HM Prison & Probation Service

Understanding Culture Change

A case study of an English Prison

Flora Fitzalan Howard, Dr Rachel Gibson, and Dr Helen Wakeling
HM Prison and Probation Service

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Dedication by the study site

Reverend Margie Schutte was an inspirational person to all at this prison, she was compassionate in her dealings with people, wise in her counsel and joyous in her approach to life. That she was mentioned by so many during the course of this research comes as no surprise to us. She embodied all that is good about the Culture we have created here, and her legacy will live on. She is remembered often and fondly by all who knew her, and we continue to strive forward, in her own cherished words “in Hope”.

The authors

The authors are all Chartered Psychologists in the Evidence-Based Practice Team, Insights Group, in HM Prison and Probation Service.

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1. Summary

Introduction and study aims

How prisons operate, how people relate to each other, and what takes place in this setting have substantial implications for the people living or working in there, and for the public. The culture of a prison may have a range of impacts, with more positive or rehabilitative cultures being related to less violence, self-harm, substance misuse, and reoffending, and greater wellbeing, plus greater professionalism, retention, and recruitment of staff. These widespread and serious impacts are a reason to pay close attention to the culture of prisons. Focusing on one prison, this study aimed to describe what changes had taken place over a period of transformation and, most importantly, aim to identify the *mechanisms* that had brought these changes about.

The existing evidence base for how to change organisational culture is limited (inside and outside of criminal justice organisations). While some approaches and practices may have promise, there is insufficient evidence to say which are likely to have the greatest impact, how such changes take place, and in what ways for different contexts and groups. Work in the prisons of England and Wales has developed an understanding of everyday culture in prison settings, and there is growing evidence that certain features of prison life are critical to establishing a 'good' prison for those living and working within them. There is limited research, however, exploring *how* culture change in prison is achieved; and this is the overarching research question in this study.

Methodological approach and interpreting findings

Using a retrospective case study design, qualitative and quantitative data were used to determine if and how culture change had occurred at the prison. Data gathering occurred in May 2022, focusing on the period from early 2020 until May 2022. This period included the Covid-19 pandemic, which was also of interest in relation to understanding culture change, given the wider research indicating the potential change opportunity that crises present for communities. One hundred and sixty-seven people at the prison participated in interviews, focus groups, or ad-hoc conversations. Thematic analysis was used to understand people's experiences of living or working at the prison during earlier and later time periods (referred to as

‘before’ and ‘now’), and to explore potential mechanisms of change. The primary limitation of the study was that it was exploratory, and therefore causal determinants of change could not be tested. Further, asking people to share their experiences of the current time (of data collection) and a few years earlier, and their perceptions of how changes had occurred, was difficult for some. Finally, despite the good sample size, the findings may not be representative of all staff and prisoner views.

Key findings

The research team heard a variety of experiences but on a number of themes responses were fairly consistent, particularly in relation to staff’s experiences of what it had been like working in the prison ‘before’. Staff described the prison as unsafe, with poor physical conditions and facilities, poor staff retention and high sickness levels, insufficient training and support, a lack of visibility and engagement from senior leaders, with poor relationships, and a sense of chaos and instability. There were also, though, descriptions of camaraderie, resilience, and hope. The experiences of what it was like at the prison ‘now’ were more mixed, although generally this was of a prison that was safer, calmer, and cleaner. Staff described feeling more cared about and supported, with improved working conditions, staffing levels, training and development opportunities. Staff described a clearer vision for the prison, that was future-focussed, and improved autonomy and empowerment. Some groups of staff, and prisoners, did not appear to have benefitted as much from the change efforts as others, and locally, managers accepted that the changes at the prison were as yet incomplete. That said, there was optimism, energy, and momentum to continue to improve things for all who live and work there.

A preliminary model has been developed, identifying conditions that enable change in this setting, and the mechanisms that bring them about. Those conditions include readiness and desire for change and improvement, receiving additional investment, a sense of togetherness in the face of adversity, people-focussed leadership, regime reduction and population stability, and the easing of central demands and scrutiny. The mechanisms include clarity of vision and priorities, active and collaborative senior leadership, empowerment and fostering autonomy, raising and clarifying expectations and accountability, recognising and valuing people and progress,

maximising and using people's potential, encouraging voice and engagement, caring about and for people, being learning focussed, and building momentum for change.

This study uniquely adds to the existing, limited evidence base for organisational change, prison management, and communities recovering from crises. Drawing on the model described and the wider evidence base, several evidence-informed recommendations are made which relate to national, regional, and local practice and decision-making. This research develops our understanding of culture change in a prison setting and starts to identify some of the likely ingredients of success.

2. Introduction

This study aimed to understand how culture change occurs in prisons and begin to identify mechanisms of change to formulate a preliminary model.

2.1 Organisational Culture

Despite considerable interest in the concept of organisational culture, this term is often poorly defined and has been used to mean different things (Gifford & Wietrak, 2022). However, definitions of organisational culture commonly include: the shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, and behaviours of people working in the organisation. This has been previously summed up as “the way we do things around here” (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). Studies of organisational culture commonly focus on specific features or aspects of a culture, such as an organisation’s approach to learning, innovation, diversity and inclusion, safety, and so on. Whilst there is research that touches on different aspects of organisational culture, it is very varied in quality and scope. As the term ‘organisational culture’ is used to mean (and consists of) many things, there is currently no one agreed way of measuring or studying it (more information can be found in Appendix A).

2.2 Prison Culture

There is a distinct paucity of research examining prison culture as a total concept, although there has been work looking at aspects of this, such as for certain groups, certain features, or with certain outcomes in mind (see Appendix A for more details). This includes, for example, HMPPS’s work to describe and develop rehabilitative culture in prisons; that is, where all the aspects of the culture support rehabilitation, where they contribute to the prison being safe, decent, hopeful, and supportive of change, progression and helping someone desist from crime (Mann, Fitzalan Howard, & Tew, 2018; Mann, 2019). Although this concept is focussed on outcomes for people living in custody, there are potential benefits of a rehabilitative culture to staff too, including improvements in safety, job satisfaction, and custodial behaviour.

There is good evidence that certain features of prison life and workings are critical to establishing a ‘good’ or ‘effective’ prison, specifically with outcomes such as reduced

reoffending, better safety and wellbeing, and so on. This evidence base comprises a good number of international and robust quantitative and qualitative studies, as well as smaller studies that have used less rigorous methodologies; the amount of research gives weight to, and confidence in, the overarching findings. These features are consequently ones to keep in mind when considering the development of prison culture or climate. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an overview of all such features, related outcomes and the supporting research, a high-level and not exhaustive summary of research findings is located in Appendix A.

2.3 Culture Change

It is not surprising given the challenges (see section 2.1) with definition, complexity, and measurement that there is not yet a well-established evidence base for how to change organisational culture (Barends & Rousseau, 2022; Parmelli, Flodgren, Schaafsma, Baillie, Beyer, & Eccles, 2011). The existing evidence base, primarily from non-criminal justice organisations, mostly comprises case studies, thematic and narrative reviews, theoretical papers, opinion pieces, and a smaller number of quantitative studies measuring outcomes of specific change initiatives or activities on specific outcomes and in specific settings. Further, several models for changing culture, and implementing change more generally in organisations have been proposed (Stouten, Rosseau, & De Cremer, 2018), but they too have generally not been well-tested.

From the available research in this area (see, for example, Barends & Rousseau, 2022; CIPD, 2020; Gifford & Wietrak, 2022; Lerch, et al., 2011; Rudes, Portillo, & Taxman, 2021; Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2015; West, Eckert, Collins, & Chowla, 2017), it is possible to identify plausible approaches that may be helpful (see Appendix A) but it is not yet possible to say with any confidence that ‘A works, to B degree’, let alone ‘through C mechanism, at D time, and for E groups’, in altering the culture of an organisation. Further, how ‘ready’ an organisation is for change may influence the likely success of its culture change efforts, although, again, the available organisation-level evidence is limited. Positively influencing factors proposed include (see Appendix A for further details): 1) how people feel about the

change, 2) how people feel about the organisation and management, and 3) the characteristics of employees.

2.4 Recovery after Crises

In the UK, the Covid-19 virus began circulating in early 2020, and extraordinary measures were put in place to limit transmission, protect life, and enable people to cope with the pandemic crisis. Soon afterwards, given that at the time the longevity of the crisis was not clear, consideration of post-pandemic recovery began in HMPPS. Even though crises can be fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, these periods can also be times of creativity and openness and can create a 'break' from the past, enabling the transformation of norms, systems, and processes to ones that work better. With this in mind, the Covid-19 pandemic was considered a potential opportunity for culture change in prisons.

Although crisis recovery has gained research interest over the years, it remains a relatively under-studied topic. Fitzalan Howard and Wakeling (2022) recently reviewed the existing research and identified some features that may enable communities to recover from crises and build back to a better state than before (see Appendix A). This research is limited in terms of its quality and size, meaning only indications can be currently drawn. However, there are clear parallels between these features of more successful recovery and culture change research more generally.

2.5 Study Aims

The overarching research question in this study was 'how does culture change occur in a prison setting?' Focussing on one prison, the study aimed to describe what changes had taken place, the contextual, situational, individual, and interpersonal factors seemingly contributing to change, the perceived impact of changes, and, most importantly (and by drawing on the existing literature), begin to identify *mechanisms* of change to formulate a preliminary model.

For the remainder of this research report, the term 'culture' is used, although it is acknowledged that the challenge of definition means that some features considered may be consider more about 'climate' by some.

The period examined was a ‘slice in time’, extending from early 2020 until May 2022. Retrospective data relating to this time were gathered in May 2022. The terms ‘before’ and ‘now’ were used to describe the two timepoints during the research (with participants and in this report). This period included the Covid-19 pandemic, which was also of interest in relation to understanding culture change, given the wider research indicating the potential change opportunity that crises present (see Appendix A).

3. Method

3.1 Context

The studied prison is a Category B prison in England with capacity for around 900 adult men and staffed by around 460-500 directly employed full time equivalent staff; its predominant function is as a reception prison. Prisoner accommodation is divided into six houseblocks. The prison was previously connected to a smaller open prison close by, with a capacity of around 200 men. Both sites had struggled over several years with safety and security issues and had demonstrated little change in these over time (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014, 2016, 2019). The prison was placed in 'Special Measures'[1] in 2018 and narrowly avoided an 'Urgent Notification'[2] from HMIP's unannounced inspection in June 2019. Illustrative excerpts from that inspection report can be found in Appendix B. In October 2019, the open site was closed. In late 2019, a new support scheme (replacing Special Measures) to improve prisons in England and Wales was introduced and overseen by a central HMPPS team: the Prison Performance Support Programme (PPSP). PPSP offers a package of support for prisons with stability challenges, for example, additional staff, funding, enhanced standards training, and airport-style security. In mid-2020 the Growth Project, delivered by Penal Reform Solutions, began at the site.[3]

Notably, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred during the period of the current study (the first of several lockdowns came into effect in March 2020). HMPPS' response, which aimed to prevent the spread of infection and protect life, created unique circumstances in the daily running of all prisons in England and Wales – most notably regime curtailments that kept prisoners in their cells almost all the time. All in-person

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1 An HMPPS process activated when a prison is assessed as needing additional specialist support to improve to an acceptable level.

2 A process invoked if there are particular concerns about the outcomes for prison residents. It involves writing to the Secretary of State for Justice within seven days of the end of an inspection.

3 The project aimed to examine and analyse which elements of practice promote growth within specific prison environments, to listen to the views of those who work and reside in prison in order to promote growth, and to use this knowledge to create meaningful positive changes which can be sustained. Penal Reform Solutions conducted a local needs analysis in 2020, and 'growth' activities began to be implemented from January 2021. Such activities included, for example, Growth Supervision and Growth Sessions with senior leaders have provided them with a space to reflect on their work, their relationships and the kind of leaders they want to be (https://penalreformsolutions.com/).

visits for prisoners ceased, and videoconferencing facilities began to be rolled out across prisons to enable contact with loved ones. All staff who were considered 'non-essential' to frontline operational delivery were asked to work from home. Social distancing, regular Covid-19 testing and PPE use by staff were implemented, when possible. Due to the impact of the pandemic on HM Courts fewer people were entering custody, and transfers between prisons were reduced as far as possible. Newly arrived prisoners were separated for two weeks before joining the main prison population in sites. If a prisoner tested positive for Covid-19, at any time, they were isolated further from others to limit virus transmission. The journey out of the pandemic was not linear with restrictions eased and reintroduced, and regime specifics determined, in response to local outbreaks and staffing levels.

3.2 Design

This project used a retrospective case study research design due to the nature of the research questions and the in-depth investigation required. The design was predominantly exploratory and descriptive in nature, focussing on a prior two-year period at the prison. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered during a short period of time and used to determine if and how culture change had occurred.

3.3 Participants

A total of 167 people contributed to the research and were involved in interviews, focus groups, or were spoken to more informally through ad-hoc conversation. Of these, 137 were staff (82%), and 30 were prisoners (18%). The primary focus of the research was purposefully on staff as prisoners had been largely locked up for the time period being investigated, plus the high turnover of prisoners meant few had resided at the prison across the period of interest. For both prisoner and staff groups, people who had been at the prison for shorter and longer periods of time were deliberately included though, to ensure comprehensive access to potentially differing views of the prison.

Full details of demographics for the staff sample can be found in Appendix B. Almost 55% took part in ad-hoc conversations, while around a third participated in focus groups, and 11% in interviews. More than half were female, most were white, and

most were aged between 26 and 40 or 41 and 55 years. The largest proportion had been working in HMPPS (and at this prison) for either between 6 months and 2.5 years, or for 10 years or more. A reasonable minority (10%) had worked in the prison for less than 6 months at the time of the research. Participants included directly employed and non-directly employed staff, as well as stakeholders and central support teams. Colleagues from a wide range of departments participated.[4] Over 50 different staff roles were present in the sample; most commonly prison officers (26%), Custodial Managers (CMs; *n*=11, 8%) and Supervising Officers (SOs; *n*=11, 8%). All grades of staff (from 2-11) were represented in the staff sample, with the most frequent being Bands 3 (*n*=43, 31%), 4 (*n*=19, 14%), and 5 (*n*=14, 10%).

Appendix B also contains information about the prisoner sample. Of the 30 prisoners who participated, 13 were involved in focus groups and 17 in ad hoc conversations. The majority were white, and the majority were aged 26-40 years. At the time of data collection, almost half had resided in the prison for between 6 months and 2.5 years; only a small proportion had been there for more than 2.5 years. There was a fairly even representation of prisoners from across the houseblocks, though only one resided in the specialist wellbeing unit.[5]

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers spent seven full days during May 2022 on-site gathering a range of data. Nine focus groups (each with up to eight participants), three interviews with two participants each, and nine individual interviews were conducted. Two of the focus groups were with prisoners, and the rest were with groups of staff. Focus groups and interviews ranged in length from 23 minutes to 81 minutes, with a mean length of 50 minutes. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide them, but

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[4] Including Activities, Education, Healthcare, Catering, the Offender Management Unit (OMU), Psychology Services, the Prison Group Director's (PGD) office, Safer Custody, Segregation, the residential units (houseblocks), Security, and senior managers. Groups most represented (based on the roles people were in at the time of study) were staff from the residential units/houseblocks, followed by healthcare, OMU, and the senior leadership team (SLT).

[5] The former healthcare inpatient facility was decommissioned and rerolled into the wellbeing unit. This saw the introduction of an Enhanced Primary Care pathway, ensuring that prisoners with complex health needs have a relevant care plan and are case managed by a member of the nursing team. The existence of the new unit aimed to reduce the need to locate people who were mentally unwell in segregated conditions.

interviewees were able to lead the discussions so that they could talk about any factors they felt were important. The schedule contained questions around the culture 'before' (from the beginning of 2020 – after which anecdotally positive changes at the prison had occurred), and 'now' (May 2022), questions around how any changes which may have happened had been achieved, as well as questions around what more was needed at the prison and what advice they would give to other prisons attempting to change their culture. Further information can be found in Appendix B, including the sampling approach taken, interview/focus group length, and details of the interview schedules. Prisoners and staff provided informed consent prior to participation. On all seven days the researchers walked unaccompanied around the prison conducting ad-hoc conversations with staff and prisoners they met, recorded in research notes. These conversations were largely centred around the key areas of questioning used in the focus groups and interviews.

Relevant official and organisational documents and data were sourced before and during the time the researchers were at the prison. This enabled the researchers to familiarise themselves with the prison's 'story' and provide contextual description of the prison (as described in section 3.1 and Appendix B). Further prison-level data, accessed via the HMPPS Hub,[6] focussed on variables including staff and prisoner numbers, safety data (e.g., rates of violence/assault, levels of self-harm), Key Work session delivery,[7] and complaints. Additional data, such as relating to staff sickness absence, recruitment, and retention, and for prisoner substance misuse/drug finds were not available.

Finally, a timeline of events during the two years prior to when the research took place was created (see section 4.2). During the data collection period, staff from the prison were encouraged to add to the timeline (marked on a long piece of paper displayed along the length of the administration corridor) anything they deemed

[6] The Hub is a web-based corporate reporting service that provides staff from prisons, probation, MoJ and associated organisations with data collection, validation, collation, and reporting.

[7] Key workers (Band 3 Prison Officers) hold a small caseload of around six prisoners. They meet weekly (or fortnightly in some establishments) with each prisoner and provide supportive challenge to motivate them to use their time in custody to best effect. The introduction of Key Workers aimed to provide a consistent individual with whom prisoners can establish a relationship, build trust, and receive encouragement. Key Work is the foundation of HMPPS' new Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model.

significant, such as events, support, changes, activities, and decisions. Prisoner participants were not able to access or add to the timeline. One of the researchers categorised the events and cross-checked these with the other two researchers.

The analysis was both data- and theory-driven. The initial analysis focussed on the interview and focus group transcripts, which were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021), followed by the consideration and integration of the identified themes with the observation and research notes, and the quantitative and timeline data. Prisoner and staff experiences were analysed together. Bringing all of the evidence together, in conjunction with the existing related literature and theory, an explanatory model of mechanisms of culture change at the prison was generated. Further details on the process of analysis and interpretation can be found in Appendix B.

3.5 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is its retrospective and exploratory design examining a specific time period of around two years. While experiences could be examined and an exploratory model of culture change could be generated, it has not been possible to test causal determinants of change. Further, not all factors that may have influenced culture change will have been examined including, for example, wider political and societal factors related to the Criminal Justice System. The timeframe examined is also relatively short (approximately two years) for considering something so potentially complex as ‘culture change’, and so the findings may miss earlier events or factors that contributed to the changes observed in this 2-year period.

Most participants were staff rather than prisoners, and as such, the experiences described should be considered more comprehensive and reliable for the former group. Even with a decent sample size, these experiences may not be representative of all at the site, and it is likely that this study will not have captured the potential subcultures that might exist in the prison, such as between departments or across residential wings. Additionally, participants were asked about their experiences both at the time of the data collection, but also a few years before (as the period of research interest extended from early 2020 to mid-2022) for those who had been

there for some time. It is possible that negativity bias played a role in peoples' descriptions of the prison during the 'before' period.[8] It was also apparent that it was difficult for some participants who had been in the prison for some time to reflect on *how* change had occurred, particularly for staff in lower grades who may be less used to engaging in reflective practice, or may not have been privy to changes or related decision-making in the same way their more senior colleagues were. The researchers were also aware of the potential of researcher investment bias, and their employment by HMPPS. This was mitigated first through careful use of peer review (two independent psychologists and researchers were asked to peer review and provide feedback on the initial draft of the report before it was then subjected to further external expert review), and, secondly, by working together as a research group to check analyses, thematic coding, and interpretation.

The selection of interview and focus group participants was predominantly conducted by the prison, within criteria provided by the researchers. It is possible that selection bias may have impacted the findings. The researchers attempted to overcome this by using a range of data collection methods, including conducting ad-hoc conversations with people who had not volunteered or been specifically selected to take part, and by triangulating the evidence gathered.

Some data that would have been useful for contextualising and triangulating findings were not available to the researchers, such as staff sickness rates, and numbers of employees joining the prison and leaving each month.

[8] Human beings tend to attend to, learn from, and use negative information far more than positive information; we are more likely to dwell on and more easily recall negative events, experiences, emotions, than positive ones.

4. Results

4.1 Prison Data

Figure 1 presents some of the prison's key safety metrics for September 2019 to April 2022, per 100 prisoners (to account for fluctuations in the population during this time). The figure includes a slightly extended period (the main research period was from early 2020) to provide context about the prison in more typical times, before the pandemic began. The restrictions and changes introduced (which applied to all prisons in HMPPS) because of Covid-19 were extraordinary; prisoners remained in their cells almost all of the time over an extended period. This had clear implications for the opportunity for incidents to occur (e.g., violence) or be noticed (e.g., self-harm) as people were so physically separated.[9] This should not be interpreted as a route to improve prison safety, however, as these restrictions are acknowledged to have come at a serious cost for people's psychological health and wellbeing, and their access to activities aimed at improving future chances and reducing risk of reoffending (Prison Reform Trust, 2021b). Unlike in the community, the journey out of the pandemic far from linear or one-directional, with restrictions eased and reintroduced often in response to local virus outbreaks.[10]

Due to the considerable changes in how prisons operated, direct comparisons between time periods should not be made; instead, trends should be viewed as indicative, and considered in conjunction with additional data. On visual inspection, the metrics can be seen following a downward trend: rates of self-harm incidents, assaults, and proven adjudications for rule-breaking, although a relatively similar trend for the number of ACCTs opened.[11]

[9] It has not been possible to compare data trends for all prisons within HMPPS, however, the decline in incidents was commonly reported across the service during this time.

[10] Prisons are a type of establishment where viruses can flourish and spread very quickly as such very strict measures were required and for much longer than they were in place in the community.

