
INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

**HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE &
WOMENS' PRISON**

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HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE AND ASH HOUSE WOMEN'S PRISON IMB ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

MISSION STATEMENT

The Independent Monitoring Board is a member of the UK National Preventive Mechanism (UK NPM) set up under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), to monitor the treatment received by those detained in custody to confirm that it is fair, just and humane.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board for Hydebank Wood College and Ash House Women's Prison (HBW) are appointed by the Justice Minister under Section 3 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (NI) 1968 and under the prison Act (NI) 1953. The Board is required to:

- visit HBW regularly and report to the Justice Minister on the conditions of imprisonment and treatment of offenders:
- consider requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board:
- report matters of concern to the Governor or, in serious cases, the Justice Minister; and
- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005.

The Prison Rules further require the Board to satisfy itself as to:

- the treatment of prisoners including provision for their healthcare and other welfare while in prison;
- the facilities available to prisoners to allow them to make purposeful use of their time; and
- the cleanliness and adequacy of prison premises.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have free access at any time to all prisoners and to all parts of the prison to which they are appointed. The Board shall also have reasonable access to any records of the prison.

STATEMENT OF CONCERN FROM THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

The statutory role of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is to give assurance to the Minister for Justice, and by extension to the General Public, of the compliance by the Northern Ireland Prison Service with relevant rules and standards of decency within prisons and the humane treatment of those held in custody.

To carry out this nationally and internationally recognised “voluntary duty” and to fulfil the requirement of the role description as determined by the Department of three-to-four-day commitment per month, IMB Boards would require a combined membership of thirty-six active members across all three establishments i.e. Hydebank, Maghaberry & Magilligan Prisons.

As we write this statement of concern, the present situation is that there are twenty voluntary members across all three establishments, with a significant number unable to give the full level of commitment as outlined in the Departmental requirements. The Executive Council (EC) has been highlighting the issues around membership and excessive workloads to the Department for a considerable period of time. In response, the Department have carried out two recruitment campaigns (2021/22 and 2022/23) with very limited success in relation to numbers of new members and their subsequent retention.

This has resulted in a crisis in relation to numbers and availability of Board members and the outworking's of this has meant a significant increase in workload for everyone.

The EC have made various attempts to both highlight and put forward workable solutions to the Department of Justice in relation to the crisis IMB's are faced with. However, there has been a disappointing almost indifferent response from the Department.

The implied result of this could suggest that the Department (either consciously or unconsciously) has limited interest in its statutory commitment to ensure the humane treatment of those held in custody. As a consequence it could appear that the human rights of these individuals do not warrant any significant consideration from the Department.

It is therefore reasonable to ask if the voluntary work carried out by IMB members, on behalf of the Minister and the Department, is merely a token gesture designed to simply comply with the legislation rather than a profound attempt to improve the conditions and the rehabilitation of those held in custody.

The EC will continue to highlight the difficulties and challenges around membership and the excessive and unrealistic workloads of voluntary IMB members across all three establishments.

The IMB hope the Sponsoring Body/Department will take on board the grave concerns outlined above, and through appropriate and meaningful engagement, will look to provide innovative and workable solutions which will underpin the rights of those held in custody and the long-term sustainability of the IMB.

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

It gives me pleasure to present the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) for Hydebank Wood Secure College and Ash House Women's Prison (HBW).

Reduced numbers on the IMB team through circumstances beyond our control, contributed to making the year one of particular challenge. Two members of the team, Deena and Claire, resigned due to pressure of work in their outside occupations and John unfortunately succumbed to ill health.

In April 2021 however, with approval given by newly arrived Governor Richard Taylor, the members recommenced visiting the houses again - with no evidence of COVID 19 having been present for 18 months. Continuing precautions to avoid the spread of infection also resulted in the introduction of a regime restricting visits to one house by each member each time he/she was on rota.

