



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Belmarsh

**For reporting year
1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

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

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

At the end of June 2023, the operational capacity (the maximum population the prison can hold) was 814¹. During the reporting year the prison held approximately 650 prisoners at any one time, of which approximately 60% were on remand.

¹ Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- there is a lack of opportunity for prisoners to experience a full and purposeful regime due to safety concerns over gang violence and conflicts
- the more regular use of body worn cameras is a positive element in the recording and therefore prevention of violent incidents
- the prison is to be commended for the care and support given to those prisoners who repeatedly self-harm

Fair and humane treatment

- the kitchen is in need of at least a more proactive effort to repair and replace items that no longer work efficiently or at best a complete refurbishment
- the prisoner experience in HSU has improved considerably over the year but there is still concern about consistent regime and purposeful activity
- prisoners are not able to experience corporate worship on a regular basis due to safety concerns
- there has been much good work this year promoting equality and the celebration of diversity, and this has been well received; it would be useful to have evidence of the impact of this work
- the frustration caused by missing property continues, especially when transferring from prison to prison

Health and wellbeing

- the time taken to assess and provide appropriate accommodation for prisoners suffering with mental ill-health remains far too long
- the contractor for healthcare has changed and at the time of writing a mental health team has not yet been established
- data suggests that up to a quarter of prisoners have no opportunity for purposeful activity and spend the majority of their day locked up in their cell
- while key work support has been limited this year there is clear evidence of some officers giving friendly and emotional support to prisoners, likewise several prisoners have been grateful for the trained care and support orderlies

Progression and resettlement

- the establishment of the employment hub looks promising
- prisoners who wish to gain employment in the prison need to have level one English and maths before they will be accepted for any role
- prisoners in HSU have limited face to face education of any substance and no opportunity for purposeful employment
- prisoners have to wait too long for transfer so their progression is delayed

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

The Minister is urged to refer all IPP prisoners to the Parole Board for consideration to terminate their licences. If the Parole Board still considers them to be a risk the Minister is urged to enable the Parole Board to reset the terms of their licence so that they are no longer held under this rule. (See Section 7.3)

Would the Minister consider the impact of prison on those with serious mental illness and review systems for assessment and more appropriate placements? (See Section 6.3)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Will HMPPS work with Belmarsh management to develop and implement a system of in-cell phones in HSU to allow prisoners privacy and access to their families and their legal teams? (See Section 5.2.1)

Will HMPPS review the new initiative that restricts prisoner opportunity as all are expected to have level one English and maths before becoming employed? (See Section 7.2)

Will HMPPS urgently review the end-to-end process for prisoner property, including looking at the use of technology, the role of the prison escort contractor, how property is recorded and the prison-to-prison follow up system? (See Section 5.8)

TO THE GOVERNOR

Will the Governor provide clear guidelines for all staff setting out the expectation that all those prisoners who return from work are enabled to shower if they wish regardless of the time of arrival? (See Section 7.2)

The phone in the communal area of HSU is near the desk used by staff which prevents prisoners from having their phone calls in private, could arrangements be made to improve soundproofing around HSU phone or move it away from the staff desk? (See Section 5.2.1)

Considering the age and condition of some of the present equipment and facilities in the kitchen, could the prison consider the preparation of a bid to improve overall kitchen facilities? (See Section 5.1)

Will the Governor review the provision of corporate worship on a regular basis where possible? (See Section 5.5)

Will the Governor review the regime to consider if more opportunity could be afforded to cat A prisoners and those in HSU to undertake useful employment and education. (See Section 7.2)

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised to the Governor	Response given	Progress
Will the prison work to create a consistent and efficient approach to prisoner's property, on arrival in Belmarsh, received from family or canteen and when moved within the prison in order to avoid frustration and despair?	Processes for searching and issuing of property have recently been reviewed and a more robust process is in place utilising the night team.	Prisoners continue to complain that property is lost and delays in delivering property received from family, other prisons and cell moves continue to cause great frustration.
Will the prison continue the good work already in place regarding collection and publication of data reflecting outcome and opportunity for relevant protected characteristics by ensuring that this data is scrutinised and used effectively to reduce inequality in all areas of the prison, including the selection of random searches and prisoner employment?	Diversity and inclusion meetings to continue bi-monthly and Prison Equality Advisory Group to be reintroduced.	Useful information on diversity issues shared widely across prison but no statistical evidence seen to show improved outcomes.
Will the prison ensure that houseblock cleaning officers monitor the work carried out by orderlies so that it is of a decent standard?	Instructions have been given to all staff involved.	Noticeable variation of cleanliness levels between houseblocks, some staff are very committed.
Will the prison continue to review conditions in the HSU with special regard to provision of visits, including video calls, providing a laptop for the unit and suitable visiting accommodation, provision of purposeful activity for the prisoners including suitable learning accommodation and the introduction of a horticulture workshop or similar?	Visits are in line with the whole establishment. Laptop available but extra staff needed. Space for education is inadequate in HSU so the prison could look to purchase chairs and flip tables. Horticulture is no longer happening, any such work would involve staff having to manage it.	Improved conditions in HSU resulting in fewer prisoner complaints. Provision of purposeful activity still lacking.
Will the prison ensure adequate time is ring-fenced for key worker duties to ensure the compliance rate for key worker sessions meets the required level?	There are intentions to continue this but at present it cannot be implemented due to staffing issues.	Key worker system is in place for a handful of prisoners and will not be reintroduced until there are adequate staff in place to manage the prison safely.

Issue raised to the Prison Service	Response given	Action Taken
Will HMPPS stand by their commitment to introduce a nationwide approach to prisoner's property including a digitalised process to reduce the amount of property lost on transfer?	No commitment given in response.	Problems continue with property losses in prison and during transfer.
Will HMPPS consider providing additional funds to improve the overall kitchen facilities at Belmarsh considering the age and condition of some of the present equipment?	There are insufficient funds and no bids have been made.	None.
Will HMPPS continue to monitor and review the situation relating to in-cell telephony in HSU?	Unlikely to progress due to security costs.	None.
Will HMPPS address the unavailability of online booking for prisoner visits and introduce a telephone booking process with a queuing system?	A replacement online service should be available in the coming year.	Telephone booking presents its own problems, issues remain.
Issues raised to the Minister	Response given	Action taken
Provision for appropriate service for prisoners suffering from severe mental ill-health.	The Draft Mental Health Bill, published in June 2022, seeks to introduce a new statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison and other places of detention to hospital.	No change seen, patients with severe mental ill-health still waiting much longer for assessment and possible transfer.
Speed up the courts process.	Clear response including more opportunities for bail.	Improved situation.
Ensure accommodation support for prisoners on remand.	Service should be in place by end of 2022.	Some external support provided by St. Mungo's, not firmly in place.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Procedures in reception have been observed by the Board to be robust, despite staff shortages at times, regarding entry to and departure from prison. Careful regard is given to paperwork, correct identification and use of staff available.

With the ramping up of the courts, there is an increase in the number of prisoners in and out of reception, often double previous numbers. This has a significant impact on staffing as officers often attend courts with the prisoners.

Prisoners are thoroughly searched every time they enter or re-enter the prison.

From reception, prisoners are taken to the first night centre. The Board has recently observed an induction talk, given to new prisoners by one of the prisoners in the centre. This talk is supported by a PowerPoint presentation and gives useful information for those who are new to prison life. Induction packs are also handed out, which are available in nine different languages, and is an improvement on last year.

Those prisoners with English as a second language are identified and further supported by other prisoners who speak the same language.

Listeners, prisoners trained by the Samaritans, are also available in the first night centre to answer queries and support where necessary.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board continues to believe that prison staff work hard to prevent prisoners from attempting suicide and self-harm. There were 337 reported incidents of self-harm in the reporting period compared to 360 in the previous year, and 324 in the year before that. Of the 337 incidents, 42 prisoners repeatedly harmed themselves. There was one death in custody in the reporting year; the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigation is ongoing. There were four 'near-misses' of significant self-harm, that required hospital admission.

Almost every week of the reporting year, a safety intervention meeting (SIM) took place. These meetings are chaired by senior managers with responsibility for prisoner safety and are attended by senior officers and staff, although attendance can be patchy. At each meeting, prisoners of concern and new incidents of self-harm are reported and discussed, followed by a review and discussion of current assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) cases, challenge, support, and intervention plan (CSIP) cases, self-isolating prisoners, and other safety, violence and care matters.