[11] Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) is the case management approach used in prisons and young offender institutions. ACCT plans are used to support people in prison or young people in our care who are at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Figure 1: Safety metrics - rates per 100 prisoners/staff (Sept 2019 – April 2022)

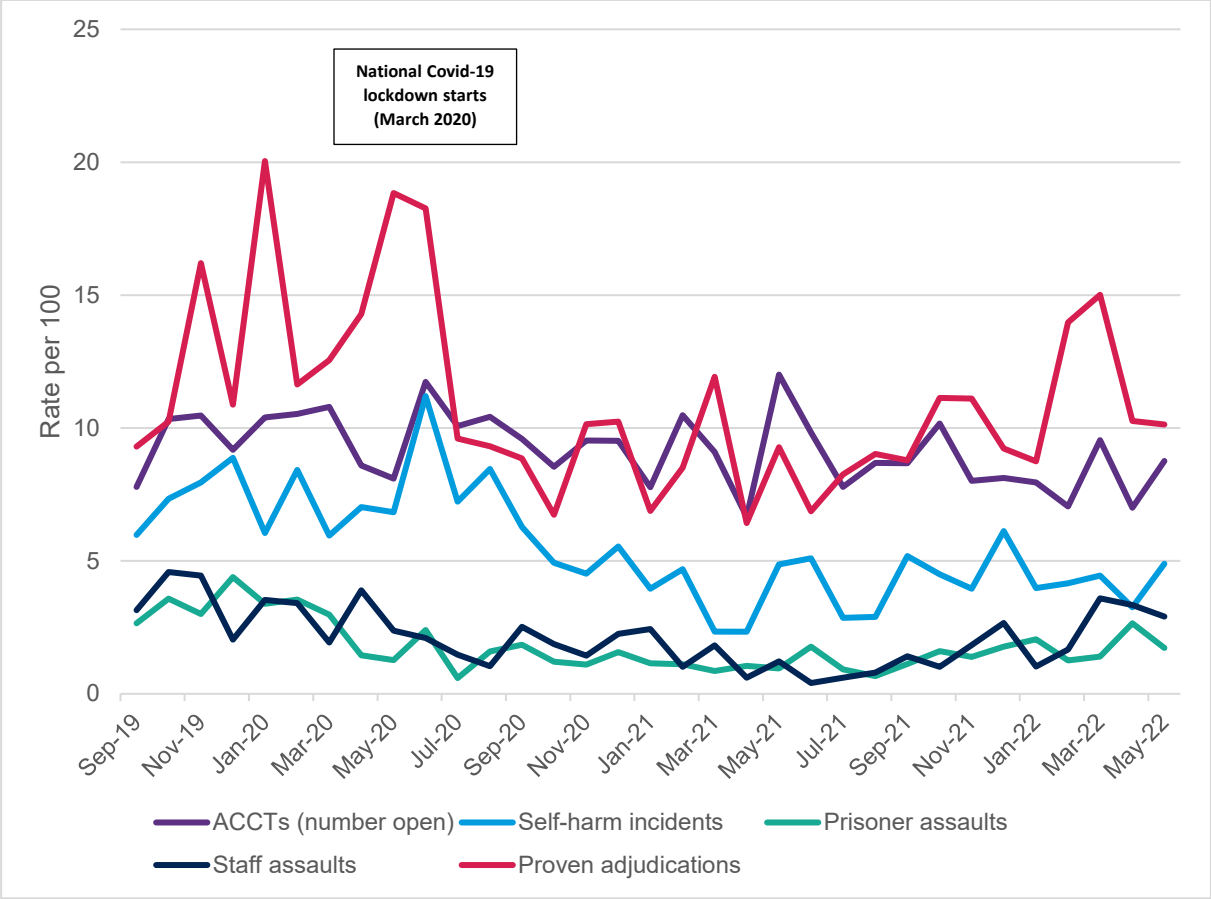
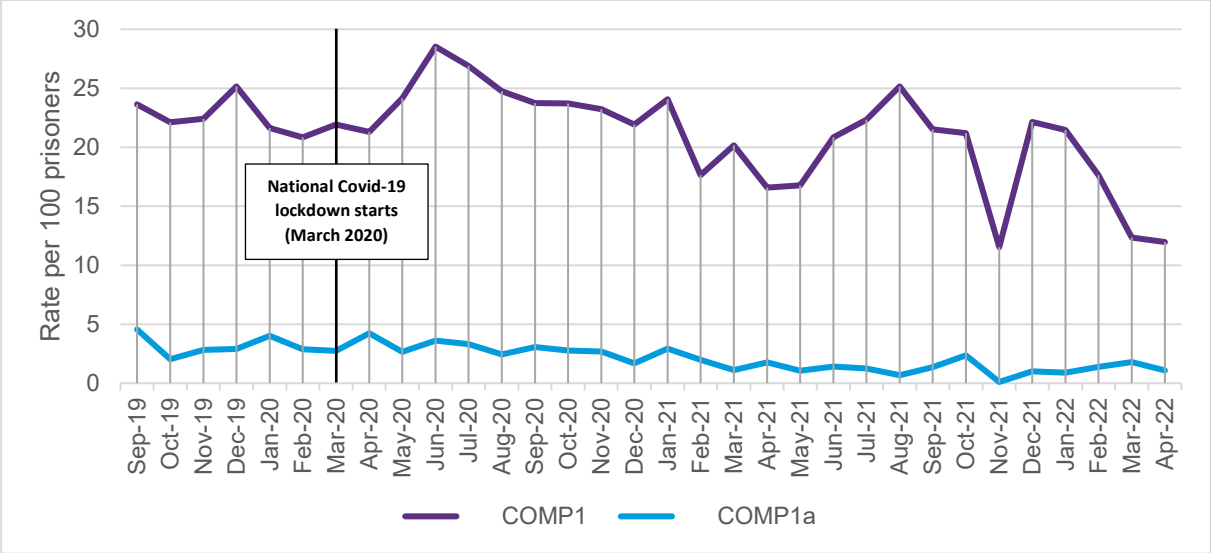


Figure 2 presents the rate of complaints (both COMP1 and COMP1a)[12] submitted, per 100 prisoners. While there are some fluctuations, there is an apparent general reduction over the period for both complaints being made, and for subsequent appeals. The volume of appeals may be considered an indicator (amongst other things) of the quality of responses to initial complaints.

[12] COMP1 forms are ordinary complaint forms which are used by prisoners when they want to make a written complaint to a prison. If the prisoner is unhappy with the response to their COMP1, they can appeal this using the COMP1a within 7 days of receiving the response to their COMP1.

Figure 2: Complaints - rates per 100 prisoners (Sept 2019 – April 2022)



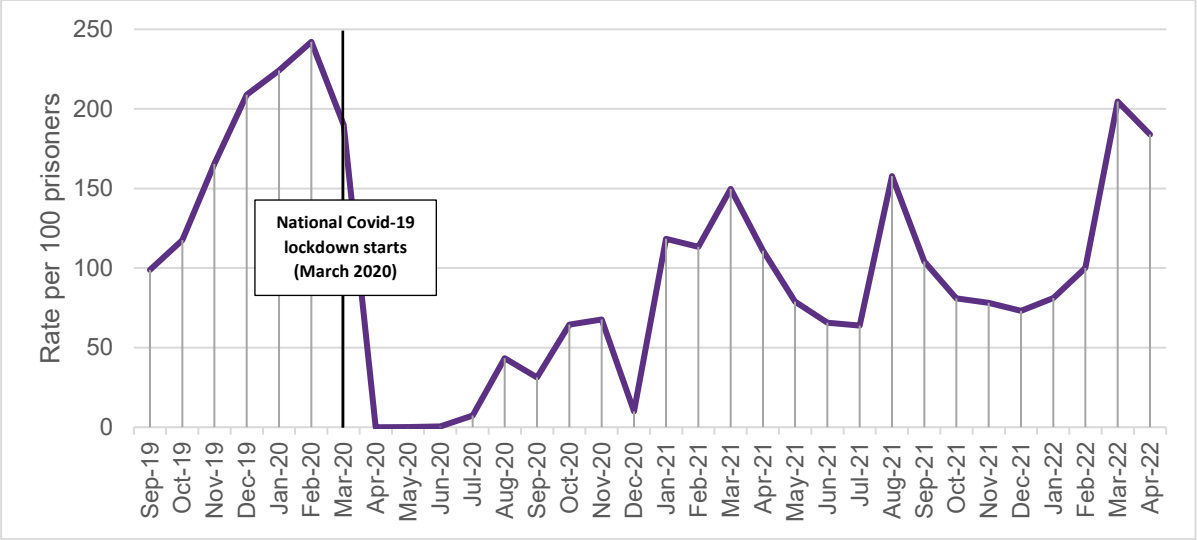
The Ministry of Justice and HMPPS' response to the Covid-19 pandemic, aiming ultimately to prevent the spread of infection and protect life, meant that transfers between prisons and new arrivals into custody were occurring at a much lower rate. Movement data for this prison illustrate this clearly. Whilst the overall average (mean) for transfers into the prison per month between September 2019 and April 2022 was 731, absolute figures show marked variation: at its highest in October 2019 (2,430 arrivals) and at its lowest in April 2020 (224 arrivals). Similarly, whilst the mean for transfers out of the prison per month was 756 across the time period, this ranged from its highest in October 2019 (at 2,463) to its lowest in May 2020 (317). The average roll in the prison per month was 871, with the highest number in September 2019 at 1053 and the lowest in June 2020 at 750.[13] The average number of staff in post per month was 485,[14] with a high of 508 in September 2019 and a low of 463 in April 2020.

Figure 3 presents the number of Key Work sessions delivered (per 100 prisoners) across the same period (see footnote 7 for information about this scheme). The sudden and dramatic reduction in delivery coincided with the Covid-19 national lockdown coming into effect in March 2020. From July 2020 the figure rises, with a somewhat unsteady upward trajectory month on month.

[13] 'Roll' is the term used in prisons for the number of prisoners on site at any given time.

[14] Directly employed and full-time equivalent.

Figure 3: Key Work sessions - rate per 100 prisoners (Sept 2019 – April 2022)



4.2 Timeline of Events and Activity

The events and activity voluntarily added by staff to the paper timeline displayed for a week in the prison can be found in Appendix C. When examining these, the researchers identified common themes amongst what staff had deemed important to document (see Table 1).

Examination of these themes shows that staff viewed developments at the prison that focused on wellbeing (for staff and prisoners), staff investment and training, and the physical environment as significant. Specific staff who joined the prison during that time were noted, along with activities linked to the Growth Project, engagement activities, support provided by those from outside of the prison, and regime developments. During interviews and focus groups with participants, many accounted for any changes they had experienced/witnessed as being a direct result of Covid-19 (and the resulting lockdowns and regime restrictions which were put in place). It is worth noting, however, the range of significant events and activities identified in the table below, some of which were noted more frequently by staff than Covid-19 activities.

Table 1: Common themes of reported events and activity

Theme	Examples
Physical environment improvements and developments	Refurbishment / redevelopment of areas for staff and prisoners New areas / facilities for staff and prisoners Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent programme[15] Clean & Decent project[16]
Wellbeing, and people-focused improvements and developments	Wellbeing pathway / unit created Staff wellbeing activities and resources Growth Project events and team Reward, recognition, celebration, and team-building events Revised induction process for prisoners Renewed and agreed local 'vision'
Staff investment, training improvements and developments	Combined induction for staff across disciplines/grades Reflective practice and supervision provided Relationship training
External support, and investment	Growth Project (external to HMPPS) PPSP (external to the prison, but within HMPPS)
Regime, activities, and processes	Services and activities adapted or implemented for prisoners Consistent regime implemented Changes to prisoner movements
Covid-19 activities	Lockdowns Covid-19 communications Staff testing
Staffing changes	New staff members Some roles merge and new roles are created

[15] A rehabilitative programme in which prisoners work alongside contractors to support a programme of work to bring prison cells and communal areas up to a good standard. This includes learning trade skills through their work and enabling them to apply for jobs with the companies when they leave prison.

[16] A staff-focussed pilot project involving dedicating a small number of staff to improve cleanliness and decency standards in prisons. This included, for example, improving access and use of cleaning materials, organising prisoner cleaning parties, working with staff to promote the benefits of a decent environments.

4.3 Experiences at the Prison

While different experiences were described within and between the two time periods of study ('before' and 'now'), there were common themes in participant responses; these are presented in Table 2, and fuller descriptions (with illustrative quotes) are provided in Appendix D. To note, for the remainder of the report, the term 'participants' refers to both staff and prisoners who took part in the study; where a point refers to only one of these groups, this is specified. The responses for some themes were fairly consistent, but for other themes there were differing views (within groups of staff and particularly between staff and prisoners). Some participants had experience of what the prison had been like 'before' and described the changes or differences experienced. For others, they focused on their current experiences, along with stories they had heard from others about what it had been like to live and work in the prison a few years ago. Some prisoners also reflected on their experiences of living in other prisons. Overall, the responses from prisoners were more mixed than from staff, although prisoners also talked less than staff about how things were 'before' (likely because fewer of them had been at the prison for lengthier periods). The table below shows the themes which were identified from participants' descriptions of what the prison was like to live and work in 'before' and 'now'.

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes of experiences

Theme	'Before' sub-themes	'Now' sub-themes
1. Safety, stability, and order	Assaults and violence Self-harm Normalisation of violence Frustration Prisoners having control Staff retreating Mass unlock and free movement Firefighting High workload Reaction-oriented High turnover of prisoners and staff	Calmer More structure Reduction in violence Reduction in self-harm

Theme	'Before' sub-themes	'Now' sub-themes
2. Physical environment and conditions	Poor physical conditions Poor facilities	Cleaner More decent
3. Support and wellbeing	Insufficient support	Support Feeling cared for Support for new staff
4. Staffing levels and retention	Problems with retention High sickness rate Inability to fulfil duties Problems with recruitment	Improved working conditions Consistency of staff on houseblocks New staff leading to improved staffing levels
5. Staff training and investment	Insufficient training	Investment in staff Training and development opportunities Focus on people rather than process Resources to do the job New staff
6. Emotional response	Anxiety Stress and exhaustion Despondent/cynical Fearful Frustrated	Pride Job satisfaction Enjoyment
7. Vision and purpose	Lack of vision Lack of clarity of purpose Central control	People as individuals Care and support Future focus
8. Leadership and management approach	Lack of SLT visibility and engagement High turnover of leaders Poor communication Not listening Lack of recognition and valuing	Communication Management approach focused on people Consistency of approach Feeling valued Reward and recognition Collaboration Voice

Theme	'Before' sub-themes	'Now' sub-themes
9. Relationships and multi-disciplinary working	Supportive peer (staff) relationships Poor SLT-staff relationships Poor prisoner-staff relationships Silo working Togetherness Resilience and hope Drive for change/determination	Team cohesion Consultation Operational and non-operational divide New staff vs. older staff Mixed views on staff-prisoner relationships
10. Regime and community	More activities for prisoners Community feel/collaboration	Time in/out of cells Access to activities and facilities Contact with support network Value of Key Work
11. Learning culture	Blame culture	Openness to learning Reflection Innovation
12. Autonomy and empowerment	Learned helplessness/hopeless Resignation and apathy	Ownership over decision making Trust

4.4 Achieving culture change

This section examines the potential conditions for, and mechanisms of, how culture change occurred (summarised in Figure 4). The focus is on 'positive' change, as described by participants (i.e., describing their experiences, outcomes, and emotions positively or as better), but also with consideration given to the wider evidence base on features of prison life that bring better outcomes (see Appendix A). The conditions and mechanisms were primarily data-driven, identified based on the reported experiences of the participants, but with the wider relevant research in mind also (see data and analysis section for more details). Whilst the focus here is specifically on how *positive* outcomes have been achieved, readers are reminded that not all participants recounted positive experiences of their time working or living at the prison, nor had experienced positive effects of the changes and efforts made in recent years (elaborated on further in the Experience themes in Appendix D). Culture is a very tricky thing to change, especially in such a changing context (e.g., changes

in staffing, prisoner population, and governmental leadership) and will inevitably need ongoing attention and dedication, as well as time to ensure that all members of a large community find their lives to be improved by any measures implemented. It is encouraging that there was no suggestion from any colleagues involved in such efforts that they were yet 'finished'.

Whilst the participants gave clear accounts of how things had been for them 'before', and how things were 'now', it was challenging for many of them to identify the *mechanisms* of change (i.e., *how* positive changes had been achieved, *what* had made the difference and *why*), with the exception of more senior colleagues (likely because they were directly involved in change-related work). This is unsurprising given the more abstract nature of this type of questioning. To add rigour, the researchers facilitated an in-person presentation, sense-checking, and challenge session of the preliminary findings with approximately 20 middle and senior manager participants. This resulted in alterations to the identified conditions and mechanisms to better reflect their local experiences.

As the following sections illustrate, the conditions and mechanisms in relation to culture change are interlinked, with many influencing similar outcomes. It is not possible to determine the impact of each individually, or collectively, and for the time being they should be considered preliminary hypotheses to provide a starting point for further testing. The way the figure is presented suggests a linear change journey, although this is not intentional; change was incremental, may have varied in its speed of progress, and different conditions and mechanisms may have had a greater or lesser influence at different moments in time. Understanding this better could be the focus of future research.

Change-enabling conditions

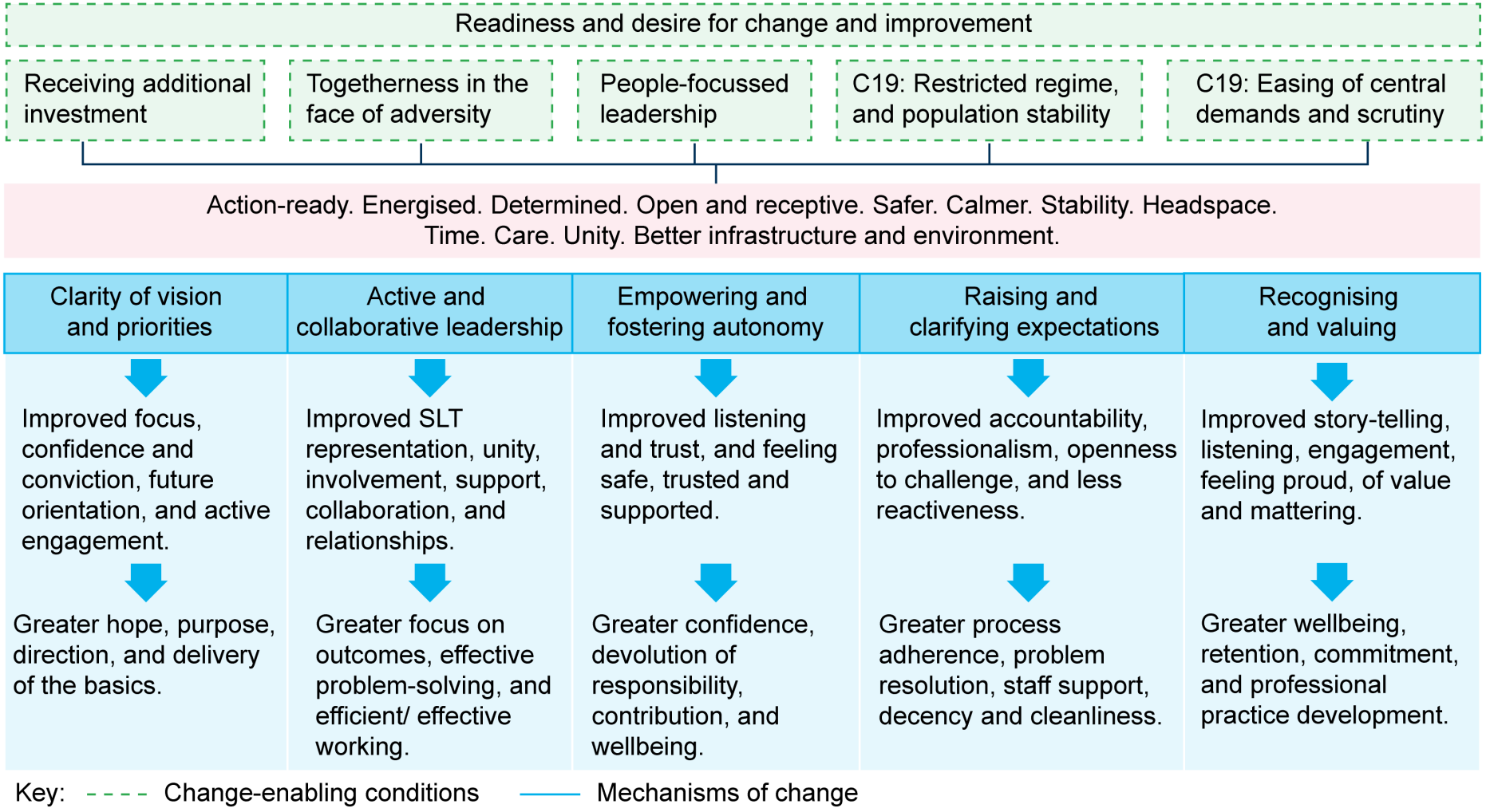
Six factors (see Table 3) appear to have 'set the stage' for more substantial change at the prison; occurring around the same time as each other, they appear to have acted in concert to 'jump start' and further enable local decisions and actions to affect change. These comprised locally specific factors, and others related to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and previous strategy or investment decisions by HMPPS. No one factor alone explains the change subsequently

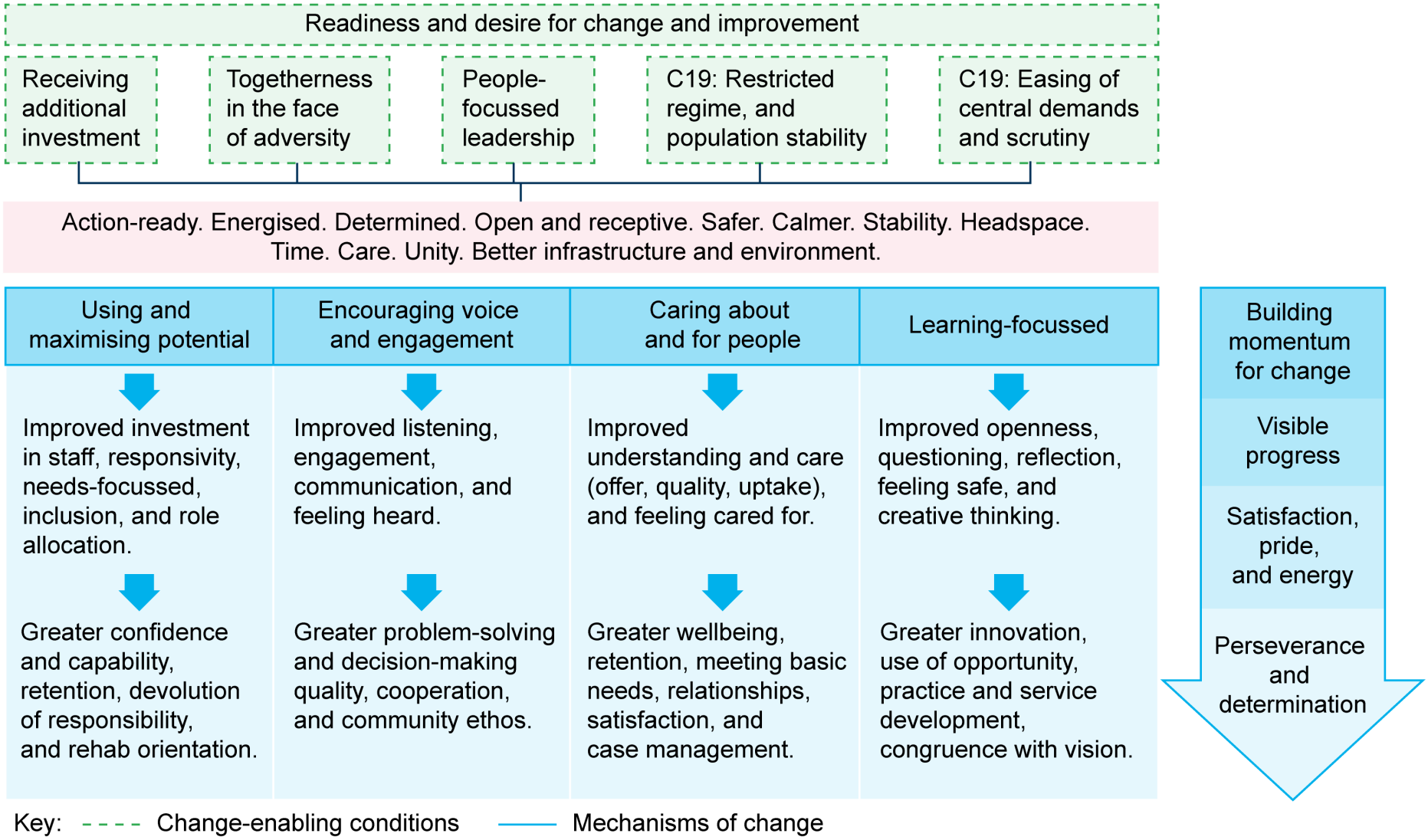
achieved, instead, they each provided an enabling function, seemingly maximised through their cooccurrence.