By the end of September, the loss of three members contributed significantly to the workload of the remaining four and my thanks are due to Pip, Yvonne and Michael for their dedication and commitment covering the rota and the considerable increase in Rule 32 Reviews experienced during the year. My thanks also to Deena, Claire and John for their pre-resignation contributions.

During the year the Department of Justice mounted a successful Recruitment Campaign following which in February 2022, a training weekend was held for new members in the Dunsilly Hotel. (As a result, HBW have been allocated 3 new members to commence in April).

Board members have been disappointed to note that as a result of NIPS budget cuts, the new prison for Women has been placed on the back burner.

I am pleased to take this opportunity on my own behalf - and on behalf of Board members - to thank the Governors and staff of HBW for their hard work and co-operation throughout the year. Our thanks are also due to the IMB Secretariat staff for their constant support.

Ann Adams

Ann Adams

IMB Hydebank Wood College and Ash House Women's Prison

ACCOMMODATION

MALE

Cedar House

During the year, the male students moved from Beech House to Cedar House which had been refurbished (20 February). There are five landings with one officer on each:

- C1 Induction – moving to Committal Induction
- C2 Protected – at risk – range of needs
- C3/4 General population
- C5 Low supervision – up to eight students - no Class Officer

Contingency Wing – Willow 1 for overflow

Double cells – Five. No intention of doubling

Observation cells – C1 and C2

Disabled cell will be on C1 but needs refurbished

Triple cell – C2

FEMALE

Ash House

- A1 General
- A2 General
- A3 Protected – at risk – range of needs
- A4 General
- A5 Low supervision

Elm 2

Enhanced domestic support moving to B2 in June

Fern 4

Female Separation

Beech House

- B3 Female CSU – moving to B1 in June
- B4 Female Committal and Induction

Primrose

Mother and Baby plus 3 long-serving female students

Murray House

Working-out Unit

During Covid 19, there was a committal and isolation landing where new committals spent a number of days before proceeding to general population. The number of days varied in accordance with changing public health and NIPS guidelines throughout the pandemic.

SUMMARY OF MAIN JUDGEMENTS, MONITORING OBSERVATIONS

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Observation

- All education classes should be covered in the case of absence of lecturers - perhaps by Prison staff.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Observation

- E&D awareness training to be provided to assist all representatives in the execution of their role on the E&D Committee.

CARE AND SUPERVISION UNIT/ADJUDICATIONS

Observation

- Prior to decision to isolate a student in CSU, all alternatives should be considered.

Observations restated

- Discussion and subsequent actions during weekly Oversight Committee meetings should focus on minimising the length of time students are confined to R32 and the support required to enable their return to the normal regime.
- All staff deployed within the CSU are trained in Trauma Informed Practice.

HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Recommendation

- Attendance of the Lead Nurse or representative at every IMB Board meeting.

Recommendation restated

- NIPS and Healthcare work together to consider the issues raised in interviews with those leaving isolation cells and ensure that individuals receive appropriate information and support when they arrive at HBW.

Observation

- Training on Transgender issues for staff is considered.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Recommendations restated

- NIPS conducts an evaluation to assess the outcomes associated with the use of Passive Drug Dogs and whether this is an effective method for indicating the presence of drugs/unauthorised articles.
- NIPS investigates the purchase of additional equipment, including body scanners, to detect drugs and unauthorised articles.

RESETTLEMENT

Observation restated

- Given its vital role in the transitioning phase and in resettlement, ensure that Murray House is fully utilised with adequate preparation and bespoke support for the women accommodated there
- A process is established to monitor individuals released to substantive accommodation to be monitored after 12 weeks.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Learning and Skills Centre reopened in June 2021. The education provider is the Belfast Metropolitan College (the Met).

Following a recommendation in last year's Annual Report, the Horticulture course will start on 1 April 2022.

All courses run by Belfast Met are working towards a City & Guilds or RSPH certificate. These include:

- Health and Safety in the Workplace – Level 1 and 2
- Food Safety – Level 1 and 2
- Barista Skills – Level 2
- Food Hygiene
- Customer Service – Level 2
- Principle of Manual Handling – Level 2
- Facilities Management
- Waste and Recycling
- Retail – Level 1
- Barbering – Level 1 and 2
- Hairdressing – Level 1 and 2

Other courses are working towards an OCN qualification.