An ACCT assurance process has operated throughout the year, and good practice and areas for development are routinely reported to SIM. Board members also review ACCT processes and forms. While ACCT files contain much helpful information, areas of concern are reported to prison managers. They include the

need for the 'risks, protective factors, and triggers' form to be better completed; and the need for case reviews to be better attended so that more rounded assessments of prisoners' current situations, and future plans, can be made. Some care plans are minimal or missing. Many on-going records are up to date; but some are not, casting doubt on the work being done to keep prisoners safe.

Board members routinely visit prisoners under constant watch in the healthcare centre or in other parts of the prison and are impressed by the diligence and knowledge of officers on constant watch duties, and by the overall measures that the prison puts in place to keep these most vulnerable prisoners safe.

Occasionally, Board members come across prisoners who tell them that they might harm themselves. Relevant officers are then informed, so that assessments can be made, and ACCTs opened if deemed necessary.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Violence across the prison has remained similar to the previous reporting year, as evidenced in the tables found in Annex B. These assaults range from individuals involved in a minor scuffle to a serious attempt on life. The number of incidents that involve a weapon, potentially suggesting a level of premeditation, is low. During this reporting year there were 16 incidents involving a weapon.

The statistics do not indicate the number of individuals involved. The figures include all assaults. A fight involving six individuals would be one incident in the statistics. An attack on a member of staff by three prisoners would be counted as one incident in the statistics.

We are told there are over 50 gangs in London, most of them based in a specific postcode. Most of these gangs have members within Belmarsh and, whether you are a member of your local gang or not, to be from one postcode places you at some risk from gangs in another postcode.

On entry to Belmarsh prisoners are asked whether they are a member of a gang and the postcode to which they relate as home. This information is logged so that, as far as is humanly possible, prisoners from different postcodes and with conflicts do not encounter one another. This is a huge task and requires very careful management. Inevitably mistakes are made but assaults are relatively few.

Within the prison there are attempts to help individuals turn away from violence and to control their anger. These attempts have various success levels. Ex-gang members have worked with prisoners to help them to change their approach to conflict and this is to be commended.

During Covid-19 periods, less violence was recorded. The Board are concerned that there has not yet been a return to normal regime. Contact between prisoners from different sections of the prison is restricted and this impacts the amount of time and opportunities for useful activities. The Board would like to see a better balance between safety concerns and opportunities for activity.

Self-isolation

There are a very small number of prisoners who choose to isolate. They only come out of their cell for a shower when everyone else is in their cell or off the houseblock. They also exercise on their own. Some prisoners may choose to decline either exercise or a shower.

The reasons for self-isolation are usually based on fear of attack or there may be mental health reasons. Fear may be based on debt, gang membership and postcode. In one case the prisoner feared attack because of political activity of family elsewhere in the world. Few remain self-isolating for a very long time. Some prisoners frequently change their minds. A record of these prisoners is required daily, and they are discussed in the SIM. The Board were assured to hear that self-isolating prisoners receive regular visits from the safer custody team and where needed visits from the psychology team.

4.4 Use of force (UOF)

There are weekly meetings to analyse all UOF events, together with body-worn video camera (BWC) and CCTV footage, and to review the UOF reports produced by all staff. A control and restraint instructor (C&R) always attends these meetings to provide an expert assessment of incidents. A summary report is produced with full documentation of the committee findings, listing where officers have performed well and where there may be additional learning or training required. Also, the officers UOF reports are reviewed to ensure they are completed in the correct level of detail and again comments are fed back to the individuals and their line managers.

There is a monthly meeting to review the weekly meeting reports and UOF is analysed to detect any specific patterns from the perspective of diversity and inclusion. Generally, officers opt to wear BWCs, and these are generally activated at the appropriate time.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Illicit items found across the prison continue to be an issue, as can be seen from the tables in Annex B. Finds of weapons have increased but there is evidence that the finds for drugs have decreased. The number in part can be explained by the robust searching techniques used by the prison, as well as intelligence gathering forms, intelligence reports by staff, phone number vetting and censors.

Prisoners go through the scanner in reception on arrival and they are also given a rub down search and a full search before being moved to their houseblock. All items sent by post are x-rayed and trained dogs (when available) go over everything. All letters are swabbed for drugs in the censors' office and checked for un-authorised contents. If authorisation to monitor a prisoner has been given, then mail and phone calls can be monitored to ascertain if plans are being made for illicit items to be conveyed into the prison.

All official and social visitors pass through a metal detection portal and are "wanded" with a metal detection wand and then rub down searched. Staff go through the portal and are "wanded" and/or rub down searched depending on the reading on the portal.

Dedicated search teams carry out target-based searches on prisoners and their cells based on intelligence received, positive indications on a cell by a dog or mobile phone detector, suspicious activity or part of the routine searches generated for the houseblock.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

There are few complaints from prisoners about food. The kitchen manager holds monthly meetings with residential area representatives, giving them the opportunity to contribute their ideas to improve the food and menus provided. All suggestions are given consideration and implemented where practicable. Temperature testing is carried out before the trolleys leave the kitchen and then in the residential areas, by the staff taking the trolleys. Wing servery reports are completed by each residential area and sent to the kitchen manager each week for review. These reports include daily temperature logs, wing servery cleaning check forms, wing manager check sheets and weekly food comments.

The kitchen manages to provide nutritious food for all the prisoners in Belmarsh. The budget per person increased from £2.19 to £2.70 in April. However, Office for National Statistics figures suggest food costs have risen by 19% in the last 12 months, and the prison is seeing weekly food cost increases as high as 30% in some cases, which is higher than the budget increase. Within that amount it is necessary to provide food for a very broad range of diets and individual special requirements.

The prison has a sole supplier for all food and drink, making it impossible to shop around for best product and value, as well as having no back up to purchase elsewhere should there be out of stock products.

Every year, an external food hygiene audit is carried out. In the last audit in November 2022, all areas received a green rating, except for one red rating, which related to the fabric and maintenance of the kitchen facilities (not under the control of the kitchen manager), stating 'the general appearance of the kitchen was 'tired'. A maintenance and repair programme is in place, and repairs are reported using the internal logging system, although there is often a long and drawn out process leading to repairs being completed. On many occasions prime equipment is out of use for several weeks or more. One piece of equipment took seven months to be installed. The Board hopes the prison will be able to allocate funds to address the issues referred to in this audit.

The Board is pleased to note that triple-occupancy cells are no longer in use throughout the prison. All third beds have been removed, so completing the transfer back to double occupancy. The reduction in headcount in the prison has resulted in a reduction of the clothing budget. In addition, during the pandemic recycling of clothes was not permitted, further reducing the clothing stock. Prisoners sometimes get rid of clothing by flushing it down the toilet, resulting in severe blockages. As recycling is now permitted, it is hoped this practice will diminish.

The programme to renovate showers in all four houseblocks is completed. The Board hope for news soon on when the showers in HSU will be renovated, as these are not up to the standard expected and attract many flies.

There is a notable difference between houseblocks in the approach to cleanliness, keeping posters and displays up to date and making effective use of prisoners to paint cells and landings.

The prison has been plagued throughout the year by vermin, in particular pigeons, mice and rats. Much has been done to solve this problem but issues with mice and pigeon faeces continue to make life uncomfortable for staff and prisoners alike.

5.2.1 HSU

The high security unit (HSU) houses up to 16 high-risk category A prisoners. Last year, the Board reported on a wide range of concerns from the regime, accommodation, and showers through to issues of in-cell telephones.

During the reporting year, several areas were improved, following the appointment of a new governor to oversee its operation. Of the 31 applications from HSU prisoners to the IMB during the reporting year, only three were received in the second half of the year indicating that the HSU prisoners were more comfortable with their environment. In particular, the prisoners' regime became more predictable although full association remains limited to two days per week. There are also education classes one day per week and also in cell study monitored by the Education Team. However, the IMB remain concerned about the availability of activities and purposeful activity for this area.

The physical state of the building is also an issue as it has been plagued with pigeon faeces, which is very unpleasant for staff and prisoners alike. Despite several attempts at remedy this problem remains a frustration for all. Also, the showers remain in very poor condition with no plans for refurbishment in the near future.

Our Annual Report last year also referred to the absence of in-cell telephony, which is widely available across the rest of the prison and the prison estate in general, including for category A prisoners. Prisoners in the HSU must use telephones in the general open area for both personal and legal calls, often within the hearing of other prisoners and prison staff.