Table 3: Change-enabling conditions

1. Readiness and desire for change and improvement	2. Receiving additional investment
3. Togetherness in the face of adversity	4. People-focussed leadership
5. Restricted regime and stability of the population (related to Covid-19)	6. Easing of central demands and scrutiny (related to Covid-19)

Figure 4: Change-enabling conditions and mechanisms of change




Readiness and desire for change and improvement
Receiving additional investment
Togetherness in the face of adversity
People-focussed leadership
C19: Restricted regime, and population stability
C19: Easing of central demands and scrutiny
Action-ready. Energised. Determined. Open and receptive. Safer. Calmer. Stability. Headspace. Time. Care. Unity. Better infrastructure and environment.
Using and maximising potential
Encouraging voice and engagement
Caring about and for people
Learning-focussed
Improved investment in staff, responsivity, needs-focussed, inclusion, and role allocation.
Improved listening, engagement, communication, and feeling heard.
Improved understanding and care (offer, quality, uptake), and feeling cared for.
Improved openness, questioning, reflection, feeling safe, and creative thinking.
Greater confidence and capability, retention, devolution of responsibility, and rehab orientation.
Greater problem-solving and decision-making quality, cooperation, and community ethos.
Greater wellbeing, retention, meeting basic needs, relationships, satisfaction, and case management.
Greater innovation, use of opportunity, practice and service development, congruence with vision.
Building momentum for change
Visible progress
Satisfaction, pride, and energy
Perseverance and determination
Key: Change-enabling conditions
Mechanisms of change

Condition 1: Readiness and desire for change and improvement

Prior to the pandemic, and to leadership changes, there appears to have been a critical and bubbling determination to make things better, and consequently some improvements were already underway at this time. Participants described colleagues as being *"so sick of how things were"* [CM], and that the want for change was felt by prisoners too (*"they wanted this change. They wanted [staff] to be in control. They wanted it to be safe"* [SLT]). There was an apparent perseverance in the face of crisis, with people continuing to come to work, and some wanting to do a good job despite all the difficulties. There were glimmers of hope for some that things could be different; staff were tired, but not broken. They kept going. The prison was described as being in the *"lowest place it could be"* [CM], but there were a significant proportion of the staff who were ready, determined and desiring change. One SO explained that they stayed because they *"wanted to change it".*

This readiness appears to have created an openness to changes and plans across the site, rallying people together (*"I don't think anybody fought against anything"* [CM]; *"[the prisoners] were fully on board"* [SLT]). And more than this, it seemed to generate and amplify a determined, single-minded, and action-ready state amongst both existing and newly arrived colleagues, as illustrated below:

> "Everyone was just ready for the change and, you know, [to] put everything into it and make a difference" [SLT]

> "…I thought this is a real opportunity if I'm honest. …although you could see the staff were burnt out and tired and scared, you could see that they were still coming back to work. They were still coming to work every day. They wanted to be here. So, you got that feel as if, well, if we manage to change it or manage to put something right, they will come along with us. So that's how I felt when [they and another newly joined colleague] got here, I felt as though, yeah, this is an opportunity for us". [SLT]

Condition 2: Receiving additional investment

There had been considerable investment planned and begun in the prison prior to the pandemic (comprising financial, human, and specialist expertise). Much of this was a

consequence of their previous safety and stability challenges (and the prison's placement in Special Measures/PPSP) which meant national resources to support change and development had already been agreed and begun. Investment enabling infrastructure improvements, such as security measures (e.g., body scanners, drone netting, and enhanced gate security) and the physical environment for staff and prisoners through the Clean & Decent project (see footnote 16 for more on this project), were felt to have dramatically improved safety and wellbeing for everyone. This is supported by internal HMPPS reports, and more recently by HMIP (2023), and perhaps explains also why activities such as these were notably present in the contributions to the timeline (see Table 1). These changes in turn appeared to form the basis for other change to take place:

> "You've got your enhanced gate security. You've got your drone netting. You've got your sealed windows. So you've not got avenues of illicit stuff coming in. So you haven't got, you know, people making large sums of money over other people's pain and squalor. … So as soon, as soon as you cut down those sorts of avenues, the population starts to settle, and then you get on with the control." [CM]

> "So you're putting people in caves and then hope they don't come out like a bear in the morning. So, so we needed to fix that. And luckily, we got Clean & Decent…that is certainly one of the cogs that has fixed this place." [SLT]

> "…[staff] didn't have a locker room when they put [enhanced gate security] in. They were taking away their staff locker room, so we were able to get some money to build them one. … some of it is also being able to put your hand in your pocket and sort of saying that we can't expect you to be going in and worrying about the decency of prisoners' rooms, if you're working in offices where it's got one broken chair and nobody can find a pen." [PPSP]

Additional facilities for prisoners, specifically in-cell telephony, and access to teleconferencing with loved ones, has been a major change in HMPPS in recent

years, gradually benefitting prisons across the country. The former was already being rolled out across prisons in England and Wales but was sped up during the pandemic, and the latter was instigated because of the Covid-19 restrictions on people visiting prisons. There was a collective view that these had been important means for prisoners to maintain important relationships with others, and for improving safety and stability (e.g., in-cell phones reducing *"unnecessary arguments"* [SO] from having to queue for use of, or in response to damaged, on-wing telephones). Such environmental improvements, along with other factors influencing safety and order, were suggested as a priority by participants for others trying to achieve similar prison culture change.

Condition 3: Togetherness in the face of adversity

Although some coworking and staff relationships had been difficult in the past, there had also been a real sense of solidarity and 'family' between colleagues, a sense of togetherness in the face of adversity (for more details, see Experience theme 9 'Relationships and multi-disciplinary working'). When Covid-19 began, everyone faced a unique and substantial collective threat and a subsequent heightened dependency on each other to cope and to continue meeting daily expectations and demands. This experience appears to have fostered and amplified a sense of togetherness and camaraderie. At least in the earlier lockdowns, a noticeable sense of being 'in this together' and the need to rely on each other to 'make it through' was felt between colleagues, and between staff and prisoners. This appears to have influenced more transparent and personal interactions, active demonstrations of care for each other, and as the extract below illustrates, a less divided and more united and collaborative front in this prison:

> "…to be honest, we only managed Covid because the prisoners worked as a team with us. They identified that we were in this together. And they identified that they needed to do these things to keep themselves safe, and they needed us to keep them safe, so they relied on us. I think once prisoners realised that our own lives also, going home, working here, we weren't enjoying our lives either… It's that sense of camaraderie I guess, but in a weird way that our lives reflected theirs much more now... So it

was like a ‘we’re in this together’. I think it became less of ‘them and us’.” [Prison Officer]

Condition 4. People-focussed leadership

In the early months of the pandemic, a new Governing Governor was appointed, whose leadership style appears to have been (deliberately) well-matched to the then needs of colleagues in the prison, specifically needing to feel cared about (*“I was looking for someone who was people focused”* [PGD]), as well as timely given their ‘readiness’ for change (see change-enabling Condition 1).

Building on the work of his predecessor, the Governor’s understanding of how people were feeling, particularly worn down, under pressure (*“They had about 15 action plans running at the same time”*) and very, very tired was responded to with an approach (*“a leadership version of a hug and a bit of love”*) that focussed on people as individuals, prioritising wellbeing, noticing and celebrating good work, making people feel proud of their work (*“How are you going to help us feel proud of what we do? That’s what we need from you”* [asked by a member of the SLT in the Governor’s first staff briefing]), and instilling hope for the future (for more details see Experience theme 8 ‘Leadership and management approach’):

> “You know, everything that we did was trying to say, look this is different; it’s going to feel different; it’s going to be different… …And make it something that is full of hope and positivity. Align it with those values, align it with the stuff that matters to people. … what are the things that are really important to your staff? And the biggest thing here was, and this is what I really tapped into, they wanted to feel proud.” [Governing Governor]

Members of the SLT described the value of the Growth Project, which provided them with a space to reflect on their work, their relationships, and the kind of leaders they want to be. Central to the people-focussed leadership approach appears to be the prioritisation of care. This included care for staff (including services and support) and care for prisoners to protect their wellbeing, and to help the groups work effectively with each other. This was explicitly and repeatedly talked about by colleagues at different management levels and appears to have impacted on how staff

subsequently talked and acted, as illustrated in the quote below, in the later section about caring about and for people (see Mechanism 8), and in the events added to the timeline (see Table 1):

> "…but key in it was this idea of focusing on treating prisoners as individuals and, running parallel to that, loads of stuff around staff wellbeing, staff facilities, so kind of like mirroring it in terms of how we treat staff. …this narrative that we need to look after the individual, we need to look after wellbeing…if we do as much as we can, that will make this prison a much better place. …even if you don't really want to be caring and compassionate, actually this is the way we keep the prison safe, not bend ups and alarm bells and PAVA[17] and batons. … So, to then hear people talking about care and what can we do to help, you know, a language of compassion and rehabilitation, was pretty profound and that happened a few months in." [Governing Governor]

Many times, the Governing Governor said the words *"relentless repetition"* which seem to capture his perseverance, as well as that of his colleagues in local leadership roles. These words were used in relation to many things, including staff capability of autonomous decision-making, the vision for the prison, people and compassion being critical, and the need to keep reinforcing people's faith (*"this is going to work; this is the future"*). This people-focussed leadership approach was obvious to many of the staff across the prison, with reflections shared about believing he was sincere, about his approachability, and about feeling connected with. That said, the Governing Governor and members of the SLT openly acknowledged that a small number of staff were not 'on board' in the same way regarding the direction of travel in the prison.

A common theme of advice the participants suggested for other sites doing culture development work links to this condition. Participants recommended focussing on prioritising people over processes, ensuring staff feel invested in, and that they have the right training and support to do their work, including material investment (such as

[17] Synthetic pepper spray

having the right equipment and being able to fix or maintain day-to-day infrastructure, even as seemingly minor as having access to pens and replacement printer cartridges).

Condition 5: Restricted regime and stability of the population

HMPPS' response to the Covid-19 pandemic to protect lives (described in section 3.1), which led to prisoners remaining in their cells almost all the time may have come at a very worrying cost to people's wellbeing, mental health, and opportunities (e.g., accessing employment and rehabilitative interventions). It also appears to have had a marked influence, in this and at other prisons, on the number of incidents of rule-breaking, violence, and self-harm (see section 4.1). Locally, this meant the atmosphere was perceived to be calmer, people felt safer, and staff wellbeing improved (which had consequences for people's resilience, energy levels, and sickness absence). There was less 'reactiveness' to serious incidents perceived to be occurring during the day, there was less paperwork and fewer processes required to monitor or support individuals most at risk (to themselves or others), and so on. This, and a more settled/less transient population (see section 4.1) all freed up considerable time and headspace for staff.

Changes in the local staffing also slowed during this time, and whilst this is likely due to several factors in addition to the working environment being safer,[18] one potentially influencing variable was the consequence of the pandemic on the country's job market. The steadiness of the staffing group appears to have subsequently enabled professional skills and relationships to be developed, which in turn appears to have even further supported the local staffing stability:

> "So [the] resignation rate has more than halved now. … …what you have done is a reduced churn and with that a more settled staffing population that they can build experience, and that has been [the prison's] problem [previously]. … So whilst the last two years have not been a particularly

[18] Interestingly participants did not share experiences relating to threat and fear of contracting Covid-19, whereas this was commonly reported, globally, by frontline workers. The lack of self-reported pandemic-related fear during this study's data collection should not be interpreted as this safety fear not having existed in the prison.

good learning environment because [new staff] kind of learned a COVID restricted regime, there has been this more solid base of people to work with and live with that you now have." [PGD office staff]

Condition 6: Easing of central demands and scrutiny

When the pandemic began, many demands and scrutiny processes on prisons from the HMPPS Centre were suspended as the focus changed to protecting life through managing virus transmission.[19] A substantial consequence of this was the time this freed up, and the pressure this took off staff (especially managers). Managers locally reported being able to use this headspace to consider their prison's current circumstances and next steps, whereas 'before' it had felt that there was insufficient time for this. This was described nicely by PGD staff as a *"once in a lifetime opportunity to stop that mad wheel spinning. Reduce the regime to nothing and give [the Governor] some thinking and planning time and [to] build"*. Staff experienced much more time in their days to determine what they needed and wanted to focus on, progressing work they perceived to be their highest priority and consistent with their vision (see later Mechanism 1), and investing in relationships, as illustrated by the following:

"It did give prison officers a chance to actually relate to the men, for the new recruits. It means they were less scared and overwhelmed." [IMB]

"…and then when Covid stopped all the noise, it's almost like we took control of the prison, didn't we, and then who we really were underneath…when that was taken away, we flourished because that's who we really are, I think. … There was no regional sort of headquarters asking for returns or anything, so we invested in looking after each other and getting to know each other again, talking to each other." [SLT]

[19] For around six months at the beginning of the pandemic, the following were ceased completely: the National Assurance Process, risk register, self-audit process, Business Plan progress reporting, Consolidated Action Plan (CAP) and selected performance data reporting. Further, quarterly performance meetings between the Governor and Prison Group Director stopped. After six months the completion of some of these processes were reinstated but in a 'light touch' manner, and performance meetings took place via MS Teams rather than in person. Only towards the end of the pandemic (around quarter four of 2021-22) was the CAP requested and scrutinised again, and an expectation set for self-audit to resume and performance data to be analysed in more depth. At the time of writing, some prior data reporting had still not been reinstated.

Mechanisms of change

The change-enabling conditions provided a context that was calmer and safer, more stable, and less reactive, more caring, and less divided, less burdened by organisational demands (with people subsequently having more time and headspace) and had an improving physical environment and infrastructure. Within this context, a host of further development and change occurred, facilitated it appears by several mechanisms, that is, new or enhanced activities or ways of doing things around the prison (see Table 4).

Table 4: Mechanisms of change

1. Clarity of vision and priorities	2. Active and collaborative senior leadership
3. Empowerment and fostering autonomy	4. Raising and clarifying expectations and accountability
5. Recognising and valuing people and progress	6. Using and maximising people's potential
7. Encouraging voice and engagement	8. Caring about and for people
9. Learning-focussed: questioning, reflection, and using opportunities	10. Building momentum for change

Mechanism 1: Clarity of vision and priorities

Amongst senior leaders, and to some degree the middle managers, there appears to be greater clarity of purpose and direction in the prison, which seems to have been internalised and evidenced through people's outlook, decision-making, and their daily practice. Using outside resources and expertise to help facilitate the process locally, boiling down the vision and values ('Be Honest, Be Kind, Be Fair') to a small number of simple and memorable points/priorities, ensuring this felt 'theirs', and having an *"almost relentless conversation and repetition"* [Governing Governor] about it, appears to have helped people understand and 'own' their vision. Then actively linking issues, decisions, and actions back to this to demonstrate congruence, seems to have helped solidify this further:

> "Clear values, clear vision, clear purpose. We had all of that right from the start. Real basics around the early days period being critical, meeting individual need, focus on wellbeing. That three key…almost like really obvious messages that were really easy to grip onto. Within that, basically,

> just get on with doing the things that need to happen in order for that to work and let [staff] get on with it and just recognise that actually if we make it matter that the wings are clean and tidy, not because [staff may be] going to get battered if they are not clean and tidy, but because it's not good for anybody's wellbeing, staff or prisoners, if the wings are filthy and dirty. So you link it back to the core purpose and the value of: is this right, is this fair, or kind, that you're living in squalor?" [Governing Governor]
>
> "…by the SOs briefing the staff at how important Key Work is, the link between the Key Work and the self-harm, the link between Key Work and violence, reduction of complaints, reduction of applications, they've now bought into-- the staff have bought into it." [SLT]

This, alongside empowering people to make decisions and changes (see Mechanism 3), appears to have translated into staff having the confidence and conviction to do just that (*"I think if you know what the vision is, you are able to make decisions to fit in that vision"* [SLT]), and to do so autonomously, in line with the prison's priorities. Subsequently, actions to address issues that perhaps had become somewhat 'accepted' were recounted by staff (*"We decided, well, we know what the problem is [with canteen and bullying]; we're gonna stop it"* [CM]), as well as a renewed clarity about how to prioritise one's time and energy (*"...people say, "well, I'm busy", but there ain't nothing in this job that I can't drop, apart from Coroner's Court"* [CM]).

Achieving clarity of vision and purpose was salient enough to be recalled and added to the local timeline (see section 4.2) and was core advice that participants suggested for other sites wanting to develop their culture. They specifically identified the importance of a vision that aligns with staff's values and what matters to them and is collaboratively and inclusively created by colleagues, rather than being determined and dictated 'from the top'.

Future-oriented thinking and conversation appears to have been a particularly important part of achieving this clear vision, and in instilling hope and a sense of direction. Rather than focussing solely on the immediate issues and needs (of which

there were many, including the pandemic), the Governing Governor engaged people in deliberately and actively considering the prison's longer-term future:

> "That future focus, this will protect us, not just through Covid; this is after Covid. … It wasn't surviving Covid…it was setting the tone early to say that this is our opportunity to create a future that will outlast any of us and go on, you know, five, 10, 15 years and I think that caught on, that sense of there's a plan and there is a sense of hope and purpose. …three months into a pandemic and we were talking about creating meaningful employment pathways for prisoners to resettle. …although we were still managing a pandemic, we were doing all this other stuff, we never hit that curve, that down curve. Although [the pandemic] was massive, we had something else and it kept that hope up of a better future." [Governing Governor]

Observations from those slightly separate to the prison illustrated this future-orientation solidifying over the years through a shift in language and the nature of storytelling by staff; this appears to have changed from being primarily focussed on the challenges of the past, to the current state and the future possibilities for the prison. This seems to have contributed to a renewed sense of purpose and hope, at least for some.

Mechanism 2: Active and collaborative senior leadership

Both operational and non-operational staff identified the stability of SLT personnel in recent years, as well as their approach to others, as critical to how it felt to work in the prison (*"For me, it's about the stability of SLT as well. I think, just having that consistency for a period of time and having somebody who actually cares"* [Non-operational colleague]). The effective integration and co-working between operational and non-operational teams still has a way to go in the prison, however, this seems to have been improved by enhancing representation at senior levels, which in turn appears to have fostered a better understanding and appreciation of others' work and roles. For example, Healthcare colleagues reported with appreciation that the new leadership role of Head of Health and Wellbeing (and importantly that person being an advocate for them, being patient and knowledgeable, and being actively involved

in their work) had been important for their better integration into and collaboration with prison colleagues, as well as having a greater voice and visibility at senior management level. Similarly, colleagues in Psychology Services reflected that previously they had little direct role in the prison (*"kept at arms length"*) compared with now feeling well-embedded, partly enabled by their presence on the SLT and their physical co-location with the prison's safety team. The Senior Probation Officer too is now a part of the prison's SLT, which they reported to be an important step to enhancing people's understanding of the importance of managing and reducing risk throughout the custodial sentence, and to local probation colleagues having greater voice. And the Head of Residence, who joined just before the pandemic began (with previous experience working in high security prisons), was credited by numerous participants for introducing small but substantial changes to how the regime is operationalised, which were perceived to have increased levels of control and safety for staff and prisoners. In turn this SLT development, perhaps once further developed and extended beyond the senior level, has the potential to help the whole prison achieve better outcomes immediately and help protect the public when people are released.

A more collaborative approach seems apparent within the SLT, with people working together more often to address problems that would traditionally fall to specific individuals based on their functional responsibilities. Some members spoke of improved relationships as a consequence of working more closely with each other during the pandemic, during which the SLT had temporarily split into two smaller groups to facilitate continuity of leadership in case people fell ill. They also reported better understanding each other's roles and responsibilities and trying to engage in constructive criticism with each other too. The quote below illustrates this approach, showing the potential to better support each other, and more effectively address problems, by recognising the interlinked nature of their responsibilities and challenges and collaborating to resolve them:

> "We see ourselves as a team now, …coming from a safety point of view, I know that safety isn't going to work unless, you know, I work with security, I work with drug services, whereas we didn't [before]. It was very much silo work and again I think it was that impossible "we've just got to get through

> it", whereas now I genuinely feel that everybody is working together for that common goal and we're talking to each other and bouncing ideas off each other and saying "can we do this?" and having that support and backing is massive." [SLT]

Whilst not unanimous, colleagues in several departments (including Healthcare and Education) reported a change in attitudes between staffing groups also, which may be a consequence of the development in SLT working. For them personally, the change made it more comfortable to enter the houseblocks and effectively do their work or liaise with officers to facilitate critical services. To some degree they believed this represented a collective shift toward care and rehabilitation being at the heart of the prison, which in turn made those outcomes more likely. Developing cross-discipline and cross-grade relationships and approachability was a key piece of advice given by participants, for others working to improve culture in prisons.