The waiting list for Cookery classes in November had 30 names on it. Unfortunately, the Art class is now down to part-time.

The Board is pleased to report that if any student is residing in CSU and following a course, staff from the Met are timetabled to visit the CSU and continue with the student's education.

There are also specific classes timetabled e.g. Art, Horticulture and Dermatitis Awareness for anyone interested irrespective of whether they are enrolled.

At the beginning of 2022, Superbike World Champion Jonathan Rea, visited HBW and took part in a motorcycle awareness programme. Nineteen young men took part in the course and the reviews have been very positive.

Work continues in the gardens with the male students looking after the grounds and planting baskets and containers which can be sold to staff and the public. The female students plant seeds which are then successfully transplanted. The produce from the female gardens is used in the kitchen.

Animal husbandry continues to be successful. The male students looking after the sheep in HBW, helped to deliver 10 lambs born this year.

The Board is concerned that when lecturers are absent, classes are not covered and the students are at a loose end on the landings.

Observation

- All education classes should be covered in the case of absence of lecturers - perhaps by Prison staff.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

HBW has an Equality and Diversity Policy which requires that all students be treated equally. This Policy sets out the legal requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Section 75 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive action to promote equality of opportunity and encourages public authorities to take actions to address inequality in the groups listed above.

HBW has an established Equality and Diversity Committee (E&DC) co-ordinated by the Head of Safety and Support and chaired by the Deputy Governor; it meets on a monthly basis. This committee involves representatives from most departments in HBW. There are also two Student Equality Representatives to act / speak on behalf

of women and young men. These representatives are well known across the site. They liaise with the Safety and Support team monthly to raise issues on behalf of their peers so that responses can be prepared for the E&DC meeting. This Committee is supported by an Equality Officer from NIPS, a representative from Start 360, and a Chaplain. Representatives from Healthcare, the Equality Commission, a member of the IMB and the Rainbow Project are also invited and attend as required.

In terms of ongoing Covid risk mitigations, meetings continue to be held in person and remotely via WebEx.

The main agenda items covered in the E&D meeting are:

- Event planning;
- Representative issues;
- Equality complaints analysis including those that may be categorised as Section 75;
- Protected groups categories;
- Foreign Nationals/Use of telephones/Interpreter services; and
- Analysis of horizontal data and emerging trends.

All statistical data/reports are circulated to all attendees prior to the meeting.

Although Covid restrictions still applied, a number of events celebrating Equality and Diversity were successfully delivered throughout the year. These included International Men's/Women's Day, Lyric play for males, Runny Honey play for females, old-fashioned Sports Day, Health Fair, Quiz and Fun Days, Christmas Craft Fair and Banter for Buns Days.

During the reporting year, the EU Settlement Scheme presented some challenges in terms of access/support in a prison environment. An extension to the deadline was granted. During this time, the NIPS HQ representative on the E&D Committee engaged extensively at Director General and Ministerial level to secure the necessary support mechanisms which facilitated the successful completion of the process.

Due to the evolving nature of Equality and Diversity issues, the IMB would recommend that training packs be updated and developed to cover transgender awareness. These should be delivered to all E&D Committee members in order to achieve a greater understanding of Equality and Diversity challenges.

Observation

- E&D awareness training to be provided to assist all representatives in the execution of their role on the E&D Committee.

SAFER CUSTODY

Board members are well acquainted with the social and psychological pressures likely to be experienced by students. Mental health, learning disabilities, vulnerability are some of the factors which feature strongly. The Board is also well acquainted with the continuing work of NIPS staff to maintain morale on the landings.

The Review of Provision of Services for Vulnerable People detained in NI prisons, announced in November 2016 was, after delays, finally published in October 2021.