During the reporting year, the Board have raised this issue with both the Belmarsh Governor and the High Security Estate management. While recognising that issues exist around monitoring calls from high-risk prisoners, many of them raise concerns around family contact and its impact on their mental health, as well as the confidentiality of protected legal conversations. The Board understands that plans are in place for some limited use of in-cell telephones.

The segregation cells within the HSU have seen an increased use during the reporting year, both for high-risk prisoners and as an overflow for the prison's segregation unit. Quite often, the required Prison Rule 45 reviews to extend the prisoner's segregation have been undertaken remotely without the prisoner present. Following representation from the IMB, reviews are now being conducted at the prisoners' cell door.

5.2.2 Segregation

The Belmarsh segregation unit has 16 cells in total. 14 cells are available for the general prisoner population, one of which can be used for constant watch purposes where prisoners are at significant risk of self-harm. Two cells are designated for Rule 46 prisoners – that is, close supervision centre (CSC) prisoners. In addition, there are two special accommodation cells, which are used for the most violent and recalcitrant prisoners, for brief spells of time.

At least three-quarters of the 16 cells are in use for most of the time. The constant watch cell was used on up to 10 occasions for different prisoners. There were two CSC prisoners in the year. Special accommodation was used twice in the year; and on both occasions the Board was informed. On one occasion, the use was very brief. On the other, it extended over three days.

The segregation unit is staffed by a team of supervising officers (SOs) and prison officers, who are specifically recruited to work there. Every day, there are fresh challenges, where a firm but fair approach is paramount. Instances were observed throughout the year of officers supporting prisoners, who mostly do not want to be there and who could be violent and extremely difficult. In the year, while some prisoners trashed or flooded their cells, there were thankfully no attacks on officers.

Segregation is meant to be a time-limited intervention but, from prison records, it is clear most prisoners had resided in the unit for over one week, and some for considerable lengths of time. These long stayers comprised CSC prisoners; those in segregation for their own protection; and those waiting to move on to facilities beyond Belmarsh. For longer stays, the Board was relatively satisfied that alternatives were routinely explored and pursued if feasible.

Board members regularly monitor Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) reviews. These reviews take place in line with prison rules and are chaired by a governor and attended by SOs, other prison officers from the unit, a nurse and a psychologist.

Board members have, over the year, raised several issues with segregation unit managers and officers. The most significant issues were;

- prisoners' property could take days to reach them in segregation, and some property was not delivered at all
- In situations where TVs and radios cannot be provided, Board members have queried whether a few distractions – books or puzzles – might be provided in the first instance
- prisoners still being charged for TVs even though, because of their behaviour, they had moved to “basic” level on arriving in segregation
- prisoners must put in daily applications to receive official forms, including discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs), complaint forms and IMB applications; as prisoners must have unfettered access to such forms, the Board has asked segregation unit managers to review their practice
- some prisoners choose to shout and use offensive language, littered with racial and other slurs, for prolonged periods of time; the prison has yet to find

ways of dealing with such lengthy outbursts and has pointed out that the culprits are often very unwell

- Board members have frequently pointed out the large amount of litter that can be found in a fenced off area outside the windows of segregation cells. Not only is it an eyesore, but also it does not speak of 'good behaviour' and is likely to attract vermin. The Board has been told that the litter is routinely removed; yet it keeps returning. A long-term plan to deal with this problem is needed.

Two meetings of the segregation monitoring and adjudications review group (SMARG) were held in the year, which Board members monitored. At these meetings, useful data on segregated prisoners and adjudications were presented. The disproportionately high numbers of Black and Muslim segregated prisoners were noted, and explanations, including gang membership among young adults, were mentioned. The Board will continue to monitor this area in the upcoming year.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Weekly prisoner consultation meetings are held with representatives from all houseblocks raising issues. Each houseblock completes a monthly consultation meeting report covering all topics raised to try and improve conditions for prisoners.

The residential governor liaises with the Prison Reform Trust, which has made recommendations focused on how the prison can better enable prisoners serving long sentences to reduce risk levels and to maintain significant relationships. Some examples of these are:

- extend the length of phone calls from ten minutes and reduce the waiting time
- enable people to buy phone credit from private accounts
- separate phone credit from canteen
- link weekly prison pay to the prices at canteen
- education pay should incentivise people to learn therefore pay should be equivalent to the best-paid jobs

Recently the prison ran a football tournament with outside teams from the police and fire brigade competing with teams of staff and prisoners. It is hoped to run a sports day in the new reporting year. Further initiatives to improve staff/prisoner relations have included fund-raising events (recently run by Charlton Football Club) and Channel 31, which is the prisoner information channel.

Key Workers

Although the prison currently has a full staffing complement, this rarely results in full availability of staff each day in the prison. The houseblocks are profiled for 14 staff daily, 11 to complete normal work and 3 to complete key work. When this staffing level is not available due to staff sickness, high escort commitments and detached duty staff, the key work commitment is the first to be lost.

Key workers are now allocated by houseblock, so staff do not need to leave their area to complete keywork sessions. Although the Board can understand that allocation by houseblock is expedient, it is not considered ideal and the original intention for key workers was for them to remain with a prisoner whilst they are in Belmarsh wherever they are located. This could also have included attending various activities with the prisoners to enable them to build stronger relationships.

When asked, officers acknowledge the importance of keywork in supporting individuals and fostering positive relationships between staff and prisoners; but prisoners do not seem to know who their key worker is or have received few or no sessions. Officers attribute the lack of consistent implementation to a shortage of available time.

5.4 Equality and diversity

During the reporting year, the prison held meetings of managers, officers and other staff to explore and promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of prison life. At the same time, meetings of prisoners, elected as equality representatives for their house blocks, were held. Both these sets of meetings were presented with data covering the prison population and key aspects of prison life, and areas of concern were discussed. Board members monitored both sets of meetings. While the discussions were open and direct, the prison would be better served if it did not cancel so many of them, and if there was better attendance of prison managers and officers from all locations.

It has been concluded at these meetings that, in general, there are no significant equality concerns for the prison. One exception are issues that arise from the challenging behaviours of some parts of the young adult population at Belmarsh, and related gang membership, both of which feature disproportionately in black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners.

“Equality Diversity Inclusion” newsletters are regularly circulated alongside one-off announcements and leaflets to raise awareness of a variety of equality related matters. Prisoners access this information on their TV channel, while staff usually receive it via email.

The Board believes that the prison would be well served by being able to point out actual improvements in prison life that have resulted from its meetings and awareness raising. One possible piece of evidence pointing to improvement is the falling number of discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) that were submitted in the year. There were just twelve in total, with none in the last three months of the year. As part of the process of dealing with DIRFs, the Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT) was asked to comment on the prisons’ handling of them. To date, the ZMT has given the prison very positive feedback.

During the year, Milton Keynes College gave considerable support to prisoners with limited English through “English for speakers of other languages” (ESOL) classes. The library also provided materials and puzzles to prisoners who had difficulty in speaking or reading English. For meetings that prisoners needed to attend, the

prison commissioned Language Line, but also turned to bi-lingual and multi-lingual officers and staff working in the prison to see if they could help.

Greenwich Council has worked with the prison to train a team of care and support orderlies to help disabled and other vulnerable prisoners with daily living activities. The scheme appears to be highly successful.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplains at Belmarsh cover the main religions to be found at the prison, most notably Christianity and Islam. During the reporting year, prisoners with or without faith were able to access support from the chaplains, who provide both pastoral and temporal care on a routine basis to many prisoners. This support begins on arrival from court or another prison, as prisoners are spoken to privately as part of their induction in the first night centre.

Currently, 171 prisoners are registered as Church of England or Free Church, and 111 are registered as Roman Catholic. The great majority of these registered prisoners are listed to attend services. Since Covid-19, three services are held on Sundays for a combined Christian congregation of mainly Church of England, Free Church and Roman Catholic prisoners. Each hour-long service caters for a different house block. This arrangement has its downsides. Firstly, one houseblock misses out each week, while vulnerable prisoners do not have a service at all. Secondly, at these combined services, Roman Catholic mass and Church of England communion cannot take place. Thirdly, it is difficult to get different pastors and lay people with lived experience to attend three services on the same day.

