



INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21
HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE AND ASH HOUSE
WOMEN'S PRISON

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CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Independent Monitoring Board for Hydebank Wood Secure College and Ash House Women's Prison for the period 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021. Your attention is drawn to Appendix 1, detailing the work of the IMB during 2020-2021. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the monitoring role of the IMB was limited throughout the year. Therefore, this report largely focuses on policy and practice reported by relevant agencies and personnel.

It has not been possible for many of the recommendations in the Board's 2019-2020 Annual Report to be implemented. Nevertheless, the issues raised in that report remain relevant and, together with lessons learned through dealing with the impact of COVID-19, will form the basis of future monitoring when life in the prison reverts to the 'recovery' phase (see Appendix 3: Summary of Recommendations).

In its 2019-2020 report, the Board raised concerns about the following:

- Future best use of the Learning and Skills facility to assist in improving the achievement of accredited qualifications, rehabilitation, and future employment opportunities for women and young men detained in Hydebank.
- The need for a separate Women's Prison, alongside development of specialised accommodation for long term women prisoners.
- A significant increase in the female population, with associated changes in accommodation throughout the site which mean that women in custody are not held solely in Ash House.
- Levels of under-staffing leading to prisoners experiencing regime curtailment, 'lock-downs', rationed access to gym sessions and association.
- Need for a more effective strategy to detect and reduce the supply of illicit drugs within the prison.
- A high proportion of 'withdrawn' or 'adjourned' adjudications, and lack of clarity about disciplinary and complaints processes amongst prisoners.
- Negative impact of reduced medication on committal and initial lack of continuity in mental health care experienced by some prisoners.
- Need for a separate, therapeutic environment for segregated women.
- Need for minimisation of the length of time spent by young men in the CSU under Prison Rule 32.
- Need for adequate preparation and support for women in Murray House and young men in the Working Out Unit, to reduce numbers returned to the general population for breach of rules and co-ordinate pre-release planning.

It is fair to say that Board members approached the new reporting year with a degree of trepidation, noting that many of their concerns might be exacerbated by the limitations on prisoner regimes, imposed by NIPS, to protect prisoners from the COVID-19 virus. Yet NIPS responded rapidly and effectively to address the unprecedented challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Progress throughout the 2020-2021 year has been as follows:

- Relating to Education and Training, assurances were received by the IMB that virtual learning provided by Belfast Metropolitan College was delivered to students from June 2020 to March 2021 whilst involvement of partner agencies was significantly reduced. It is disappointing that an accredited course in Horticulture has not yet been established and there appeared to be little progress in other accredited courses (relating to, for example, construction skills) which support employability.
- There appears to have been no movement in progressing the business case for a separate, self-contained Women's Prison on the Hydebank Wood site.
- Of concern has been the high proportion of women and young men sent to custody on remand throughout the year. 58 prisoners were released from Hydebank Wood under the 'early release scheme': 33 women and 25 young men. In addition, some women were transferred internally on site to landings outside of Ash House. Thus, tensions between prisoners were reduced on landings due to the reduced density of population. It was also possible to commence some upgrading of Ash landings 3 and 4 without major disruption to prisoners.
- Whilst the IMB are aware that issues regarding staffing throughout NIPS were reported in the Keating and Robinson (2020) review of support services for operational prison staff, the management at Hydebank assured the IMB Chair that staff absence due to sickness or self-isolation was managed effectively without impinging on the prisoner regime.
- The Board welcomed a significant decrease in the amounts of illicit substances used and recovered within the Hydebank Estate throughout the year, largely due to restrictions in movement both within the prison and between the prison and the community caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Two relevant recommendations remain to be implemented: need for an evaluation to assess the outcomes associated with use of Passive Drug Dogs and their effectiveness; purchase of additional equipment, including body scanners, to detect drugs and unauthorised articles.
- Despite a lower number of adjudications throughout this reporting year, the proportion of completed adjudications leading to a 'guilty' verdict was just over half (57%)

amongst the young men and only a third (34%) amongst women. The high proportion of 'withdrawn' adjudications continued.

- The Board is pleased to report that a female CSU was established in December 2020. This has resulted in reduction of tensions between prisoners previously accommodated on Ash 1 and more appropriate 'one to one' attention for those held within the CSU.
- Concerns remain about the undue length of time some young men were detained in the CSU. Although the Board welcomed the review undertaken by the CJINI relating to use of CSUs in Northern Ireland prisons, its findings have yet to be published.

Additional recommendations made by the Board this reporting year relate to concerns about use of custody for women and young men with mental health needs and plans for enabling Wi-Fi across the site. In addition, the Board would stress the negative impacts of the pandemic on the Resettlement of prisoners - it has been impossible to facilitate outside employment prior to release and loss of this vital part of their rehabilitation journey cannot be overstated.

In conclusion I wish to record sincere gratitude to Ann, Clive, Deena, Yvonne, Claire, John, Michael and Pip for their commitment to the work of the IMB throughout the year. By the end of the year the commitment and enthusiasm of the IMB team at Hydebank Wood College /Ash House remained undiminished, with each one giving freely of much time and expertise in the role. Clive also served as Vice Chair for a second year and 'went the extra mile' whilst acting as Chair in my absence during a challenging time. For yet another year, Deena has edited the annual report for the Board and contributed immensely to the content herein.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff of HBW for their assistance and co-operation throughout the year. The Board has a formal monthly meeting with the Governor (replaced by virtual meetings on occasion), and I wish to thank the management for their courtesy, willingness to listen and address matters raised by members. The Board aims to provide constructive feedback to ensure the proper and humane treatment of prisoners within an acceptable prison environment.

Finally, I note that the Board has the support of the IMB Secretariat and for this my colleagues and I are most grateful.

Hazel Patton

Chairperson, IMB Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison

OVERVIEW OF ESTABLISHMENT

The site accommodates male young offenders aged 18-21 in what was re-named Hydebank Wood Secure College in 2015, as well as Northern Ireland's Women's Prison accommodating any female aged 18+ sent to custody. The male and female populations each include a mix of remand and sentenced prisoners.

Prison population 2020-2021

As elsewhere, the Coronavirus pandemic affected all aspects of life in Northern Ireland from the end of March 2020 and had a significant impact on the prison population during this reporting year.

The population of **women** on the Hydebank site (see Appendix 2: Accommodation) on the third Tuesday of each month between 1.4.20 - 31.3.21 was:

April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
58	55	55	54	56	52	46	39	46	56	49	42
Number on remand											
30	30	28	28	28	28	23	23	27	38	31	23
52%	55%	51%	52%	50%	54%	50%	59%	59%	68%	63%	55%
Number sentenced											
28	25	27	26	27	24	21	16	19	18	18	19
48%	45%	49%	48%	48%	46%	46%	41%	41%	32%	37%	45%
Fine defaulter											
				1		1					
				2%		2%					
Detainee											
						1					
						2%					

*Figures provided by NIPS at Hydebank Wood did not include those in custody in August

The population of **young men** in Hydebank Wood Secure College on the third Tuesday of each month between 1.4.20 – 31.3.21 was:

April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
72	69	64	68	74	67	68	65	61	55	54	48
Number on remand											
35	34	30	33	41	38	39	39	39	33	33	27
49%	49%	47%	49%	55%	57%	57%	60%	64%	60%	61%	56%
Number sentenced											
37	35	34	35	33	29	29	26	20	22	20	21

51%	51%	53%	51%	45%	43%	43%	40%	33%	40%	37%	44%
<i>Fine defaulter</i>											
										1 2%	
<i>Detainee</i>											
								2 3%			

The **transgender population** on the third Tuesday of each month between 1.4.20– 31.3.21 was:

<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sept</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>
											1
<i>Number on remand</i>											
											1

Since January 2020, there has also been a child in Hydebank (accommodated with its mother from birth).

Based on these monthly snapshots (NIPS email.15.6.21), the average daily female population throughout the 11 months for which figures are available was 50 - a significant decrease from the daily average of 74 in 2019-2020. The average daily population of young men was 63, also lower than the previous daily average of 94 in 2019-2020.

The number of committals reportedly decreased as a result of changes in court sittings during the Coronavirus pandemic. In April 2020, the (then) Deputy Governor stated that those committed were mainly remand inmates who had committed relatively minor offences such as resisting arrest or breach of bail conditions. The high proportion of women on remand was a significant concern - over half of those in custody throughout the year, this rose to almost 60% in November and December 2020, 68% in January and 63% in February 2021. Having been just below half between April and July, the proportion of young men on remand also increased from November to February when it was 60% or more – reaching a high of 64% in December.

Actions taken in response to the Coronavirus pandemic

NIPS took decisive actions to minimise risk of COVID-19 infection within Hydebank and access to the prison was limited to essential services only from the end of March 2020. Following an easing of restrictions, outside agencies returned to the prison in July, but many stopped coming in during the second lockdown (October – December 2020) and the third

lockdown (January – May 2021).

It was reported in telephone updates with Governors and the Lead Nurse that a range of ***infection control and prevention measures*** were introduced throughout Hydebank. Hand sanitising stations were placed at the main entrance/ exit, outside the Cabin, at the entrance to Elm/Willow landings, and later by the entrance to the main corridor. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser was placed at each palm-reader and outside each residential area. Cleaning parties kept the College clean and disinfected.

In every House, each landing operated as a ‘domestic household’ or ‘bubble’, with no interaction between landings and those on each landing timetabled to do activities at the same time. There was sufficient surplus accommodation within the site to mitigate risks from any identified infection. Isolation Units were established for females and males. A2 was used as a landing for women requiring shielding.

Cleaners, recycling and kitchen workers were the only prisoners who left their landings to work, and these ‘key workers’ were located on dedicated landings - C5: grounds; A5: cleaning common door handles and ‘frequent touch points’; B3: removal of bins, etc; kitchen workers and those working in the Cabin were moved to a landing in Willow House – named Fern 1. Throughout the year, prisoners were reminded about the on-going need to socially distance and regularly wash their hands; the importance of cleanliness was consistently emphasised.

NIPS staff wore face masks on landings from mid-October, with Healthcare staff wearing fluid-repellent face masks when seeing patients and moving around Hydebank. Although prisoners did not wear masks when going about their daily business (unless visiting Healthcare), all staff or others on-site wore masks from October onwards.

Each person was risk assessed but, if a prisoner went out and was with staff, socially distanced, wore a mask and therefore had limited risk of contracting COVID-19, they were not isolated on return (e.g. if they attended an outpatient appointment/ A&E, or a funeral where they were socially distanced and with staff at all times). In contrast, a prisoner out on Compassionate Leave, unsupervised for three days, was isolated when they returned.

Any prisoner displaying ***symptoms*** of COVID-19 was isolated in their cell and a swab was taken. If this was positive, they would have been sent to the Isolation Unit. At the April 2021 Board meeting, the Governor reported that only 5 prisoners in Hydebank Wood had been placed in protective isolation during the year and the virus had not spread into the general

population. The Deputy Governor affirmed that when these 2 males and 3 females were isolated in their cell, others on their landing self-isolated within their residential area and the landing was screened off to ensure that staff were aware of on-going self-isolation. Each individual subsequently tested negative.

From April 2020, NIPS and Healthcare staff (plus family members) showing symptoms of COVID-19 were able to be tested. NIPS staff must self-isolate if they have been symptomatic, irrespective of the result of the test.

During week beginning 5th May 2020, one young man committed to Hydebank on remand had **tested positive for COVID-19** in the community, despite showing no symptoms. He remained in isolation until a negative test and plans were developed to manage his release from isolation in a way that minimised negative perceptions of others and reduced his own anxieties. The first positive test of a female prisoner was reported on 9th January 2021. She was reportedly only the third prisoner across the three prisons in Northern Ireland who was not a new committal to test positive since the outbreak of the pandemic (*Belfast Live*, 9.1.21) and the first in Hydebank. The other women on her landing were placed on an isolated regime but none tested positive.

News bulletins reported on 18.10.20 that 4 Prison Officers at Hydebank had tested positive for COVID-19. Two prisoners were placed in isolation as a precaution and 14 staff who tested negative self-isolated. The IMB was notified that a member of staff had tested positive in November. Members of the senior management team tested positive and self-isolated in February 2021, when a deep-clean of the Administrative Block was carried out. In total, 32 NIPS staff tested positive during the year 1.4.20 - 31.3.21 (NIPS email, 22.6.21), a far higher number than the IMB received notification about. Significant numbers self-isolated, reaching a peak of 51 during February 2021 (see: 'Staffing').

In January 2021 it was reported by the (then) Deputy Governor that a number of Healthcare staff were self-isolating. Agency/ management staff and paramedics were on call to cover shifts, although this was not required as cover was provided internally. It was reported that Healthcare staff had "gone above and beyond" to cover shifts, including for a colleague who needed to shield. The Healthcare Centre was deep-cleaned as a precaution. According to the SE Trust, a total of 10 Healthcare staff in Hydebank tested positive between 1.4.20 and 31.3.21, the most recent case in January 2021. However, no patient services were stepped down during this period and there was no transmission to people in prison.

Primary Healthcare staff were able to give COVID-19 **vaccinations** when these became available in December 2020. In line with the process in the community, the Astra Zeneca vaccine was offered to older prisoners and anyone with underlying health issues before being offered to specific age groups. Most, but not all, of those offered the vaccine accepted it. The Pfizer vaccine was offered to younger prisoners, with a take-up of approximately 56%. It was intended that those who refused would be given further information about the vaccine so that they could make an informed choice when re-offered it. Whether or not they were vaccinated was a personal choice for Healthcare staff and the majority had both vaccines. NIPS staff registered for vaccines through the processes operating in the community. Any doses of the Pfizer vaccine remaining in Hydebank at the end of the day were offered to NIPS staff. Both SE Trust and NIPS had a 'track and trace' system for their staff.

Throughout the year, the **relationship between NIPS and Healthcare** was very co-operative. NIPS enabled Healthcare staff to use rooms in the ground floors of Houses to see patients so that social distancing could be maintained, and for the whole Healthcare staff team to meet in the Visits Centre while this was not being used. Communication and relations between Healthcare and NIPS were good, with one agency providing face masks from their stock for the other when supplies ran low.