This more active engagement and shared responsibility has also been observed from those slightly apart from the prison, with the implication that this represents more effective and focussed working. The quote below illustrates this well; observations of the prison's leaders focussing attention on outcomes (also related to the previous mechanism), and taking joint responsibility for compiling reports for regional or central monitoring and accountability:

> "…more focused on outcomes than I've seen in the past. …there's been a transition where the work has been very centralised about that one person in that [Head of Business Assurance] role to now pushing it out and asking more from functional heads… It was about the whole [approach was] very much based around a centralised position as opposed to functional heads contributing to that wider, wider delivery. … [Now] when I see the [various risk and assurance reports, and actions plans], it may not be as neat as it was in the past, but it certainly shows greater engagement from others involved with it." [PGD office staff]

Mechanism 3: Empowerment and fostering autonomy

At different levels, individually as well as collectively, the focus on empowering people to take ownership of their work and responsibilities and giving them the autonomy to make decisions and try new things, was identified as critical to the local change (at least at senior and middle manager levels), and also as a fundamental factor identified for others attempting prison culture change. This appears to have resulted in a noticeable change in how staff approach their work, but this came not from developing local skills, but from shifting people's beliefs about themselves (*"It's this kind of sense of being able to take things on and deal with them and think of the answers"* [PGD]).

Empowering people and encouraging them to act autonomously requires considerable trust and can be particularly hard when the stakes are high, and some participants were open about this initially feeling uncomfortable. From the participants' accounts, this began at the top (between the PGD and Governing Governor) and appears to have filtered down (at least to the operational middle manager level), bringing challenges but also notable benefits.

> "…the second-best decision I made was to let [the Governor] govern in the way that he wants to govern.[20] And there's some risk in that, not only in relation to any governing governor, but also because he doesn't govern in the way that the Service necessarily always feels comfortable with. You know, he doesn't focus on processes and assurance and all of that. That's not to say that he can't or doesn't do those things, but he does it in his way of governing [which] is quite different from quite a lot of people. …but really the big decisions were getting the right governor and letting them govern in that way, and enabling that really..." [PGD]

The empowerment was made explicit by the Governing Governor to some of their colleagues, and in some reported cases, inspired people to have and test new ideas

[20] The best decision described was the appointment of a people-focussed Governor, who would build on the work of former colleagues who had this leadership approach.

as they felt able, trusted, and supported to make decisions about their own work and their roles in the prison.

> "Because the gaffer said, "do what you need to do". So, after I found my feet after a few months, I went back to him and said "well, would you like me to involve the OSGs and the admin grades [in the induction process]?",[21] and I gave him the reasons and he went "it's your baby, sounds like a great idea, crack on". He's let me run with it." [CM]

Moving from a perceived state of helplessness, where demands and challenges felt unending, and staff felt they had little control over these, required very clear focus and messaging. It also, importantly, required people to have the capability (i.e., resources, skills, and time) to be able to use these offered opportunities, which were significantly influenced too by the change-enabling conditions previously discussed. Listening to staff, encouraging them to identify what was possible to try, and then supporting that, is illustrated in the quote below, and appears to have motivated and prompted their engagement and responsiveness to the chance to be autonomous.

> "But then putting the support in place that allowed them to actually do something about it themselves. So, not that learned helplessness, that was classic pure learned helplessness, including at SLT level, "oh, it's too difficult; this is [prison name]. Oh, we can't possibly be asked to do anything because it's [prison name] and it's just horrendous." So, actually, well, let's give them the tools. … So the member of staff feels empowered, the prisoner feels looked after, everybody wins, you know. Give them the tools, make sure they've got the resource and then basically give them a regime that enables them to succeed." [Governing Governor]

This leadership approach appears to have fostered trust in colleagues, and in combination with the safety of knowing that ideas can be tried and that it is ok if they do not work, that the emphasis was on learning rather than blame, this ethos appears to have 'filtered down' and to be modelled by other managers (*"you kind of pass on*

[21] Operational Support Grade

that autonomy, don't you, because you have that level of trust"). With this devolution of responsibility, accounts from staff (such as that below) illustrated how managers were refocussed on doing the work of a manager, rather than being caught up in the work that should be done by others.

> "I think we've empowered, we've empowered our supervising officers a lot more, and I think I, I see a big change when I go on the houseblocks with the supervising officers, actually control the houseblocks. They seem to spend time with their staff, they're directing the staff, they're giving them coaching, they're trying… And before we did, you'd never see that. They were just told to get on with it and… But I think they, they're a great help with the staff now because we've empowered them to just get on and actually start taking, start, you know, take charge; "you do it…you can do it", and I think that's helped." [CM]

Numerous accounts revealed the positive impact felt by these staff, including their personal job satisfaction, sense of achievement, morale, and pride in their work (*"every manager really takes pride in their area and really owns it"*).

Mechanism 4: Raising and clarifying expectations and accountability

In varied contexts, the raising of expectations and having these spelled out in concrete ways appears to have positively influenced people's professional behaviour in line with what the prison is wanting to achieve. This has manifested both in people keenly not wanting to 'let others down', plus *"pride and healthy competition"* [SO] between some staff groups, and thus raising the standards they hold themselves and each other to. Further, this is a factor which the participants considered essential for others attempting prison culture development work. A local example is, alongside the financial investment in the Clean & Decent project, the lead for this established ways of working to maintain the benefits of improved practice, ensuring that there was not simply an expectation of improved outcomes, but that the work was implemented with clear processes, scrutiny and seriousness that would enable those to be achieved. The quote below illustrates the experience of those affected:

> “And we’re a lot more accountable, aren’t we, than what we were before? We have to justify why we need new stuff and actually keep account for it. We have to answer to it, whereas, before, before, we, we didn’t. It was a case of just getting through the day. So it didn’t matter. If [the Clean & Decent lead had] just gone “make it clean”, and that was the only thing…but, now, she is in charge of every piece of cleaning equipment in this jail, you can’t get a new mop, you can’t get a new broom [without a reason], and then you’ve got nothing. You’ve got to buy into it to actually get the stuff you need to, to clean the houseblock.” [CM]

Similarly with new operational staff, dedicated attention to them in their early days and weeks has made (or certainly has intended to make) more explicit what is expected of them. This is closely related to investing in people (see Mechanism 6), but as the quote below shows, the implementation of clear expectations, even at the very basic level of dress-code, may have positive implications for how people see themselves, each other, their roles, and the Service which they have joined.

> “…they’re in a uniform and from that Monday onwards I’ll inspect them to make sure they’ve ironed, and make sure they’re clean. If they don’t know how to iron the shirts, I’ve got an ironing board and an iron in my office, and I’ll show them. … And I think we look professional. You know, we look like an organisation that knows what they’re doing.” [CM]

There appears to have been a shift in how staff behaviour is dealt with also, which in turn seems to have supported a more responsive and understanding approach to conduct issues. For example, as described by an operational middle manager, there is now an expectation to actively work to resolve or overcome staff conduct issues, rather than avoiding these or reaching immediately for the option of dismissal. Intermediate response options include, for example, reflecting on the impact of one’s own leadership and actions, making referrals for occupational health support, and providing additional training and coaching. This altered approach reinforces a sense of learning culture, whilst also ensuring that employees are supervised and guided. The improvements in, and focus on protecting, people’s wellbeing and resilience appear to have also enabled people to rise to these expectations, reframing them as

achievable challenges, rather than as threats. Consequently, the potential for action and change seems to be embraced rather than shied away from (*"…before it wasn't a healthy challenge. It was all the struggling challenges…whereas now it's an enjoyable challenge"* [SLT]), which in turn has influenced people's resilience in the face of challenges and means opportunities for development are exploited.

The raised expectations of staff conduct and their professional roles, and staff meeting these, may explain why there has been a lessening of prisoners' queries and concerns needing escalation. Further, as one senior staff member reflected, the enhanced conduct seems to have also enhanced prisoner expectations too:

> "I don't get routinely moaned at by prisoners. There's more of an expectation that they'll be dealt with…they'll get things they should have. And I think there's a growing expectation that the prison will support them in rehabilitation." [PGD]

Mechanism 5: Recognising and valuing people and progress

Participants described how having the prison advocated for and promoted for their efforts and progress (including before the pandemic), at local, regional, and national levels, fostered a sense of pride and accomplishment amongst staff. This was felt deeply to be needed (see change-enabling Condition 4) to break from the 'story' that they felt had become 'stuck' (particularly as a consequence of being placed in Special Measures/PPSP):

> "We had such a bad press and I think when [the Governing Governor] came, I think one of the first things we asked for was: "you need to tell our story outside of here". There was so much hard work, just absolutely willing, [we were] really passionate but still I think there was a perception from senior leaders outside that [the prison] is still horrible." [SLT]

The narrative surrounding the prison has changed over time, described now as *"a badge of honour now rather than a badge of shame"* [IMB], and with one member of the SLT reflecting that people want to come there *"because it's on an upward wave so they now want to be part of it"*. Whilst there is clearly still more to do to improve

outcomes, being recognised positively appears to have further motivated colleagues to continue their current efforts, sustain changes, and dedicate themselves to doing even better, as well as influencing their personal wellbeing. An example provided related to attending the Deputy Governors' regional meeting, and the pleasing reaction of colleagues when all the prison's local performance measures were *"green, green, green solid"*[22] [SLT].

What appeared so powerfully in staff members' accounts, and in their tone and demeanour when they shared these with the researchers, is the recognition that *they* are responsible for the progress achieved, and owning this contributes to their sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, and prompts them to really notice and share this:

> "And now, for the last couple of years probably I go on and the CM knows I'm visiting, so they're there before I get into the main part of the wing and or the SO is and they wanna tell me about what's going on in the wing and they wanna show me what they're doing" [PGD]

Looking now at the value placed on staff, a striking difference from the view in some (perhaps many) prisons, is the perception of new-in-service operational staff being an asset rather than a problem or liability. Accounts provided included seeing this group as people who bring 'fresh eyes and ideas', who may have excellent core skills or attitudes, and a rehabilitative orientation more consistent with the local vision, which are a valuable contribution to the prison. For example:

> "'Experienced staff'…that that gets bandied around. When I got temporary promoted, I went to [houseblock], and my staffing group wasn't the best. But I can see that no matter if you've got one day in or 10 years in, I've got an idea of what sort of person you are. And sort of…I got all my staff in one by one, had a chat with them, you know, got to know them a little bit. And then we went to workforce planning and they were saying "you need experienced [staff]", and I went "whoa, I don't need your 'experienced'

[22] Metrics/measures are often rated as 'red', 'amber', or 'green', denoting their status/degree of concern (red = worst, green = best).

> [staff], I need the ‘right’ staff”. I says “I've got people on there with two months in that are not moving anywhere. Also, there’s individuals on there with ten years plus, I don't need them”.” [CM]

Managers perceived this attitude to newer staff to have influenced their retention problems, with people being less likely to look elsewhere for alternative employment. When viewed as a valued colleague, this appears to have influenced new staff members’ job satisfaction and morale, their sense of belonging, and willingness to speak up with new ideas for ways of working (see also Mechanism 7), which in turn has the potential to benefit the prison overall.

Although less commonly reported, the impact of individual recognition and appreciation appears to be experienced as hugely meaningful and personal when it happens, leading people to feel noticed, valued and that they matter:

> “…she got a really lovely letter and she came over and she had tears in her eyes, and she was like “Thank you so much. I did it because I wanted to do it.” I said “I know, but you put yourself out there and that should be recognised and acknowledged.” It doesn’t cost me anything. It cost me two minutes to write an email.” [Non-operational staff]

> “One of the things we do on [houseblock] with the Growth Team…it's like an award ceremony, so like we nominate staff; like he said, the 21-year-old officer who got him the mattress. Right, so we're highlighting what they're doing, like. I nominated the library. And when I went to the library this week he said “it was the first time in 14 years I had ever had any recognition”. So it was kind of like a good feeling to get through...” [Prisoner]

Mechanism 6: Using and maximising people’s potential

Middle managers appear to have been critical to the development of operational staff, specifically through their more active involvement and in the approach that they take (which appears more constructive and coaching-focussed than it was previously) as illustrated by the following quote:

> "The CMs are more pro-active, they're getting more involved with staff or making staff be more involved and it's just drilling home the basics. Again, the CM will say, "Why have you done that?" challenging people whereas before maybe they just leave them to it. … They're doing it in a positive way. It's like before, in the old days [if you'd not done your job there'd be a] massive b*****king, a kick up the arse and you're out the door. …and rather than chastising him and giving him a big b*****king, they're working and helping him and he's now gone on to be a decent enough officer and that's with help, and work, and guidance." [CM]

The local belief is that these types of changes have been critical to the retention of new-in-service staff, and for improved staff professionalism and wellbeing. Such a change in middle managers seems to have been in part a consequence of them being empowered and given autonomy (see Mechanism 3) to properly focus on these aspects of this work, rather than becoming involved in work that should lie with those they oversee.

Related to the previous change mechanism, the changing demographics of the operational staff group had also been perceived (by many, but not all) to align better to achieving the vision and potential of the prison. Whilst many acknowledged it was problematic that new-in-service operational staff lack hands-on experience of prison work, and especially the experience of a running a proper regime (unlike during the pandemic), the ethos of new colleagues, and the departure of those with more 'old fashioned' views (*"they have this view of prisoners that, you know, they're scumbags and that's how they should be treated"* [Partner Agency staff]) was commented on positively:

> "…with the staff now, you've got the younger, younger staff recruitment, 'cause they're new, like, into college and they're getting taught the new way to work here, they're much more about rehabilitation rather than punishing people so that, that's helping." [SO]

The creation of new roles and formalised leads for areas of work seems to have facilitated the delivery of particular and needed investment in staff and local changes.

For example, a new middle-manager role was introduced to focus specifically on the serious challenges regarding recruitment and retention of prison officers at the prison. Given considerable freedom, and support from the SLT, they designed a new staff induction programme (with greater structure and oversight, combining new staff from all areas and grades)[23] and ongoing mentoring (of the operational new members) in the early days. Devoting time to this mentoring (demonstrations and then follow-up observation and coaching) was identified as particularly needed, to ensure new colleagues were prepared to effectively conduct core aspects of their roles; an example is below:

> "Because [mealtimes] potentially is always a flashpoint, although not so much now. But I'm there with them. I'm watching them. I help them. I mean soon as we started doing controlled unlock, I went "right, follow me". So I took them up to one of the spurs, and went "right, this is how you do it" and I fed the whole houseblock, doing it with them. Because they haven't got a clue. I only needed to do it once, or do it twice just in case I hadn't captured everybody. You know, but I was there as well after that, every mealtime." [CM]

Further, this person designed and delivered additional in-house training on induction, focussing less on process and procedure, and more on staff wellbeing and skills (such as on support services, resilience, and mental health), in response to their perceptions of the needs of staff. Those who experienced the extended mentoring reported on it positively, including how necessary and accessible it was, as illustrated in the quote below. It is likely that such a scheme brings important benefits in terms of staff competence and confidence to do their work, and signals to employees (including those not directly experiencing this additional support) that the organisation cares about and invests in them.

> "…what you do at college, it don't prepare you. To walk on that landing after being at college, it's…like the handbrake is taken off… …[At this

[23] Typically, induction for colleagues in different roles will be done separately, i.e., prison officer induction will be different from that for Operational Support Grades or non-operational staff.

prison] before you go into training, you come in. You have a tour round the prison…, so it will give a little taster of the reality of what you're going into, and then, when you come out of training, you have shadowing as well, so you've got that little bit of accountability. …everybody's just been incredibly patient with me and they've just been there, …if I'm not sure, I'm not just going to go with it. I'm going to go and ask someone, and everybody's just been amazing. …and there's just a calmness and there's always been someone to help and support." [Prison Officer]

Across the houseblocks, the time and investment available for staff was noticed too, such as managers in the segregation unit reporting the recruitment of staff to their location had never been better,[24] as people were able to focus more on their professional development and career progression, rather than 'firefighting'.

Having the 'right' people in the 'right' roles seems to have particularly contributed to positive change, specifically in jump-starting change, and then maintaining and developing it further. To help with identifying the 'right' people, the SLT reported trying to limit routine or automatic 'rotation' of staff between roles, and instead request individuals submit expressions of interest (fostering people's sense of autonomy), and then conducting competence-based interviews with candidates. Whilst they acknowledged this was more time consuming, they believed it to be worthwhile. Having staff mentoring and induction delivered by someone passionate and dedicated, who takes initiative and develops the work, appears to have made that a success. Similarly, as the CMs recounted, part of the success of another major project was due to the lead's particular knowledge and commitment to their work:

"…she's got the operational aspect of understanding you know, the security aspects as well as controlling and auditing, … she wants to make this job her own, so she wants to do the best job she can…she's invested in it".

[24] Segregation units serve the purpose of removing a person from the main prisoner population. This can be used for several reasons, such as for the person's own protection, to maintain good order in the prison, while an adjudication hearing is pending (following alleged rule-breaking), and for cellular confinement (as a punishment for proven rule-breaking).

The significance of this theme chimes with the identification of events and activities on the timeline which relate to specific roles being created, and investment in staff being implemented. The accounts supporting this mechanism indicates these changes, and experience of their consequences, extend beyond the managerial level of staff.

Mechanism 7: Encouraging voice and engagement

The accounts provided of local progress repeatedly indicate the importance of better listening and engagement between staff, and between staff and prisoners, and indeed, of the main pieces of advice participants said they would pass on to others working on culture change, was to properly listen and make it safe for people to share their views and experiences. Locally, progress in this area appears to have been facilitated partly through the introduction of specific fora and meetings, and over time the practice of consultation is perceived to have become more routine in their local ways of working.

Beyond simply enabling people to have a voice, and listening to this, the engagement activity has been used to collaboratively design or shape practice at the prison. The example below refers to a specific part of the prison where officers and prisoners were actively encouraged to inform operational design. This approach has the potential to result in better decision-making and impact, given that those directly affected are directly involved.

> "…now we've got the time, now staff are listening, now we're engaging with each other better, we're raising those concerns and they're being heard. …we knew [houseblock] was an issue anyway, but they all had an input on that. I remember doing forums about what we needed at that time, so I just think it was being listened to, and prisoners as well, we've had prisoner forums on here as to what they feel they need, that played a massive part." [CM]

The next quote illustrates how consultation with prisoners was a central component of the decision to introduce a split regime, rather than return to 'full unlock', when the pandemic lockdown restrictions eased. People's experience of these two states will

be considerably different, and both come with benefits and costs. In such circumstances, encouraging the people impacted to contribute to the decision-making becomes all the more important in reaching a solution acceptable to all. This consultation is likely to be one reason why the introduction of the split regime appears to have been largely well-tolerated and complied with.

> "…they actually were part of the forums, asked to remain in their landing cohorts, and the reason for that is obviously, yes, it's less time actually out of their cell if you put it above (inaudible) but in terms of the time that they get is quality time out their cell." [SLT]

Linked also to the mechanisms of empowerment and of valuing people, the response to people raising ideas and voicing opinions seems to have encouraged this to continue. If voice is encouraged, and then sincerely considered and responded to, this fosters repeated engagement (rather than it being perceived as superficial, tokenistic, or insincere), as illustrated by the extract below:

> "It doesn't matter how new you are. When you've got an idea, if you put it out there, you will be listened to, especially on our houseblock. I feel like we've got quite good SOs and CM. If you want to put a point of view, they will listen to you. It might not always go through, but they're more than happy to listen to you and take it onboard and, if does go through, then perfect, you've helped out a little bit." [Prison Officer].

The focus on community and working collectively appears to have influenced the nature of local communications, both their content and tone. Instead of a more traditionally authoritarian, punitive, or harsh approach, those involved in communications reported emphasising support and procedural justice, recognising the centrality of communications to bring people onboard and boost cooperation with collective efforts, changes, or rules:

> "…there's still a couple of signs on the drive which is very much to the visitors: "We're watching you. We're going to put you in jail if you try and bring anything [in]". That was the old way of…everything was very

> security, downtrodden, everybody's corrupt… Now, it's very much "Okay, this is what we expect of you." This is how…the right way to do it. If you're in trouble, please contact us for help. So it's not "We're after you", [it's] "we're here for you". … And [we did more of] that sort of explaining, that procedural justice around all the communications. … Staff didn't know why they were being told to do things. They didn't get the why. We just told them the what and maybe the how if they were lucky. It was never the why. The more understanding they have and continue to have, the more engaged they are and responsive they are, and accepting if it's a decision that isn't a favoured one, but those decisions still have to be made sometimes." [SLT]

Mechanism 8: Caring about and for people

An emphasis on care for people (especially for colleagues) is noticeable in the prison, with successive governors building on previous work, and now formally integrating this into the vision of the prison ('be kind'). The locally-reported pre-pandemic staff retention problem and high staff sickness rates, and then the pandemic itself, brought the issue of staff wellbeing into particularly sharp focus. Many participants reported that feeling more cared about contributed to improved staff wellbeing and retention. Events and activities related to care and wellbeing were also noticeably present in the locally created timeline (see section 4.2).

Local investment in care services is a clear signal that staff care is taken seriously; this has included the provision of a weekly on-site counselling service, and dedicated time and roles to boost the in-house Care Team service delivery. The local Care Team have become a more prominent feature in the prison over the years, trusted and well-known, led by a passionate and committed operational staff member, actively and personally engaging with staff daily across the prison (*"Just continually bombarding people [with care]!"*), and given time and space for this role to be performed properly and well (rather than as a 'add on' to main duties when time allows). This appears to have led to a normalisation of care, trust that such care is genuine and helpful, staff believing that their wellbeing properly matters, and an increased uptake of care (with people frequently accessing this themselves as well as initiating it/making referrals for each other).

> "I'm free to go and do bits and pieces, whereas before you're detail led.[25] When you're detail led, I can't go and do that because I'm in reception or I'm in security or I'm here. But the role that I'm doing now also enables me to pick up all the slack on that as well. Or people come and see me and we'd have ten minutes. I've got more time now, so I can go and do what I have to do as care team lead, and it's massive. But also it works for the prison because, if I go and take half an hour to go and talk to somebody and they don't go sick… I like to be very visible. I like to be very visible, get out there and see people, walking round, "You okay? Everything all right?" But I get lots of referrals." [Care Team]

The demonstration of care goes beyond the Care Team though and appears to be linked closely with increasingly active middle managers, and their modelling how much each person matters, as demonstrated by the following quote:

> "I think [support for staff is] good, to be fair. I'd just not long been assaulted, and then the amount of support you get from everyone, like the [inaudible] everything, the staff, your colleagues, the Care Team, your CM. I think, within an hour of me being assaulted, I had everyone emailing me asking if I was all right, and then, days later, still people asking me if I'm all right. I think, from that perspective, I think it's very good. Even my CM, he checked up on me and he was on nights,[26] so he wouldn't have known the situation. As soon as he obviously found out, the next morning I went in and he's emailed me asking me." [Prison Officer]

Participants accounts revealed the significance of specific individuals in relation to the availability and provision of care. For example, one former colleague was named by many as a source of immensely valued support. The sadness that was experienced by these staff when their colleague died was still evident in how they spoke of her to the researchers, and memorial cards were on display across the

[25] Operational colleagues are 'detailed' to where they are meant to be and what they are meant to be doing during their shifts.