217 prisoners are registered as Muslim and, of these, 209 are listed to attend services. Since Covid-19, two houseblocks are allowed to attend Jummah (Friday) prayers each week. The next week, the other two houseblocks have their turn. Under this arrangement, one houseblock prays in the chapel and the other in the gym. Vulnerable prisoners can prayer together each week in the education room.

While recognising that the above arrangements are led by security concerns and help the prison to manage potential violence, they deny that part of Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 05/2016 that calls for corporate worship, which is so important to all faiths in bringing people together in a common peaceful cause. The Board strongly encourages the prison – in discussion with the chaplaincy and prisoners – to find a way whereby corporate worship can return to Belmarsh, safely, with plans in place to manage or mitigate any trouble that might arise.

During the year both prisoners and the chaplaincy were also concerned that, since the pandemic, religious classes have not been held. Such classes support religious observance and can deepen faith and encourage peaceful co-existence between faiths.

During the reporting year, Muslim prisoners in segregation complained to the Board and the prison about being reprimanded for calling others to prayer through their cell windows. They pointed out that other prisoners can play loud music and shout to each other, but nothing is done to curtail them. While the prison did issue a general

notice about noise coming from cell windows, it did lead some Muslim prisoners to question the motives of the prison in 'silencing' them, as they saw it. Some segregated Muslim prisoners also complained about the convoluted process necessary in order to attend religious services. The Board also heard of instances of Muslim prisoners being interrupted in their cells while saying one of their daily prayers. These instances point to the sensitivities required when dealing with faith and belief at Belmarsh, particularly for segregated prisoners.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme is understood by most prisoners and is used widely to counteract poor attitude or behaviour. Prisoners complain that they have not been informed when given negatives or positives and resultant issues come as a surprise. It would be helpful if prisoners could always be given clear notification of negatives especially and further notification to prisoners and staff if these are rescinded for some reason. Some prisoners feel they have been unfairly treated by being moved down to basic. Most prisoners who are at an enhanced level on the scheme are proud of this and keen to make use of the privileges this provides. For example the Samaritans provide a 'goody bag' for enhanced prisoners purchased during visits.

5.7 Complaints

The prison has a prisoner complaints policy framework governing the way in which a prisoner can make a complaint, and the expected response times. The complaints system is managed from the business hub, which directs the flow of complaints, monitors follow up and produces monthly management reports.

During the reporting year from July 2022 to June 2023, there were 2,394 "Comp 1" complaints from prisoners, which is broadly like the previous year. The major areas of complaint are as follows;

- residential issues – 16.8%
- property – 15%
- reception – 11.3%
- security – 9.2%
- finance/cash – 8.9%
- visits – 6.9%
- sentence planning - 6.8%
- telephone requests – 6.1%
- catalogue orders – 5.1%
- activity allocations – 4.6%

The response times of the prison in meeting the five-day turnaround target has increased from around 93% in June 2022 to under 97% by April 2023, although there was a dip earlier in the year to under 80%. In part, this was caused by reduced staffing numbers in the business hub although individuals processing complaints continued to maintain a high level of response.

Applications to the IMB have remained similar during the year, with areas being similar around reception/property, visits/telephone, reflecting family contact and

issues on the houseblocks being high on both systems. (Please see applications data in section 8.)

5.8 Property

Last year the Board commented that this area was problematic. It remains so, particularly relating to inter-prison property, despite assurances in the ministerial response to last year's report that the new Prisoners' Property Framework would improve the situation and outcomes for prisoners.

The number of applications to the IMB relating to inter-prison property almost doubled in the 2022/23 reporting year to 71, up from 36 the previous year. In many cases, it is not simply clothes and trainers, which are lost, but legal papers required in the on-going defence of a prisoner on remand, or precious family photographs of loved ones. Many prisoners tell us that this loss is affecting their mental health.

Within the prison, improvements have taken place in the handling of property, although thorough searching often delays the prisoner receiving property for up to two weeks. The number of IMB applications during the year regarding property within the prison fell from 28 to 23.

The system continues to rely on the manual recording of tags on prisoner property bags on transfer, and a hand-written property card itemising every item in the prisoner's possession. The process for recording and following up lost property is archaic and requires a significant paperwork exchange between prisons, with many items still being reported as lost. Stricter interpretation of the volumetric controls (number of bags), by the prison escort contractor has added to the problem with bags being left behind on transfer.

There is no use of technology, simply the prisoner's comp 1 form being sent by the business hub to the other prison's business hub and repeated emails being sent to follow up. There is no direct prison-to-prison contact between the reception staff who process a prisoner's property, and the many parties involved often introduce delays. Quite often, it is only when the IMB becomes involved through an application from a prisoner that action is taken to retrieve missing property.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare ran a good service over most of the reporting year with few complaints and a consistent group of managers, from the prison staff and from Oxleas. In January 2023, a new provider was appointed, namely the Practice Plus Group (PPG). The handover finally took place in June 2023. It is felt that not enough time has passed for a full evaluation of this provider and its impact on the health and wellbeing of prisoners at Belmarsh. However, the resignations of some good staff have been unfortunate, particularly around the provision of mental health nurses which has been reduced to less than one full time equivalent by the end of June.

Concerns over the full year have been like last year:

- prisoners having to wait too long for appointments, especially those in outside hospitals

- inordinate timescales for assessment of mental health patients and removal to more appropriate settings
- wasted in patient appointments for those prisoners who choose not to attend, or have regime clashes
- wasted appointments when prisoners cannot be brought to the department due to staff shortages; this has been the case in particular for prisoners in HSU

ACCT documents seen in healthcare show good recording generally with updated notes contributed by various staff. ACCT reviews have taken place regularly.

Efforts have been made to improve the inpatient area, but these should now continue by completing the sensory room so that it can be used more regularly and repairing the windows on cell doors, many of which are so damaged that it is impossible to see the prisoner inside. Also, the unsuitable heating system means that prisoners suffer from extreme heat or extreme cold and this cannot be adequately regulated. There have been occasions when areas have been found dirty, for example bathrooms and the constant watch area, but these have been cleaned once staff have been alerted.

Staff have managed some very sick patients; while those who are physically unwell have received good care, compassion has been shown to those with mental illness, several of whom should have been moved to more suitable accommodation more quickly.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Prisoners have complained that they sometimes wait too long for healthcare to act with regards advice on medication or on-going illness and because they are not given any information, they feel they have been forgotten. This is not the case for those prisoners who have been admitted to healthcare as they are seen daily.

6.3 Mental health

The majority of prisoners who are inpatients in healthcare are suffering from mental ill health. While they are generally treated well and medicated appropriately there are clearly some who would benefit from a more therapeutic environment. Prisoners must wait many months for an assessment and an appropriate placement and for some this does not exist.

There have been a few prisoners over the year who have been persistently self-harming and attempting to end their lives. These prisoners have been observed to be looked after carefully and placed on constant or intermittent watch which requires regular recording of activity and interaction. They are treated well with staff communicating in an understanding way and doing their best to support some very difficult situations, such as dirty protests or arson. Some prisoners in this position are given anti ligature clothing in a bare cell to prevent self-harm. While it has been distressing to see them in this situation, the Board agrees that it has been a necessary outcome after prisoners have expressed clearly what their intentions are.

Over the year there were several occasions when officers or IMB had to chase up the mental health team if a prisoner on a houseblock was seen to be suffering from

mental illness and they would eventually visit and make an assessment. If there was a space, they could be accommodated in healthcare. It is concerning that at the time of writing a new mental health team is not yet in place under the new provider – this is an essential element that must be organised as a matter of urgency.

6.4 Social care

At any given time, there are 20 to 30 prisoners under social care. Their needs range from neurodiversity to physical disability. Those prisoners who are subject to social care report to be generally satisfied with the appropriate support they have been given by the prison and by Greenwich Council. The training and use of care and support orderlies has had a positive effect on some of the neediest prisoners.

6.5 Time out of cell and regime

Special study

The Board has conducted a special study of time out of cell and regime, based on information provided by the prison.

In addition to applications received on a weekly basis, the Board has noticed a steep rise in general complaints from prisoners who claim they are spending far too long locked up in their cells. This is more often the case at weekends and when staffing is low. However, it is also a result of a regime created to avoid conflicts and violence when prisoners from houseblocks meet.

The Board was so concerned about this issue that they asked for daily data on regime across the prison. While this data was not always accurate, it did give a clear picture of time out of cell over two separate, two-month periods. In the special study, the Board investigated two areas of the prison, HSU and houseblocks. Detailed results and analysis are shown in Annex C.