In response to need for places where Healthcare staff could 'decompress', as in Hospitals, NIPS and SE Trust worked together to discuss creation of a safe space for staff in each prison (a calm place where tea, coffee and fruit were available and 'rules' included no discussion of COVID-19). In Hydebank, this was not considered necessary - Healthcare staff instead requested provision of some outside bean-bags. The Trust provided funding for Healthcare staff on each site to have a meal together once a week for 6 weeks.

During the summer, a senior manager reported that the mental health of NIPS and SE Trust staff was likely to be affected by concerns about their children returning to school, adults returning to work, increased socialising, etc. in the community following the first lockdown - at a time when they were weary and wondering how they were going to live through the circumstances brought about by the pandemic. The Trust and NIPS had fortnightly meetings about how staff could be supported so that their anxieties did not affect their relationships with, or responses to, prisoners.

A multidisciplinary 'Health and Wellbeing Steering Group', involving Healthcare and NIPS staff, met monthly to discuss the needs of prisoners and staff. In partnership with Prison Well,

Zoom yoga classes were facilitated for NIPS staff, in addition to a 'Weigh to Go' club and 'Couch to 5k' programme.

In March 2020, NIPS produced a policy on Temporary Release (under Prison Rule 27) to manage the prison population during the public health emergency caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. This so-called '**early release scheme**' applied to: 'prisoners *other than* those remanded in custody by any court; committed to custody for trial; or committed to be sentenced/ otherwise dealt with by the Crown Court'. A prisoner released under Rule 27 may be recalled to prison at any time, whether or not the conditions of their release have been broken.

NIPS limited those who could be released temporarily by excluding from consideration:

- certain sentence types (including: extended/ indeterminate custodial sentence or life sentence; sentence that engages notification requirements of Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003)
- certain offences (including: any offence which has contributed to or led to the death of an individual(s) or attempted murder; connected to terrorism; involving use/ possession of explosives, a firearm or offensive weapon; involving domestic violence or cruelty; perpetrated on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, transphobia, sectarianism or disability) and
- certain prisoners (including those: liable to removal from the UK at sentence completion; who have been recalled from licence during their current sentence; on a restricted transfer from another jurisdiction; currently subject to management under public protection arrangements or judged to present a Risk of Serious Harm).

In addition, a prisoner was only released if NIPS was satisfied that they had immediate access to accommodation in the community, and they were not on a SPAR Evolution care plan at the time of potential temporary release. The conditions of any period of temporary release included: not committing any offence; being confined to accommodation from 7pm to 7am; compliance with any advice and guidance re the COVID-19 pandemic; not having any contact with victim(s); not consuming alcohol or entering premises licensed to sell alcohol; not consuming any drugs except those prescribed; not engaging in any social media platforms; not having contact with any press/ media organisations or outlets.

Between March and November 2020, 44 individuals were released under this scheme (17 young men, 27 women), although 7 (3 young men, 4 women) returned to Hydebank. A key

issue for some individuals was difficulty accessing an address to which they could go on release. In total, between 1.4.2020 and 31.3.2021, 58 prisoners were released from Hydebank Wood under the 'early release scheme': 33 women and 25 young men (NIPS email, 9.6.21).

Staffing

It was reported in January 2021 that sickness absence cost the NI Prison Service more than £3 million per year for the three years April 2017 - March 2018, April 2018 - March 2019 and April 2019 - March 2020, with 988 absences recorded across the three prisons during the year to March 2020 (Keating and Robinson, 2020, p33-34). In their **review of support services for operational prison staff**, commissioned by the Justice Minister, Siobhan Keating [Consultant Psychologist, Belfast HSCT] and Gillian Robinson [HR Director, Probation Board NI] observed that "NIPS' sickness absence figures are consistently and significantly higher than the other NICS [NI Civil Service] departments", but that numbers of prison staff using available support services were low compared to the number of NIPS employees and level of sickness absence (Keating and Robinson, 2020, p32; 35).

Key findings of interviews conducted by the review team included: staff were reluctant to raise concerns about their own mental health – believing that if concerns were raised it would have an effect on perception about the role they could carry out, potentially affect promotion prospects and lead to a process of dismissal if time was taken off; staff who had been longer in service found it harder to speak out; mental health issues were not treated in the same way as physical injuries – they went unseen and potentially unheard; initiatives are required to support staff who, due to the nature of their work, will inevitably need support in the area of mental health (Keating and Robinson, 2020, p45). Many interviewees discussed the issue that staffing levels "were running too tight given the high levels of absence, unexpected incidents and duty restrictions", and need for recognition of the role in NIPS being different from that of other 'civil servants' (Keating and Robinson, 2020, p53). Arguing that "days lost to sickness absence should significantly reduce if much earlier interventions are made and the investment is made at the front end of the process", the authors suggested that a "short term investment for longer-term gain must be considered" (Keating and Robinson, 2020, p65).

During 2020-2021, the number of **staff on sickness absence or self-isolating** in Hydebank on the *third Tuesday of each month* averaged 14, although there were variations each month.

The figures for April 2020 – March 2021 were:

April 2020: 11 (6.5%); May: 13 (7.5%); June: 8 (4.3%); July: 13 (7.2%); August: 13 (7.2%); September: 14 (7.6%); October: 16 (8.2%); November: 16; December: 12; January 2021: 17; February: 17; March: 20.

Figures provided by NIPS (email, 22.6.21) record that 32 Hydebank Wood NIPS staff tested positive for **COVID-19** during this period. The number of NIPS staff who self-isolated *each month* were: April 2020: 9; May: 7; June: 12; July: 12; August: 18; September: 20; October: 45; November: 26; December: 26; January 2021: 35; February: 51; March: 28.

In regular updates, the (then) Deputy Governor assured the Chair that staff absence was managed within the establishment through use of PECCS [Prison Escorting and Court Custody Services] staff and additional overtime for prison officers, with staff levels remaining sufficient to maintain the regime throughout the year.

1. ACCOMMODATION

Female

On 27th March 2021, there were 36 females and 1 transgender person housed in **female accommodation**. Although the 'Women's Prison' is referred to as 'Ash House', it is no longer the case that all females are accommodated in one place on the Hydebank Wood site. Nineteen of the women in custody on 27th March 2021 were held in Ash House, one of six stand-alone accommodation units within Hydebank. Twelve were held in a separate building on Fern landings 1, 2 and 4. Two women (together with a baby under 2 years of age) were held on the Primrose landing within the Healthcare Centre. Two were confined within the female committal/ isolation unit within Willow House, one was in the female CSU and one was in Murray House (see Appendix 2).

Holding male and female prisoners on this site may not be in accordance with international standards concerning the separation of the sexes in the custodial environment (CJINI, 2020, p3). The historic background resulting in this situation is summarised in the 2007-08 First Report of Session of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons (Section 3.64). The prison service took the decision to move women prisoners to Ash House within Hydebank Wood establishment in June 2004. Seventeen years have elapsed since that decision, during which major improvements in accommodation within Ash House have been achieved. Nevertheless, as in previous Annual Reports, the Board notes that for many years a strategic plan has been in place for the construction of a stand-alone prison for women in Northern Ireland. The Board remains firmly of the view that this development should proceed as a matter of urgency.

In December 2018 a discussion document entitled *Prisons 2020* was published by NIPS, stating an alternative delivery model by 2020-22 based on creation of a discrete Female facility within the current Hydebank Wood site based on redeveloping the existing Ash and Beech Houses and completely separating them from the Secure College for young men. Although this option is not our first preference, in view of the budgetary pressures facing the public sector and the impact of COVID-19, the Board welcomes the planned development of a separate Women's Facility focused on providing a family-centred, therapeutic environment.

The Board is disappointed at delays in progressing the Business Case for this project throughout 2020/21, and has expressed on-going frustration with the Governors who attended Board meetings. The (then) Deputy Governor noted in December 2020 that the Central Procurement Directorate, responsible for public procurement policy in Northern Ireland, was at reduced capacity due to COVID. Plans remained at Business Case 1 level in March 2021.

The Chair of the Board reported at the March 2021 Board meeting that, in a recent meeting with the Director General, she had been assured the budget for the proposed new facility was in place and had been signed off by NIPS, so was now back with the Department. Continued delay is detrimental to the provision of resources to address issues particular to women prisoners (for example healthcare and family matters) as well as gender-specific responses to issues of abuse, addiction, education and successful re-settlement (see: UN General Assembly, 2010).

In 2018 Board members visited the Dóchas Centre in Dublin, a purpose-built, self-contained prison for women. Members were impressed to witness the free movement of prisoners throughout the entire Dóchas estate. Unlike Dóchas, women prisoners located within the Hydebank Wood estate are escorted by prison officers when outside, except within the female gardens. Members are concerned that constant escorting prohibits women prisoners from developing personal responsibility for managing their time or developing self-management skills which may, in the long term, inhibit effective resettlement. The Board has observed on occasions that the requirement for male and female prisoners to share resources on one site at Hydebank (including health care, education, gymnasium and visits) limits use of these facilities for both parties and increases the occurrence of 'lock-downs'.

Recommendation re-stated: A stand-alone Women's Prison should proceed as a matter of urgency.

The Board highlights that the alternative accommodation for both male and female prisoners during any proposed construction period must be fit for purpose. The Board questions whether this is possible given the constraints of the accommodation afforded within Cedar, Elm and Willow Houses, especially if compliance with the social distancing requirements relating to COVID-19 continue.

Recommendation re-stated: A feasibility review is completed and published detailing plans for relocation of all students within current proposals to redevelop Ash and Beech Houses into a separate Female facility.

Last year's Annual Report highlighted occasional *problems with heating and hot water*, particularly in Ash House, as a result of the age of the infrastructure within Hydebank. It has been reported that these issues have been addressed through renewal of all seven plantrooms and the installation of two new boilers in the main boiler house. A new, computer-controlled building energy management system provides information about the entire system, identifying and enabling any issues to be promptly resolved. Plans for the 2021-2022 year include renewing the underground heating mains pipework and adding a third boiler to the main boiler

house for backup purposes.

The Board notes that the **communal ablutions within Ash House** were painted during 2019, but no further work was completed during the current reporting year. The Board remains concerned that the shower trays and shower heads have not been replaced. In 2018, during the Board's visit to the Dóchas Centre for women prisoners in Dublin, it was observed that each cell had an individual shower installation. The Board is disappointed that conditions in Northern Ireland appear to be of a lesser standard than those in Dublin regarding shower provision. The Board notes that the ages of women confined in Ash House during the year ranged from 18 to 83 years - a proportion of whom were coping with menstruation and all striving to maintain high levels of hygiene throughout the Coronavirus pandemic whilst having to use communal shower facilities.

In previous reports the Board highlighted **lack of lids for toilets located in individual cells** in Ash House. The Board was advised that prisoners could request supply of lids subject to an individual risk assessment. This problem has re-emerged as advice has been received that no stocks of lids are now available on site.

Recommendation re-stated: Issues concerning the condition of showers and provision of toilet lids within Ash House should be reviewed as a matter of urgency and action implemented.

During monitoring of **Ash 5** on 27th March 2021 it was noted that this accommodation now appears 'dated'. 8 key workers were housed in Ash 5. When first established, this landing represented innovative progress but the association room and kitchen now lack the spacious character evident on other landings in Ash House and elsewhere within the College complex. There was some temporary mitigation in use of the kitchen as the women were unable to self-cater and make full use of the facility due to delivery issues arising from COVID-19. In the interim, food was provided from the main kitchens.

Recommendation: The standard of accommodation (with emphasis on the association room and kitchen) within Ash 5 should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation re-stated: NIPS should initiate a feasibility study into the provision of a secure, self-catering unit for long term female prisoners within the Hydebank Wood site.

In December, the (then) Deputy Governor advised the Board that there were plans to provide more 'stepdown' facilities for women, including the development of Independent Living Units. This would be a welcome development.

The emergence of **COVID-19** in March 2020 resulted in NIPS applying new approaches within many aspects of prison life. This had a major impact on the use of accommodation for females. To protect those in custody from COVID-19, it was deemed necessary to form ‘bubbles’ throughout the complex. Within these groupings, prisoners enjoyed limited association, pursued work and studies, and had virtual contact with family and friends.

In July 2019, a landing with capacity for 20 women had already been established in Willow House for **female committals**. Known as Fern, this provided a dedicated landing where committals could undergo the induction programme in a pleasant and calm environment, enabling them to settle into prison life for a few weeks before moving to Ash House. During the reporting year, this landing remained operational and was re-named Fern 2.

Additional landings dedicated for female prisoners were established as follows:

- a committal/ isolation unit within Willow House, with capacity for 16 females
- a female CSU within Elm House, with capacity for 4 females and space for expansion
- a landing within Elm House previously named Elm 1 and Willow 1 (now named Fern 1), with capacity for 15 females, accommodating those who worked in the Kitchens and Cabin
- a landing which was the old CSU (named Fern 4), with capacity for 8 females, to accommodate women who requested and met the criteria for ‘separated’ status.

Extensive work carried out over two weeks (costing £482,000) re-purposed the former male CSU, with enhanced security, to provide accommodation for three women who had requested and met the criteria for ‘separated’ status. As the Minister for Justice stated, “structural, electrical and mechanical work was all required to ... ensure that an adequate level of security was in place to manage the challenge presented by separation” (BBC NEWS, 6 October 2020). Renamed Fern 4, like other landings this ‘separated’ unit includes cells, an observation room, an Association Room, showering facilities, a laundry and storage room, and access to an exercise yard. The (then) Deputy Governor outlined plans to commence work in 2021 to establish additional rooms for Healthcare and educational provision/ purposeful activity, as well as to upgrade the exercise area - in line with the protocol regarding conditions for separated males in Maghaberry Prison. The Board agrees that these developments are necessary, with opportunities for virtual learning an important element of their mental health for those in the unit. The unit is staffed by NIPS officers, one of whom is female. A group from the Independent Reporting Commission [created under the *Fresh Start* Stormont Agreement

(2015) to monitor progress on tackling paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland] visited the separated unit week beginning 8.2.21.