[26] Night shifts

prison. The esteem in which she was held and the depth of feeling at her loss was tangible.

Seemingly smaller acts by senior managers also, such as knowing and celebrating people's birthdays, stopping to say hello to colleagues in the corridors, and understanding and personally responding to people's personal circumstances, were perceived by staff as genuine and are now routine/typical, sending the message that individuals are noticed, they matter, and they are cared about. This is consistent with the vision that the prison has established, and requires daily decision-making to be in line with that: *"Actually we are going to prioritise caring for each other… Before I start doing the paperwork, I am going to go and ask them how they are"* [SLT]. Demonstrations of care were reported to not be 'one off', but rather considered part of a 'package' of actions.

Making time for personal interactions, that are not work-focussed, also appears now to be more common amongst the senior staff. This was identified as particularly needed to help support each other in the early days of consultation becoming more common in the prison, as this consequently meant receiving difficult feedback more often and directly. The value of this informal support and care has meant that even though the need for it may have somewhat lessened over time, the importance of having this time together has not, and as such it remains in place.

Caring for the men living in the prison has also developed, although overall appears to lag somewhat behind the progress made in relation to staff. One example is seen in the work of the Family Services team, who during the lockdown actively worked to provide in-cell activities for all men as they recognised the considerable strain extended confinement placed them under. The fact that they extended this to prisoners without children (who would not usually be their target group), is a signal of their determination to care for all prisoners. Another example is the work to improve the physical environment, the conditions in which people are held, and the subsequent success in ensuring basic decency needs are met; these appear to have been a major mechanism of change in the prison:

> "…the reduction in violence and self-harm is huge, huge. And yes, it reduced nationally due to Covid and lock up, but what we found with [this prison] is that that has been sustained now, there has to be something around of the investment in the greater welfare of prisoners and a general decency that's been turned around. So I think that is key that obviously comes with strategy and leadership, …and if you do have a more stable prison with less self-harm and less violence, it tends to breed, you know it helps other areas to grow. … I think the culture change, and what feels like a greater kind of interest, is in prisoner welfare as being quite central to that." [PGD office staff]

Two additional examples stand out which illustrate the altered emphasis on care, and its contribution to positive change, and seem to represent well the opinion of several participants that a prison should be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable residents. The first is the establishment of a wellbeing unit and care pathway dedicated to caring for those who need the most support. Whilst these remain in the relatively early stages of development and their potential does not yet feel fully realised or shared amongst all staff, the instigation of them hopes to send a message that care is a core purpose of the prison. The quote below evidences not only the seriousness with which some staff on the wellbeing unit take the care of prisoners, but also the benefits this has for them too; the relationships they establish, and the personal satisfaction and reward they gain. Also reported, were the benefits to other prisoners and staff of having a physically separate unit for those most needing it, in that there was then less disruption (from people being unwell) occurring on mainstream houseblocks. Residents on the wellbeing unit talked of their appreciation of the prison officers located there, and the quality of care they experienced from them, and the belief that they and their needs mattered to the staff.

> "…and staffing that with people who are volunteers who are prepared to be a bit more patient, what have you…and then six months later starting up the [wellbeing unit] and that's working between them, and with bringing in a CM to do this, really well supported by the Wellbeing Governor, that's changed [the unit] so significantly because people give a s**t and are minded to think about, you know, these guys have got issues, and need to

> be treated with care and not to…we're not to cause them more damage. So you believe in the purpose of that role. It's not just to put them behind the door and treating them the same as everybody else. They're entitled to the same things, but you cannot treat them the same. …I think you end up with a better relationship with the prisoners and with the staff and you believe in the job that you're doing because you're investing yourself in it." [Prison Officer]

The second example relates to working in a more integrated and multidisciplinary way to provide better care. Influenced by the practice of Psychology Services, greater time was invested to understand *why* challenging behaviour was occurring, with the aim of prompting a more considered, responsive and effective approach to managing individuals. This was partly achieved by valuing what staff know about the people in their care and encouraging them to use this in their work. The following quote is an example of genuine multidisciplinary and collaborative working in the context of a process that can sometimes feel perfunctory and process- rather than person-driven:

> "[In the segregation unit] I was briefed on an individual and I was told "We've just done his [Good Order or Discipline (GOoD)][27] board and we've come up with a management plan for him. We've had psychology, mental health, his Key Worker and his Prison Offender Manager. We've engaged [the prisoner]. We've had this meeting and we've come up with a plan and this is what we are going to do." Well, I'd never done a GOoD board like that before!" [Governing Governor]

In the light of these examples, it is not surprising that when prompted participants identified the following as critical activities for culture change in prisons: making people feel cared about and that they matter, meeting people's basic needs well, and prioritising the development of good relationships between people. It appears that

[27] Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) board, where the cases of people held in segregated conditions under this prison rule are reviewed.

caring ‘cascades’, in that as staff feel more cared about, they in turn are more able and likely to care for prisoners.

Mechanism 9: Learning-focussed: questioning, reflection, and using opportunities

Approaching issues and previous practice with a questioning mind appeared in people’s accounts as a way they developed local practice. Ways of working can become deeply ingrained in prisons, with processes and practices delivered in the same ways over many years. Reflecting on why things are done this way, and questioning if that *needs* to be the case, takes effort and headspace. The ‘freeing up’ of external demands (see change-enabling Condition 6) provided this space for reflection which then fostered more creative and innovative thinking and developed local decision-making capability and action. People were able to focus their energy and action on responding to local needs, rather than, for example, reporting on spreadsheets and action plans. In fact, participants’ suggestions for other sites working on cultural change included adopting a culture of learning (as described above) and doing good quality problem analysis. It was considered important to properly understand what the issues are and why, before determining and testing different potential solutions). Locally, having new staff members with fresh eyes also appears to have helped facilitate such questioning and reflection:

> “I was sort of aware it hadn't worked here before, and there was things that I couldn't imagine being different because I had known it for so long, but [new SLT member] just kept saying: “why do we do that? Why can't it be different?” And he just kept saying to me, "well, why can't it be different?" and we just started to say that to the staff who worked for us on [residence] and then say that to other people and just keep saying "why can't it be better?" …and it just grew from there really for me.” [SLT]

Other ways that the prison appears to have encouraged and supported reflection and practice development is through investment in regular supervision for SLT members via the Growth Project (*“creating those spaces where people can talk safely…having space to decompress and offload without the fear of it impacting on how they would be judged and what they were looked at as a result”* [Growth Project Lead]), through

actively challenging each other when practice ‘slips’, and by instigating more routine conversations and meetings amongst groups of staff to enable reflection and ‘checking in’ (as illustrated in the quote below).

> “We talk about the learning and also [the CMs and SOs] have regular meetings now…where they talk with the rest or the security around what their plan is. So instantly if you have those constant conversations, they know what decisions fit with that and you know what decisions will not.” [SLT]

An ethos of learning from practice, and openness to ‘getting it wrong’ without fear of blame and repercussions (*“you're allowed to make mistakes without fear of getting into serious trouble”* [PPSP]) appears to have been developed. With this in place, it seems staff have become more willing to make suggestions, *“feel more relaxed about making changes”* and trying new things, and trust that it is ok if they do not work as hoped, as the learning will still be valuable and support the next round of decision-making or planning (for further details see Experience theme 11 ‘Learning culture’).

These changes in ethos and attitude appears, certainly amongst the SLT, to have reduced the natural defensiveness that can be triggered when challenged, held to account, or when one’s prison is placed in the spotlight. The perspectives of staff working in the Group Director’s office illustrate this well, specifically the increased openness and communicative relationship that exists between them and the prison; *“[they] are a lot more open. They are a lot more easy to talk to”* and when issues do arise the Governing Governor is *"very open to those sorts of conversations and wants to be involved, wants to know”*. This openness was noted too by central support service colleagues who were brought in because of the prison’s placement in Special Measures/PPSP. Such involvement can feel challenging for prison-based colleagues if it feels to them more like additional scrutiny and pressure, rather than genuine support and help (i.e., done to, not with). In this case, however, the perceived response of the SLT was to *“embrace”* what was being offered, creating *“a joint invested interest in the project”*, which has in turn meant *“there's been other avenues of investment that have come their way”*.

There were also important contextual and serendipitous timing factors that influenced the shift in questioning, reflection, and learning, and which fostered innovation and positive perceptions of opportunities afforded. For example, in early 2020 a detailed needs analysis by Penal Reform Solutions was completed. Whilst the SLT acknowledged that this did not contain new information per se, it provided a 'benchmark' of sorts, and a clarity on issues, that then enabled decision-making about what to focus on with the benefit of the time and space afforded by the easing of other pressures (see change-enabling condition 6). The Clean & Decent project is a very clear example of the prison viewing the financial investment received, and the lockdowns especially, as an opportunity to make faster and ongoing progress with planned work. Formerly the prison's physical environment was in a very dilapidated state; through the lockdowns this project continued and was heavily invested in (and more local budget was then allocated to this than would be typical before and during this time). This resulted in a markedly improved physical environment, more organised delivery of 'basics' relating to decency, and improved people's wellbeing and day-to-day experience on-site.

> "Our Covid protocols were so tight that the contractors had confidence to carry on with the refurb programme which has been going on for like 99 years [group laughter]. But those people all through lockdown, where other prisons stopped completely, we kept a building programme going, we kept a refurbishment programme going and so coming out of it we've been building all the way through that, and it's not one little thing -- it's not one big thing that's changed this place; it's all of those little things." [SLT]

The most talked of 'rethink' of local practice was the choice not to reinstate the 'core day' when the pandemic restrictions eased, and instead introduce a 'split regime' limiting the number of people out of their cells at any one time and giving clearer structure to the day. The consensus amongst staff and prisoners seems to be that this has dramatically improved stability and good order.

Further, with the prospect of service delivery having to stop due to the lockdowns, colleagues in Chaplaincy, the Library and in Family Services introduced or expanded

'outreach' services, and as a consequence they not only report having managed to engage with more people in the prison (*"I think we've got 560 men signed up to the library now"*), they have chosen to continue much of their modified service delivery post-pandemic, in addition to reinstating the more traditional activities that can now be facilitated. On the operational side, an example of a reconsideration relates to an aspect of the Incentives Policy Framework, and this not being reintroduced as staff believed this was problematic rather than constructive:

> "…scrapping Basic has been a huge positive.[28] I don't think it worked [before]. Taking TVs off people just…just stupid, antagonistic. And all it led to was smashing up cells and ending up in conflict and more problems. …we could have put that back in as soon as we could after [restrictions eased], but we haven't." [CM]

Mechanism 10: Building momentum for change

Being able to see first-hand the benefits of local work or changes, especially when people could attribute this to their personal involvement, seems to have fuelled momentum and energy for further efforts. The quotes below illustrate this well; along with the impact on people's wellbeing, satisfaction, and commitment from realising the fruits of their labour, there is almost a sense of being 'giddy' in relation to continuous improvement and 'being better':

> "…they believe in it, and they've driven it and that's why it's been such a success here, and I think staff have seen the change... People start smiling a bit more, and I think that drove you on and on thinking: actually, we could be much better. We can just see it…just getting better with virtually every day. And then the momentum kept going…" [SLT]

> "I think the reason it might have stuck is that it's nice not being on the naughty step anymore. It's nice. You get a sense of pride. You feel, you get job satisfaction. You feel valued. … Gives you more energy. … Like,

[28] Basic is the lowest incentives level; see footnote 21.

you get a little bit and do better. Then you want a bit more. You just want to do a bit more." [SLT]

Storytelling, and specifically a change in the types of stories being told, appears to have helped reinforce and motivate change. The current stories told by staff (positive about the present, and the difference between now and the past) are both a marker of culture change having occurred, and a mechanism for bringing about that change, replicating and strengthening this over time. A similar type of 'cascade' effect appears in relation to care in the prison (see also Mechanism 8), whereby as staff feel more cared about themselves, they to begin to demonstrate more active caring to those they are responsible for.

This energy, *"dare to dream"* [SLT] attitude, and sense of achievement seems to have fostered the kind of perseverance that was needed for both 'routine' as well as more ambitious challenges, and to result in colleagues actively suggesting they try more than was being expected of them. Just a few of the many examples given included: colleagues approaching the Governing Governor in the carpark to suggest the early resumption of Key Work activity, the CMs' refusal to pause their efforts to achieve roll reconciliation after prisoners' movement to work/activities given their absolute belief they would succeed, and prison officers insisting on increasing what was suggested by the Governing Governor in relation to the time out of cell they could effectively facilitate for prisoners when the lockdown was being gradually lifted.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to understand how culture change in prison is achieved. A preliminary model has been developed, identifying conditions that enable, and mechanisms that bring about, change in this setting. Those conditions include readiness and desire for change and improvement, additional investment, a sense of togetherness in the face of adversity, people-focussed leadership, regime reduction, and population stability, and the easing of central demands and scrutiny. The mechanisms include clarity of vision and priorities, active and collaborative senior leadership, empowerment and fostering autonomy, raising, and clarifying expectations and accountability, recognising and valuing people and progress, maximising and using people's potential, encouraging voice and engagement, caring about and for people, being learning focussed, and building momentum for change. Through the accounts of participants, there is evidence of these conditions and mechanisms bringing (or at least starting to bring) about structural change that influences the behaviour of individuals which further embeds the cultural change; there is evidence of change manifested through deeds rather than words or intent. This can be seen, for example, through the altered behaviour of CMs in their supervision and training of colleagues, and through the change in language used and provision of care pathways and interventions. However, there are indications that some elements may potentially be represented in all parts of the model as outcomes, conditions, *and* mechanisms for change. For example, 'safety' is an outcome of improved culture, the condition under which people are more able to consider and implement ideas and activities and may also be a mechanism through the reciprocal relationships between staff and prisoners (i.e., when staff feel safer, so too do prisoners).

The change at the prison over the last few years (based on people's perceptions and official data) as described in this report, has been substantial. Encouragingly, the identified change-enabling conditions and mechanisms of change identified here appear consistent with features in other reports relating to this prison that have been completed or published since this study. For example, HMIP's (2023) report following

their recent unannounced inspection, describes the inspection as "*positive*", there being "*much to be proud of*", and that the prison is in a position of "*excellent opportunity to continue to build on this success and make further improvements*":

> "…the prison had made excellent progress and was now cleaner, more decent and safer. The governor had rightly focused on transforming the staff culture, working to improve the capability and confidence of staff and raise morale. He used the pandemic lockdown to reinvigorate the prison, creating a vision for the jail and developing his senior team."
>
> "As a result, assaults on staff and between prisoners had reduced significantly and the prison felt safe and calm."
>
> "Senior leaders had invested time and resource in training and supporting custodial managers and supervisory officers and this meant that individual wings were competently led… Living conditions in the jail were also much better; the general environment was well-maintained and clean, and improvements had been made to cells, showers and serveries."

The needed culture change is not yet complete though. Whilst the consensus amongst participants was that the change had been very positive, some mixed views and experiences were heard, and some groups of people do not yet appear to have benefited as much from the change efforts as others (i.e., non-operational staff, junior staff, and prisoners vs. senior and middle managers and operational staff). HMIP (2023) too identified ongoing areas of need (notably relating to early days in custody, release planning, purposeful activity, rehabilitation, and education, training, and work). Locally, however, there is a notable sense of optimism for the future, and energy and momentum to continue to improve things for all who live and work there. This will inevitably take time, but if the improvements to-date are sustained and then further enhanced, it seems plausible that the benefits described in this report will be retained and expanded. It is also important to note that this research has heard more from staff than prisoners, and there is clearly more to do to listen to and engage prisoners more actively in the culture change journey at this prison.

5.2 Findings in the Wider Context

The proposed model for achieving prison culture change is preliminary, and at this time should be considered one example of how to effect change in this setting. It is encouraging that aspects of the model chime closely with some of the HMPPS approach principles for achieving its vision (working together to protect the public and help people lead law-abiding and positive lives): enable people to be their best, an open learning culture, transform through partnerships, and modernise our estates and technology (HMPPS, 2019). Further, the model is supportive of, and supported by, the wider research and theories related to change (see next paragraph) but given the overall dearth of research on this topic, it is plausible that there are other ways that prisons could achieve positive culture change.

As alluded to above, the proposed model is markedly consistent with the wider evidence base on 'changing organisational culture' and on 'recovery' and 'building back better' after crises (see section 2.4, and Appendix A). For example, all three of these frameworks include direct reference to developing clarity of purpose and vision, making this explicit and applicable to all, and developing and investing in people. All three also identify the critical role of leaders and middle managers in modelling expectations, influencing others' behaviour, and supporting people with change. Similarly, the need for reflection, continuous learning, modification, and review appears in them all too. Further, this prison change model and the wider organisational change evidence base both recognise that having the resources (staffing, financial, and so on) and infrastructure to bring about change are needed, and that working collaboratively with, listening to, and empowering people to be actively part of changes or decisions, are important components of undertaking change effectively. Recovery research and this prison change model also align well in relation to making time to carefully design and enact change, the significance of healthy interactions between central and local spheres, and the importance of being people-focussed. The study participants' experiences certainly included, albeit less explicitly and consistently, the role of effective communication and procedurally just practice, and the place of quality assessment and needs/solution-focussed action planning, which the wider evidence base suggests are important. These features are identified by participants in their advice for others contemplating prison culture

change, and in their suggestions for further local development (see section 5.3). The crisis recovery evidence highlights the importance of diversity, inclusion, and representation, and collaborating with other organisations; these were not obvious components of the current model, and this may explain why some groups of participants reported feeling 'left behind' or may be a consequence of the study's sampling. Finally, this prison change model places importance on recognising and valuing people, and on the sense of momentum and achievement to keep going, which receive less focus in the other two frameworks.

Considering the overarching purpose of HM Prisons and what may define a 'good' prison (see section 2.2), looking at the experiences recounted by participants (specifically the impact of the change-enabling conditions and mechanisms for change) gives reasons for positivity and hope regarding the direction of the prison's culture change journey. Whilst not all the features outlined in section 2.2 are manifest in the model of change generated from the prison under study (particularly those relating to activities for prisoners), many are. Specifically, the researchers identified evidence of an increased sense of belonging, empowerment, and support, influencing wellbeing, commitment, and collaborative working. Further, improving the environment was seen to positively influence wellbeing; there were benefits attributed to feeling noticed and cared about, and improved relationships were seen to enhance meaning and pride in work. Much of the positive 'now' experience is staff-focussed, but the likely ramifications of this in their subsequent work with, and treatment of, prisoners is important to consider. For example, staff who are well-supported, resilient, take pride in doing a good job, and work better together are likely to provide a better quality of care, hold more rehabilitative attitudes, and be more effective in their work. What the researchers saw and heard at this prison suggests there is still a way to go and more to do but the prison is described as notably further forward in fulfilling its core purpose and responsibilities.

5.3 Culture Change Recommendations for the Prison

Whilst there was general agreement from staff who participated in this study that there had been significant positive culture change at the prison over the past few years, many acknowledge that more is needed to sustain this, and to address

outstanding areas of need. The participants identified several areas for further development including: 1) staff appraisal systems need to be more fair and transparent, 2) line management needs to be more consistent, present, and visible, and 3) communication needs to be more clear and frequent (particularly around regime and scheduling). It will also be important that all groups of staff have their voice heard, not just those in operational grades or those colleagues with 'louder' voices. The continuing and strengthening of the consistent use of praise, encouragement and reinforcement about the everyday achievements may help to sustain progress and bring more people on board with change efforts. Successes and good practice should be shared widely with the whole prison so that everyone is aware of the positive changes, not just those in management grades.

Support for staff also needs further focus, particularly for officer grades and OMU staff. Staff need to be provided with the right resources and supplies to allow them to do their job properly. Additionally, more responsive training, continually improved induction processes for new staff (including setting expectations) and greater understanding and awareness about what different staffing groups do and how they operate, would foster greater understanding between groups of staff thereby hopefully facilitating multi-disciplinary working and improved working relationships between staffing groups and teams. Whilst care for staff had undoubtedly improved at the prison, there were still some groups who felt uncared for by their managers. Introducing practices such as staff reflection logs, and more team building activities could help to improve morale and develop a greater sense of togetherness and promote collaboration amongst all staffing departments and grades.

Staff were evidently determined to retain the progress made at the prison and expressed fear of returning to how things used to be. This fear appears to have been longstanding, occurring when improved safety and stability resulted from the Covid-19 lockdowns, as well as when the prison moved out of the pandemic restrictions. One possible reason for this is the organisational memory colleagues have of HMPPS making changes that have not 'stuck'. Again, 'relentless repetition' of progress at the prison travelling forward remains a critical message, with small steps and fostering trust and faith both being vital. There is a need to focus on sustaining, consolidating, and embedding the change made thus far, and being mindful to not

allow progress or good practice to ‘slip’ over time. Effective consultation and engagement, for example, needs to be a continuing process, not just about new and different topics but returning to past discussions and actions to check on progress. Without this, there runs a risk of making ineffective changes, letting things slip or missing opportunities. In addition to ensuring the practices which have had a positive impact at the prison are sustained, there is an enduring requirement to keep up the effort to keep everyone on board with the changes and make sure all staff get chance to discuss, shape and hear about changes. It appears central that the vision of the prison is shared by all staff, regardless of grade or position.

Much of this applies to prisoners, too. This report, and the wider literature on culture change and coproduction, indicates that whole culture change must include prisoners and partner agencies, as well as prison staff. Their participation, through consulting them and drawing on the resources they bring, can strengthen the shifts required in the prison culture. Setting out a strategy for how to communicate the vision to prisoners and others and plans to incorporate their contributions to the prison culture through active citizenship are fundamental to sustaining change.

5.4 Recommendations for Prison Culture Change Efforts

Using the preliminary model for achieving culture change in a prison, the following evidence-informed recommendations are made, which relate to national, regional, and local practice and decision-making.

At national level:

1. Where possible, reflect on the current needs of the people living and working in a prison, and aim to align these with the leadership strengths of potential leaders and senior managers.
2. Progress initiatives to recruit, train, and constructively support leaders in creating hopeful, constructive prison communities. This also includes initiatives to support middle manager development, and continuity planning.
3. Keep under review the central demand for assurance and data returns from prisons, aiming for these to be proportional, streamlined, and underpinned by a clear rationale. When a prison is in crisis especially, resist the temptation to automatically increase such processes and scrutiny.

4. Prisons in crisis will likely benefit from relief from some pressures - where possible a reduction in transfers for instance can bring some stability to the population that in turn may bring the necessary calm and headspace for planning and creating change.
5. Provide investment (e.g., staffing, financial, etc) that is locally viewed as relevant and helpful. Enable and respect local decision-making about how to use new investment, rather than being too directive.