Summary of conclusions

Too many prisoners still spend very long periods locked behind their doors with little to do. Our analysis of the prison's data shows that there are around a quarter of prisoners who do not attend any activities during the week and will spend up to 22 hours locked in their cells. Some of these will do so by choice. (see 4.3 self-isolation). Some will not have access to employment or education because of conflicts or security issues. The activities that category A prisoners can engage in are also seriously restricted.

At the other extreme, some prisoners are engaged in activities through the normal working week and at weekends. These may spend less than twelve hours a day in their cells.

The Board would like to see a wider variety of activity with prisoners spending more time out of their cells. There have been plans for improvement and new initiatives, and the Board are hopeful that these materialise over the coming year. This was also a point made in the recent HM Inspectorate of Prisons review.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Large numbers of prisoners suffer from substance addictions and for most of this reporting year, there was a very successful programme called Pathways to the Future, run by Care Grow Live (CGL). CGL were subcontracted by Oxleas to deliver this service.

As the contract for healthcare was transferred to PPG, the substance abuse rehabilitation work was subcontracted to Phoenix Futures (PF). The Board shares the concern of prison management that the excellent work done by CGL should not be lost. It is envisaged that there will be closer working between PPG and PF staff at Belmarsh. The Board welcomes this.

There are two sets of peer mentors within Belmarsh; healthcare champions and substance misuse mentors. Both will be supervised and trained by PF. Both programmes have had a positive impact.

The help groups Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous and Smart Recovery will all continue and the variety of approaches that these offer can only be positive. However, attendance at these groups is voluntary, therefore prisoners lose out on wages if they choose this over employment or education. The Board feels this is unfortunate and does not encourage participation in a vital aspect of rehabilitation. Also, those who choose to lose wages are subsequently vulnerable to debt and exploitation while in a vulnerable position. It is hoped that the prison management will reconsider this approach.

6.7 Soft skills

There is a limited emphasis on soft skills at Belmarsh, although ideas continue to be discussed regarding the potential benefits of various schemes, including:

- the library supports training of Shannon Trust Reading volunteers, although these remain unpaid
- Listeners, trained by the Samaritans are in place throughout the prisoner and in the first night centre; the commitment of these prisoners is a fine example of what can be achieved and could be developed further
- there was an art class in education, which was well attended by young adults who used this opportunity to share feelings and opinions in a safe space; unfortunately, the excellent teacher of this class has left and a new teacher is awaiting clearance

Despite the lack of more organised soft skills provision, the emotional support given to prisoners by some officers is commendable – as is the peer support many prisoners rely on.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Gradually over the year the Milton Keynes College (MKC) area of the prison has become more alive. This has taken far too long while concerns around safety, staffing issues and clashes remain. These issues limit the provision of consistent and

inspiring educational opportunities for prisoners. There are certainly more prisoners in attendance, especially in English and maths lessons, as level one is now required before a prisoner can gain employment. The college area is attractive with interesting and informative displays.

The Board feels that opportunities are missed to really engage prisoners in worthwhile and interesting study. For example, the art class mentioned in the previous section was a fine example of a therapeutic learning experience, which could raise self-esteem and develop previously unrealised talents. This year, thirteen pieces of work were submitted for Koestler Awards.

There is very limited education provided to prisoners in the HSU which is predominantly English and maths. This occurs once a week, along with in cell learning monitored by the education team and the standard is, in the view of the prisoners, extremely low and humiliating. There is a classroom fitted out in the HSU area, but this is not used for education purposes. Accredited courses are offered but these are rarely taken up.

Vulnerable prisoners in Houseblock four have in class sessions for English, Maths and Business. On top of this they also have access to the curriculum on outreach.

The library remains a rich resource for the prison, but it remains underused, which is a frustration for library staff and the IMB. Only recently were some prisoners allowed to visit the library while in the college area for lessons. Other prisoners have designated times during association. The librarians continue to do all they can to promote library use and deliver books to houseblocks on a regular basis.

A recent workshop in the library required a group of prisoners to write bedtime stories for their children. These were then edited, printed on card with illustrations and laminated to give an attractive and professional look, which delighted the prisoners involved.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The Board has continued to question the efficacy of the work opportunities provided at Belmarsh. While new initiatives abound, they do not always materialise for a variety of reasons and sometimes without explanation. For example, while it was good news to see the end of the “teabags” workshop assembling breakfast packs, which was reported to be demeaning and boring for the prisoners, it was disappointing to find nothing in its place. The new barbering workshop destined to be in that area has taken several months to set up and is still not in action at the end of the reporting year.

The horticulture provision for the HSU, which showed much promise as the covered gardening area is already in place and a tutor was employed, was ended before it started as the tutor resigned. The space has been left to become overgrown and difficult to manage. Staff shortage has been the reason for prisoners not visiting the area to dig and plant.

The recent opening of a dry-lining workshop, in collaboration with Wilmott Dixon construction, and provision of training provided by Railtrack, have been positively received by prisoners with an impending release. These employers will offer

interviews to those prisoners who have successfully attended their workshop courses.

The industrial cleaning workshop can lead to accreditation, again a useful element for future employment, but also for those prisoners who are hoping to be successful in their application for an orderly role within the prison.

Other workshops - textiles, recycling, yards party are observed to be well run, and prisoners are generally proud of their work. Complaints are around low pay, insufficient protective clothing, regime changes that can affect pay and not being allowed to shower on return to houseblock. While the prison has made some effort to solve the showering problem it remains an issue for this hardworking group of prisoners. Similarly, those prisoners who work long shifts, some of whom are also Listeners, complain that they do not receive adequate time in the gym.

Vulnerable prisoners who remain separate from the rest of the prison continue to be offered teabags packing workshop with no alternative. This workshop is observed to be well led, busy, lively, and productive. This group of prisoners would benefit from more engaging employment given the opportunity.

It is unfortunate that workshops have been plagued by staff sickness over the year and often there is no cover for annual leave periods, resulting in closures and redeployment of staff.

A Labour Board is held weekly and offers of employment are carefully weighed up according to risk assessments and records of behaviour. This system appears fair based on Board observations. As previously mentioned, prisoners now require at least level one English before they can apply for a job – this could prevent ESOL and prisoners with learning difficulties from having an equal opportunity to work. Prisoners are readily dismissed from work if they refuse to attend, show poor attitude, or get caught up in more serious issues.

At a meeting convened by the Prison Reform Trust, prisoners expressed concern that those with longer sentences had little to occupy their time, as they were more likely to be refused work due to security issues.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Almost 7% of total complaints the prison received during the year were attributed to offender assessment systems (OASys) and sentence planning. Prisoners have complained that, once sentenced, their progression is held up while awaiting transfer to more suitable establishments, which provide appropriate courses. Likewise, the process of re-categorisation for cat A prisoners is held up due to delays in completion of OASys reports and sentence planning.

From July 2022 to May 2023, 681 prisoners were released and of this number only 28 were granted home detention curfew (HDC). This figure represents a 50 percent decrease compared to the previous year. This drop comes at a time when the prison estate is struggling with limited free space. Several factors could be attributable to this decline, including longer remand periods resulting in little or no sentence, prisoner transfers, where the HDC will be attributed to the receiving prison or a decline in eligibility due to certain disqualifying offences. No prisoners were released on temporary license during the year.

In the month of May 2023, there were 253 prisoners being held on remand, along with 113 prisoners convicted, but still awaiting their sentence. There were eight IS91 prisoners being held for immigration related reasons, while 23 individuals were either repatriated or extradited.

It is worth noting that single transfer moves are currently not feasible due to the pressure on the prison population and transportation logistics, resulting in holding back prisoners from transferring.

At the end of May, there were 96 life-sentenced prisoners, eight more than the previous year.

IPP Prisoners

At the end of the reporting year, the prison held four indeterminate sentences for public protection prisoners (IPP), three of whom are on license recall. The one who is not on recall has been imprisoned since 2011. It is understood that they are subject to reviews with the Parole Board every 12 to 24 months. The Board considers it is inhumane to keep these men in prison for such lengthy periods.

7.4 Family contact

Unfortunately, following on from last year's report, booking visits by telephone remains problematic. Although the system can accommodate a holding queue for 20 calls, there is no indication given to callers that they are in a queue. This lack of information often leads to aborted attempts or misconceptions that their calls have gone unanswered.

