the decant.

7.4 Family contact

The prison positively promotes and encourages family contact and, to judge from pre-Covid-19 observations, demonstrates excellent visitor/staff relationships.

Prior to Covid-19, family provision within the establishment allowed for visit days on Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday weekly. There was a monthly family day allocated on the first Saturday of each month along with specific arrangements for children's days, foreign national days and adult only days.

As was reported in the 2020 annual report, the visits centre provides a welcoming venue for families, when Covid-19 restrictions are not in place, and incorporates a wide variety of activities for children including a backdrop picture for family photo opportunities. However, there continue to be poor dedicated play facilities for children in the outside visits centre where there is a small grassed area which could be put to good use if funding were available to fence it off for the safety of the children playing there. The opportunity of the cancellation of visits during lockdown was not taken to commission this work though other work is being planned inside to improve facilities for children.

Telephone provision is via phones located on the spurs as in-cell provision remains unavailable. Phone calls to families with young children have to fit around school hours. There is added tension around the use of phones because of the restricted time prisoners have out of their cells during lockdown. On F wing, no evening phone calls have been possible. Mail (both incoming and outgoing) is collected and delivered daily except for Sundays.

Although family visits were suspended for most of the year, good efforts were made to optimise access to phone and email contacts; additionally, the use of Purple Visits video calls was well received across the population. A wing representative feedback project relating to residents' experiences during Covid-19 restrictions, which was undertaken by the IMB, confirmed the significant value of Purple Visits to residents.

Take-up of face-to-face-visits, when these were initially reinstated after the first lockdown, was poor due to the long distances travelled by visitors, reduced time available for visits, restrictions on behaviour related to social distancing and a lack of facilities within the visits hall, including the closure of the Ormiston cafe. Following the third lockdown, visits recommenced on 28 April 2021 with two days a week (rather than four) available initially. Furniture in the visits hall was organised to preserve social distance and this reduced the number of visitors in any one session to 10 (instead of 26).

7.5 Resettlement planning

HMP Whitemoor sits within the LTHSE and, therefore, does not generally release prisoners directly into the community. Resettlement work is primarily focused on completion of offending behaviour programmes (OBP), providing education and employment skills. However, throughout this reporting year, limited progress has been made in the completion of OBPs due to the restrictions placed on the prison in line with the national frameworks established to reduce the risk of Covid-19.

Prisoners are identified ten months prior to their release. The OMU and the community offender manager (COM) work closely with the prisoner to identify a suitable resettlement establishment for him to be transferred to in order to prepare for release. The OMU aims to complete the transfers within three months prior to release in order to enable prisoners to access all necessary resettlement provisions.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8 (+2 on sabbatical)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	4
Total number of segregation reviews attended	26

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	17	1
C	Equality	9	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	5	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	21	2
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	0
F	Food and kitchens	9	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	13	3
H1	Property within this establishment	27	5
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	23	2
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	8	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	18	3
K	Transfers	13	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	5
	Total number of applications	181	36



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