Operational practice that brings positive culture change at regional and local levels:

1. Understand the prison's current 'readiness' for change and develop this sufficiently before implementing or expecting change. This includes how people feel, their capacity and competence, and the availability of resources needed for change to occur. Capitalise on potential unexpected benefits of experiencing challenging times, such as the bonds forged between people or changes to ways of working; use these to remind people of their capability and to 'jump start' new endeavours.
2. Within the overarching HMPPS vision, devise a local vision, that is simple, meaningful, relevant, and understood by all staff. Reiterate this frequently, explicitly linking decisions, actions, and expectations of staff to it, and use this to guide recruitment, training, promotion, and development opportunities.
3. Dedicate time and additional investment to new staff (over a prolonged period, if possible); consider role allocation based on strengths and interests (rather than having automatic 'rotations'), model and provide support for development of staff reflective practice, critical reasoning, and creative thinking, invest in middle manager capability and leadership (enabling good succession planning), and consider dedicated full-time roles in relation to staff care, staff development/mentoring, and equalities/diversity.
4. Communicate often and clearly, using multiple methods to reach everyone and to listen widely, applying the principles of procedural justice.
5. Use opportunities to empower staff and give them autonomy over their work. At senior levels, this involves leaders creating an environment where people feel able to try out new ideas, without fear of blame if things go wrong. Trust staff to make the right decisions and give them the resources that they need. Resist the temptation to step-in too heavily, or micro-manage, if things don't

go to plan at first. This can be supported by making practice development routine: questioning current practice without nostalgia, helplessness or defensiveness, empowering people to generate ideas, normalising short-term trials of initiatives, framing attempts as opportunities for learning rather than success vs. failure, and being quick to stop or pause ideas that are not working (even if these have attracted investment or have 'loud' and passionate advocates).

6. Consider the locally relevant meaning of an 'effective prison regime', which focuses on rehabilitation and safety, maximises access to high levels of structured and meaningful activity, that supports sentence management, provides opportunity for doing good and contributing, and prioritises good staff-prisoner relationships.
7. Reinforce positive work, efforts, and successes as often as possible. This includes having multiple methods of recognition and reward for all staffing groups (including non-directly employed) and prisoners, building reflection on the 'good' into standard meeting agendas, and actively sharing success stories both internally and externally.
8. Develop collaborative, multi-disciplinary, and co-productive ways of working. For example, for staff, having all departments and functions represented at SLT, considering short-term shadowing of roles, facilitating group reflection sessions, having a combined induction process (rather than divided by role/discipline) including understanding the work of each department, sharing workspaces, and actively challenging unhelpful and stigmatising attitudes towards colleagues (e.g., new-in-service staff being 'risky' or a 'liability', and long-in-service staff being 'dinosaurs'). With prisoners, for example, encouraging people to get actively involved in trying new things, devising solutions to problems, and facilitating/supporting change, taking care that engagement is as widespread and representative as possible.
9. Demonstrate sincerity of, and effective, care. This includes ensuring everyone knows what support is available and can easily access this, remembering the small, informal acts as well as the larger and more formal ones (e.g., remembering birthdays and asking people how they are vs. provision of counselling services and occupational health referrals).

10. Ensure that the physical environment in which people live and work is decent, clean and well-maintained. Work to develop good relationships with those providing estates services, along with giving consideration to how staff and prisoners can get involved. This will help to demonstrate to staff and prisoners that their living and working conditions matter.

5.5 Future Research

The preliminary model for culture change in prisons proposed here would benefit from further development and testing. This includes work to refine the conditions and mechanisms, considering others not yet identified, investigating whether some are more or less crucial to changing prison culture, and whether certain combinations or sequencing makes culture change more or less successful. Testing the model at other prisons is also needed, particularly in ones of different categories and functions, and at ones whose 'starting point' may be more or less challenging than at the prison studied in this instance. This would also helpfully inform considerations of reliability and validity of the model.

Prospective longitudinal research, and with larger groups of prisoner participants, would enable more thorough investigation of how to bring about change, including change for prisoners as well as staff, and investigate how to sustain progress over time. Larger samples, plus specific targeting of people in different groups or areas of work, would also allow for examination of possible subcultures coexisting within a prison, and further investigate issues relating to equality and discrimination. The latter is particularly pertinent given the recent HMIP review on the experiences of black prisoners and prison staff (2022). Further, future methodologies should be chosen that enable causal relationships to be tested, such as through the use of process tracing (Collier, 2011) or realist evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

5.6 Conclusion

The current study has enabled the production of a preliminary model for understanding how to change prison culture; this model is noticeably consistent with the wider, related evidence base, although may well not be the only way for prisons to effect positive change in their cultures. In developing this model, this study adds

something unique to the existing evidence base for organisational culture change, for prison management, and for communities recovering from crises. The model needs further development and longer-term testing, with the aim of supporting HMPPS and other correctional services around the world who are looking to develop cultures that are better for those who live and work in prisons and bring better outcomes for the public at large.

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Appendix A
Culture: Additional Information

Culture and climate

Complicating further the challenge of studying culture, there is also a lack of agreement and clarity regarding the concept of organisational 'climate', and how this is distinct from, or interrelated with, an organisation's culture. A proposed distinction (see, for example: Ostroff, Kiniki, & Muhammad, 2013) is that climate is an experientially based description of what people see and report happening to them in an organisational situation; it involves perceptions of what the organisation is like in terms of practices, policies, procedures, routines, and rewards. 'Culture' instead may define why these things happen, consisting of the organisation's fundamental ideologies and assumptions and is influenced by symbolic interpretations of organisational events. Culture is thought to represent an evolved context embedded in systems, to be more stable than climate, have strong roots in history, is collectively held, and is resistant to manipulation.

Measuring organisational culture

Different organisations, or people studying different aspects, have devised a variety of culture or climate measurement tools (Barends & Rousseau, 2022; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 2020). These measures are usually tailored to a specific context, aspect of culture or climate or a particular outcome, and so cannot easily be applied to other settings or used to consider the whole of what might be meant by 'culture'. Many of the tools have also not yet been fully tested to ascertain their reliability and validity. These problems with measurement further mean that the evidence base linking culture to different or improved outcomes and performance is still in its infancy (Barends & Rousseau, 2022).

Prison culture research

Other work in this area has looked to understand 'what matters most' to people living or working in prisons and attempted to measure these sometimes difficult to observe constructs such as respect, humanity, trust, and personal autonomy (Liebling & Arnold, 2002; Crewe, Liebling, & Hulley, 2011). A recent and related study has

indicated that the higher moral quality of life, or higher interior legitimacy, within prisons supports better outcomes for prisoners on release (Auty & Liebling, 2020). Further, in depth case study research has illustrated what a prison can look like at its best, achieved with the right form of leadership, creativity, and attitudes among staff (Liebling, et al., 2019).

Attempts have also been made to measure social climate in forensic hospital units and prisons, such as through the development of the Essen Climate Evaluation Schema; the version adapted for prison settings looks at dimensions of hold and support, inmate cohesion, mutual support, and experienced safety (Day, Casey, Vess, & Huisy, 2012). While there is some evidence that this measure can differentiate between therapeutic and general residential units within prisons (Reading & Ross, 2020; Schalast & Laan, 2017), the measure does not tap other features of prisons that we know to be important (such as the physical conditions, or perceptions of procedural justice).

Features of a 'good prison culture'

Group	Evidence summary
Prisoners	• If prisoners are helped to learn and practice new ways of thinking and behaving (including through structured behavioural programmes), and desirable changes/behaviours are reinforced and incentivised, then improved behaviour in custody and lower recidivism are more likely (e.g., Chadwick, Dewolf, & Serin, 2015; Fortescue, et al., 2021; Gendreau, Listwan, Kuhns, & Exum, 2014; Smith, Heyes, Fox, & Harrison, 2018; Tate, Blagden, & Mann, 2017; Trotter, 2013). • If prisoners feel that they are cared about and matter, and they respect and trust staff, then better engagement, conduct (including substance misuse recovery) and wellbeing results (e.g., Fitzalan Howard & Pope, 2019; McGuire, 2018; Steiner, Butler, & Ellison, 2014; Wakeling & Lynch, 2020). • If people achieve good sleep, diet, and exercise, they are more likely to have improved physical health, psychological wellbeing, and conduct (e.g., Battaglia, et al., 2015; Ramsbotham & Gesch, 2009). • If people are supported in protecting and developing quality family ties and accessing positive social support, then we are likely to see lower recidivism (e.g., Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998; May, Sharma, & Stewart, 2008; Mitchell, Spooner, Jia, & Zhang, 2016).

Group	Evidence summary
	• If people have hope and believe that behaviour change is possible (in themselves and in others), then the chance of desistance from crime (and other behaviour change, such as substance misuse recovery) is greater (e.g., Lambert, Altheimer, Hogan, & Barton-Bellessa, 2011; LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008; Rex, 1999; Wakeling & Lynch, 2020). • If people have opportunities to do good for others and feel valued and part of a community, then better psychological health and positive identity change is supported. If prisoners' positive identities are fostered, then they will be in a stronger position to desist from crime (e.g., Bagnall, et al., 2015; Burnett & Maruna, 2006; Chiricos, Barrick, & Bales, 2007; Intravia, Pelletier, Wolff, & Baglivio, 2017; Maruna, 2001). Therapeutic communities have also been linked to lower rates of prison violence (Richardson & Zini, 2021). • If people have opportunities to have high levels of purposeful activity, are able to access employment opportunities, and have busy productive days, then less violent behaviour in custody is observed (e.g., Maguire, 2018; Prison Reform Trust, 2021a; Steiner & Woodredge, 2014).
Staff	• If staff have positive relationships with the people in their care, then they are more likely to find greater meaning, and feel greater pride, in their work (e.g., Fitzalan Howard & Wakeling, 2021; Kenny & Webster, 2015; Liebling, et al., 2019; Walker, Egan, Jackson, & Tonkin, 2018). • If staff are effectively trained and supervised, and have effective skills then they are more likely to stay well, act professionally and use evidence-based practices and skills to effectively improve prisoner outcomes and reduce prison violence (e.g., Andrews & Dowden, 2005; Chadwick, Dewolf, & Serin, 2015; Garland, McCarty, & Zhao, 2008; Kenny & Webster 2015; Maguire, 2018; Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun, & Xie, 2009; Rothwell, Kehoe, Farook, & Illing, 2019). • If staff apply consistent rules, do not use harsh punishments and use power appropriately, then prison violence is reduced (Crewe, Liebling & Hulley, 2015; Day, Brauer, & Butler, 2015; Rocheleau, 2013). • If staff feel a sense of belonging, feel empowered and adequately supported, can detach from work at the end of the day, and experience good relationships and communication in the workplace, then better wellbeing, less burnout, greater resilience, and more collaborative working, commitment to the organisation and productivity are more likely (e.g., Bui, Chau, Degl'Innocenti, Leone, & Vicentini, 2019; Klinoff, 2017; Park, & Hassan, 2018; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2015; Tonkin, Malinen, Näswall, Kuntz, 2018; Vogelvang, Clarke, Weiland, Vosters, & Button, 2014).

Group	Evidence summary
Prisoners and staff	• If prisoners and staff feel treated in procedurally just ways, then greater respect for rules and authority, better well-being, less rule-breaking, less violence, lower recidivism, and greater dedication and commitment at work are fostered (e.g., Beijersbergen, et al., 2014, 2016; Fitzalan Howard & Wakeling, 2020; Lambert, Hogan & Griffin, 2007; Taxman & Gordon, 2009; Wakeling & Fitzalan Howard, 2022). • If people work and live in better quality conditions, have access to naturalistic and green settings, and have the resources they need, then better physical and psychological wellbeing, better decision-making and less rule-breaking and aggression in custody is more likely (e.g., Bierie, 2012a, 2012b; Chen & Shapiro, 2007; Engstrom & van Ginneken, 2022; Walker, et al., 2013). • If prosocial norms are actively promoted and reinforced, then people are more likely to act in accordance with these (e.g., Cabinet Office and Institute for Government, 2010; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991).

Evidence-informed potential approaches to achieve organisational culture change

Approach	Meaning
Clarity of purpose, driven by values	Cultural change may be more successful in organisations where there is clarity in organisational vision and values, and these are explicit and made applicable to all employees.
Effective management and leadership	Cultural change may be more successful in organisations that have active and visible leaders, who continuously model expectations and desired behaviours authentically, and who are confident and competent in leading change in organisations, bringing everyone together and with them in the change process. Cultural change may be more successful when middle managers and supervisors are engaged, enabled, and encouraged to influence employee behaviour and norms, convey expectations, and provide support for any necessary changes.
Dedicated change resources	Cultural change may be more likely in organisations that establish a dedicated team and infrastructure to coordinate, implement, monitor, and evaluate progress. Monitoring may be interpreted as a statement of the organisation's priorities – what is measured is what matters.

Approach	Meaning
Quality assessment and needs/solution-focussed action planning	Cultural change may be more likely in organisations that properly understand their current culture(s), the drivers and impacts, and use this understanding to formulate change plans that accurately match the identified problems, needs and strengths. Further, solutions/activities are carefully devised, informed by the best available data and evidence of what works. Attention is paid to implementation and there is commitment to keeping quality under review.
Coproduction and engagement	Cultural change may be more successful when organisations engage with, and listen to, their staff and stakeholders regularly and authentically, and work together to co-produce change and solutions to problems (encouraging and empowering people 'bottom up' rather than solely determining these 'top down').
Effective communication and procedurally just practice	Cultural change may be more successful in organisations that communicate well with all their employees about expectations, change and benefits. Commitment and engagement in such changes is more likely to be established and maintained when the organisation is perceived to be procedurally just.
Evaluation, continuous learning, and modification	Cultural change may be more successful when organisations continuously monitor changes and their impact (positive and unintended) and modify and adapt future steps/actions where needed, based on evidence and data. Cultural change may be more likely when the focus is on what matters most, and change is not rushed/timeframes are realistic. Positive cultural change may be more likely when learning and continuous development is part of everyone's job description and standard ways of working.

Readiness for culture change

Readiness factors may include:

- *How people feel about the change* (e.g., viewing this to be beneficial for efficiency and effectiveness, not being cynical about change, believing change is needed, and the change request aligning with people's capacity).
- *How people feel about the organisation and management* (e.g., positive perceptions of organisational justice and leader legitimacy, a lack of perceived conflict between previous and new goals, perceiving management to be supportive, and being committed to the organisation and its 'mission').
- *The characteristics of employees* (e.g., emphasising treatment/service quality, being well trained and educated, and leaders being supportive of and capable of bringing about change).

Evidence-informed factors enabling communities to recover from crises and build back better[29]

- Taking time. Taking sufficient time to process and make sense of what has been endured, and not rushing decisions about what is needed for effective recovery.
- Active and deliberative community engagement. The whole community identifies the impacts, needs, priorities and actions that are likely best for them.
- Effective interaction between government and community. Governments providing the 'scaffolding' for community-led recovery (rather than imposing plans or decisions) by helping to bring together and offer additional services and support.
- Building local recovery capacity and capability. Identifying recovery-related knowledge or skill gaps in the community and developing these.
- Developing local leadership. Local leaders (who are empathic, available, supported, supportive, credible, trusted, and resilient) facilitate the community's recovery. Leaders that support a shift in culture to spot and create opportunities for development and togetherness.
- Ensuring diversity, inclusion, and representation. Hearing from and including people from all parts of the community to inform recovery decisions and plans.
- Collaborating with community organisations. Using community organisations (public, private and volunteer groups) who are already integrated into, and understand, the community.
- Developing social capital and focusing on people. Focussing on the physical, social, and emotional recovery of people, and bringing/bonding people together to promote belonging and community identity.
- Effective communication. Ensuring communication is consistent, honest, trustworthy, and readily available through a range of media.

[29] The term 'building back better' was coined by technical experts some decades ago in relation to natural disasters; initially it was meant literally, for example, adopting and enforcing better engineering standards so buildings were less likely to collapse during/after an earthquake. The term has since been applied to organisations and communities too.

- Building in flexibility and review, learning and reflection. Continually reviewing needs, issues, capacity, activities, effectiveness, governance and so on, as recovery progresses, to enable changes and adaptations as needed. Committing to learning, and taking time for this, to support development, creativity, and innovation.

Appendix B
Methodology: Additional Information

Study site context

Excerpts from HMIP's assessment of the prison in 2019: *"far too much low-level misbehaviour was going unchallenged by staff"*, *"failure to provide an environment in which prisoners could feel safe"*, and *"swift and effective management action was required to ensure that prisoners were no longer left angry and frustrated by failures to deal with basic, day-to-day issues"*.

The prison was selected for the current study for several reasons: it had been through considerable challenges over recent years (see section 3.1) including changes in leadership, the researchers were aware of 'stories' of notable positive change taking place there, and both the regional and local managers were keen to understand what and how things might have changed.

Sampling approach

Sampling was based on availability and coordinated by the site. The aim was to speak to as many staff as possible and ensure participation of people from different staffing groups, grades, areas of work, and varying lengths of time working at the prison. One prisoner focus group involved Insiders and Growth Project representatives.[30] [31] The selection of participants for the other group was co-ordinated by the prison and involved men from several houseblocks.

Staff sample demographics

Variable	***n* (*N* = 137)**	**%**
Consultation type		
Focus group	47	34
Interview	15	11

[30] The Insiders scheme is a peer-led prison support programme.

[31] The Growth Project is run by Penal Reform Solutions and aims to identify the needs of a prison and implement appropriate changes in practice, to improve the overall prison environment and culture for staff and prisoners. The Growth Project commenced in 2020 at the prison and involved establishing a Growth Team of prisoners and staff.

Variable	*n* (*N* = 137)	%
Ad hoc conversation	75	55
Gender		
Male	53	39
Female	84	61
Ethnicity		
White	118	86
Black	5	4
Mixed	7	5
Other	4	3
Not reported	3	2
Age		
20-25 years	13	10
26-40 years	50	37
41-55 years	44	32
56+ years	18	13
Not reported	12	9
Time working for HMPPS		
Less than 6 months	7	5
6 months to less than 2.5 years	29	21
2.5 years to less than 5 years	24	18
5 years to less than 10 years	23	17
10 years or more	51	37
Not reported	3	2
Time working at this prison		
Less than 6 months	14	10
6 months to less than 2.5 years	35	26
2.5 years to less than 5 years	32	23
5 years to less than 10 years	18	13
10 years or more	35	26
Not reported	3	2

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Prisoner Sample Demographics

Variable	*n* (*N* = 30)	%
Consultation type		
Focus group	13	43
Ad hoc conversation	17	57
Ethnicity		
White	20	67
Mixed	6	20
Other	3	10
Not reported	1	3
Age		
26-40 years	13	43
41-55 years	9	30
Not reported	8	27
Time in custody at this prison		
Less than 6 months	8	27
6 months to less than 2.5 years	14	47
2.5 years to less than 5 years	3	10
Not reported	5	17
Location		
Houseblock 1	5	17
Houseblock 2	6	20
Houseblock 3	6	20
Houseblock 4	8	27
Houseblock 6	4	13
Wellbeing unit	1	3

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Data collection

The semi-structured schedule was piloted during the first focus group and then amended slightly in terms of structure to ensure the conversation flowed more naturally in subsequent sessions. All focus groups and three of the individual interviews were conducted face-to-face at the prison, whilst the rest of the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Verbatim transcripts were produced for

analysis. In total there were approximately 480 pages of transcripts and 36 pages of observation and research notes produced for analysis.[32]

The ad hoc interactions began with an explanation of the research aims, and an open offer to listen to anyone who wished to contribute. This activity enabled the voice of more people at the prison to be heard (and confidentially) and allowed for observation of interactions and daily activity within the prison. Research notes of observations and disclosures were made. Participants of ad-hoc conversations provided their consent verbally, and brief demographic information was also gathered for most.

Documentation sourced and reviewed included recent HM Inspection Reports, recent Measuring Quality of Prison Life and Staff Quality of Life survey reports,[33] Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting minutes, violence reduction plans, regime and other notable documents outlining prison management and strategy, including the Growth Project review, the Clean & Decent project reports, Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) reports,[34] incident log sheets, and Segregation Monitoring & Review Group meeting minutes.

Analytical process

Through the thematic analysis a series of codes were initially created which were then clustered into themes and sub-themes. This coding was initially conducted on transcripts for two of the focus groups by all three authors together to establish a rigorous and uniform process, following which the remaining transcripts were coded separately by all three authors. The generation of themes was conducted by all three authors together.

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[32] In MS Word, font size 12, Times New Roman, and single spaced.

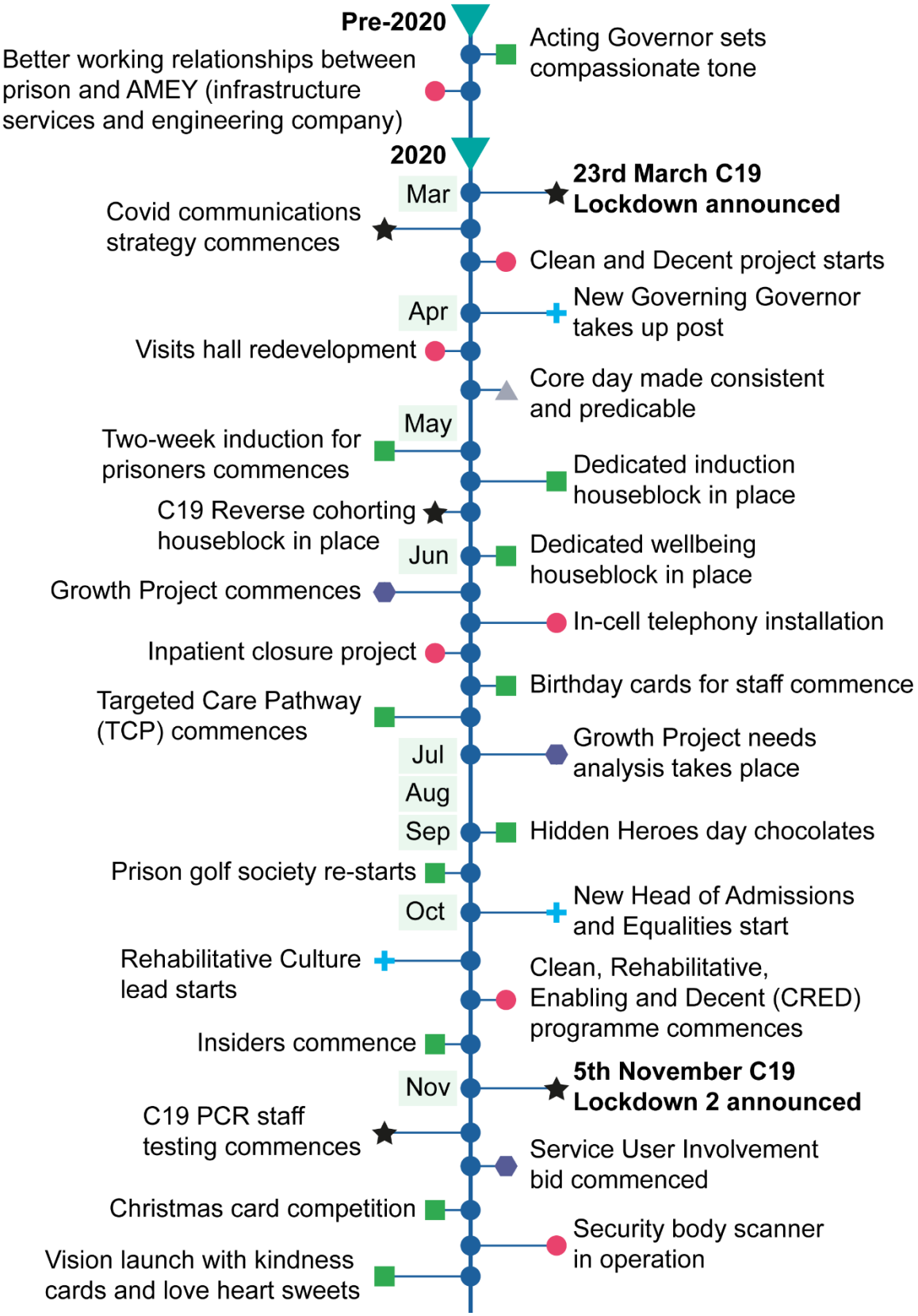
[33] MQPL and SQL routine surveys used in HM prisons to measure relatively stable latent constructs of quality of life that cannot otherwise be observed; for example, respect, fairness, bureaucratic legitimacy, and personal autonomy.