The prison faced challenges in uploading the visiting schedule onto the internet's GOV.UK site, as managed by the National Communication team. As a result, visitors still must resort to calling or emailing for confirmation of available sessions. This issue must be addressed as a matter of some urgency, as it only amplifies the volume of calls and emails that need to be handled.

Notably, the Board has also received complaints from prisoners who have had their planned visits cancelled at the last minute or have been informed of no availability for two to three weeks in certain instances. This problem appears to be more prevalent among HSU prisoners. HSU prisoners have had access to a laptop made available in December of 2022 to aid delivery of video calls.

The crèche facility in the visits hall has been closed on many occasions due to a shortage of voluntary staff to run it, which is unfortunate as it provides valuable family support during their visit.

The Board has recently been informed that regular management meetings will take place to address all areas associated with family and significant others contact. These will look at visits, bookings, crèche and visitor centre facilities and, importantly, the recognition and support for prisoners who do not receive any visits. It is hoped that this, along with an improved telephone booking system, will enable the prison to greatly enhance the overall experience for visitors, families, and prisoners alike.

There are plans to create a garden area for visitors, in particular children, to work with prisoners. Security issues around this initiative are under review.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The New Futures Network (NFN) is a specialised employment team with the primary objective of facilitating successful employment outcomes for individual prisoners. A former workshop has recently undergone refurbishment and has been transformed into an appealing and tailored space for a new employment hub.

Since early May 2023, it has been compulsory for sentenced prisoners to attend at least one session in the employment hub; a development that holds promise as it enables engagement with prisoners on an individual basis and the identification of their specific support needs. The hub is still in its early stage and undergoing development, so it is not possible to quantify any success rate currently.

Recent figures indicate that a total of 128 prisoners who are nearing their release have been provided with assistance in the last six months. Working through a work-readiness checklist, key barriers are identified for these individuals and addressed where possible. The prison lead is hoping to establish new workshop ideas, which will be appropriate for employment.

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) prison lead also provides general and tailored help to individual prisoners with universal credit claims and making appointments ahead of the prisoner's release date at a Job Centre. Help can be provided at the start of a prisoner's sentence ensuring housing benefit continues for six months or for making claims in preparation for future release. The prison-based work coach has been in post since February this year, and since then has seen 76 men to date, including those on remand.

The new prison lead for identity and bank accounts (IDBA) has been in place since December 2022. Following initial delays, the first application for a bank account and birth certificate were early in the year. Since then, the program has achieved success; with an additional seven bank accounts and 13 birth certificates obtained for eligible prisoners by the end of June.

A recent snapshot of progress so far, showed the release of 49 prisoners, with 15 being eligible for IDBA assistance. Within this group, two bank accounts and four birth certificates were obtained, three bank applications were declined but regrettably for seven men there was no time for IDBA help. The prison has been discussing this facility for several years with no progress, so the Board is very pleased to see prisoners at last being supported positively with resettlement.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	324

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	13	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	16	28
C	Equality	9	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	18	12
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	65	84
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	20	23
F	Food and kitchens	13	9
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	70	73
H1	Property within the establishment	28	24
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	36	75
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	9	20
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	19	16
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	87	56
K	Transfers	24	33
L	Miscellaneous	67	50
	Total number of applications	494	513

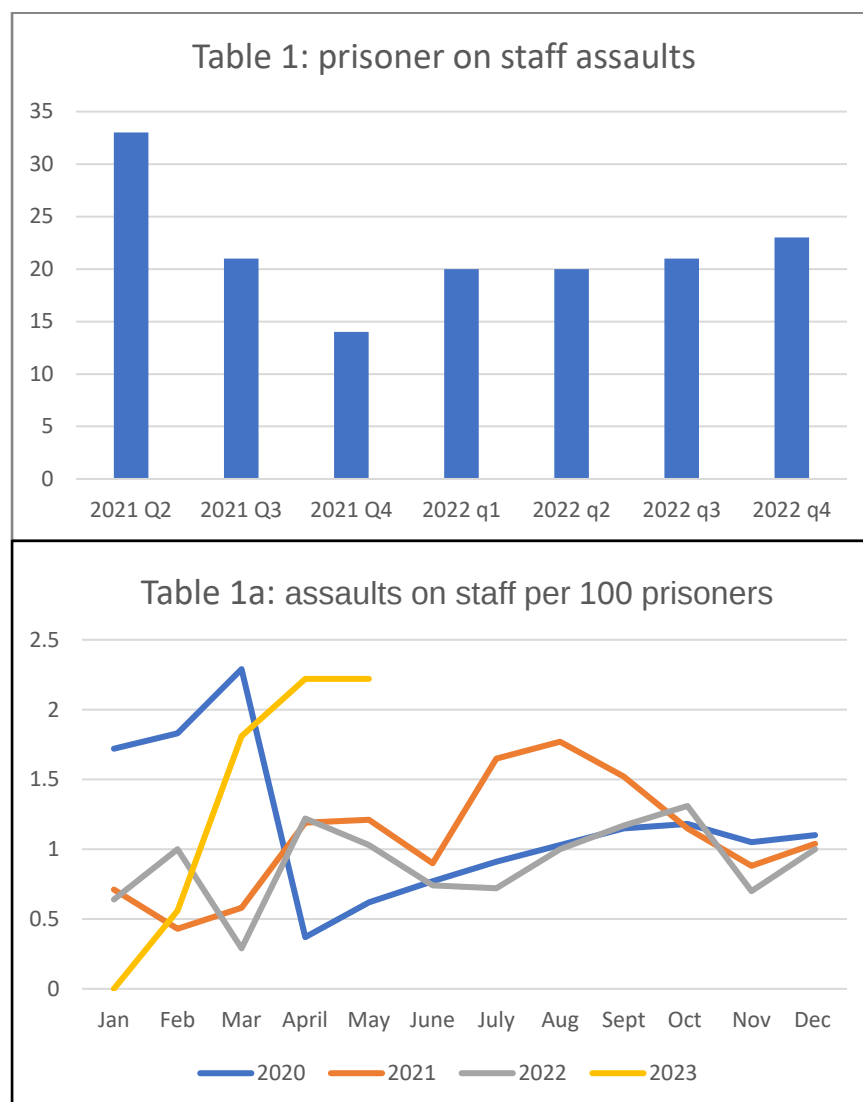
Annex A

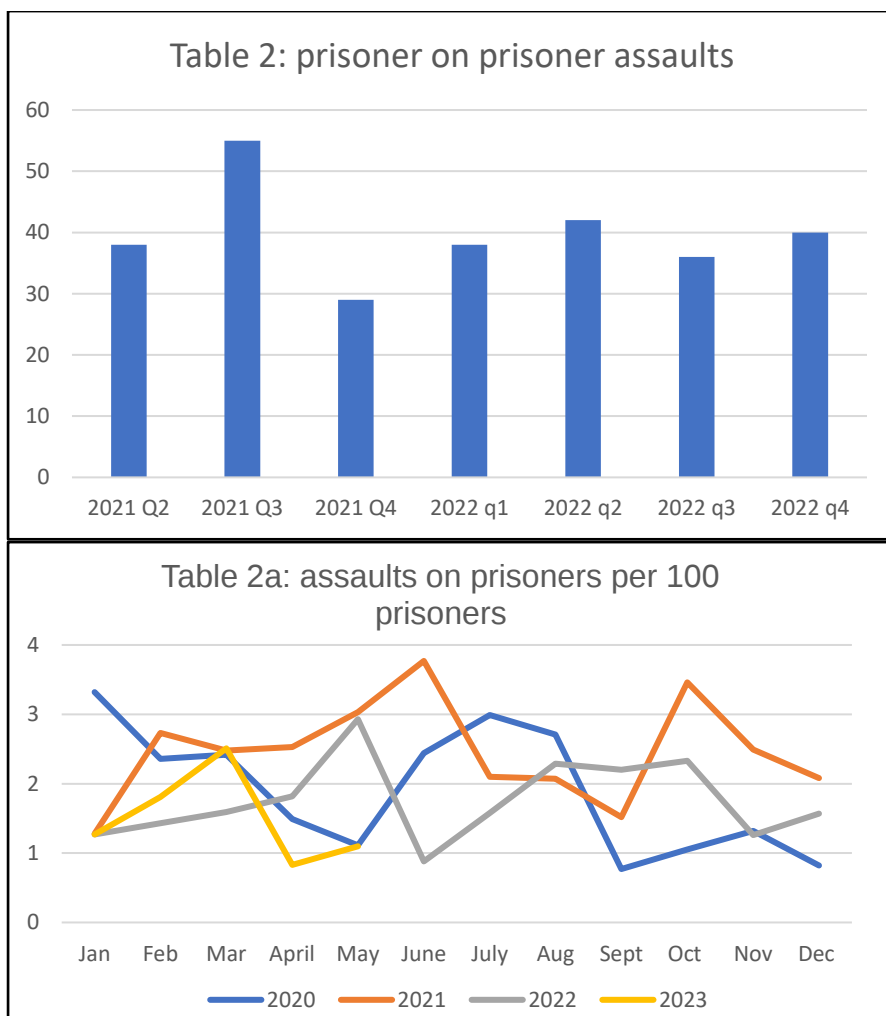
Service Providers

- Maintenance: Gov Facilities Services Limited (GFSL)
- Healthcare: Practice Plus Group
- Substance abuse: Phoenix Futures
- Education: Milton Keynes College