Safer Custody within HBW is the responsibility of a team consisting of a Governor, Senior Officer and 2 other officers. The team's responsibilities include attendance at all SPAR Reviews, consideration of issues raised by bullying through the Challenging Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, and attendance at R32s.

The team meets weekly to consider Safety and Support for specific individuals (male and female) which have been brought to their attention. Healthcare also contributes as appropriate. Once cases have been reviewed outcomes may range from in-house solutions or referral to outside agencies.

During the year, the number of incidents involving males in Beech House increased but decreased in Cedar House. SPARs were up by 40% which on average, was 18 each month. Self-harm incidents have also grown by 145% (53% for males and 150% by females). This figure also includes Trans - without which it would be 100%.

Based on the incidence of self-harm per 100 of the population, the figures show an increase of 130% for females (up from 10 to 23) and an increase of 56% for males (up

from 9 to 14). Despite the increase, only two cases required treatment at outside hospital and the remainder either required cleaning or no treatment.

It is also worth noting that only 50 of the 237 people who stated they had a history of self-harm actually self-harmed whilst in custody.

There was an increase in the usage of Observation Cells - a 122% increase on last year. When taking account of the population fluctuations, use of obs cells per 100 of the population increased by 88% up from 16 per 100 to 21 per 100.

The Board notes that recommendations from previous years, with regard to Restorative Justice, would appear to still not be fully implemented.

CARE AND SUPERVISION UNIT/ADJUDICATIONS

“Care and Supervision Units (CSUs) are places in Northern Ireland where some of the most vulnerable, mentally unwell, violent and challenging prisoners are segregated from the rest of the prison population for periods of time”. A Review into the Operation of Care and supervision Units in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (published 1 February 2022).

The Care and Supervision Unit (CSU) in Hydebank Wood segregates students from general association for a number of reasons. These include being considered a danger to themselves or others, being found with or suspected of having an unauthorised article, or being physically violent to staff or others.

Initially, students on a Rule 32 are held in the CSU for up to 72 hours. During this time, a Case Conference is held to review the evidence and the reason for the confinement. A recommendation will then be made for an extension to either remain in the CSU or to be released back to the landing. The former decision must be reviewed by a Prison HQ Governor. The prisoner has a right to attend the Case Conference to give their perspective.

Weekly Rule 32 Oversight meetings - chaired by the Deputy Governor, consider the well-being of those in CSU with the purpose of making suggestions for meaningful

activities. This ensures that Healthcare and other agencies support the students and that the exit plan is being followed.

Despite the continued restrictions due to Covid 19, members continued to prioritise weekly visits to CSU, attendance at R32s Case Conferences/Reviews and Oversight meetings as these areas involve some of the most vulnerable individuals.

This year figures show a continued stream of students removed to segregation. A total of 50 males were removed to the CSU:

34 individuals on one occasion each, 9 on two occasions, 2 on three occasions, 3 on four occasions, 1 on five separate occasions and 1 occurred six times. Almost half of these were for 'Good order and Discipline' (47%); 40% 'To ensure the Safety of Self or Others'; the remainder (14%) 'Pending Investigation'. The specific reason for restriction – Violence (48%), Drugs (26%), Behaviour (17%) and Other (9%).

The length of time spent in the CSU is monitored and it would appear in this year that a significantly smaller number (23% as compared to 31% last year) were held in the CSU for less than 3 days. Furthermore, a greater number were held there for more than 21 days, with 7 males (9%) spending more than 42 days in segregation (there were 4 last year), Whilst there always appear approved reasons for the length of time held in segregation, we urge continued focus and consideration of this.

Within the female population, a total of 21 were in segregation in this year: 19 on one occasion, 1 on three occasions and 1 four times. Over half (54%) were segregated for 'Good Order and Discipline' and the rest, 'To Ensure the Safety of Self or Others'. The specific reason for restriction was Behaviour (31%), Violence (31%), Drugs (31%), Concealed Articles (4%) and Other (4%) – (percentages have been rounded).