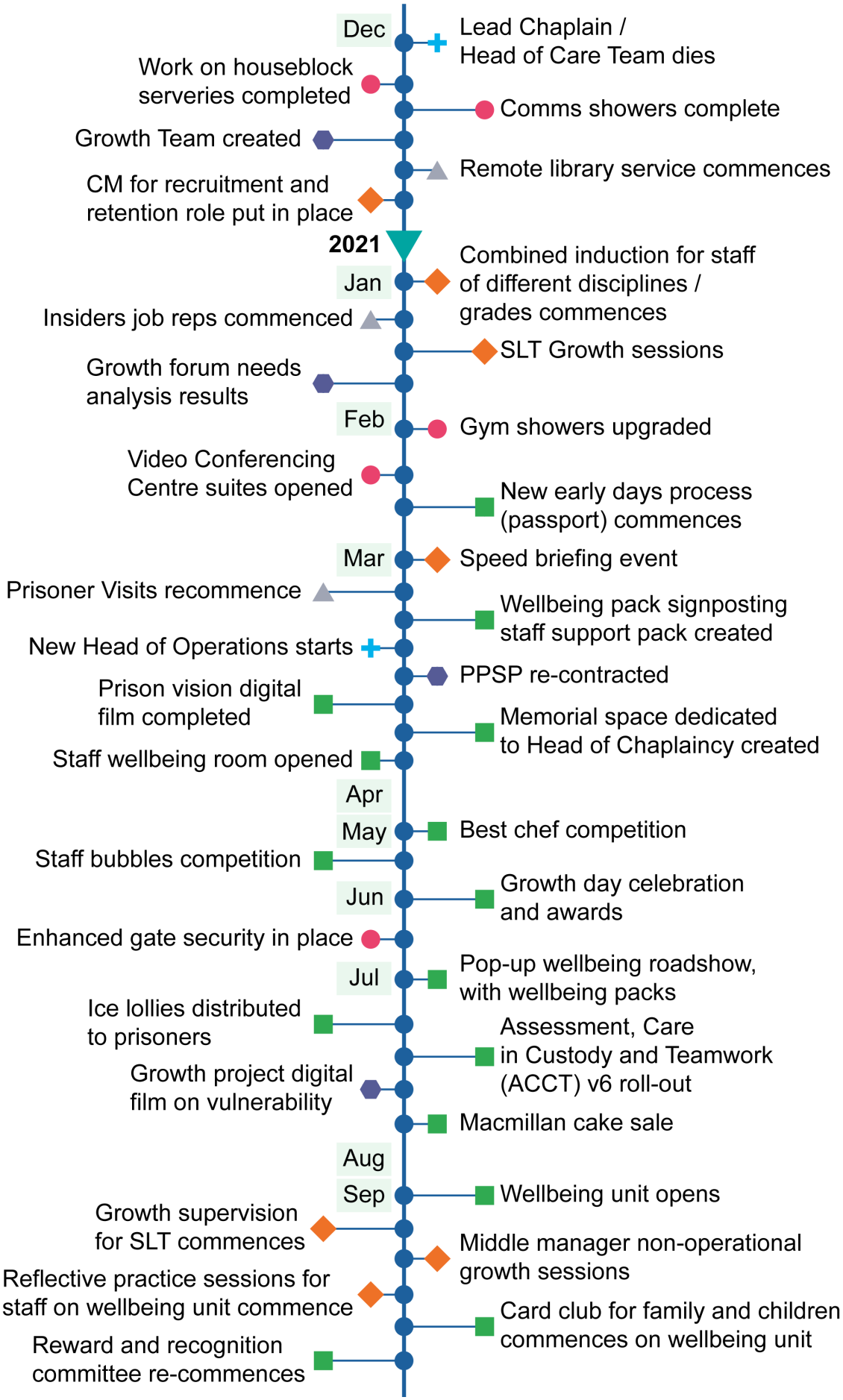
[34] The IMB provide independent monitoring of prisons and immigration detention. They report on whether the individuals held in these settings are being treated fairly and humanely, and whether prisoners are being given the support they need to turn their lives around.

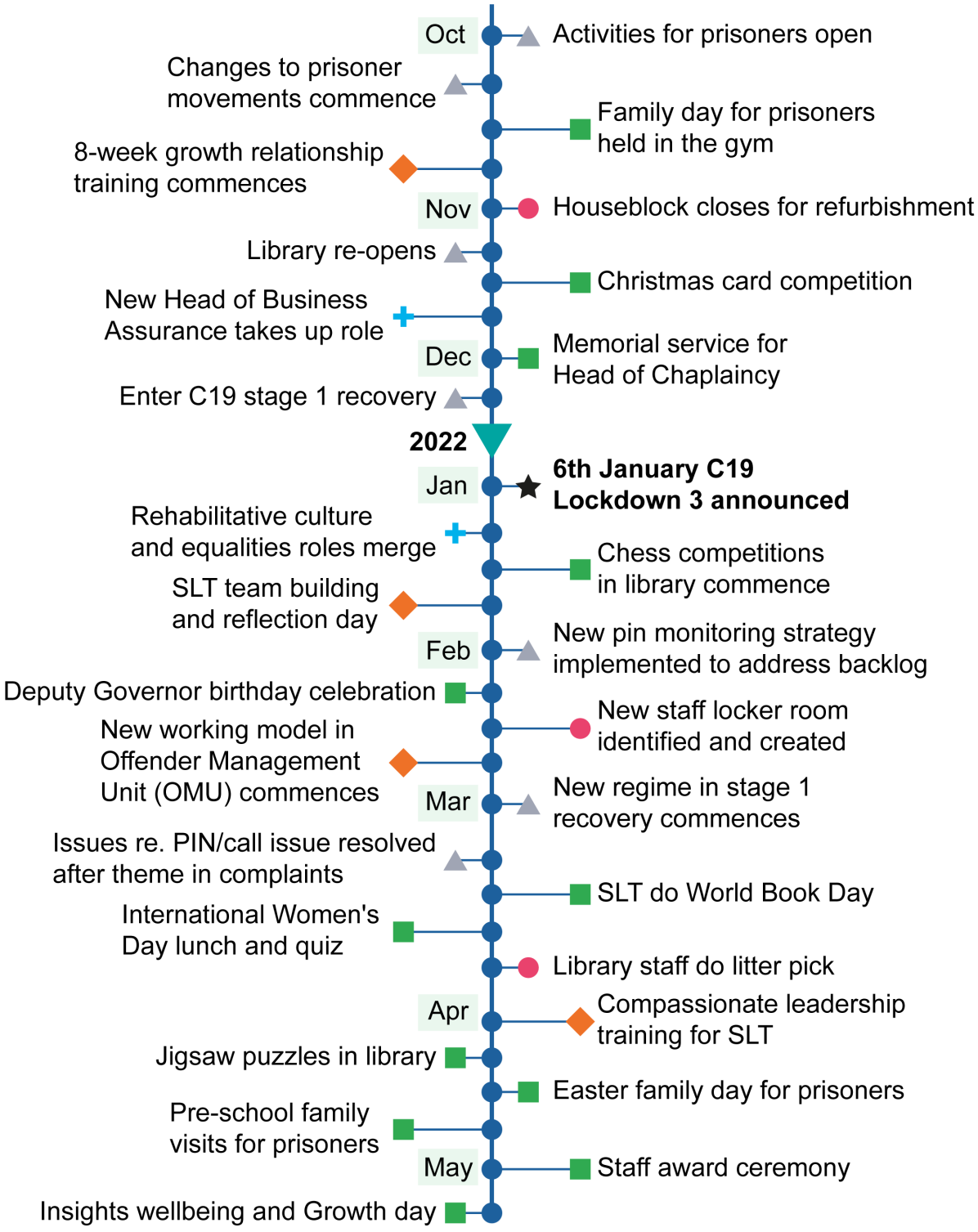
The themes were then considered alongside observation and research notes, and the quantitative and timeline data. This consideration focussed on identifying supporting and contradictory additional evidence, to help refine and adapt the themes. Collectively this was then used by the three researchers to describe people's experiences at the prison pre-Covid and at the time of the research, and to explain how the culture had (or had not) changed during this time.

To protect quality and rigour this research adhered to the criteria proposed by Bauer & Gaskell (2003): that qualitative research should be transparent, should contain thick descriptions (using quotes from interview data, for example), should use a triangulation of evidence, should adopt a clear and appropriate sampling strategy, and should attempt to acquire validity of the formation of the initial themes. For the last of these criteria, the initial findings were presented back to the prison to obtain views on the meaning, clarity, and interpretation of the findings. This allowed further refinement and adjustment of the themes and the explanatory model of culture change.

Appendix C
Timeline of Events and Activities




Dec
Lead Chaplain / Head of Care Team dies
Work on houseblock serveries completed
Comms showers complete
Growth Team created
Remote library service commences
CM for recruitment and retention role put in place
2021
Jan
Combined induction for staff of different disciplines / grades commences
Insiders job reps commenced
SLT Growth sessions
Growth forum needs analysis results
Feb
Gym showers upgraded
Video Conferencing Centre suites opened
New early days process (passport) commences
Mar
Speed briefing event
Prisoner Visits recommence
Wellbeing pack signposting staff support pack created
New Head of Operations starts
PPSP re-contracted
Prison vision digital film completed
Memorial space dedicated to Head of Chaplaincy created
Staff wellbeing room opened
Apr
May
Best chef competition
Staff bubbles competition
Growth day celebration and awards
Jun
Enhanced gate security in place
Jul
Pop-up wellbeing roadshow, with wellbeing packs
Ice lollies distributed to prisoners
Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) v6 roll-out
Growth project digital film on vulnerability
Macmillan cake sale
Aug
Sep
Wellbeing unit opens
Growth supervision for SLT commences
Middle manager non-operational growth sessions
Reflective practice sessions for staff on wellbeing unit commence
Card club for family and children commences on wellbeing unit
Reward and recognition committee re-commences



Key

- Physical environment improvements and developments
- Wellbeing / People-focused improvements and developments
- Staff investment / training improvements and developments
- External support / investment
- Regime / activities / processes
- Covid activities
- Staffing changes

Appendix D
Experiences at the Prison

Experience 1: Safety, stability, and order

The long-standing performance issues relating to safety and stability, mirrored in the safety data presented in section 4.1 and the previous HMIP reports, were also corroborated by participants' (all staffing groups) consistent descriptions of the prison 'before' as an extremely unstable place to live and work. Descriptors of the prison pre-Covid included *"chaotic"*, a *"war zone"*, *"manic"*, *"toxic"*, *"intense"*, the *"wild west"*, a *"cattle market"*, and *"unpredictable"*. Prisoners also talked about the instability, describing the lack of presence of staff on units enabling the chaos. Staff described lurching from *"crisis to crisis to crisis"* [non-operational staff member], in a reactive manner, constantly *"firefighting"* and in *"survival mode"*:

> "And I think the problem majority of staff and managers.. took it a day at a time. Let's get through today. Yeah, I have people say that all the time that it was. Yeah, let's get through today… I've got through today… it was almost like survival." [PGD]

They talked about very high levels of violence, with high rates of assaults against prisoners as well as staff, frequent use of weapons, and frequent incidents at height.[35] They reported high levels of drug use, frequent bullying, and high numbers of self-harm incidents. There was a reported *"buzz of constant incidents"* [Governing Governor] with staff often having to decide which alarm bell to respond to as there were so many going off simultaneously. This lack of safety had become normalised for many, with one non-operational member of staff describing a regular assault experience they had as an operational grade (see quote below). However, new staff reported being shocked at how unsafe the working conditions in the prison were when they started. One colleague indicated that people had 'accepted' how bad things were, even though the situation was far from normal or acceptable.

[35] This includes prisoners climbing on netting, over bars, or onto rooves.

> “I got punched in the face (inaudible), went back to my houseblock, and everyone was just like “Have you?” and we just carried on, because it was happening so often, people getting assaulted. Things like that became really normal.” [Non-operational staff]

The high turnover of prisoners and staff at the prison made things even more difficult and unstable. There was no induction unit at the time and without a clear system in place for monitoring empty cells, newly arriving prisoners were placed wherever they could find space, sometimes in inadequate cells. New staff reported feeling unprepared to enter such an environment and found it very difficult when they first arrived at the prison and could be *“broken after their first day”* [SO].

Staff described the lack of safety being linked to prisoners feeling frustrated with requests not being dealt with, officers not being able to fulfil their duties and deal with issues adequately, the cells not being fit for purpose, and poor canteen processes. Prisoners also reported violence being triggered by the perceived negative attitude and treatment by staff. Further, some indicated that prisoners had nothing to lose and that there were very few consequences if they behaved in aggressive and violent ways.

Staff, and to a lesser degree prisoners, talked of staff being unable to maintain good order in the prison ‘before’. Some suggested that prisoners (and gangs on houseblocks) held control, with one SO stating that *“the prisoners, had more control than we did, and they, they knew it and we knew it”*. The SLT also reported this problem:

> “They’d absolutely lost control. They were scared. You could see in the, in the eyes of the staff they were scared. You could see the prisoners were scared as well. And certain individuals had created gangs on the house blocks. There was absolutely no understanding of how to stop that.” [SLT]

Staff were fearful and scared of prisoners ‘before’, particularly due to the high levels of violence and the chaotic environment. Staff of different grades made comments about colleagues on the houseblocks ‘hiding away’ in wing offices and only emerging

to lock and unlock prisoners, having unofficially designated *"no-go areas"* (including prisoner's cells), being *"in retreat"*, and not having the confidence or competence to challenge misconduct. Lack of order was attributed partly to having more hours where prisoners were unlocked, 'free flow',[36] and mass, uncontrolled movements around the prison. This resulted in perceptions that prisoners had too much unstructured free time, and unmonitored mixing, which resulted in greater levels of bullying, drugs, and violence *("they could sort of run the prison really"* [CM]).

Staff had a consistently chaotic workload 'before', with their time and energy taken up with crisis management, dealing with the violence, unrest, constant alarm bells and code blues. They described lacking the headspace and time to do their job properly, embed anything, deal with issues or support prisoners, and instead having to focus on making it through their shifts. Systems were disorganised and fragmented, and there were *"too many action plans"* [Governing Governor], with no staff to action them. Staff felt overworked, were reaction-oriented and did not have the time to identify problems, find solutions, improve systems, or change the way things were being done.

> "We're just basically firefighting day to day. We haven't got time to sit down and do all the performance stuff. All the forward thinking. And the stuff that you would normally expect from a senior leader team." [PPSP]

Consistently, participants described there being a safer and calmer environment 'now', with less violence and self-harm, greater structure and clearer expectations of the daily regime, and staff being able to legitimately maintain order; consequently, when an incident did occur, this was considered notable and unusual, rather than 'typical', as illustrated below:

> "When [name] got assaulted a couple of weeks ago, he got assaulted quite badly on the lower walkways, and it was like the talk of the prison. Someone's been assaulted. That was a regular occurrence before Covid". [Non-operational staff]

[36] Free-flow movement allows prisoners to move about the site, to and from activities, unescorted.

Staff who had worked for varying amounts of time at the prison described the increased sense of control and order as a consequence of introducing a split regime on houseblocks, where only a proportion of prisoners are unlocked for association at a time, making houseblock movements (i.e., to go to work, education, or appointments) consecutive rather than concurrent, prisoners being escorted during movements, and an increased staff presence. The more structured regime was perceived, certainly amongst staff although not necessarily amongst prisoners, to have enabled people's needs to be better met. For example, staff cited the more streamlined and effective coordination and delivery of other important services: colleagues in Healthcare (mental health, physical health, and substance misuse) reported that their patients more often receive appointment slips and subsequently attend (compared with 'before'), that having scheduled Healthcare sessions for each houseblock means time is more focussed, and that overall they believe the quality of care has improved. And on the houseblocks, this regime change is believed to have allowed more quality time to be spent between prison officers and individual prisoners, which means issues can be raised, understood, and addressed more quickly, and that relationships have improved overall. The significant improvements in safety and order, and the benefits experienced as a consequence, might in part explain why staff frequently reported fear and concern should this not be maintained in the future, and the implications for staff wellbeing and retention should this happen.

Experience 2: Physical environment and conditions

Participants described the prison as dirty and unclean 'before'; it was generally dilapidated and *"uncared for"* [IMB]. Poor conditions made the prison an unwelcoming place, with broken facilities, rubbish left out, dirty corridors, and a high number of cells out of use and not fit for purpose (e.g., with broken windows, missing mattresses, no kettles, and so on). The quote below illustrates the extent of the problems:

> "Sometimes I can remember going into cells, and it wasn't surprising to see that a prisoner didn't have a kettle. But sometimes you'd go in and it didn't have a kettle, didn't have a pillow. Sometimes it didn't have a quilt. You know, there were just really basic things, I mean, and some of that

was about the structure, too. Sometimes they didn't have, you know, they didn't have actual proper window coverings." [PGD]

Furthermore, the poor environment seemed to breed a lack of care for maintaining it, for both prisoners *("as soon as we improve things, they broke them"* [PGD]) and staff *("they didn't take any care of their own environment because actually the bigger environment we were in [was] such a mess"* [SLT]).

Participants described noticeable improvements over time to the physical environment and conditions within the prison. This included the environment now being cleaner and more decent, decency checks taking place routinely and effectively, easy access to adequate cleaning materials on the houseblocks, and better processes in place for damaged furniture to be replaced or repaired. The Clean & Decent programme appears to have been central to this. Senior managers described a real sense of pride that staff now took in their duties and efforts to maintain a quality environment:

"I've got a work party that we go round doing the furniture. So if there's any broken furniture damage, furniture will go round and we'll remove, replace and install. So cells are getting back to how they should be, and prisoners are loving it because they can see something happening" [SLT]

Experience 3: Support and wellbeing

Staff reported that 'before' there was a lack of support from management, and overall, a lack of care shown to them, citing examples of not knowing who they were managed by (*"six months to figure out who it was because they were never there"* [SO]) and being unable to openly discuss or voice concerns:

"…your opinion didn't matter, your voice didn't matter, unless they happened to like you… you couldn't be vulnerable.. you couldn't hold your hand up and say 'I'm struggling' or anything.. it was literally keep your head down, go and hide". [CM]

Support between teams also appeared problematic, leading to silo working. For example, some non-operational staff felt that they were not given practical support by operational colleagues, even though behind the scenes they felt like they did a great deal to support the work of their operational counterparts.

Unsurprisingly, staff reported low morale, and lack of motivation; additionally, high levels of staff sickness absence were reported, and many staff appeared to be finding it difficult to cope and consequently struggling with their wellbeing. Staff described a lack of job satisfaction 'before' (and the monotony of just locking people up and dealing with assaults), and this, as well as the lack of perceived support, was negatively affecting wellbeing, and contributing to people leaving the job:

> "People were struggling. People were leaving left, right and centre. We were haemorrhaging staff". [OSG]

Most of the staff who participated reported feeling more supported and cared for 'now'. Some staff reflected on the positive impact of having a Governing Governor who cared about them, how a renewed focus on supporting staff had made a difference, and the importance of the dedicated (and additional) care-related teams and services in place (e.g., Chaplaincy, the Care Team, and Insiders). The value placed on being supported was evident in people's accounts, and illustrated well by the following quote:

> "They just actually do care. Do you know what I mean? Even if you turn around and say "No, no, no, I'm fine," like I was adamant I was coming back to work, and they were like "No, you're not." Do you know what I mean? … and you look back and you think "Actually, they do care." …it makes you think "I am actually like valued. They do care." So I was quite grateful for that, to be fair, and it weren't just the staff on the wing. I mean, I think [name] come over as well. It's like "Are you okay?" When you see people like that, you're thinking "Well, do you know what I mean, you're up the food-chain and you're asking me if I'm okay." So it is good".
> [Prison Officer]

The accounts of improved support for new colleagues included mentoring, coaching and support from line managers. The provision of this appears to be linked to the perceived increased stability and order of the prison (which in part was a consequence of the Covid-19 lockdown measures), which allows time for this to be implemented. However, improved support was not universally experienced, with strong views given by some staff about managers not knowing how they were, not spending sufficient time with them, or providing support when they needed it:

> "Before Christmas I had a death in the family and it was, it was sudden, all of a sudden, and you can't have any build up to it, and it might not have hit me as hard as it hit other people, but I felt like I had no choice but to come to work … only having two days, I had an endless list of things that I needed to do and I had a deadline to do it by and I didn't have that support. The only reason why I managed to achieve it is using my own leave to get it done. There is no mitigating circumstances other than one day that I got". [Prison Officer]

Prisoners also emphasised the importance of feeling supported, tending to identify specific individuals who have provided this though, rather than perceiving staff generally to be supportive, as illustrated by the quote below:

> "My Offender Supervisor has been a diamond.[37] Like physically, psychologically, emotional support. She's been there. She's chasing stuff up for me … For me, they're doing great things out there and helping." [Prisoner]

Prisoners also spoke of wanting opportunities to provide more support to others (to peers and staff), such as through taking on work on the houseblocks to give staff more time.

[37] Offender Supervisors (a previous role that has been replaced by Prison Offender Managers (POM) contribute to and lead the assessment of prisoners and prepare, implement, review, and evaluate their sentence plans with them.