The Board is satisfied that the arrangements outlined afforded female prisoners good living conditions throughout the COVID-19 emergency, subject to the usual restrictions imposed by occupying a site shared with young males. This conclusion has been reached through information given to Board members on a regular basis by senior NIPS management personnel, supported by direct observation by the Chair and Vice Chair who visited new landings as they were established.

Recommendation: The local NIPS management and staff should be commended for setting up new landings as an appropriate response to minimising the impact of COVID-19 on the female population of Hydebank Wood.

In addition, the management should be commended for the speedy re-purposing of the former male CSU to accommodate ‘separated’ female prisoners and development of plans for expansion of facilities and outdoor recreational space attached to this landing.

Male

As of mid-March 2021 the male population was 48: 21 sentenced, 27 on remand. This is significantly lower than in previous years, when the daily population has been around 94.

The majority of young men in Hydebank are housed in two residential blocks: Beech and Cedar Houses (see Appendix 2).

C5, the ‘Enhanced’ wing, was closed following an incident over Christmas.

A **Working Out Unit** in **Willow House**, physically isolated from Beech and Cedar, usually houses 2-3 individuals who live independently and do paid work outside the prison if this can be sourced. With the COVID-19 restrictions put in place at the end of March 2020, this Unit was closed [see ‘Resettlement’ section].

The **CSU** for young men is located on a landing in **Elm House** [see ‘Segregation’ section].

In March 2020, a male **Isolation Unit** was opened on a landing in **Elm House** to quarantine all male committals, who were isolated for 14 days. This Unit was also used for any young men showing symptoms of COVID-19 [see ‘Healthcare’ section].

Throughout the year, each landing operated as a 'bubble' for all social, educational/ work activities.

2. ADJUDICATIONS

The **PREPS** [Progressive Regimes and Earned Privileges Scheme] used by NIPS includes three regimes: 'Basic', 'Standard' and 'Enhanced'. It was reported that almost all prisoners were on an 'Enhanced' PREPS regime at the end of October 2020, with only 4 on 'Basic' regime (3 of whom were in the CSU following an incident in C4 dining area). According to the (then) Deputy Governor, in mid-February 2021 just 2 of those in custody at Hydebank Wood (out of 99) were on 'Basic' regime, the previous week this figure was 8. The intention was to introduce a tablet-based format for PREPS, with more discretion for local implementation. From March 2021, NIPS staff recorded PREPS on the PRISM system. Fully automated, alerts generated at specific times have to be acted on; ensuring that all reports and appeals are carried out and that information is recorded in one easily located section on PRISM. Landing staff reported that this had reduced paperwork, and that the triggering of need for a CRB report or the end of the appeal time meant staff could address PREPS promptly.

Prisoners are given a 'warning' or 'adverse' for less serious issues (although these can affect their PREPS regime). More serious issues, or an accumulation of adverses, lead to a charge being laid and a subsequent adjudication.

According to NIPS figures (email 24.6.21), during the year **1.4.2020 to 31.3.2021 there were 260 adjudications involving 80 young men** (compared with 771 during the same period in the previous year). Of the 252 completed adjudications during this period, 144 (57%) resulted in a 'guilty' verdict, 12 (5%) in a 'not guilty' verdict, 96 (38%) were 'withdrawn' and 8 were 'adjourned' as a result of individuals being transferred to other establishments.

84 of the 260 adjudications (32%) were based on 'discretionary' charges – (i.e. charges on which an officer decides whether or not to proceed). These include: endangers Health and Safety; is disrespectful or uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour; disobeys a rule or regulation; absents himself; obstructs an officer in the execution of their duty; offends against good order and discipline; attempts to commit an offence.

Amongst the young men, the most common 'offences against prison discipline' under Prison Rule 38 related to poor behaviour and drug use (with the number and proportion of adjudications concerning each 'offence' noted in brackets):

- damage to prison property (48: 19%)

- unauthorised article in his possession (42: 17%)
- disobeys an order (26: 10%)
- is disrespectful, uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour (21: 8%)
- refuses to provide a sample (20: 8%)
- fights or wrestles a prisoner or other person (20: 8%)
- endangers Health and Safety (19: 8%)

Figures provided by NIPS (email 24.6.21) show that there were **89 adjudications between 1.4.20 and 31.3.21 involving 52 women** (compared with 218 during the same period in the previous year). Of the completed adjudications, 30 (34%) led to a 'guilty' verdict, 4 (4%) to a 'not guilty' verdict, and 55 (62%) were 'withdrawn'.

25 of the 89 adjudications (28%) were based on discretionary charges.

The most common 'offences against prison discipline' under Prison Rule 38 amongst women were:

- unauthorised article in her possession (15: 17%)
- fights or wrestles a prisoner or other person (12: 13%)
- damages prison property (10: 11%)
- disobeys an order (9: 10%)
- presence of drugs (9: 10%)
- attempts to commit an offence (5: 6%)
- assaults an officer/ staff member (5: 6%)
- refuses to provide a sample (5: 6%)

The **number of adjudications** was significantly lower during this reporting year than in previous years. It was reported that fewer prisoners and improved staff interaction on landings during the COVID-19 pandemic had contributed to this situation. A significant reduction in discretionary charges (of 75% for males and 80% for females) was recorded at the September 2020 Safer Custody Steering Group Meeting. The (then) Deputy Governor reported in February 2021 that more NIPS staff had been trained in 'trauma-informed' practice and staff were being encouraged to engage with those displaying anti-social behaviour with the objective of reducing tensions and diffusing volatile situations.

The **proportion of completed adjudications leading to a 'guilty' verdict** was just over half (57%) amongst the young men but only a third (34%) amongst women. Given the stress provoked by the adjudication process, these figures raise questions about whether

adjudication is the most appropriate response to their behaviours or actions – particularly in relation to discretionary charges.

The proportion of '**withdrawn' adjudications** remains high, especially regarding women for whom over half (62%) of adjudications were withdrawn (compared with 38% amongst the young men). The individual being 'discharged', 'not in custody' or 'no longer in custody' accounted for 47% of withdrawn adjudications in relation to males, while 58% of withdrawn adjudications for females were a result of the individual being 'discharged'. This is indicative of the short time in custody for many detained women, and reinforces the limitations of adjudication as a response to challenging behaviour. The reason for withdrawal was not recorded in 25% or simply recorded as 'withdrawn' in 11% of withdrawn male adjudications, not recorded in 13% or recorded as 'withdrawn' in 7% of withdrawn female adjudications - it would be helpful if this information was provided to enable further analysis of reasons for withdrawal.

Recommendation: The reason for withdrawal of an adjudication should be recorded, leading to analysis of the main reasons for withdrawal and whether these could be avoided.

NIPS reported that, at the start of the pandemic, all adjudications were **adjourned** for a number of reasons: the level of offences against prison discipline were low; there was a reluctance to hold adjudications that may result in additional losses for individuals who were already experiencing restrictions (which may potentially be extended to 23-hour lockdowns); moving people to and from adjudications was likely to impact on established 'bubbles' and may increase cross-contamination; the adjudication rooms in Ash House and the CSU were too small to enable social distancing.

NIPS (email, 22.6.21) have assured the Board that **information explaining the adjudication process** is provided to every person subject to adjudication via *Information Sheet 21*, which is used in all Northern Ireland prisons. It was reported that this standardised information has not been adapted (into an 'easy read' version) as NIPS received advice suggesting that altering the language/ definitions used might have potential legal implications or reduce perceived seriousness of the adjudication process. Those being charged are given a copy of *Information Sheet 21*, or will have it read to them, when being issued with a charge sheet. The Information Sheet refers to use of advocates (including the support of the Start 360 Advocacy Team), although very few reportedly request this. If Start 360 are interested in accompanying an individual, NIPS has affirmed that they can approach the CSU staff or the Adjudicating Governor about their involvement.

Recommendation re-stated: NIPS continues to work with the Speech and Language Therapist to: develop accessible information for prisoners about prison discipline, the adjudication process and their entitlements; to identify individual communication needs; and to implement effective strategies for ensuring that prisoners understand what has been said to them and expected responses.

3. ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

This year was impacted greatly by the Coronavirus pandemic and consequent restrictions in movement, both within the prison and between the prison and the community. The main sources of illicit drug entry into Hydebank Wood are Home Leave, Compassionate Leave and new committals. Isolation for 14 days of all new committals and anyone who was outside the prison unsupervised on leave for a short period, combined with increased application of Rule 32 to prevent unauthorised articles reaching the general population, appear to have been instrumental in a **significant decrease in the amount of illicit substances used and recovered** within the Hydebank estate. As a result, there was a much decreased incidence of overdose and other drug-induced behaviours. Whilst this was welcome, it did not lead to complacency within the staff charged with responsibility in this area.

There was a serious incident over the Christmas period when a small number of young men (who had 'Enhanced' status) drank the hand sanitiser provided as part of COVID-19 infection control. The Board understands that this was an isolated incident, which was not repeated. In January 2021, it was noted that there had been an **increase in diversion of prescribed medication**. Healthcare addressed this in relation to Opiate Substitution through use of liquid form which was directly injected, reducing opportunities for this medication to be diverted.

The Board understands that, although the number of committals was considerably lower than in previous years, a high proportion of those entering Hydebank did so with an established and concerning **substance dependency**. In terms of **support for prisoners**, the Addictions Medical Consultant appointed in January 2020 and Start 360's AD:EPT [Alcohol and Drugs: Empowering People through Therapy] staff worked with Healthcare throughout the year; combining their knowledge, skills and expertise to assess, manage and support those who presented with addiction and withdrawal difficulties. As well as consolidating relationships, this is likely to affect future working practices and reduce duplication. It reportedly also improved links with Community Addictions Teams. Having been assessed on committal, those requiring it were offered support through AD:EPT and the Addictions Team. It was reported by the SE Trust that demand exceeded capacity due to a significant rise in demand. Need was being managed through reviewing procedures, innovative initiatives, and further commissioning.

The multi-disciplinary team formed a new addictions pathway – each person was triaged by a nurse, referred where appropriate to the Mental Health Team where s/he was triaged again, after which an addictions referral was made where necessary. The Addictions Medical Consultant worked on substitution therapy, with the assistance of addiction nurses who visited Hydebank once a week, and with the AD:EPT worker who delivered one-to-one therapeutic and practical intervention and support. Additional support was received, where appropriate, from the in-house services of Psychology and Probation. In planning for release referrals were made, where possible, to a range of community-based services (e.g. Start 360, MACS, Extern).

The Board is disappointed that the two **recommendations** regarding substance misuse in its 2019-2020 Annual Report have not yet been implemented. The first concerns use of Passive Drug Dogs.

Recommendation re-stated: 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.

The second relates to part of the overall strategy for addressing substance misuse and bullying - the Board supports the Inspectorate's (CJINI and RQIA, 2019, p12) recommendation that additional equipment may be required. Exploration of "new developments in the use of search technology and equipment to better detect drugs concealed in a person" was also recommended by the Prisoner Ombudsman (2020, Recommendation 7) following an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of a prisoner at Magilligan prison. In June 2020 the (then) Deputy Governor noted that a body scanner, capable of detecting substances and unauthorised articles, was to be provided to each prison. It was anticipated in February 2021 that X-ray body scanners would be purchased by April, with one likely to be placed in the main reception area. However, this had not occurred at the time of writing (July 2021).

Recommendation re-stated: NIPS investigates the purchase of additional equipment, including body scanners, to detect drugs and unauthorised articles.

4. CATERING AND KITCHENS

The catering team reported that, under financial and staffing pressures, they had continued to provide good quality and variable daily meals to the prison population throughout the year. The budget per person remained stubbornly fixed at £19.50 per person per week (similar to the past 15 years). Despite this, the team provided a menu which was well-received with few reported complaints. There was no annual survey following the most recent inspection in

November 2019 (CJINI, 2020); a survey will be conducted in early 2022. During this challenging year the team introduced 'FakeTakeAways' every Saturday evening, which were well received and continue to be popular. There were no COVID-19 issues in catering throughout the reporting year and a contingency plan remains in place.

Recommendation: The number of staff within the catering team is increased and a review of the budget allocation for catering is conducted in light of increasing food costs.

5. CHAPLAINCY

Following the outbreak of **COVID-19** across Northern Ireland in March 2020, attendance of the Chaplaincy at Hydebank Wood was significantly reduced. The Lead Chaplain - Fr. Stephen McBrearty - attended most days, although movement around the College was limited. Throughout the year he visited all new committals in the Isolation Units.

Religious services were cancelled but the Rev. David Jardine (Church of Ireland) and Fr. McBrearty arranged to broadcast a united service every Sunday through the College tannoy, which was reportedly warmly received by both residents and staff. Ramadan in April-May was addressed for Muslim residents when the local Imam, Dr. Answar, agreed to visit. Throughout the pandemic, Fr. McBrearty maintained contact with Dr. Answar, raising with him any requests or issues. Sr. Oonah Hanrahan (Roman Catholic) and Rev. Jardine returned to Hydebank in June 2020. With the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions in October 2020, religious services were re-introduced in the Chapel until Christmas Eve when once again full restrictions were imposed. Mrs Joan Parkinson (Methodist) returned to her position at the start of May 2021. Since then, services have been provided each week in the College Chapel with limited numbers in attendance: two Catholic Masses on Mondays and two Combined Services on Thursdays.

Plans for Chaplaincy annual activities (such as Prisons Week) were put on hold. The Chaplains have played as full a role as possible whilst adhering to Government regulations. The Board would like to thank them for the dedication they have shown during a difficult year. Given the important role they play in supporting individuals and their families, their presence in Hydebank has no doubt been missed.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The **Learning and Skills Centre** was closed at the end of March 2020. The education provider - Belfast Metropolitan College [Belfast Met.] - reportedly sent work to individuals. Virtual

learning was established in June, with students attending the Learning and Skills Centre in landing units and tutors engaging remotely with assembled students. Virtual education continued through Zoom classes over the summer. Belfast Met. remained off-site from October 2020 until June 2021.

Involvement of **partner agencies** was significantly reduced – Start 360, Barnardo's, Mugshots did not attend Hydebank during the year.