Annex B

Statistical data referred to in section 4.3 Violence and violence reduction





Statistics referring to section 4.5 Preventing illicit items

Finds in the reporting year

Item	Number of finds
Drugs	98
Mobile phones	48
Weapons	166
Tobacco	38
Sim cards	12
Drones	1
USB/SD cards	78
Hooch	17
Wi-fi/Bluetooth	2

Where they were found	
HB1	86
HB2	101
HB3	99
HB4	104
Reception	41
Gym	1
College	2
Visits	6
Gate	1
Workshops	10
Corridor	1
RID store	3
SEG	4
HCC	1

Annex C

Time out of cell and regime - special study

Detailed analysis - High Security Unit (HSU)

The HSU is often referred to as a prison within a prison. It is, as the name suggests, very secure. It usually houses between eight and 12 prisoners who are regarded as high-risk category A.

The prisoners are housed in individual cells within two separate wings. Their regime consists of daily exercise, showers, association and a visit to the gym. They attend visits, either in person or by video link, whenever the occasion arises. They clean their wing, for which they get paid, attend the chapel if they wish and have education sessions, either as a wing or individually.

A full regime would normally provide exercise of at least 30 minutes twice a day and the same for association. They would make phone calls and have showers during their association time. A split regime would provide half of this. While in an ideal situation each day would allow a full regime, staffing concerns sometimes do not allow for this. Belmarsh attempts to provide a full regime twice a week.

The following tables are based on data collected by the prison. Each area enters their figures on a spreadsheet.

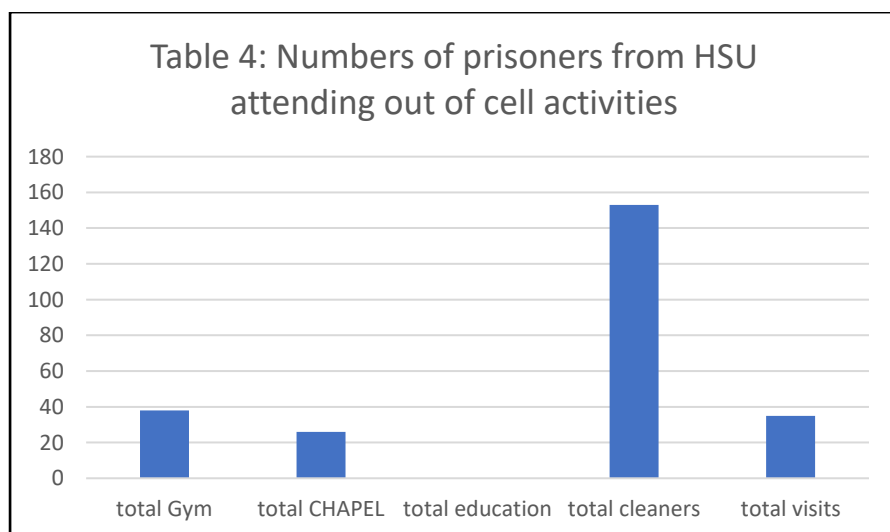


Table 4 shows the frequency of other out of cell activities. Cleaning work is seen on most occasions and education is seen on the least. (None recorded). The number of occasions for the gym and the number of visits is closely similar.

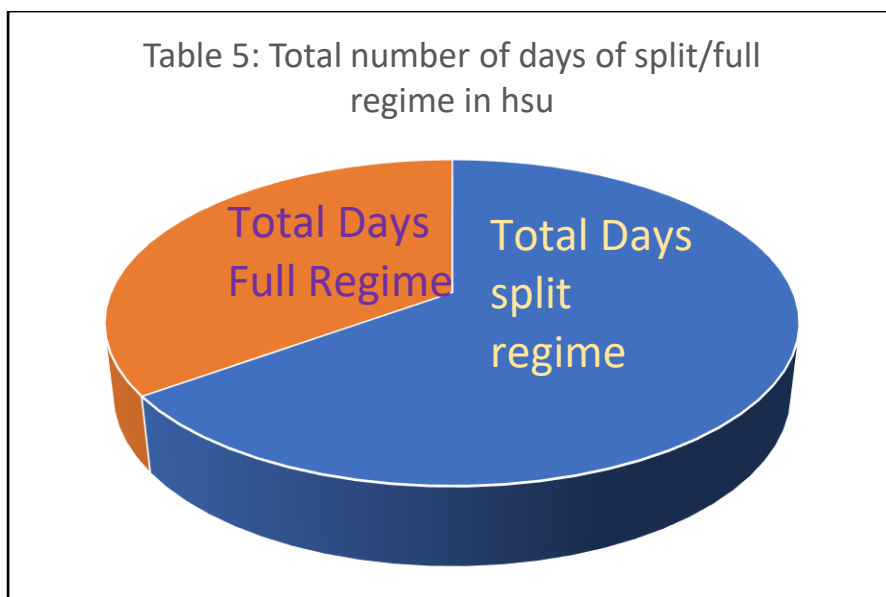


Table 5 shows the proportion of full and split regime at approximately a ratio of 1:2.

There is an average of less than one visit per day. This is for as many as 12 prisoners so is surprisingly low, possibly because some HSU prisoners have family overseas. For others their security status limits time available.

By contrast, the number of visits to the gym would indicate an offer to everyone of a visit almost every day. All who wanted to would be able to use this popular option if they wished.

The only other time prisoners come out of their cells is to collect their meals.

The Board believes the men are afforded less time out of cell than is healthy. Taken together, the figures show that, even with a full regime, prisoners are rarely out of their cells for more than four hours per day. There should be more time for education. Previously, there was a garden where prisoners grew their own vegetables. This was very successful and though there have been several times when its return was signaled, this has yet to happen.

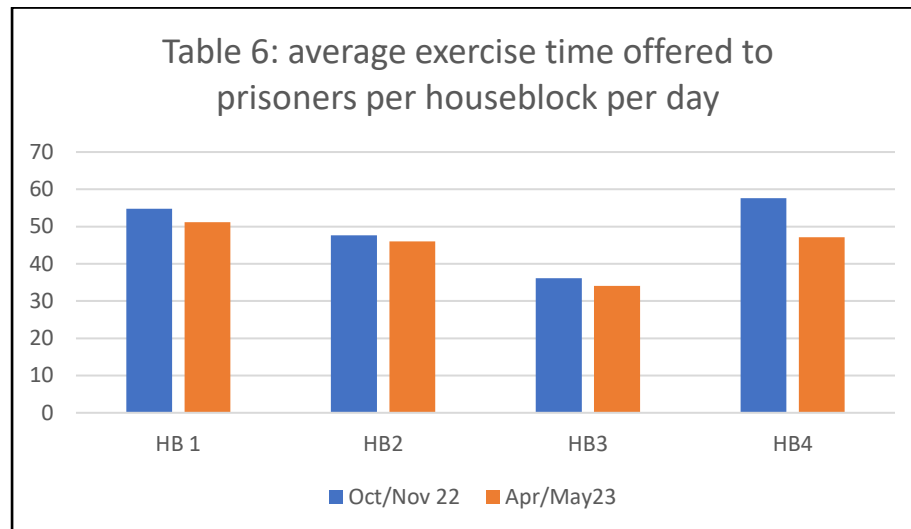
We also note that education should happen on a Monday afternoon and that Mondays are one of the days when a full regime is usually provided. It is a pity that this clashes with the monthly staff training as well as all bank holidays over the year further reducing the opportunity to have a full regime.