There was a slight decrease in the number of women held for less than three days (31% compared to 36% last year). The largest proportion (23%/6 persons) were segregated for between 8 and 14 days, one lady for more than 36 days and none for more than 42.

While recognising that there have to be valid reasons for segregation, IMB would like to be assured that there are robust discussions about alternatives, prior to the decision to remove students from general population, as the effect can be detrimental, particularly for those with mental health problems.

Observation

- Prior to decision to isolate a student in CSU, all alternatives should be considered.

Observation restated

- Discussion and subsequent actions during weekly Oversight Committee meetings should focus on minimising the length of time students are confined to R32 and the support required to enable their return to the normal regime.

The substantive Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units in the Northern Ireland Prison Service by Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI reported in February 2022.

IMB was pleased to note several positive findings made by the Inspectors of the CSU in HBW. These include:

- Acknowledgement of the significant improvements and important changes in approach being provided by the new CSU facility;
- That CSU was a bright, vibrant and calming place;
- That there was a multi-purpose room equipped with seating, television, game console, exercise bike, small library and servery facility;
- That the telephone booths afforded students' privacy; and
- That there was an excellent library service.

The Report made 11 Strategic and Operational Recommendations. IMB fully endorses the findings and recommendations and are pleased to note that HBW quickly began to take forward the recommendations.

One of the key recommendations actioned within this time was that which referred to the relocation of the CSU for women. The Inspectors felt that the arrangements in CSU which detained males and females on the same landing (though they were in two distinct areas) did not adequately protect the privacy of women or protect them

from abuse. Ironically, the HBW IMB Annual Report 2020/21, had endorsed the establishment of the female segregation unit in the same vicinity to that of the males. It had been our recommendation in 2019/20 that consideration should be given to 'the establishment of a specific area/unit for those women who require segregation', based on our concern that there was not a specific such area for females. In line with the CJINI report, we are in total agreement that being in such close proximity to the male CSU, was out of step with the Mandela Rules and HMIPS Specific Expectations for women in prison, as it did not provide entirely separate facilities.

The Governor immediately responded to this recommendation. As a temporary measure he took the decision that women confined under R32 should be isolated in their cells on one landing - six cells on Ash 1. This caused disruption to the regime, with those women on the landing not subject to restriction, being locked to accommodate time out for the women who were restricted by R32. This was a contributing factor in using Fern 1 as a female CSU. This additionally put pressure on the supervising staff. Consequently, there were many complaints by students and staff to IMB who raised the matter with the Governor.

However, given this was a temporary measure, the renovation of Cedar House towards the end of this reporting year, enabled a dedicated CSU landing for women to be located in Beech House, a much more appropriate arrangement.

The responsibility of staff for those in CSU is onerous. The level of skills and abilities of CSU staff directly impacts on those in isolation. It has been reassuring to observe the commitment and dedication of the staff in this Unit, however we would want to see a specific process in place for selection, training and support of the staff who work in the Unit. It is understood that Trauma informed training for all staff is planned to take place within the next reporting year.

Observation restated

- All staff deployed within the CSU are trained in Trauma Informed Practice.

IMB expect that the underpinning requirement on the NIPS to meet United Nations minimum standards and the principle of continuous improvement will be the impetus

for completing the implementation of both the recommendations - as set out in the CJINI report and in this report, to enhance the provision of the CSU in HBW.

CHAPLAINCY

Since the last report, the Chaplaincy in Hydebank Wood has welcomed a new Chaplain representing the Presbyterian Community residing in HBW. Rev Rodney Cameron, who served as Lead Co-ordinating Chaplain in Maghaberry for a number of years, resigned his position and has now been appointed for one day a week. We are pleased to welcome him to the team.

The team now consists of:

- Rev. Stephen P McBrearty MBE (Lead Chaplain) and Sr. Oonah – Catholic
- Joan Parkinson – Methodist
- Rev. David Jardine – Church of Ireland
- Rev. Rodney Cameron – Presbyterian
- Dr. Anwar – Muslim

It has been another difficult year dealing with Covid and the fallout of the same. The Chaplaincy team has maintained its presence within the College and fulfilled its Pastoral Care Ministry despite the many setbacks. The Catholic community are welcomed to Mass every Monday afternoon whilst the Combined Christian Communion welcome their residents on a Thursday afternoon.