A range of **workshops** are usually provided by NIPS instructors. During lockdown, work continued in the gardens as normal. Male students were encouraged to plant baskets and containers. In the female gardens, prisoners planted seeds which were later successfully transplanted. The produce from the female gardens was used in the kitchens. All involved were very pleased with their results. Unfortunately the City and Guilds course in Horticulture, to be delivered in liaison with Belfast Met., did not get off the ground. Arrangements for progressing this course remain under discussion.

Recommendation re-stated: Ensure delivery of the City and Guilds Horticulture course.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Hydebank Wood has an **Equality and Diversity Policy** which sets out the legal requirements under Section 75 of the *1998 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 generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependents 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 inequalities experienced by the groups listed.

Hydebank has an established **Equality and Diversity Committee** (E&DC), co-ordinated by the Governor for Safety and Support and chaired by the Deputy Governor, which meets on a monthly basis. This Committee involves representatives from most departments in Hydebank. There are also two Equality representatives who attend on behalf of the women and young men in custody. This Committee is attended by a member of the IMB from Hydebank, an

Equality Officer from NIPS, a representative from Start360, the Chaplain and (per the recommendation in last year's IMB Annual Report) Healthcare, the Equality Commission and the Rainbow Project. We do not always have representatives from all of these areas but they are invited each month.

It should be noted that during this reporting period, face to face E&D Committee meetings were suspended in line with the mandatory COVID-19 restrictions. Meetings were introduced on a remote basis in April 2020, using Webex, and have continued in this format throughout the year. Attendance has been limited, however the IMB representative has attended remote meetings where possible.

The main agenda items covered in E&D Committee Meetings include:

- Event planning/communication
- Representative issues
- Section 75 complaints analysis
- Protected groups categories
- Foreign Nationals/ Use of telephones/ interpreter services
- Analysis of horizontal data and emerging trends

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

In this reporting year two new **representatives from the young men and women in Hydebank** were appointed. 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. They have made and continue to make a positive contribution to the meetings. Issues raised by them are given priority attention - all concerns raised are reviewed and actioned in a timely manner.

An issue of concern raised by the IMB and NIPS HQ representatives in respect of the **EU Settlement Scheme** was how those in a prison environment would be supported to access the scheme and overcome complexities. The NIPS HQ rep. raised this at DG and Ministerial level, and provided status updates at the E&DC meetings.

A Corporate decision was taken to put a hold on large **events**, in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines. However, the Board acknowledges the hard work and effort of the E&D team in organising and delivering a series of small events throughout the year in which everyone was able to stay in their 'bubbles'. These were well received by all. Future event planning will

continue to be reviewed at corporate level.

The Board recognises that recommendations from last year's Annual Report may need to be revised. Regarding **previous recommendations**:

Recommendation: Every effort is made to ensure the attendance of representatives from Learning & Skills and Healthcare at Equality & Diversity Committee meetings.

Meetings were held remotely through Webex, and representatives from these functions attended. However, due to resourcing, logistics, technology, etc. attendance was still infrequent. Progress in implementation of this recommendation will be reviewed as COVID-19 restrictions ease.

Recommendation: As the E&D Committee develops further, responsibility for events planning and management is shared by the wider team.

Major events have been suspended due to COVID-19. However, throughout the year a number of successful smaller events were held. This was a collective effort from the E&D team at Hydebank. Progress in implementation of this recommendation will be reviewed when suspension of large events is lifted.

Recommendation: External scrutiny is encouraged by targeted invitations to attend the Committee being sent to the Human Rights and Equality Commissions and other relevant agencies.

Representatives from the Equality Commission and the Rainbow Group attended remote meetings via Webex where possible.

Recommendation: E&D awareness training (refresher) is provided to assist student representatives in the execution of their role on the E&D Committee.

Both of the new representatives received E&D training to support their role on the E&D Committee. However, the IMB Board suggests that, due to the evolving nature of the E&D Committee, a standardised training pack is developed and delivered to all E&D Committee members in order to achieve a common understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation: A standardised training pack is developed and delivered to all members of the Equality and Diversity Committee, to support a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and anticipated objectives.

8. HEALTHCARE

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust [SE Trust] is responsible for delivery of Healthcare in Northern Ireland's three Prisons.

Although primary Healthcare in the prisons was not significantly affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns, as in the community, there have been concerns about the possible impact on **secondary care** as external appointments stopped or slowed. This reflects nervousness in the wider health system about people having missed early appointments or on-going support relating to cancer and other illnesses.

The planned introduction throughout the Prison Service in September 2020 of a **No Smoking policy**, with nicotine replacement patches to be offered alongside smoking cessation programmes for prisoners and staff, was postponed.

Healthcare in Hydebank Wood

There is no in-patient facility at Hydebank Wood. An on-site Healthcare Centre - the Hawthorne Practice - provides Healthcare services.

Healthcare **staffing** remained stable during the year. The multi-disciplinary team at Hydebank included: a Lead Nurse, 8 Primary Healthcare Nurses, 3 Mental Health Nurses, 1.5 Occupational Health Therapists, a part-time Physiotherapist, a part-time Pharmacist, two Medicines Management Technicians, a part-time Dentist who was on call 9am – 5pm, and a Speech and Language Therapist. Where posts were vacant, they were filled by bank and agency staff. As a pilot, from April 2020 paramedics provided overnight cover (i.e. 11pm – 7am) and an emergency response. Two student nurses who worked in Hydebank in the autumn were reported to have found this a good experience and brought valuable knowledge and skills to the Healthcare in Prison Team.

One of the Nurses completed the **training** to conduct smear tests and, with relevant PPE, held regular clinics. Another member of the Healthcare team completed training in CBT [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy], which was anticipated as being a useful asset. CBT courses were being commissioned by the SE Trust to support the professional development of permanent staff. It was reported that the Speech and Language Therapist had offered and undertaken some training with NIPS staff. STORM [Skills Training on Risk Management] training about suicide prevention and self-harm was completed by NIPS and Healthcare staff together and NIPS Training department provided training for Healthcare staff about SPAR Evolution. Healthcare was involved with NIPS to train prisoners in Basic Life Support.

Healthcare provision in Hydebank Wood

The Coronavirus pandemic changed **Healthcare delivery in the prison**, including use of technology-enabled care. Because GPs who go into prisons also work in the community, they

were a risk to prisoners. Following the introduction of a triage system for Healthcare appointments, GPs responded via letter, telephone, video-link or face to face. According to a senior manager, patients considered this a positive development - as some people's needs could be assessed and responded to quickly, others could be spoken to for longer than the 10 minutes usually allocated to appointments in the community. In addition, because prisoners did not have conflicting priorities they were able to attend all Healthcare appointments.

In mid-April, an i-Pad was introduced to facilitate 'face-to-face' consultations with a GP or other Healthcare staff (Primary Healthcare Nurses, Mental Health Nurses, and Psychiatrist) as required. The mental health team carried out crisis visits if necessary. During direct contact, whenever possible, Healthcare staff implemented 'social distancing' (i.e. keeping 2m apart from others) and wore Level 4 PPE [Personal Protective Equipment]: gloves, an apron and face mask. All staff were fit-tested with FFP3 face masks for use in close work where a distance of 2m could not be maintained (e.g. taking bloods or nebulising). No concerns were expressed over supply of appropriate PPE (especially after the Trust took over supply), which was ordered weekly and delivered within 2-3 days. Stocks were regularly replenished, ordered online through the Trust.

Initially, prisoners were only tested if they showed symptoms of COVID-19. Under Public Health Agency [PHA] guidance, from 12.5.20 all new **committals** were tested for COVID-19. Regardless of swab results (reported as being 70% accurate) or whether they showed symptoms, every committal sent from the courts or police custody was isolated for 14 days in a cell within designated Isolation Units for females [Willow 3] and males [Elm 4]. Routine swabbing on committal ended in January 2021 but, following a COVID-19 screening based on specific questions, each committal continued to be isolated for 14 days. Each Isolation Unit landing had accommodation for 14 individuals, including an Observation Cell. The male and female landings were separated by a grill and staffed by four NIPS officers (2 male, 2 female). The female cells each contained a bunk bed. In November the (then) Governor stated that he planned to dismantle these and replace them with a single bed in each cell to provide more room. However, as this would impact on the Certified Normal Accommodation of Hydebank Wood, it was decided that this was not possible. In the Isolation Units, mattresses were washed daily and 2 orderlies (wearing PPE, boiler suits, boots and overalls) cleaned the laundry using the washing machine and tumble dryer in situ. Staff cleaned each cell during the occupant's shower period. Vacated isolation cells were given a deep clean, including the curtains, and rubbish was placed in clinical waste bags.

Having initially taken committals straight to the Isolation Unit, from mid-April every committal (male and female) was taken through the Male Reception area where initial assessments were carried out by NIPs and Healthcare staff wearing PPE, and they received an explanation about procedures in Hydebank aimed at reducing risk of COVID-19 infection. Based on NICE Guidelines, the committal template was reviewed to devise a new template for initial Primary Healthcare assessments. In a discussion at the December Board meeting about access to relevant previous information during committal health assessments, the Lead Nurse indicated that it can be difficult to access information (e.g. identifying where an individual has been in the past) – this is sometimes provided in Equality & Diversity admission information or revealed by the person during conversation. Piloting of face-to-face screening by a mental health nurse on the day after committal began week beginning 13th July 2020. This was rolled out and reported to have worked well, enhancing communication between mental health and the Primary Healthcare team and making information about the person's mental health history and/or learning difficulties more readily available.

Those quarantining in the committal cells experienced no movement, a restricted regime and limited showering (initially one at the end of the first week and another when they left the Isolation Unit, although this was increased to every other day). They were issued with fresh clothes; their own clothes were laundered and returned when they were released from isolation. Provision of their food, and any other face-to-face contact, was with staff wearing appropriate PPE. There was reportedly considerable interaction between those in isolation and staff to facilitate their needs, maintain their health and well-being. Each isolated prisoner received a Bluetooth headset with limited contact numbers for family and friends, agreed in advance, for use during their period in isolation. There was no restriction on the length of calls and no charges were paid. These phones were used to facilitate committal assessments and conversations with Healthcare, and to access any of the numbers usually available on the PIN phone system (including Samaritans). Each quarantining prisoner received distraction packs, games, jigsaws and letter-writing kits to maintain contact with family, plus a weekly pack of foodstuffs from the Tuck Shop. At the end of April, IT facilities were extended with the installation of additional play/ game stations.

The Health Promotion Worker and Safer Custody Team organised weekly quizzes and Bingo on the quarantine landings, with individuals using their buzzers to answer questions. These activities aimed to engage and entertain those confined. 'Quarantine engagement sessions', focused on the benefits of human interaction, enabled individuals to be listened to and heard. This frequently led to advocacy or signposting on their behalf as well as provision of guidance and information about Healthcare services and how these could be accessed. The needs

identified during these sessions informed NIPS induction meetings with every new committal. Everyone who spent time in isolation over Christmas received a 'Care at Christmas Health and Wellbeing Pack' which included: a jigsaw, Beano, Christmas socks, luxury beeswax soap, chocolate treat, 'Survivors Guide', a Christmas message from the Chaplains, and AD:EPT/Start 360 drug information.

Following some problems with the earpieces, it was decided in October to conduct Healthcare assessments in the Association Room of each landing. Healthcare staff saw those in isolation daily, and more often if they were on medication or were in need of specific care. They were seen regularly by mental health staff, with assessments conducted by the Clinical Psychiatrist if required. An exit interview was conducted with each prisoner in which they shared their experience of quarantine and its impact on their mental and physical wellbeing. The key findings of interviews with over 200 prisoners across the three prisons have been summarised in a report by the Trust lead for Quality Improvement and Engagement and published in a co-authored article in the *International Journal of Prisoner Health* (Gray, Rooney and Connolly, 2021). Common themes included: the importance of connection (contact with family, staff attitudes); support (particularly regarding mental health, sleep, withdrawal from substances, distraction); and communication (especially for those in prison for the first time, regarding information and access to Healthcare staff).

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

Healthcare was asked to check the temperature of **those due to be discharged** to supported living, and to swab these individuals before their discharge date. If requested by external organisations, individuals were tested by Healthcare before they left Hydebank.

A range of **health promotion** activities were delivered throughout the year by the Health and Wellbeing Engagement Team at Hydebank, supported by staff in Healthcare, AD:EPT and the NIPS Safer Custody Team. The Health Development Worker (in collaboration with prisoners, the Speech and Language Therapist and the Service-User Engagement Officer) developed a non-digital social media platform in the form of a magazine: *What's Up?* From the end of April, this was available fortnightly on every landing during Saturday 'Buns and Banter' sessions. It included messages, jokes, recipes, poetry by prisoners, health and well-being information and suggestions, 'good communication' tips, and activities such as word searches. This resource reportedly flourished over the year - providing a popular way for prisoners to communicate

while observing COVID-19 prevention regulations, relieve boredom, recognise kindness, connect with friends, and gain health advice.

Based on prisoners' suggestions and expressed need to connect with others, co-designed socially distanced health and wellbeing events took place every three months. Combining important health messages delivered in accessible ways, these included Fitness for Food, Men's Health Big Outdoor Quiz and the Big Outdoor Karaoke Picnic. In addition to providing education, information and support for individuals to make positive choices regarding their health and wellbeing, these events lifted the morale of both prisoners and staff. At bi-weekly health and wellbeing meetings, prisoners identified the need to gain support by socially interacting. 'Chat and Chew' and 'Banter for Buns' activities were subsequently organised for landing bubbles, providing a space to chat, vent and have fun while learning baking and cooking skills.

A stock of basic plus essential **medication** was retained. Within the general population medication was issued before 4pm, to be taken at the appropriate time by the prisoner (as noted in their care plan). A senior manager reported in April 2020 that there has been a decrease in night time medication as a result of COVID-19 as many benzodiazepines cause respiratory depression and airway compromise, which would be potentially harmful if the prisoner was infected with COVID-19. There was no change in the types of medication prescribed during lockdown, although it was reported by a senior manager in August that medication being reduced or stopped when those entered custody, remained the main reason for complaints to Healthcare.