Detailed analysis – Houseblocks

Belmarsh has four houseblocks. Notionally they contain the same number of prisoners. In practice this is not the case. There are single and double cells in all four houseblocks. Houseblock three contains the first night centre, where new arrivals are housed for just their first night. This block therefore has a higher number of empty cells during the working day. Houseblock four has the unit housing vulnerable prisoners. Over the course of a week the numbers in each houseblock will vary considerably. A prisoner may, over a long stay at Belmarsh, find himself in each of

the houseblocks in turn. Staffing at any point in time will vary across the houseblocks and therefore, the regime prisoners experience will vary.

Exercise: All prisoners in the houseblocks should be offered at least 30 minutes of fresh air exercise every day. Table 6 shows the average exercise time for individual prisoners across the four blocks, based on figures for the months, Oct/Nov and April/May. The table shows considerable variety with a range from 32 to 58 minutes.

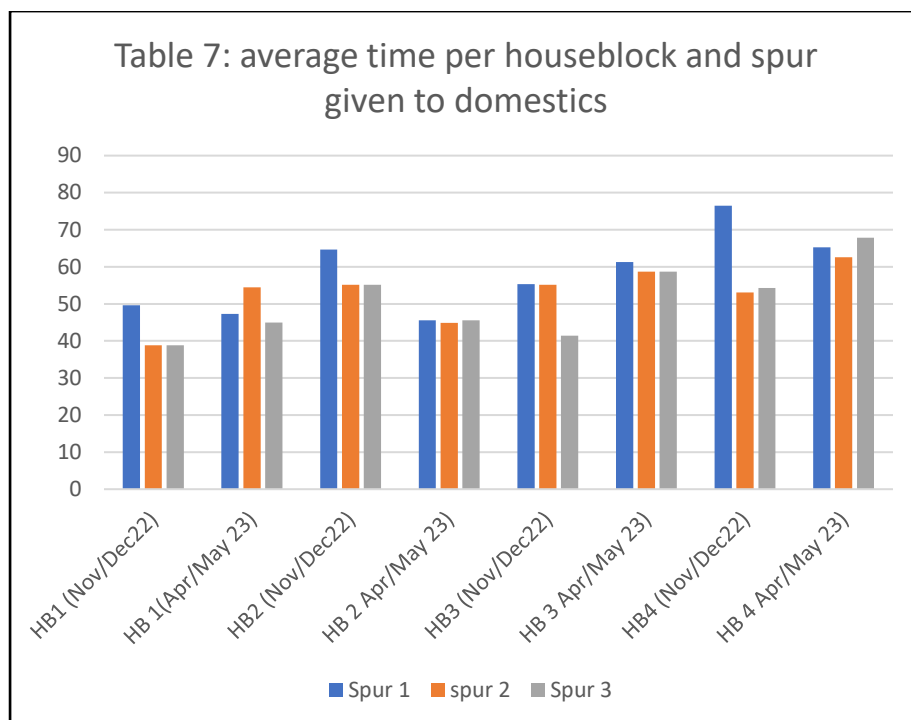


These averages are for days on which exercise is recorded as having been offered. It will be noted that, in all four houseblocks, there has been a decline in average time. December produced some inclement weather, preventing outside exercise. It should also be noted that prisoners are perfectly entitled to refuse the offer of exercise.

Domestics: Ideally at least one period of an hour should be available within each houseblock for prisoners to associate, clean their cells, do their washing, and take a shower. In addition, those prisoners sharing a cell may use this time to make private phone calls.

Table 7 shows the time per houseblock that has been made available for these domestics. It should be noted that during this period prisoners are confined to their wing within the houseblock.

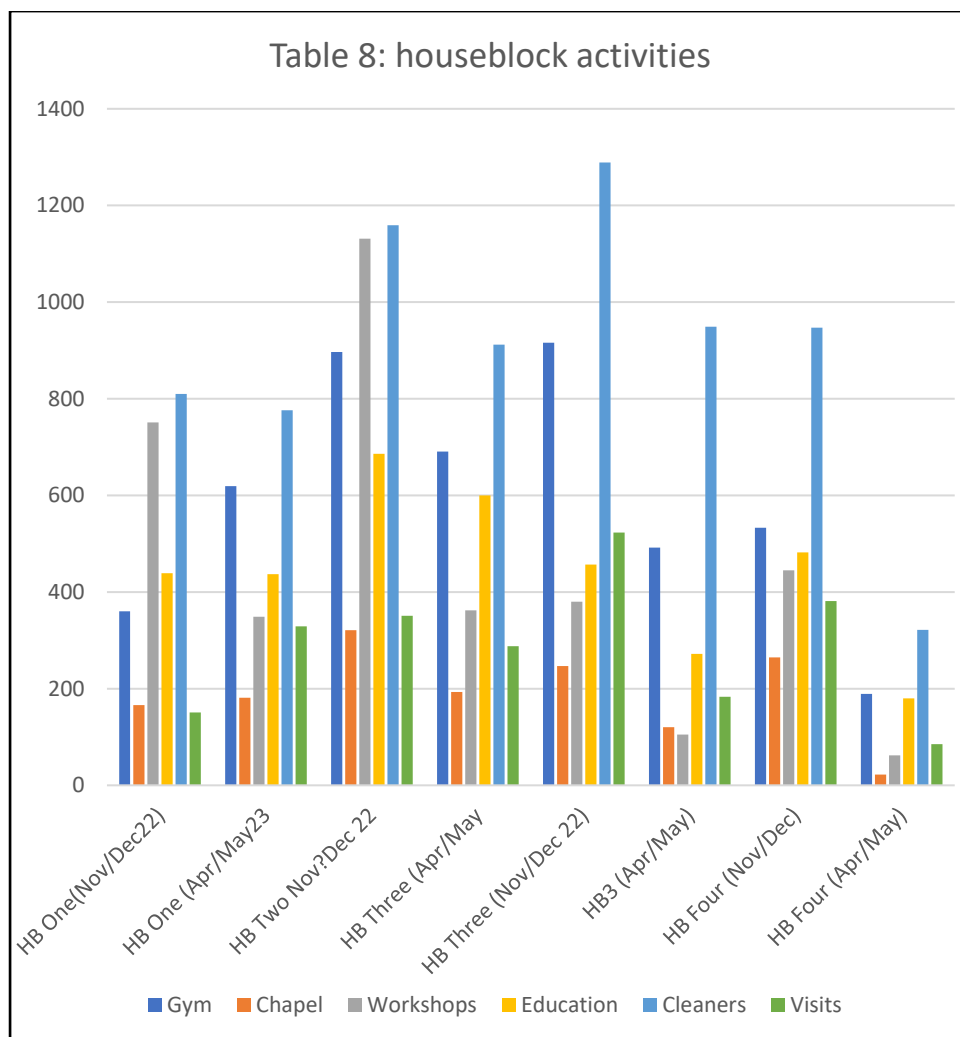
There is a small variation between wings within each houseblock and between each of the four houseblocks. It is disappointing to notice the variation, which is due to the organisation of staff and the time of day that these domestics are arranged. In all cases the average time is more than the minimum 30 minutes and in isolated cases considerably more.



Activities: It is a requirement that those detained are offered useful activity through the normal day. There is a range of possibilities available, the main ones being education and workshops, chapel, gym and visits. In addition, a large number of prisoners are employed as orderlies, mostly as cleaners for the four houseblocks.

Table 8 shows the number of prisoners engaged in these activities in the two-month periods. There are restricted activities at weekends and on other days, such as staff training.

Table 8 shows great variety across the site, both between houseblocks and within the three wings of a single houseblock. Some houseblocks show increased provision while others show a decrease. The sharp decline in activities in houseblock four is of concern but there are special circumstances there.



Houseblock four houses vulnerable prisoners. At the time of writing almost half the houseblock was designated for vulnerable prisoners. The number fluctuates over time but this year the trend has been upwards. Vulnerable prisoners rarely leave the houseblock. As some of these prisoners have conflicts with other prisoners, even within their area, time out of cell to associate is carefully controlled.

Notes to above tables

Note 1: blanks and zeros recorded on original data sheets have been excluded from this analysis

Note 2: for tables 4 and 5, the period under study is April and May, as the HSU did not join recording until after the study had started

Note 3: for tables 6 to 8 the period of time is two blocks of two months: Nov/Dec 22 and April/May 23



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