This year an open service for Prison Week included all residents and staff who participated in readings and prayers.

The annual Remembrance Service was restricted in numbers and the larger Prison Service Community from all three estates were welcomed to a Remembrance Day Memorial Service in the grounds of the Memorial Garden within Hydebank Wood Estate.

Christmas services were also restricted and the Carol Service was held in an open space for all to attend. With the easing of Covid restrictions, Lenten services were celebrated.

The Chaplaincy team continues to play a major role in the life of Hydebank Wood through Induction programmes and other prison meetings such as Safer Custody and Equality and Diversity - as well as working closely with agencies in PDU. They maintain a solid presence and continue Pastoral care for residents on a one-to-one basis as well as following up with families when necessary.

HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Healthcare is an integral part of prison life as it not only impacts on the individual student, but also influences the dynamics among students - both on the landings and on the whole prison environment.

In considering Healthcare provision in HBW, it should be highlighted that the Healthcare team continues to cater for both males and females.

As well as the impact of Covid this year, Healthcare in HBW was being delivered in the context of high levels of a range of mental health needs among the students. Many have complex needs which include learning difficulties. The Healthcare team was depleted due to vacancies and absences, making it more challenging to deliver optimum care.

However in spite of this, Healthcare introduced a number of initiatives. Such as face to face mental health triage which could identify issues such as anxiety disorders and sleeping problems and self-help information was given in conjunction with other treatment therapies.

A further development by Healthcare was that nominated staff undertook cervical screening training, a positive step in establishing bespoke services to meet the needs of the women on site.

Staff also undertook training on low level Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Given the mental health needs of students, this is useful knowledge to have within the Healthcare team and of benefit to all the population on site.

Due to Covid, the Cessation Smoking Policy of introducing replacement patches was halted temporarily. By the end of this period, this policy had restarted which is to be commended.

During the Covid restrictions - which reduced in-person visits to virtual ones - incidents relating to un-prescribed drugs decreased, although once the regime reverted back to a normal one, the misuse of drugs continued through coercion, threats of violence and intimidation. As a contribution against drug misuse, Healthcare staff distributed medications directly to the student or used liquid medication to avoid tablets not being swallowed and stored for barter or self-harm.

IMB frequently raised concerns about the committals who were required to be in isolation for 14 days due to the Covid-19 pandemic on entry to prison. Necessary as it was, the impact of this isolation for those with mental health issues - or those who were detained for the first time - was especially tough. Agencies were able to carry out some virtual visits and staff organised quizzes and special activity packs for quarantined landings to try to mitigate against the negative effects of isolation.

Throughout the year on rota visits, IMB continued to hear from individuals with specific health related matters. If urgent, IMB made contact directly with Healthcare. The opportunity to discuss particular concerns or general healthcare matters at the IMB monthly meetings with a representative from Healthcare is greatly valued. It is an important conduit for IMB to discuss issues from their perspective and receive updates. Unfortunately, on some occasions this year we have missed that interaction as Healthcare has been unable to attend. This matter was in the previous report and still stands as a Restated Recommendation.

Recommendation

- Attendance of the Lead Nurse or representative at every IMB Board meeting.

The importance of collaborative working is central to a holistic approach to the treatment of students. With this in mind, IMB would want to see the recommendation from the previous year's report, that the co-operation is maximised by considering issues raised in interviews and when leaving isolation cells, is carried forward.

Recommendation restated

- NIPS and Healthcare work together to consider the issues raised in interviews with those leaving isolation cells and ensure that individuals receive appropriate information and support when they arrive at HBW.

During the reporting year there were special circumstances for some students which warrant being noted.