From week beginning 8th June, **allied health professionals** (e.g. respiratory Physiotherapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Dietician) - who had been re-deployed for COVID-related work - were involved in a phased return to work in Hydebank, with all of these staff back in the prison by 1st July. They triaged referrals and either had virtual calls or face-to-face but socially distanced meetings with individuals. Having to respond differently highlighted how practitioners can deal with patients in different ways, some of which are likely to continue (including a mix of virtual and physical appointments). The SE Trust reported that, when restrictions were re-imposed during subsequent Northern Ireland lockdowns, staff remained on site but their roles changed occasionally as there was a flexible approach to ensure needs were prioritised.

During the year, the **Speech and Language Therapist** worked with the Psychology Department to help ensure that work was appropriately adapted for two individuals with

learning disabilities and that they understood information. In addition to maximising the ability for prisoners to engage effectively and apply what they had learned, this collaboration provided mutual learning and support for the two professionals involved. The Speech and Language Therapist continued, with the prisoner's consent, to provide 'Communication Tips' sheets advising NIPS and Healthcare staff how they could adapt communication during meetings or appointments with individuals identified as needing additional support, and to provide 1:1 support for people with a range of communication issues. In summer 2020, 'What's in a picture?' social conversation groups were held to encourage inclusive discussion and improve the social communication skills of participants. Each week a photograph stripped of its caption and other identifying information was presented to the group and the Speech and Language Therapist facilitated a discussion in which students talked about what they observed and what conclusions they drew from the picture. The questions asked and language used was adapted to suit individual needs. A communication screening pilot was launched in January 2021, with all new committals screened within 4-6 weeks after their period in isolation. Training about speech, language and communication (e.g. a generic 2-hour awareness-raising session for all staff and more advanced, if appropriate, bespoke training for staff in specific roles) did not take place during the year because of COVID-19 restrictions. It is anticipated that this will resume in 2021-2022.

Prisoners joined the 'Clapping for Carers' campaign every Thursday evening until the end of May 2020, and some sent Healthcare staff cards thanking them for their support. In June it was reported that the **mental health** of those in isolation had been reasonable. Anyone considered by staff to be vulnerable was referred to the weekly Safety and Support meetings, which continued throughout the year. The mental health team carried out crisis visits (including at weekends) and assessments, as required, in the landing Association Rooms to enable social distancing. The Clinical Psychiatrist also visited landings and the Isolation Units to conduct assessments as required.

The (then) Deputy Governor reported in June 2020 that, although prisoners were generally coping with the restrictions necessitated by the COVID-19 virus, staff had begun to express concern about a few who had started to show signs of stress. The mental health team intervened when individuals were identified 'at risk' within the SPAR Evolution process, but no outside agencies were available. The Lead Nurse stated in August that the decrease in prisoner numbers meant NIPS and Healthcare staff were able to pick up on issues and identify those requiring additional support. In October she affirmed that she was satisfied SPARS were being used to ensure the safety of individuals, if required.

In their joint inspection regarding the safety of prisoners held by the NI Prison Service, CJINI and RQIA (2019, p8) highlighted the range of vulnerabilities commonly experienced by prisoners (including high levels of mental ill-health, personality disorder, learning difficulty, drug and alcohol addiction), stating: “Concerns remained that prison did not provide the therapeutic environment required for prisoners with complex needs”. The Inspectorate noted: “Courts should be aware of these limitations when committing people to prison for mental health assessments”. However, it was reported by the Lead Nurse in October, that the needs of some of those sent to Hydebank “have been more complex”. The Governor for Safety and Support noted in November that, although numbers in Hydebank were low, there was a high concentration of prisoners with mental health issues and the December Safer Custody Steering Group Meeting reported increased prevalence of mental ill-health in new committals. The Lead Nurse affirmed that the mental health needs of those in Hydebank had been more complex during the Coronavirus pandemic, and that prison was not the best option for some of the young men and women sent there. The Board is concerned that custody is being used to accommodate women and young men with significant mental health needs because there is insufficient alternative accommodation (including secure psychiatric care). Use of custody in these circumstances is an inappropriate response for the individuals concerned. It also has significant impacts on other prisoners and on NIPS staff who are not trained to meet the needs or respond to the challenging behaviours of these individuals.

Recommendation: A review is conducted to compare the proportion of prisoners in Hydebank Wood with complex mental health needs during the Coronavirus pandemic with the proportion in previous years. Any significant increase should be brought to the attention of the Health and Justice Ministers, with an emphasis on provision of appropriate alternative accommodation and support.

Regarding ***waiting times for appointments***, information provided by the SE Trust in relation to the Hawthorne Practice at Hydebank stated that the routine wait for a GP appointment between 1.4.20 and 31.3.21 did not exceed 2 weeks. From July 2020, the Mental Health Team completed face-to-face triage with all new committals the day after they entered custody. Routine or urgent mental health provision was offered on the basis of assessed need and was in line with community waiting times: up to 9 weeks for a routine appointment, up to 10 days for an urgent appointment. It was reported that individuals in Hydebank were often assessed below these waiting times, and that anyone in crisis was seen immediately. The number of dental appointments made each month ranged from 18 in July to 62 in November. The longest wait for an appointment was 5 days (October), but most individuals were seen within 2-3 days. If an emergency request was made the individual was seen earlier, and there was access to emergency dental treatment within the Belfast Trust.

In terms of **complaints**, the Lead Nurse reported in mid-June that only one person had complained to Healthcare and that was after their period in isolation. The SE Trust reported that no formal complaints had been received during the year 1.4.20-31.3.21.

Specific issues

Concerns about the physical and/or mental health of **individuals** were discussed with the Lead Nurse in telephone updates and at Board meetings. She explained what was being done by Healthcare or other agencies (such as the prisoner's Sentence Manager) to resolve issues and support individuals.

Delay in **virtual appointments from Hospitals**, where the Hospital gave a 9am appointment and the patient plus a member of Healthcare staff then waited until 11.30am for the Hospital to call, was an issue that occurred three times in the week beginning 8th June 2020. This was flagged by the Lead Nurse to the Healthcare in Prison lead in the SE Trust.

During a virtual Safer Custody Steering Group meeting held in November 2020, a member of the mental health team commented that there was a shortage of mental health facilities in the community and, in her 20 years of experience, the number of those waiting for a **Transfer Directional Order [TDO]** to a more suitable facility was at its highest across all three prisons. When a TDO is sought, an external assessor has to go into the prison to assess whether this is appropriate and, if so, there may be some delay before a bed becomes available in a community mental health facility. The Lead Nurse reported that if no bed becomes available in a suitable ward in the prisoner's host Trust within two weeks, the delay is escalated to Director level in the SE and host Trusts. The SE Trust confirmed that there were 7 TDOs in Hydebank during the year 1.4.20-31.3.21, with four occasions when there was more than a two-week delay [see 'Segregation' section].

The Board closely monitored the situation concerning provision for a **mother and her baby** housed on a landing at the base of the Healthcare Centre - the Primrose Unit - and **pregnant women** held in Hydebank during the reporting year. It was satisfied that responsible agencies worked together in difficult circumstances to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all concerned. When specific concerns were raised with Healthcare, these were responded to with an explanation of the circumstances and planned actions.

The Board is keen to ensure **attendance of the Lead Nurse, or a representative from Healthcare, at every Board meeting**. Given the perceived value of the information provided by the Lead Nurse when she attended Board meetings, and the opportunity this provided for

Board members to follow up on Healthcare issues raised with them by individuals, the Board agreed in September's Board meeting to request a written update about any relevant issues from Healthcare if the Lead Nurse or a representative was unable to attend a Board meeting. Unfortunately, the Lead Nurse was unable to join due to technical issues the WebEx virtual Board meetings held from January to March 2021, leading to a reliance on telephone updates. **Recommendation re-stated: Attendance of the Lead Nurse (or representative from Healthcare at Hydebank Wood) at every IMB Board meeting, alongside quarterly meetings with the AD for Healthcare in Prison.**

9. LIBRARY

Following the **COVID-19** lockdown, the Library was no longer open and the Librarian's working week was reduced to three days. The Librarian was extremely busy organising and operating a delivery system. Prisoners on each landing were able to ask officers to phone the Librarian to ask for specific items, which were then collected and distributed by a number of assigned officers. Before books, DVDs and CDs left the Library they were cleaned with sanitiser and the same precautions were taken once they were returned. In the summer prisoners from different landings were allowed to visit the Library for half-hour sessions, with a 15 minute interval between each visit during which the Library had to be cleaned with sanitising spray and then let dry. The visits by landing were very structured and the timetable had to be changed twice because of other activities. From September 2020, the Library was back to operating a full service and the Librarian returned to work 5 days a week. There was only one Library Assistant (a female) as the other (male) Assistant was from a different House and therefore not able to work in the Library to avoid mixing between landings.

In terms of **events**, International Women's Day was celebrated in March by landings and there were messages from female personalities. Men's Health Day was celebrated in June by landings and different celebrities sent messages. The messages on both days were shown on a large screen, light refreshments were provided and each person received an appropriate goodie bag.

Two **programmes** proved to be very popular: a Book Folding Project and a Storybook Recording Project, with interest heightened because of the Covid-19 restrictions. The Librarian and her Assistant were inundated with requests for both projects and the finished items were posted out from different landings at prison expense. The Librarian has endeavoured to ensure constant activity on every landing by supplying card making craft packs, colouring packs and word searches as well as books, DVDs and CDs.

10. RECEPTION AND INDUCTION

Reception

As a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic, in April 2020 the Female Reception was closed and all committals were processed through Male Reception. Any post for women prisoners was processed by an officer in Ash House bubble, and individual class officers facilitated the transfer of money when required.

Induction

As a result of COVID restrictions, induction has been limited. Committal staff visited those in the Isolation Units wearing PPE, and information was provided within a booklet. However, during a visit to the isolation cells by the IMB Chair and Vice-Chair in November 2020, it was noted that the 'First Night' booklet given to prisoners on arrival was a pre-Covid generic version.

Discussing the 'New Governor Scheme', in February 2021 the (then) Deputy Governor indicated that priorities would be cleanliness and basics, followed by a review of delivery of the Induction programme (including consideration of the advantages of delivery within Beech 1 for males and Fern 2 for females).

The Board plans to review the *induction materials* received by prisoners (i.e. timetable and information) and re-draft information about Hydebank Wood IMB for inclusion in the induction programme. It was suggested to the IMB Executive Council that a DVD be produced for prisoners about the role of the IMB within prisons – this would be particularly useful given low levels of literacy and high levels of dyslexia amongst those in custody.

11. RESETTLEMENT

The successful resettlement of all those who are committed to Hydebank Wood, whether on remand or sentenced, must 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.

During this reporting year, a decrease in the number of prisoners was mirrored by decreased staff attendance and a significant reduction in the support of external services, largely as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, it is reassuring that efforts were made to maintain a regime that was active and progressive.

As recommended in last year's Annual Report, the Governor with responsibility for resettlement reported that a **Resettlement Needs Assessment** has been designed and utilised to support the development of co-ordinated, structured pre-release planning. Completed within 30 days, this identifies the needs of the prisoner both whilst inside Hydebank and upon release. Implementation of this needs assessment has yet to be evaluated.

Another recommendation from last year – *establishment of a system to monitor the number of individuals in substantive accommodation 12 weeks after release, the difficulties experienced by ex-prisoners and potential changes required to enhance resettlement* – has not yet commenced. The Board considers this an activity that should be progressed to determine what works and attempt to reduce obstacles to successful resettlement.

Recommendation re-stated: A system is established to monitor the number of individuals in substantive accommodation 12 weeks after release, the difficulties experienced by ex-prisoners, and potential changes required to enhance resettlement.

During the year, under the '**Early Release Scheme**' enacted as a measure to assist with the pandemic, 58 prisoners were released from Hydebank Wood: 33 women, 25 young men [see 'Overview of the Establishment' section]. The immediacy of these releases did not make it possible for any resettlement plans to be put in place, the consequences of which are unknown.

Those with responsibility for resettlement, sentence planning and support work together in the **Personal Development Unit** [PDU]. Co-ordination and collaboration between the various disciplines – NIPS, Probation, Psychology, Start 360 and the Chaplains – appears to be very good. Whilst the pandemic and subsequent restrictions curtailed their on-site presence to varying degrees, it would appear that this did not have a significant impact on the support provided to prisoners.

Valuable **additional services** – Housing Rights, NIACRO, and Barnardo's – were unavailable for some time as a result of the pandemic restrictions but, as much as was possible, they provided support virtually. When restrictions made it permissible, they returned to the PDU. It is pleasing to note that the Women's Safety Worker, in post since October 2019, has continued to work closely with Probation and Women's Aid. She reportedly has a positive rapport with the female prisoners and is active in delivering the GOALS programme.

The **Beyond Violence programme**, which was delivered to female prisoners with some success last year, did not run again this year. Given the high proportion of women in Hydebank

who have used violence as a response to trauma and abuse, it is imperative that this programme is available.

Recommendation: The Beyond Violence Programme is made available and delivered to those for whom it was designed.

A new, community-based resource for women commenced this year. **PAUSE** is a voluntary programme for and with women who have experienced/ are at risk of repeated pregnancies that result in children being removed from their care. The programme aims to break this cycle and support women to take control of their lives with the help of a key worker for 18 months. At the end of March 2021, two released women started the programme and a subsequent four had been referred to it.

The **Working Out Units** – Willow for males, Murray House for females – have not had a great degree of success this year. Willow Working Out Unit was closed completely in June 2020, with numbers having been very low (2) since May. The struggle to identify women who met the criteria to be located in Murray House continued and in June it was also closed, partly as a consequence of COVID-19 restrictions which meant that the women located there were unable to work in the community. Murray House reopened towards the end of the reporting year but, again, numbers were low. Whilst the reduced numbers of women within the prison may have contributed to this, it remains disappointing that the recommendations from last year did not materialise.

Recommendation re-stated: Providing tangible preparation for resettlement as residents live independently and do paid work in the community, the Working Out Unit for young men is recommenced.

Recommendation re-stated: 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.

12. SAFER CUSTODY

The **vulnerable nature of individuals in custody** has been well documented, and the Inspectorate has evidenced how the social and psychological profile of prisoners is poorer than that of the general population, with higher concentrations of mental ill-health, learning disability and personality disorder as well as higher prescription rates amongst those in prison (CJINI and RQIA, 2019, p16-18). In Hydebank, many of the young males have high levels of need and vulnerability, often linked to substance misuse. Many of the women have serious social, health and emotional problems and are on prescribed medication. In 2018 the prevalence of previous traumatic brain injury amongst women prisoners was found to be high

(79%) with 38% of women reporting six or more previous injuries, the majority of which were sustained as a result of either childhood or partner physical abuse (O'Rourke et al, 2018, cited in CJINI and RQIA, 2019, p18).

As noted in previous Annual Reports, in November 2016 the Ministers for Justice and Health announced a joint **review of provision of services for vulnerable people detained in Northern Ireland prisons**. In December 2018, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Agency [RQIA] was commissioned to assume responsibility for this Review. Following a three and a half year delay, the RQIA was scheduled to undertake the review in 2020. However, Terms of Reference were not published until January 2021. The Terms of Reference included assessment of the effectiveness of strategies/ policies, services and operational procedures in place to deliver care and treatment to people with mental ill-health at risk of self-harm or suicide in the prisons, as well as the effectiveness of arrangements for needs assessment and planning/ commissioning of services delivered to this group. The RQIA anticipated reporting its findings in summer 2021.

Safer Custody at Hydebank Wood

The **Safer Custody Team** at Hydebank consists of a Governor, senior officer and two officers. The role of the team includes attendance at all 'at risk' SPAR Care Plan reviews; supporting and being a point of contact in relation to issues such as bullying or the needs of Foreign Nationals; co-working with other departments on referrals; attending Rule 32 reviews and case conferences; contributing to the induction process, including bullying awareness and the process to be followed if a bullying incident occurs; contributing to Safety and Support meetings regarding bullying, anti-social behaviour and other incidents to provide a focus for the forthcoming week. During the year, the Team worked with Healthcare and the Health Development Worker for Prisons to provide distraction packs, landing-based activities and games to keep prisoners occupied. They checked-in with new committals in the Isolation Units within 48 hours of their arrival to pick up on any potential issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity.

During the year, **weekly Safety and Support meetings** continued to take place to consider the needs of 4-5 specific individuals each week (female and male) about whom staff had concerns. However, these were only attended by the Safety and Support Team and Healthcare, with written inputs from others as necessary due to the need to maintain social distancing and to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19. **Monthly Safer Custody Steering Group meetings** considering statistical safety and support information were

cancelled between April and August, resuming again in September with attendance via WebEx for those unable to meet in Hydebank as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

SPAR Evolution

The **SPAR Evolution** [Supporting the Person At Risk] process continued to be used by NIPS when responding to individuals in distress; taking practical steps to ensure that those identified as being at risk of self-harm or suicide received appropriate support. A concern being raised about an individual leads to one of three outcomes:

- 1) 'No apparent risk' – whatever caused the initial concern has been/ can be addressed and there is nothing to indicate self-harm or suicidal intent;
- 2) 'No apparent risk with referrals' – there is nothing to indicate self-harm or suicidal intent but referral to another agency is intended to provide necessary support;
- 3) 'at risk' – the person requires assistance from partner agencies, frequent monitoring, and development of a care plan which includes details about the environment; referral for interventions or additional assessments (by the GP, mental health team or other agencies); support and interventions provided. It is intended that access to usual activities and education/ work will be maintained, with the person remaining in their own cell unless the risk of self-harm is high. If placed in an Observation Cell, the person should, if possible and after risk assessment, remain in their own clothes.

Despite having a lower population than the other two prisons in Northern Ireland, historically the rates of SPARS raised, recorded self-harm incidents and authorized use of Observation Cells has been higher amongst both young men and females in Hydebank Wood (CJINI and RQIA, 2019, p70).

According to figures supplied by NIPS (email, 24.7.21), between 1.4.20-31.3.21, 284 concerns were raised (185 by Reception, 99 by residential staff) in relation to 150 individuals in the **male population**. Following assessment:

- 132 of these were considered 'no apparent risk' (98 of those raised by Reception, 34 of those raised by residential staff)
- 96 were considered 'no apparent risk with referrals' (67 of those raised by Reception, 29 of those raised by residential staff)
- 56 were considered 'at risk' (20 of those raised by Reception, 36 of those raised by residential staff).

Observation Cells were used 12 times in relation to 9 individuals, with anti-ligature clothing used on 11 occasions. There were 17 self-harm incidents by 13 individual young men.

During the same period, 389 concerns were raised (221 by Reception and 168 by residential staff) in relation to 185 individuals in the **female population**. Following assessment:

- 104 of these were considered 'no apparent risk' (60 of those raised by Reception, 44 of those raised by residential staff)
- 185 were considered 'no apparent risk with referrals' (125 of those raised by Reception, 60 of those raised by residential staff)
- 100 were considered 'at risk' (36 of those raised by Reception, 64 of those raised by residential staff).

Observation Cells were used 29 times in relation to 26 women, with anti-ligature clothing used on 19 occasions. There were 24 self-harm incidents by 15 individual women.

The main reasons for Care Plans being opened were 'low mood' or someone exhibiting unusual behaviour. Mental health team attendance at SPAR reviews reportedly led to a more "robust" approach and improved joint working with NIPS. In comparison with other jurisdictions, where prisoners spent a lot of time in their cells and incidence of self-harm was high during the pandemic, the focus in Northern Ireland on encouraging as much out of cell time as possible while maintaining landing-based cohorts was reported to have contributed to a reduction in behavioral and self-harm incidents (evident in 6-month comparisons with the same time last year in both September 2020 and March 2021).

Bullying and Anti-social Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can take many forms and may be overt or covert. A Security Information Report [SIR] is submitted following every reported bullying incident, which is then investigated.

Anti-social behaviour is managed through the *Challenging Anti-social Behaviour [CAB] Policy*. This includes a Concern Form which can be completed by staff if they consider unacceptable behaviour is occurring without waiting for a person to self-report an incident (e.g. if they notice that someone has more or less 'tuck' than they should, or is wearing another person's clothes). During the year there were 57 recorded anti-social behaviour incidents involving 60 individual young men, and 35 incidents involving 45 women. These figures were lower than those reported last year (when there were 69 incidents amongst males and 77 amongst females). This was attributed to fewer prisoners being held in custody at Hydebank,

the population being spread around the site, lack of illicit drugs coming into custody, and positive engagement of staff with those on landings. Throughout the year, efforts were made by NIPS staff to relieve boredom, maintain prisoners' spirits and interact with the relatively low numbers on each landing. There was a strong sense of camaraderie amongst the small landing groups. In addition, having a separate committal/ induction landing [Fern 2], and establishment of a small CSU for women prisoners in another House, contributed to a considerable reduction in tension amongst female prisoners formerly all located in Ash House.

In February 2021, Board members expressed disappointment that **restorative justice practice** had not been implemented as a means of resolving low level conflict in Hydebank because the small number of trained staff were deployed to meet operational need during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Recommendation re-stated: The Restorative Justice approach is expanded, with a bigger pool of staff trained to facilitate this approach.

Additional Support

All committals were offered support by **Action Mental Health** via a phone call, and this support could continue via virtual visits when they joined the general population if desired. From September 2020, **Start 360** provided mentoring/ emotional support via a virtual visit for anyone identified as needing this support. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, the **Samaritans** did not visit Hydebank during the year. Instead they were available via the phone system (using the PIN number on the landing phone or a portable earpiece/ phone at night). However, there were reportedly issues with poor signal strength which affected the making and maintaining of connection in some areas. An additional problem was a technical issue in which the dedicated phone line was intermittently suspended when a Samaritans automated system triggered a message that the maximum amount of calls from one number had been exceeded. This issue was also experienced at Maghaberry prison and NIPS HQ was working to resolve it.

13. SEGREGATION – CARE AND SUPERVISION UNIT (CSU)

Individuals may be segregated from the general population and placed in the Care and Supervision Unit [CSU] if they have transgressed prison rules and received a period of cellular confinement under Prison Rule 39(f) for adult prisoners or confinement to room (Prison Rule 95 (2) (f) for Young Offenders or their association has been restricted to maintain good order and discipline, ensure the safety of others, or in their own interests under Prison Rule 32 [R32] for a period authorised by a NIPS HQ Governor if an extension has been requested following the initial period on local R32. Weekly Oversight Committee meetings review the progress of individuals held on R32 and consider actions required to enable their return to the general

population.

Due to restrictions on personnel going into the prison, IMB members did not attend R32 reviews or weekly **Oversight Committee** meetings for most of the year. From 27th June IMB members used the Administration Boardroom on Saturday mornings to check R32 and Oversight Committee paperwork (brought over from CSU), discussing any issues arising with the Duty Governor present on site. These visits were stopped for two weeks in October when additional restrictions were brought in, but resumed again and continued through to the end of the reporting year. Individual Board members attended the Oversight Committee meetings in person from January 2021. Whilst IMB involvement in the Oversight Committee meetings was curtailed, there is general satisfaction with their value and how they are progressing. As recommended in the 2019-2020 Annual Report, the Board continues to urge that every effort is made in discussion and subsequent recorded actions to minimise the length of time prisoners are confined under R32. Concerns with regard to the undue length of time some are detained in the CSU remain.

Recommendation re-stated: Discussion and subsequent actions during weekly Oversight Committee meetings should focus on minimising the length of time prisoners are confined under Rule 32 and the support required to enable their return to the normal regime.

The number of **R32s** in this reporting year was lower than in previous years, most probably the consequence of both a decrease in the population during the Coronavirus pandemic and in the level of illicit substances on site.

According to figures provided by NIPS (email 22.6.21), within the male population between 1.4.20 and 31.3.21 there was a total of 87 R32s involving 53 young men, with one being placed on R32 on 6 separate occasions, one on 4 occasions, 8 on 3 occasions, 10 on 2 occasions and 33 placed on R32 once. The majority were placed on R32 'to ensure the safety of others' (49), 28 'for good order and discipline', 7 'pending investigation' and 3 'in their own interests'. The main reasons for individuals being placed on R32 were drugs (31), violence (22) and behaviour (22). Concealed articles (8) and weapons (1) also featured within the reasons for male restrictions. Whilst the majority (81%) were returned from the CSU to the general population within 21 days (47% within 3 days), the Board raised concern regarding the four occasions where young men remained within the CSU for more than 42 days. Numbers of young men in the CSU fluctuated this year as usual, ranging from 3 to 12 at any one time, with the average being 5.

A total of 12 women were placed on R32 (two on two separate occasions) during the same period. Mostly this was for up to 3 days (5: 36%). However, one woman was on R32 for more than 36 days and one for more than 42 days. On nine occasions the reason for women being placed on R32 was 'to ensure the safety of others', on four it was 'for good order and discipline' and once 'pending investigation'. This was related to drugs (5), behaviour (3), violence (3) or 'other' factors (3).

Two of the individuals who spent an extensive period in the CSU, one male and one female, were eventually transferred (via a TDO) to secure psychiatric accommodation - highlighting the inappropriateness of their placement in custody, use of segregation, and the complexities for staff involved in their care and supervision.

The Board is pleased to report that last year's recommendation that '*NIPS, in partnership and with the support of relevant others, considers the establishment of a specific area/ Unit for those women who require segregation*' was both considered and implemented. A **female CSU** was established in December 2020 on the landing next to the male CSU. The same staff cover both CSUs. The Board considers this a significant improvement on the use of Ash 1 for those confined to cell or placed on Rule 32. The female CSU has capacity for four women (in single rooms), with no more than two women having been there at any one time in this reporting year. As would be expected, those placed there generally suffered with mental health/behavioural issues, as was the case with many of the young men transferred to the male CSU.

Although mental health and allied professionals are involved with their care to some degree, it is prison staff who have the bulk of responsibility for the welfare of those in the CSUs on a daily basis. Staffing in the CSU appeared to be stable, consistent and adequate throughout the year. Whilst these staff are responsive and demonstrate commitment to meeting individual needs, they are not trained to deal with the challenging and often distressing behaviours presented by some individuals in the CSUs. The Board was pleased to hear that a number of NIPS staff had received **training in trauma-informed practice** this year, but disappointed that staff in the CSU did not appear to have availed of this training.

Recommendation re-stated: All staff deployed within the CSU are trained in trauma-informed practice.

The Board was concerned throughout this year that the **regime** in the CSUs was limited, with a lack of constructive activity as inputs from other agencies were affected by COVID-19 restrictions. This was acknowledged by the (then) Deputy Governor and the Board was assured in January 2021 that some measures were being put in place to facilitate virtual

learning and increased interaction. The Board is pleased to report that a PC was installed in the Interview Room and has been used by prisoners for Zoom meetings/ calls.

This reporting year saw a CJINI *inspection of CSUs* across the three prisons, to which the Hydebank IMB Board contributed via a Zoom meeting. Information was provided from CSU log books and key issues raised were: the length of confinement for some individual young men, recommended extensions being reduced by HQ Governors, and the difficulties involved in motivating some of the young men to engage in constructive activity while in the CSU.

14. SPORT AND RECREATION

Gym

During the year there have been extended periods when, in line with COVID-19 restrictions in the wider community, the Gym was closed. However, the Gym staff endeavoured to provide a *programme of activity* across the residential areas throughout. When the Gym was closed from April to July 2020, Gym staff provided a limited range of activity to residents within their domestic bubbles, including no-contact football, walks and running, utilising outside areas. A team competition in aid of charity was organised in June 2020, with teams of prisoners and staff from each landing competing while maintaining social distancing. One member of the Gym staff was assigned to a residential area each day to provide the programme of activity across all landings. Each landing operated as a single domestic unit with no interaction with other landings to help reduce the likelihood of any potential cross-contamination. This system proved to be most effective. In July 2020 the Gym was opened for use by one landing at a time and Gym staff supervised the use of exercise equipment.