HBW has a mother and toddler whose welfare was a subject raised several times by IMB with Healthcare. However, we were reassured that the well-being of the child was being closely monitored by Social Services, provided by Belfast Trust. The toddler attends a crèche in the community and IMB observed that in spite of her unusual environment, she appeared to be well cared for and content.

The lack of regional psychiatric beds available to be able to transfer those assessed as needing specialised mental health provision was problematic, as the students concerned were in an unsuitable environment. Their behaviour caused disruption to students as well as challenges to staff. This is a situation that is unfair to all, especially to a population confined in such close quarters.

Within the year, HBW housed two women with health needs who were over the age of 75. The implications of managing these women adequately have been far-reaching. While fully cognisant, these women were remanded to custody by the court, the IMB would wish it to be recognised that other jurisdictions have more appropriate units. Although the staff were extremely resourceful in trying to respond to the needs of these women, they were subjected to unfair treatment due to the lack of a suitable facility. Since the beginning of their committals, IMB repeatedly made their views known to NIPS - including the Director General - that HBW is not the appropriate place for the detention of these women.

Within the population of HBW, there is a transgender person; the IMB would like to see that staff receive training on transgender issues to ensure equity of treatment.

Observation

- Training on Transgender issues for staff is considered.

Finally, as the percentage of those in HBW with mental health issues remains high, there is a strong argument for increased resources. In a Review commissioned by the Departments of Justice and Health in October 2021, the key finding was that 'Healthcare in NI prisons is characterised by underfunding'. The effect will be greater pressure on Healthcare and the consequent impact on the vulnerable population in HBW.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

This year saw the continued restrictions as a result of Covid 19, with reduction both in the number of visits and in the degree of personal contact. This appears to have continued to have some impact on the amount of illicit substances believed to be carried being carried into Hydebank Wood. Furthermore, the continued restrictions of internal movement and the mandatory 14 day isolation upon committal appears to have further decreased the passing of illicit substances within the Estate.

Whilst this has been welcomed, it has not led to complacency with those who are charged with responsibility in this area. This Board understands that, whilst committals also were down this year on previous pre pandemic years, of those entering HBW, a high proportion did so with an established and concerning substance dependency. Furthermore, we understand, that those dealing with the issue, have noticed a significant increase in both the percentage of females entering with a history alcohol abuse and associated severity and complexity. It seems also, that there has been a concerning increase in the number being committed who inject substances in the community which often brings its consequent health difficulties. Alcohol related brain injury (ARBI), generally the result of adolescent and/or binge drinking, is also being detected. All of this, of course, is a concentrated reflection of our wider community.

We are satisfied with the continued work of the Addictions Consultant and the AD:EPT worker who, in collaboration with the Healthcare team and the addiction nurses, have continued to combine their knowledge, skills and expertise in assessing, managing and supporting those who present with addiction and withdrawal difficulties. The Multi-Disciplinary Team has continued to use the

addictions pathway, where each person is triaged by a nurse, referred where appropriate to the Mental Health Team & Addictions Team, where he/she is triaged again, after which a referral is made to the Addictions Team, where necessary. The Clinical Addictions Team consists of one psychiatrist and two nurses who provide a service to patients to manage alcohol and drug misuse. This includes Opiate Substitution Therapy. The Addictions Consultant prescribes opiate substitution therapy, with support provided by the addiction nurses who are in attendance in HBW once a week, and with the AD:EPT worker from Start 360 who delivers one to one therapeutic and practical intervention and support to patients.

AD:EPT delivers Smart Recovery, a science-based self-help programme and it is pleasing to report that a more appropriate version of this, Start Smart, has been developed to be delivered for the males who are in the younger age group.

In planning for release, referrals are made, where possible to a range of community based services, (e.g. Community Addictions Teams, Start 360, MACS, Extern and Addiction NI). At this stage, the involvement of the Housing Rights worker, based in Hydebank Wood provides much needed support and guidance.

The Board is disappointed that the third and fourth recommendations for 2019/20, restated 2020/21 have not yet been completed.