There was strict adherence to all PHA guidelines with regard to social distancing and a programme of sanitation of machinery and the Gym area between scheduled sessions. Attendance was within domestic bubbles twice a week. In line with wider restrictions in the community the Gym was closed from September 2020 to the end of March 2021. Gym staff reverted to providing a limited range of activity to residents within their domestic bubbles (no-contact football, walks and running using an outdoor pitch). Female residents were offered a 'Couch to 5K' Course, which proved popular.

Gym staff worked on preparation of an *Open College Network qualification* 'Understanding How Exercise Contributes to a Healthy Lifestyle', assisted initially by the Belfast Met. Head of Learning and the Librarian (who is the OCN Co-Ordinator for Hydebank Wood). In October they commenced the first delivery to eight young men using the Gym as a study hall. Those who completed the course were awarded certificates by the (then) Deputy Governor in

December. As the first course of its kind, this was covered on the NIPS Twitter page. A further class of females also completed the course.

While the Gym was closed, the opportunity was taken to have the **area updated** with new signage, additional equipment and flooring.

Recreation

In terms of time 'out of cell', there was more mixing between landings from June until 16th October 2020 (in line with a lifting of some restrictions in the community). During the year, there was extensive provision of **recreation** across all areas including:

- Distraction packs – puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, colouring
- Art supplies for use on the landings
- In-house competitions such as quizzes and bingo
- Nature for Nurture with each student being given a seed, pot and soil to grow their own plant
- Mobile library
- 'Banter and Buns' sessions took place on Saturday mornings, although these were held once a month from July as provision of weekly staffing at weekends proved difficult
- *WhatsUp?* Magazine highlighting ongoing activities and encouraging males and females to contribute goodwill messages
- Shared reading events
- Advice sessions on keeping active/ weight management/ nutrition awareness
- Walking therapy with the dogs
- Several off-landing outside events were held including a Big Outdoor Table Quiz, a Fitness for Food event, Picnic Karaoke, Treasure Hunts and an Elf Hunt at Christmas. Residents attended the Treasure Hunts and Elf Hunt by landing. With the larger scale events it was possible to have the majority of residents attend together with no issues and social distancing was ensured through supervision by staff.
- There were efforts to raise funds for local charities through various events. A Pink Colour Run, cake sale and raffle for Action Cancer in October raised £2,150. Cake sales proved to be very popular and all residents were allowed to purchase items on sale.
- A Pumpkin event was planned to celebrate Halloween.
- 19th November was International Men's Day and an event was organised in the Library, with small groups attending in their landing bubbles.

The Health Development Worker for Prisons worked with the Healthcare Team to deliver these events and used them to gather material from residents for the *WhatsUp?* Magazine.

Although there was no 'timetable' to the **regime**, activities included X-Boxes, games, bingo, quizzes, mini-cooking, wing-based gym. It was reported in August 2020 that prisoners were out of their cells all day at weekends, participating in Bingo and other activities. The (then) Deputy Governor reported that, over the Christmas period, a full regime operated up to 24th December, with an 0800-1800 unlock for all on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. No Home Leave was agreed as this would require the prisoners to isolate on their return. An outdoor Christmas Day event was planned, gifts (selection boxes) were provided, the catering budget was increased, and decorations were provided for all landings (including the CSU and Isolation Units).

Last year the IMB recommended that effort should be made to continue to encourage **local, high-profile sportspeople to visit Hydebank** and cement links with the 'outside community'. This was not feasible during 2020-2021 because of COVID-19 restrictions, but the College is encouraged to continue with this policy once conditions permit.

Recommendation re-stated: Every effort should be made to encourage high profile, local sportspeople to visit Hydebank and cement links with the 'outside' community.

15. TUCK SHOP

The Tuck Shop continues to be an appreciated resource for the prisoners. In the most recent Inspection Report (CJINI, 2020, p32) the Inspectors commended "the Tuck Shop for providing a wide **range of groceries** often at prices well below those in the community". During the year, as contracts with suppliers ended, that range of groceries has been extended. This was as a result of asking the prisoners what they would like to see on the provision list. Subsequently different lines were added, giving the prisoners more variety and choice.

Prior to COVID-19, the Speech and Language Therapist and the Dietician developed an '**easy to read' version of the Tuck Shop list**. Pictorial representations, together with information about the content of the provisions (such as sugar and fat levels), were designed to make it simpler for prisoners to navigate the list. This Picture Tuck List was rolled out to all landings during the year, a very advantageous initiative for those who may have struggled with interpreting the former list.

Enhanced prisoners have maintained a **presence in the Tuck Shop**, giving them the opportunity to improve their skills in numeracy and literacy with the added bonus of improved

self-esteem. This is a very worthwhile role for both male and female prisoners.

The practice of prisoners receiving a ***Tuck Shop Supplies Pack on committal*** continues. This is a welcome gesture, especially for those committed to custody for the first time. As part of the institution, the Tuck Shop is a well-run resource which attracts positive acknowledgement from the prisoners for the efficient and effective service it provides.

16. VISITS AND COMMUNICATION

Visits

As a consequence of COVID-19, in March 2020 the Justice Minister announced a temporary ***suspension of visits*** in all 3 prisons. In Hydebank Wood, Skype and (from mid-April) Zoom were used to enhance communication by prisoners with their families and friends. In addition to those within Ash House, 'virtual visits pods' were established in various sites around the campus. Virtual visits of up to 20 minutes were booked in advance and rotated so that Houses did not mix - Beech virtual visits took place in Learning and Skills; Cedar's in Videolink; and Fern, CSU prisoners and 'separated' females used a terminal in the Visits Centre. ***Virtual visits*** were considered especially welcome for prisoners who had been away from their home setting for some time as they could see their home; for those who had not been able to see younger siblings, other relatives, or their pets; and for Foreign Nationals.

The (then) Deputy Governor advised an Equality and Diversity Committee meeting in November 2020 that he was pursuing additional funding to enable ***Wi-Fi*** across the Hydebank Wood estate. This intention was affirmed at the December IMB Board meeting, which included discussion of a business plan to roll out IT infrastructure with the aim of providing access to Wi-Fi in every cell and plans to develop a business case to establish Zoom booths across all areas next year. It was anticipated that this will improve educational as well as communication options. The Board welcomes this objective, particularly given the importance of regular communication with family and friends for prisoners and at a time when visits have been restricted to reduce potential COVID-19 infection.

Recommendation: Plans to enable Wi-Fi across the Hydebank Wood estate, with access to Wi-Fi in every cell and Zoom booths in every area, should be progressed as a matter of urgency.

Socially distanced visits were introduced in Hydebank on 27th July 2020. NIPS produced *Information for Families* and *Socially Distanced Visits* Leaflets. Open to all on a 'first come, first served' basis, priority was given to new committals and those who had not been able to use virtual visits. Visits were offered one day per week, with morning and afternoon sessions

alternating for males and females. On the first week, visits were on Monday, the second week they were on Tuesday, etc. with no visits Friday to Sunday. There were two sessions in the morning and one in the afternoon. Existing 'closed booths' were used to provide precautionary measures, with a third also opened. However, on 15.10.20 NIPS Director General stated that, from 6pm on Friday 16.10.20 "all in-person visits will be temporarily suspended" until 13.11.20 as the 'second wave' of COVID-19 led to an unprecedented increase in numbers infected in Northern Ireland. Although restrictions were eased in the community for a week, they were re-imposed from 27.11.20 to 11.12.20. The (then) Deputy Governor reported that face to face visits resumed in Hydebank on 14th December, using 3 closed booths. Although one adult and a prisoner's child were allowed to visit, it was reported that parents were not taking up this option in comparison with previous demand. However, as a result of rising COVID-19 infections in the community, the NI Executive imposed further **restrictions** from 26th December. During this third 'lockdown', in-person visits were again stopped and did not resume until 4 May 2021.

Communication

A '**Hydebank Mums' initiative** operated from 17.00-19.00 for women with children, and some of the women in Ash had access to Skype-enabled tablets which they used to maintain contact with their family.

Each prisoner in Hydebank received an **additional phone credit** of £5 per week throughout the year to encourage maintenance of contact with family and friends during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In September 2020, a female raised with a Board member visiting Hydebank Wood the issue of **clothing parcels** from families and friends not being distributed while packages ordered from Amazon were being delivered and distributed. The following month the (then) Governor and Deputy Governor reported that fewer parcels were delivered during Coronavirus 'lockdowns' in the community; those received were 'quarantined' for 72 hours and then searched before they were sent for distribution in each House.

It was reported in September 2020 that those eligible for **Home Leave** were taking this at the end of their sentence and not returning to Hydebank, to prevent them returning to custody and having to isolate for 14 days.

At the end of November 2020, the IMB was informed that an '**email a prisoner' facility** had been established - if the prisoner's family opens an account and deposits a minimum of £5,

they can email the prisoner (at a cost of 40p) and receive a response (at a cost of 25p), with the costs met by the family. However, it was reported in February 2021 that there had been limited uptake of this scheme.

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HYDEBANK WOOD COLLEGE & WOMEN'S PRISON BOARD MEMBERS

1 APRIL 2020 - 31 MARCH 2021

IMB Member	Status	Appointed	Retired / Resigned
Ann Adams	Member	10/06/13	~
Claire Aitken	Member	01/04/19	~
Clive Smyth	Vice-Chair	20/05/13	28/02/21
Deena Haydon	Member	01/04/16	~
Hazel Patton	Chair	31/07/13	31/03/21
John Watson	Member	01/04/19	~
Michael O'Hara	Member	01/04/19	~
Pip Jaffa	Member	01/04/19	~
Yvonne Adair	Member	01/04/16	~

APPENDIX 1: THE WORK OF HYDEBANK WOOD IMB 2020-2021

The **Hydebank Wood IMB Board** consisted of 9 members during 2020-2021. One member took a six month sabbatical from November 2020 – May 2021, and the Chair was absent for parts of June, July and October as she was out of the country involved in essential family matters. The Vice Chair and Chair both retired from the IMB in February and March 2021 respectively. They will be much missed, having made a significant contribution to the Board since joining in 2013.

The Board usually has **monthly meetings**, attended by the Governor or Deputy Governor who report about events and developments in Hydebank over the previous month and respond to matters arising from rota visits or specific issues of concern raised by Board members. The Lead Nurse is also invited to attend to report on staffing and initiatives within Healthcare at Hydebank as well as responding to healthcare-related issues raised during the previous month's rota visits. During the 2020-2021 year, as a result of restrictions imposed in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, meetings in the prison were limited. Board members met in the Hydebank Visits Centre to discuss drafting of the 2019-2020 Hydebank Wood IMB Annual Report in June 2020. The first Board meeting of the year took place in the Visits Centre in August - eight IMB members attended in person, sitting at socially distanced tables, and one participated via telephone. Two members of the Secretariat were in attendance. The Lead Nurse and one of the 'Future Leaders' Governors who had been at Hydebank for just four weeks provided updates about how the prison was operating. The September Board meeting was also held in the Visits Centre. As additional restrictions were imposed throughout Northern Ireland during the second COVID-19 'lockdown', a virtual Board meeting was arranged via Zoom in October. Board meetings were held in Hydebank Visits Centre in November, and in the Administration Board Room in December. The Chair and Vice Chair met with the (then) Deputy Governor in January 2021 to reduce footfall in the prison during the third Northern Ireland 'lockdown', circulating notes to Board members afterwards. They subsequently had to self-isolate, when he and other members of the NIPS management team tested positive for COVID-19. Each member of the Board was provided with a secure laptop by the Department of Justice in January 2021, which improved communication with NIPS and the IMB Secretariat, and enabled organisation of virtual Board meetings using Microsoft Teams in January, February and March.

During periods when Board meetings were not possible, regular contact was maintained with the prison through weekly telephone updates from the (then) Deputy Governor to the Board Chair or Vice Chair, notes of which were circulated to Board members via email. In addition, individual Board members received regular telephone updates from the Lead Nurse regarding

Healthcare, and from Governors concerning Equality and Diversity as well as Safety and Support, with notes circulated via email.

The Chair and Vice Chair met the (then) Governor and Deputy Governor at Hydebank on 8.6.20 to discuss the recently published Inspection reports and process for gathering information to inform the 2019-2020 Hydebank Wood IMB Annual Report, with a follow-up meeting on 9.11.20 to discuss the draft Report and any issues arising from the process of factual accuracy checking. They also visited the 'isolation' cells on 17.11.20 and the female 'separated unit' on 11.12.20. As requested by the (then) Deputy Governor in January, they ensured that staff working on these landings logged their presence for potential 'track and trace' should they subsequently develop COVID-19 symptoms.

Members usually carry out weekly *rota visits*, in pairs, when they visit each prisoner in the CSU and every House landing plus other areas of Hydebank (e.g. Learning and Skills Centre, gardens, gyms, Murray House, the kitchens, the Cabin). In addition to following up any prisoner's request to be seen (placed in a box on their landing), members speak informally to prisoners and staff as they move around the site. Any issues raised by prisoners or staff are noted in log books and followed up with relevant personnel. However, IMB members stopped visiting Hydebank following the initial UK COVID-19 'lockdown' in March 2020. A Freephone number was provided to prisoners via a poster on every landing and a system was established whereby the Secretariat would contact an IMB member if a prisoner rang the Freephone number. That person would then make arrangements to speak with the prisoner by phone in confidence, following up any issues raised with relevant NIPS/ Healthcare personnel by phone or email. On 13.6.20 a message wishing prisoners well and reminding them about the IMB Freephone was included in the *WhatsUp?* Magazine produced for them by NIPS and Healthcare staff during the summer. Only one prisoner in Hydebank used the Freephone throughout the year – the Secretariat forwarded their details to the Board and the situation was addressed.

Board members were notified via email about forthcoming **Rule 32 reviews** and weekly Rule 32 Oversight Committee meetings. Unable to attend these reviews or meetings in person, from 27th June 2020 Board members, in pairs, reviewed R32 and Oversight Committee paperwork in the Administration Block (where the records were left by CSU staff) every Saturday morning on a rota basis. They used this opportunity to discuss the situation with the Duty Governor, relaying any issues by email to other Board members. Following the introduction of additional restrictions on 15th October, no-one visited on 17th or 24th and just one member at a time fulfilled this role from 31st October until June 2021 (following agreement

by NIPS Executive Forum on 2.6.21 that IMB members could return to attending R32s in person). Board members attended the weekly Oversight Committee in person from January 2021.

The IMB is represented on a number of **Committees** in Hydebank, including monthly Equality and Diversity Committee meetings and monthly Safer Custody Steering Group meetings. When these were held virtually via WebEx the relevant Board member attended, circulating notes afterwards.

IMB members usually attend **training** throughout the year, but this was not possible during 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

All members of the Board usually attend the **IMB AGM** with colleagues from the two other prisons in Northern Ireland. However, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the AGM did not take place during 2020.

Three members of the Board were elected members of the **NI IMB Executive Council**. They attended virtual meetings to discuss and agree policies and procedures across the three Boards (23.11.20; 8.2.21; 29.3.21). A separate meeting of the Council was held to consider review of constitutions for the Executive Council and IMBs (27.6.21).

Some Hydebank Wood IMB members responded, as individuals, to the Ministry of Justice **consultation**, '*Strengthening the Independent Scrutiny Bodies through Legislation*' (September 2020).

With IMB colleagues from the other two prisons, the Vice Chair and incoming Chair of Hydebank Wood IMB attended a virtual **meeting with the Minister for Justice** in February 2021 where they raised the issue of slow progress in the establishment of a stand-alone Women's Prison on the Hydebank site. They, with representatives from the other prisons, also attended a virtual **meeting with the NIPS Director General** on 1.3.21.

The Board Chair and/or Vice-Chair maintained contact throughout the year with **other monitoring bodies** (CJINI, RQIA, Prisoner Ombudsman), including a Zoom meeting with the CJINI Chief Inspector and staff which focused on the condition and use of the CSU within Hydebank, weekly Oversight meetings, and the planned development of a women's facility (3.12.20). The Board contributed to inspections being conducted by CJINI into how the criminal justice system treats females in conflict with the law (Zoom meeting, 12.1.21) and use

of CSUs in Northern Ireland prisons (Zoom meeting, 18.1.21; information recorded in log books). The Chair and Vice Chair, with IMB members from the other two prisons, met staff from RQIA regarding their forthcoming *Review of Provision of Services for Vulnerable Persons Detained in Northern Ireland Prisons*, focusing on assessment, treatment and care for those in prison with mental ill-health who are at risk of self-harm or suicide (Zoom meeting, 4.12.20).

The **UK NPM** [National Preventive Mechanism] comprises bodies with powers to enter places of detention in the four UK jurisdictions of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, including: prisons and young offender centres, police custody, court custody, secure accommodation, mental health institutions, immigration detention, military detention, customs custody facilities. The role of the UK NPM is to independently monitor instances of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of those detained; make recommendations to authorities to improve treatment and conditions, and prevent torture or other ill-treatment. IMBs are one of the 21 bodies constituting the UK NPM. Where relevant, IMB members raise matters concerning any inhuman and degrading treatment at Board meetings, enabling on-going recording of information which can then be reported whenever the UK NPM requests examples. Based on 'remote monitoring' (i.e. regular phone and email updates provided by NIPS and Healthcare) information about the situation in Hydebank during the COVID-19 pandemic was provided by Hydebank Wood IMB to the UK NPM using an 'evidence template' designed by the NPM Secretariat - with the caveat that this information had not been verified by direct observation or discussion with prisoners and landing staff (submitted 29.6.20; 31.8.20). An update about Hydebank was also provided for the UK NPM meeting held virtually in November and attended by a representative from the Board (10.11.20). In December, Board members received information about the UK NPM response to the report of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture's visit to the UK in September 2019.

APPENDIX 2: FACT SHEETS RE ACCOMMODATION

FEMALE ACCOMMODATION

Ash House is a stand-alone residential unit for females within Hydebank Wood, adjacent to Beech and Cedar Houses for young men.

At 1st April 2020 it housed the majority of the female population within the establishment, with a clearly defined progression through the landings for female prisoners during their prison journey.

Ash House has five self-contained landings, each with servery and association areas.

Each room in Ash landings 1-4 has a hand sink with hot and cold water, together with a toilet.

Ash 1 was used to house committals transferred from Fern landing, women confined under Rule 32 or those confined to cell following an adjudication (the latter two categories held at the end of the landing, beyond an additional grille).

Ash 2 housed women on the Enhanced regime.

Ash 3 and 4 housed women on Basic, Standard and Enhanced regimes.

Ash 5 housed mostly Enhanced long term prisoners (i.e. serving 2 years or more).

Thus Ash 1, 3 and 4 were 'feeder' landings for women to progress to Ash landings 2 and 5, or to Murray House.

Two observation rooms are located on Ash 1 and one on each of Ash 2, 3 and 4.

Ash 2 and 4 each have a double room which has been adapted for disability features or alternatively may be used as 'Mother and Baby' units.

Shower and bath facilities are located in communal rooms on each landing.

The ground floor of Ash House includes a hairdressing classroom (closed due to COVID-19) a communal seating area (removed for refurbishment), a training kitchen, a multi-faith room (closed due to COVID), a drop-in centre, a medical room (currently under extension) and a

Zoom room together with laundry and store rooms.

At 1st April 2020, in addition to Ash House, a separate landing known as **Fern** in the former Willow House was utilised to receive female committals. It has a capacity of 20 rooms, including one observation room, together with an association room, kitchen, servery and communal showers. Women were transferred to Ash House landing 1 after induction was completed, unless special circumstances necessitated a longer stay in Fern. It remained in use at the end of March 2021, renamed Fern 2, with women going to this landing after a period of 14 days in isolation.

At 1st April 2020, a 4-bed unit known as **Primrose** located within the Healthcare Building was also in operation. This includes accommodation suitable for a 'Mother and Baby' as there are two association rooms, one for adults and one for 'Mother and Baby', together with a kitchen and bathroom. It remained in use at the end of March 2021.

Murray House is a six-bedroom unit for females nearing the end of their sentence. It houses those requiring little supervision who are working in the community.

A '**separated unit**' for women who have requested and been granted 'separated status' was created in October 2020 in the former male CSU [named Fern 4].

A **female CSU** was established in December 2020 in the former Elm House, adjacent to the male CSU (see Ash 1 above).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on use of accommodation for females within Hydebank Wood. To protect the prisoners it was necessary to distribute female prisoners throughout the establishment and allocate them to groups known as 'bubbles', enabling them to live and associate together safely. An **Isolation Unit** was established within the former Willow House to accommodate women during their first two weeks in custody.

Over 26th and 27th March 2021, there were 36 female and 1 transgender prisoners in female accommodation at Hydebank:

- Ash 1 (capacity 16) housed 7 females (Standard and Enhanced regimes).
- Ash 2 (capacity 16) housed 4 females (regarded as vulnerable).
- Ash 3 (capacity 16) housed 0 females (under refurbishment).
- Ash 4 (capacity 16) housed 0 females (under refurbishment).

- Ash 5 (capacity 9) housed 8 females (engaged as key workers in the Tuck Shop, Library, Gardens, Cleaning and COVID-related duties).
- Fern 1 (capacity 15) housed 5 females (working in the Kitchens and Cabin).
- Fern 2 (capacity 20) housed 3 females plus 1 transgender person (induction after transfer from the Isolation Unit).
- Fern 3 (previously a Working Out Unit for males) was not in use.
- Fern 4 (capacity 8) housed 3 females who had requested and been granted 'separated' status.
- The Isolation/ Committal Unit (capacity 16) housed 2 females.
- The CSU (capacity 4) housed 1 female confined under Rule 32.
- Primrose Unit housed a mother and her baby plus another woman prisoner.
- Murray House (capacity 6) housed 1 female.

MALE ACCOMMODATION

Hydebank Wood was opened as a category 'C' male Young Offenders Centre in 1979. Since November 2012, the establishment has not held 'juvenile' offenders aged 16 and 17 (who are placed in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre for 10–17-year-olds). In May 2016, Hydebank Wood was given 'Secure College' status, holding 18-21 young men on remand or who are sentenced.

There are four residential units for young men. Two, Beech and Cedar, are used in full.

Beech House has four landings providing 60 cells (+ 2 observation rooms)

Each room in Beech 1-4 has a hand sink with hot and cold water together with a toilet.

Beech 1 is used as the committal induction landing for young men, from which individuals are transferred to another landing following completion of the induction programme.

Beech 3 is used for those who are 'Enhanced' Key Workers with lower supervision from staff. They are permitted an extended period of unlock until 10pm in the evenings

Beech 2 and 4 are used for individuals on all three regimes: 'Basic', 'Standard' and 'Enhanced'.

Cedar House has five landings, providing 68 cells (+ 4 observation rooms)

Cedar 1 C1 is used for those on all three regimes: 'Basic', 'Standard' and 'Enhanced'.

Cedar 2 is a stand-alone unit that houses young men that are identified as not suitable for general population which could be for a number of different reasons, including their offence.

Cedar 3 and 4 are used for those on all three regimes: 'Basic', 'Standard' and 'Enhanced' – closed for refurbishment through reporting period.

Cedar 5 is a low supervision landing for individuals on the 'Enhanced' regime who self-cater through Asda shopping. They are permitted extended unlock until 10pm.

Shower facilities are located on each floor of these Houses. The ground floors include classrooms and medical rooms.

In **Elm House**, one of the landings was refurbished to create a **CSU** for young men which opened in July 2019.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, an **Isolation Unit** was located on **Elm 2** for male committals and those showing symptoms of the COVID-19 virus.

On 26th March 2021, there were 54 young males accommodated in Hydebank Wood:

- Beech 1 (capacity 14) housed 4 males
- Beech 2 (capacity 14) house 3 males
- Beech 3 (capacity 16) housed 8 males
- Beech 4 (capacity 16) housed 6 males
- Cedar 1 (capacity 14) housed 9 males
- Cedar 2 (capacity 14) housed 4 males
- Cedar 3 (capacity 15) housed 0 males
- Cedar 4 (capacity 15) housed 0 males
- Cedar 5 (capacity 10) housed 5 males
- Elm 2 Isolation/ Committal Unit (capacity 15 + 1 observation room) housed 11 males
- The CSU (capacity 15 + 1 observation room*) housed 3 confined under R32, 1 confined to cell for breach of prison rules

*CSU rooms are not Certified Normal Accommodation

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ACCOMMODATION

- A stand-alone Women's Prison should proceed as a matter of urgency.
- A feasibility review is completed and published detailing plans for relocation of all students within current proposals to redevelop Ash and Beech Houses into a separate Female facility.
- Issues concerning the condition of showers and provision of toilet lids within Ash House should be reviewed as a matter of urgency and action implemented.
- The standard of accommodation (with emphasis on the association room and kitchen) within Ash 5 should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
- NIPS should initiate a feasibility study into the provision of a secure, self-catering unit for long term female prisoners within the Hydebank Wood site.
- The local NIPS management and staff should be commended for setting up new landings as an appropriate response to minimising the impact of COVID-19 on the female population of Hydebank Wood.
- In addition, the management should be commended for the speedy re-purposing of the former male CSU to accommodate 'separated' female prisoners and development of plans for expansion of facilities and outdoor recreational space attached to this landing.

2. ADJUDICATIONS

- The reason for withdrawal of an adjudication should be recorded, leading to analysis of the main reasons for withdrawal and whether these could be avoided.
- NIPS continues to work with the Speech and Language Therapist to: develop accessible information for prisoners about prison discipline, the adjudication process and their entitlements; to identify individual communication needs; and to implement effective strategies for ensuring that prisoners understand what has been said to them and expected responses.

3. ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- 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.

4. CATERING AND KITCHENS

- The number of staff within the catering team is increased and a review of the budget allocation for catering is conducted in light of increasing food costs.

5. CHAPLAINCY

- No recommendations.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Ensure delivery of the City and Guilds Horticulture course. Ensure delivery of the City and Guilds Horticulture course.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- A standardised training pack is developed and delivered to all members of the Equality and Diversity Committee, to support a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and anticipated objectives.

8. HEALTHCARE

- NIPS and Healthcare work together to consider the issues raised in interviews with those leaving the isolation cells and ensure that individuals receive appropriate information and support when they arrive in Hydebank Wood.
- A review is conducted to compare the proportion of prisoners in Hydebank Wood with complex mental health needs during the Coronavirus pandemic with the proportion in previous years. Any significant increase should be brought to the attention of the Health and Justice Ministers, with an emphasis on provision of appropriate alternative accommodation and support.
- Attendance of the Lead Nurse (or representative from Healthcare at Hydebank Wood) at every IMB Board meeting, alongside quarterly meetings with the AD for Healthcare in Prison.

9. LIBRARY

- No recommendation.

10. RECEPTION AND INDUCTION

- No recommendation.

11. RESETTLEMENT

- A system is established to monitor the number of individuals in substantive accommodation 12 weeks after release, the difficulties experienced by ex-prisoners, and potential changes required to enhance resettlement.
- The Beyond Violence Programme is made available and delivered to those for whom it was designed.
- Providing tangible preparation for resettlement as residents live independently and do paid work in the community, the Working Out Unit for young men is recommenced.
- 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.

12. SAFER CUSTODY

- The Restorative Justice approach is expanded, with a bigger pool of staff trained to facilitate this approach.

13. SEGREGATION – CARE AND SUPERVISION UNIT [CSU]

- Discussion and subsequent actions during weekly Oversight Committee meetings should focus on minimising the length of time prisoners are confined under Rule 32 and the support required to enable their return to the normal regime.
- All staff deployed within the CSU are trained in trauma-informed practice.

14. SPORT AND RECREATION

- Every effort should be made to encourage high profile, local sportspeople to visit Hydebank and cement links with the 'outside' community.

15. TUCK SHOP

- No recommendations.

16. VISITS AND COMMUNICATION

- Plans to enable Wi-Fi across the Hydebank Wood estate, with access to Wi-Fi in every cell and Zoom booths in every area, should be progressed as a matter of urgency.