Recommendations restated

- NIPS conducts an evaluation to assess the outcomes associated with the use of Passive Drug Dogs and whether this is an effective method for indicating the presence of drugs/unauthorised articles.
- NIPS investigates the purchase of additional equipment, including body scanners, to detect drugs and unauthorised articles.

RESETTLEMENT

The successful resettlement of all those who are committed to Hydebank Wood - whether on remand or sentenced - must continue to be a priority from point of entry to release. As has been stated before, this is somewhat more straightforward and easier to plan when the individual is sentenced to a specified period of time; with

those on remand it is not so, as their length of stay is unpredictable. The percentage of those on remand in Hydebank generally exceeds more than half its population.

This year saw the continuing impact of Covid 19 on Resettlement. Probation was off-site for much of the time before returning to hybrid working, with this year also seeing, in the latter months, a change in their management and the loss of two of their three Probation Officers. Voluntary and Community partners were off-site for a significant period, linking in virtually. Prison Officers in dedicated roles (Sentence Managers/Personal Development Plan Co-ordinators) with the Personal Development Unit (PDU) were often redeployed due to staff shortages elsewhere. Despite the difficulties, standards were maintained in regards to housing, benefits, etc., for those getting released.

All of which had a detrimental effect on the assessment and planning for release. It was pleasing that Psychology maintained a physical presence, as well as that of the unstinting support from the Chaplains.

This reporting year, the Conditional Early Release Scheme was much reduced, from 58, (including Covid 19 Temporary Releases) in 2021/22 to 7 students being released.

The suspension of pre-release testing also negatively impacted the ability to resurrect the Working-out Unit for males - which was not reopened. Given that Murray House is essentially 'outside' the custodial establishment, it was able to exist for those small number of women who met its criteria; this year it housed and successfully released three women. As has been repeatedly stated however, the low usage and throughput to this excellent resource continues to be both disappointing and concerning and this Board reiterates its recommendation that this is given serious consideration in the coming year.

Observation restated

- Given its vital role in the transitioning phase and in resettlement, ensure that Murray House is fully utilised with adequate preparation and bespoke support for the women accommodated there

It is pleasing to note that the Women's Support Worker, in post from October 2019, has remained in post, with her role evolving to meet the changing needs of the female population. She has delivered OCN accreditations in Personal Success and Wellbeing, Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and completed a Victim Impact Programme. She liaises closely with the Police Service and provides support for women who have made disclosures of a sexual nature, or those relating to modern slavery and human trafficking.

It is also pleasing to report that the PAUSE initiative, as noted in last year's report, has continued to offer women and children in care the much needed support and guidance, both when in custody and upon release. This covers women in the Western, Northern and Belfast Trust areas. It is very much hoped that continued funding will be put in place and that it will be extended to all five Trust areas.

The Beyond Violence programme which was delivered to female students with some success 2019/20 did not run again this year. The Board understands from the Psychology Unit (which designed and delivered the programme) that there has not been a sufficient number of sentenced women to make this viable.

A recommendation from last year, influenced by the CJINI Review of Resettlement, 'to monitor individuals in sustainable accommodation 12 weeks after release' appears to not yet have progressed. This Board believes such focus would be highly beneficial in establishing best practice and informing and supporting those services responsible for the resettlement of those released from custody.

Observation restated

- A process is established to monitor individuals released to substantive accommodation to be monitored after 12 weeks.

In summary, given the continued restrictions in place throughout this reporting year and the consequent impact that the pandemic has had on staffing, the focus on and attention to, resettlement has suffered to some extent. This is despite the commitment and motivation of many who are responsible for and believe in the huge

importance of planning for release from the day of committal. The Board commends those and looks forward to seeing expansion of their work in the coming year.

**HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE & ASH HOUSE WOMEN'S PRISON
IMB MEMBERS APRIL 2021 - MARCH 2022**

Yvonne Adair

Ann Adams

Pip Jaffa

Michael O'Hara

Claire Aiken Resigned 31 August 2021

Deena Hayden Resigned 31 August 2021

John Watson Resigned 7 October 2021