Experience 4: Staffing levels and retention

The prison had previously experienced significant issues with staffing, including high sickness absence rates, high staff turnover, and problems with retention. As one SLT member said, *"the turnover was so high that they could leave the same day they walked through the door"* and described how there was little point getting to know new staff members as they were *"not going to last"*. Recruitment was hampered in part by the reputation of the prison as being unsafe and chaotic, and the lack of local promotion opportunities was one reason cited for existing staff choosing to move on.

These factors all contributed to significant resourcing pressures, which meant that activities were often curtailed for prisoners, and middle managers had to take on responsibilities that should be those of junior colleagues. It also meant that there was a lack of consistency with staff having to be frequently reallocated to cover staffing shortages. The high number of new and inexperienced staff also caused significant issues, which links to the earlier 'support and wellbeing' theme.

In contrast, many staff reflected on improved staffing levels 'now', and how this related to improved retention of staff, improved working conditions, more support for staff, and also improved consistency on the houseblocks, as illustrated below:

> "You're generally getting put on your same house block. You're not guesting, you're not going to another house block and being left on your own when you don't know their regime". [Prison Officer]

However, some staff, in particular operational staff, continued to express concerns regarding staff retention given poor pay, and how staff retention is an ongoing risk:

> "The wages don't match the level of responsibility. If I was on a band 3 wage, I'd go and work in Amazon... the wage doesn't necessarily match living standards or the level of risk that it carries with some of the tasks that these guys are asked to do". [Non-operational staff]

Experience 5: Staff training and investment

Staff described a lack of staff investment and training when talking about how things were 'before'. New staff particularly did not feel equipped or that they were given enough support or training (local and national) to perform their roles. Having just started, staff were often then given the responsibility to train additional staff. Some described how new staff "got lost in the system" and were in the *"wolves' den"*. The following quote illustrates the pressure that was put on new staff with little support:

> "I was having to look after them as well as manage my spur, or manage the unit, and a lot of the time, especially we only had one other person per spur, so the new ones would come in, so you'd have your two weeks shadowing, if you lasted that long, and then you was running the spur on your own." [Prison Officer]

There was a shift in this experience over time. Many staff emphasised the importance of investing in staff, and of staff feeling invested in. Improvements in this over time appear to have come in a variety of forms, such as through more training and development opportunities, coaching and mentoring, and the greater general focus on people rather than processes 'now'. This was a topic of mixed views, however, as illustrated by the three quotes below:

> "The SO's the person who sets the tone for the day, so of that 140 people, 150 people who are under our care, that is a lot of responsibility … and they've got no leadership training whatsoever." [Prison Officer]

> "We don't get invited to any training…cause we are not prison staff." [Partner agency staff]

> "We have more time to teach the new staff their actual jobs … I can hold my hands up and say I didn't do [it] because I didn't have the time … but now I have time to teach my officers exactly what we do and why we do it … and when. Nobody taught me that, it was just "Oh yeah, you do this paperwork. You should do it. We ain't got time" sort of, "The shift's over",

> sort of thing, “We’ll pick it up tomorrow” whereas that’s not the case now”. [CM]

Given national issues with staff retention, the prison (like so many others) has recruited a large number of new staff into operational roles. Newer staff reflected on their experiences of training, largely suggesting that their training had failed to equip them with the knowledge and skills to undertake their role*, “I don’t want to talk out of turn, but what you do at college, it don’t prepare you”* and there being insufficient time for training when they return from college, so they have to *“wing it”*. This was a view that we also heard from some more experienced operational staff, who expressed frustration with the apprenticeship scheme.

Experience 6: Emotional response

When talking about experiences ‘before’, staff reported feeling apprehensive and anxious about being at work due to the chaos and instability and what this meant for others being available to help with incidents that might arise (see Experience theme 1), something that seemed to be experienced particularly by new colleagues:

> “Come in with the flight or fight... Your anxieties have built up all night... It used to be a massive thing of… such a massive anxiety of who you're working with, because you used to come in before Covid and look at it…, and you want to just turn round and go – nah [I can’t do this].” [Prison Officer]

Staff were described as generally stressed, exhausted, and overwhelmed with the workload and the difficulties they faced, and were also worried about taking time off when they needed to. Staff felt *“battered and traumatised”* [Governing Governor], and were not enjoying, feeling satisfied or rewarded by their work. One particularly vivid description we heard from one experienced staff member was that the stress and tension they felt rose with every speedbump on the prison drive, as you *“knew what you would be battling with”* when you got there. Some staff also felt despondent, fed up and even cynical about the wider Prison Service:

> “You know, I went into to run a project and the comments were ‘we've had loads of these projects come in before and it always fails. So what's the point?’ It was that position from the staffing group, it's just like. ‘Why? Why should we bother?’” [PPSP]

Prisoners reported fewer negative emotions about their experiences ‘before’, but some described feeling frustrated with basics not getting done, and some were also fearful of the high levels of violence and unpredictability.

Across staffing groups, people described a sense of pride in the changes that had then taken place at the prison, and that this was being recognised (*“the Governor’s bringing people in to see us doing a good job”*). Staff reflected on their greater sense of job satisfaction and enjoyment at work ‘now’, with the environment being *“happier”*, more *“fun”*, and feeling more relaxed. For those participants who had experience of other prisons, some described this site as being *“better”* than other prisons or the *“best”* prison they had been to. Within the staffing group, however, there were some differing perspectives. Whilst very rare, a few alluded to preferring the prison in the ‘before’ period, as the chaos and incidents were *“exciting”* to them. Further, and more consistently, non-operational staff generally did not believe they had yet experienced the benefits of the local changes, and so consequently did not report the same range or degree of positive emotions as did their operational colleagues.

Most staff believed the prisoners were happier, although this was not universally agreed on by the prisoner participants (see, for example, their mixed views on relationships with staff and on the regime - Experiences 9 and 10).

Experience 7: Vision and purpose

Staff described a lack of vision and direction at the site ‘before’. The focus was instead on dealing with the present and being reactive rather than having a strategic plan for the future. The site’s change from it’s previous connection to an open prison was cited as the cause of confusion about the prison’s purpose and identity.

Staff also recounted high levels of central (regional and national) control and oversight, which was target- rather than people-focussed, and was perceived to be

unhelpful, ineffective, overly burdensome, and failing to meaningfully meet and respond to local needs:

> "And I think some of that was the culture from…from like KPIs and KPTs.[38] It was like "We must hit this target" without thinking about the people and what might happen. It was target-driven, not common sense. What works in one prison doesn't necessarily work in all prisons because we're different. We're totally different." [Non-operational staff]

Particularly those in management positions, but other staff too, perceived there to be a clearer vision for the prison now, indicating this had been widely shared. This included treating people as individuals, offering care and support, and having hope. The Governing Governor described establishing this early on and the importance of consistent messaging:

> "Clear values, clear vision, clear purpose. We had all of that right from the start. Real basics around the early days period being critical, meeting individual need, focus on wellbeing. That three key, almost like really obvious messages that were really easy to group onto" [Governing Governor].

Staff described the vision being set by the Governing Governor, but some also described this as now shared and owned by everyone:

> "What we are coming in and delivering, what are we doing, so I think if we actually are all doing the same things, we've all got the same purpose … call it a vision, call it whatever you want, but you've got a joint purpose that we're all heading towards". [CM]

There was, however, some ongoing apprehension for some staff as to whether the vision and purpose of the prison was understood and shared by everyone, and the

[38] Key Performance Indicators and Key Performance Targets

risk that this clarity might be lost with SLT changes, and/or through a lack of focus, as described in the quote below:

> "… I think all the good work that has been achieved over the last two years could potentially be in danger of being lost through complacency". [Prison Officer]

Experience 8: Leadership and management approach

'Before', the SLT were not felt by staff to be visible and engaged, and this was perceived as a lack of interest and care. Reported experiences suggested a consequent effect: when staff felt treated poorly by management, this negatively influenced how they then treated prisoners, which may explain why prisoners perceived CMs as not always being proactive and there being a *"lack of leadership on the houseblocks"* [Prisoner].

The inconsistency and high turnover in leadership (over many years), appears to have contributed to uncertainty about direction, a lack of consistency and inefficiency in the running of the prison, the processes in place, as well as the work of the staff:

> "I've been here. What's seven years? And I've probably had, we probably, including the gaffer, had six governors. Which which never helps any way shape or form…. You know, people like to come in and change things, and if you've got change every 12 months, you've got no chance of doing anything." [CM]

Being valued or recognised (unless negatively) was perceived to be limited 'before', fostering a sense of not mattering, individually or collectively (*"they were just constantly being told they were rubbish"* [Governing Governor]). This appeared to be particularly felt by some departments (e.g., OMU and Reducing Reoffending), and more widely was compounded by poor pay (interpreted as reflecting how little HMPPS staff are valued societally and politically). However, there were clear accounts from some staff who felt previous Governors did call things out that were not right, tried to address issues, and had commenced the process of change which came to fruition later at the prison.

Whilst there was a strong sense of staff not having a voice ‘before’, the prisoners indicated that there had been more consultation with them previously (see also later experience theme 10 about regime and community). Similarly, while staff recounted previous poor communication by managers, prisoners described better communication previously, particularly around activities:

> “Every week you were getting a letter under your door about what was going on in the prison, what workshops there were, what spaces there were.” [Prisoner]

In contrast, numerous staff reflected positively on the management style and approach during the ‘now’ period. The accounts included many references to feeling supported and cared for, valued, and recognised, managers being more visible and accessible, sincerely listening more, being open to ideas and feedback, and valuing consultation and collaboration, as illustrated by the quote below:

> “We’ve had a number of managers in where I’m working at the moment. The girl that’s in there now, she’ll, every day at the end of the day, say to all of us “thanks team, you’ve done a good job”. That’s all you want. It makes a big difference, you know … “thanks you’ve done good today”. You know, I’d never had that in all the years with the different managers. That’s the first one that’s ever done that”. [Non-operational staff]

Staff within the SLT also reflected on involving more people ‘now’, *“I think we work less in silos now, so we probably make decisions with more people involved”*. Some of those from within middle management positions said that *“we plan things better”* [CM], and how reduced demands from the centre have meant *“we’ve had time where we can actually sit down with the staff and actually work with them like we’re supposed to”* [CM]. However, views were mixed among some staffing groups (particularly in non-operational teams) regarding particular managers, with some colleagues suggesting that they did not seek out managerial support, but would like more involvement and engagement with them.

In fact, there were many mixed views with regards to the leadership and management approach. Among some operational staff, there was a view that there was now greater consistency in the management approaches taken across the different houseblocks, particularly in relation to the regime and consistency of staff. However, this was not a universal view, with other staff, and the majority of prisoners, describing an inconsistency in the way different staff and houseblocks operated. This included inconsistency in how reward and punishments are issued, how rules are applied, and how prisoners are treated generally:

> "It's knowing to ask, because we don't know it's changed, so it's knowing really. That's what's a bit frustrating, and each house block is totally different because I work in visits and so I work in different houseblocks when I'm free, and every houseblock is different, the way they do things". [Prison Officer]

Prisoners' comments on the management approach adopted by staff were, for the most part, more negative. Some prisoners described how they felt that unnecessary restrictions/rules had been put in place and that they failed to get responses from managers. There were also mixed views regarding the skills, competence, and approach of operational staff who were newer in post, with some saying that young officers are a *"problem"* and that only *"the old, experienced staff know how to deal with prisoners"*, and others saying than young officers arrive with a *"better attitude"*. One prisoner described his frustration at understanding prison processes better than new members of staff:

> "Do you know what I'm saying, like, literally, it's just through their, their stupid thick mentalities. Do you know what I mean? A lot of these screws come from McDonalds, KFCs, Tescos, all right. Every, everyone's entitled to work but back in the day, like, see, before this pandemic, a lot of these jails has real old school screws, yeah, that you could go and ask... know inside out. Now, I know, I know more about the system than half these screws". [Prisoner]

Most prisoners did not feel that they were recognised in the same way as staff but wanted to feel valued and recognised for the work and changes that they were trying to make. Staff, in a range of positions, also felt that more work was needed in this area for themselves. For some operational staff, this appeared to focus on feeling valued by line managers, with a prison officer explaining *"[the CMs] should know you as an individual, not as just another black and white uniform. They should invest into actually knowing us"*, and having good reward and recognition processes in place:

> "They are trying to sort of instil that a bit more and people are getting recognised for bit and bobs". [SO]

Experience 9: Relationships and multi-disciplinary working

Relationships between staff, and between staff and prisoners, were frequently discussed by participants. When talking about how things were at the prison 'before' relationships appeared to be mixed. Staff described some good relationships between themselves and some excellent support networks between colleagues. Despite the chaos and lack of support at the prison at this time, there was also a strong sense of camaraderie and solidarity between some groups and within teams, as well as a real sense of togetherness in the face of adversity. It was as if going through such a difficult experience bought people together. As an SLT member said:

> "There is something about this place that we were downtrodden; we were on the naughty step, but we were in the trenches together a little bit. There was a real sense of kind of family. Yeah. It might be chaotic but it's ours." [SLT]

However, relationships between the SLT and other staffing groups were generally described as relatively poor. Different teams were described as poorly communicating with each other, and significant silo and poor multi-disciplinary working was apparent. Some teams, such as those working in non-operational roles (including OMU), healthcare, and partner agencies, felt particularly excluded and not involved in local decision-making.

Relationships between prisoners and staff were also mixed. Consistent with the 2019 HMIP inspection report, staff described how they did not have time to give prisoners support or help or to fulfil their job roles which impacted on the quality of their relationships. Considerable amounts of their time were instead focused on managing crises and the associated paperwork. Expectations felt unrealistic:

> "So it didn't matter about rehabilitative culture. It didn't matter about what we wanted the men to do. It didn't matter about purposeful activity. So the staff felt like they were just getting their keys, unlocking waiting for an assault, locking them back up for the day. You know, just that regime." [Non-operational staff]

Examples of poor relationships were shared with the researchers by prisoners, including disrespectful treatment, lack of response to complaints, and repeated inaction regarding issues. Prisoners described how these then led to frustration and aggression. Furthermore, there appeared to be a reliance on a subgroup of staff, those that prisoners felt could be depended on. Although some staff corroborated this by indicating that staff-prisoner relationships were at times strained and distant, there was also mention that relationships between staff and prisoners have always been good on some houseblocks/some parts of the prison, and that it was a minority of staff who were determining this negative culture.

When describing relationships 'now', operational staff frequently described positive relationships with their fellow operational colleagues, and the previous camaraderie that some had experienced had been developed further. Staff within the SLT *"see ourselves as a team now"* and *"everybody is working together for that common goal"* (see Mechanism 1: clarity of vision and priorities). Staff within other teams, such as partner agencies and Healthcare, also described improved relationships with operational staff, with an ongoing need to develop consultation and collaboration. However, others, in particular those within administrative roles, described operational staff as being *"dismissive"* of the value that they bring to the prison and feeling that *"they're looking down on you"*.

Some middle managers described difficulties making contact with other teams, which appeared to impact on relationships between teams, for example, *"Safer Custody are a nightmare"*, and *"you can never get through to anyone on Healthcare"*. However, more closer working relationships were described 'now' between teams (such as in the Induction Unit) following more joined up working arrangements being put in place.

A number of staff in a range of roles reflected on improved relationships with prisoners, with a *"less them and us"* feel [Prison Officer], illustrated by more frequent conversation and interaction: *"it doesn't matter where you go at any time of the day there will be them interactions"* [CM)

There were mixed views from prisoners regarding relationships with staff 'now'. While some suggested these had developed positively, others expressed ongoing frustration:

> "cause we've been here that long now you, you build up a bit of a rapport", "officers who you can actually talk to, like they're mates. I don't even look at them, ah yeah, like sometimes I chat to them that much it's just like they're my pal" [Prisoner]

> "and I tell you what, I am more honest, loyal and respectful than half of these with keys, and that's what makes my blood boil". [Prisoner]

Despite this, most prisoners who spoke about Key Work sessions, did so positively as *"they address your issues"*.

Experience 10: Regime and community

Despite some negative emotions and high levels of violence and instability reported by prisoners, it was clear that some prisoners preferred the regime as it was 'before', as this offered longer periods out of their cells, and a greater variety of available activities. Some talked about Enhanced Wings giving people something to work

towards,[39] others talked about the benefits of prisoner roles, such as peer mentor roles and managing mail. These positions were not in place at the time this research was conducted, and generally, prisoners talked of more incentives and opportunities for them in the 'before' period:

> "I certainly thought it was a much better prison for me personally [before]. We don't really have movement and things as we did beforehand, but the regime I felt was better. There was more -- you know, more gym, more workshops, more activities, and I think I was discussing it earlier with some of the lads, so when we used to have the Enhanced wing it was really good on there." [Prisoner]

Some also described the prison as having a better community feel 'before', and that there was greater engagement and collaboration with prisoners at this time. For example, they indicated that there were more meetings and conversations, and particularly mentioned the councils as being a good forum in which to contribute their views. A minority of staff agreed that 'before', staff spent more time with prisoners than they do 'now', and the IMB mentioned some of the more positive aspects or services provided pre-Covid, including industries.

Many operational staff and managers perceived the regime to be improved 'now' and to provide a better balance of time in cell and time in purposeful activity. Staff in management positions also described how fewer prisoners on association at any one time meant that it was easier to access activities and facilities:

> "Yes, it's less time actually out of their cell … but in terms of the time that they get is quality time out of their cell. They actually get access to showers without having to kind of wait, or a pool table. Medication: they're not running the gauntlet back to their cell, getting bullied for their meds.

[39] Prisoners can earn additional privileges by demonstrating a commitment towards their rehabilitation, engaging in purposeful activity, reducing their risk of reoffending, behaving well, and helping other prisoners and staff. There are several levels; the higher the level the person is on, the greater the privileges received. Poor behaviour can lead to a person moving to a lower level and losing privileges as a result. Enhanced is the highest incentives level.

> They feel safer. They can come out and stand on the landing. They get access to like games and stuff." [SLT]

There was a shared view by staff that the increased staff-prisoner ratio during periods of unlock (due to fewer prisoners being unlocked at any one time) 'now' made it easier to manage the regime, spend time getting to know prisoners, and have more time to fulfil their duties. The Key Work session delivery data (see Figure 3 in section 4.1), suggest this has increased over the time period (although with notable dips in delivery across time). Some staff also described how prisoners spent less time out of their cell now, and how they felt this had reduced aimlessness and bullying, and improved the wellbeing of prisoners (citing fewer open ACCTs; although note that this contrasts with the official data, see Figure 1 in section 4.1):

> "When we used to do, like, on a weekend, you'd have your whole roll, so 160 men …four hours for each period, and they would just get bored and when you're bored you cause trouble, don't you?" [SO]

Staff and prisoners placed particular value on some specific facilities / schemes that are now in place at the prison. These included the use of digital technology to maintain contact with family and friends, the family services team and keywork:

> "to give access for the prisoners to access their family and, even to the point with [name], he hadn't spoken to a family member in 12 years and he ended up having a Purple Visit … and it brought me to tears just watching that connection that he was then getting with his brother that he hadn't had". [Non-operational staff]

> "This Families team, they don't just literally like you know come and just say, ah, yeah, they literally go above and beyond". [Prisoner]

While most staff we spoke to believed that prisoners preferred the current regime, staff from the IMB raised concerned that this could be isolating for some. Prisoners appeared to have mixed views on the current regime. While some reflected that this was safer, others felt it did not provide equity of access to activities, and stated that

they preferred the regime 'before': *"…everything happens in the core day, so if you go to work you're always missing out on things like exercise and [access to the] library"* [Prisoner].

Whilst prisoners did not speak of the emotional toll of a more limited regime, the absence of disclosure should not be interpreted as an absence of impact. This is especially important given what is known about the impact of the severe lockdowns on mental health for people in custody, and with fewer interactions between people occurring it is possible that harms become less visible too.

Experience 11: Learning culture

In the 'before' period, some staff described that leadership style had led to a blame culture, with staff worried about being blamed for things going wrong and so trying to cover things up or feeling fearful and reluctant to try new things. This meant that learning from attempting ideas, or mistakes that were made, was not achieved:

> "You couldn't be vulnerable at all under that Governor…you had to, if you couldn't do something, you couldn't hold your hand up and say, 'I'm struggling' or anything-- it was literally, keep your head down, go and hide." [CM]

This was a stark contrast with the reported 'now' experience. Some staff, particularly those in middle and senior manager roles, described an openness to learning, including when things did not go to plan. This was discussed in terms of asking questions, using reflective practice and conversations, and an avoidance of defensiveness. This is illustrated in the quote below, that was in reference to Jubilee medals being issued (which were only for operational staff),[40] and to putting on barbeques for staff (which could not be attended by staff not at work, or by those who had to remain on the houseblocks to ensure safety and security):

[40] Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Platinum Jubilee (marking 70 years of service) in June 2022. Special commemorative medals were awarded to serving frontline members of the police, fire, emergency services, prison services, and the Armed Forces.

> “I think we recognised what we … every time we did something, we recognise … we were able to reflect and recognise what we could improve next time round. So even something as small as like a communication we sent out, if we picked up something and then went "we haven't explained that properly” … So, when we don't get it right, we immediately just go "yeah" you know [and try to put it right]”. [SLT]

Many staff (from different disciplines) also reflected how it was possible to try new things, think of new ideas and be innovative, and how this did not feel risky:

> “I think we weren’t scared that it wouldn’t work, and if it didn’t work, we learned so that was I guess, the picture we made that it didn’t matter. It was about trial and error. It was about trying new things, and if it didn’t work, that was OK. But having the freedom to fail. It and taking that fear away, I think has an impact certainly. So even though it didn’t necessarily fail, I think them knowing that it would be OK if it did, was huge”. [Growth Project Lead]

Experience 12: Autonomy and empowerment

‘Before’, there was a feeling of learned helplessness and hopelessness in some of the staff. This helplessness seemed to lead to resignation and apathy to the problems and poor performance, with staff expecting failure. There was also a lack of understanding about how, or if, change could be achieved. As a PGD said: *“there was a feeling of what’s the point?”* Staff described feeling ‘numb’ and appeared to be disengaged and unwilling to try to fix things, or get out of their position, but instead ‘accepting’ of poor work conditions and violence. Some staff even appeared to dig their heels in and were resistant or unwilling to try to change. The poor reputation of the prison at the time may well have reinforced staff helplessness and disillusionment. The following quote from an SLT member illustrates this helplessness and apathy:

> “People had stopped seeing each other and each other’s needs and the prisoner’s needs and were just – I just need to get myself through this next shift. And the prison officers would sort of look after each other to get to

the end of the shift, but it wasn't like it is now, you know. It was just self-preservation and a little bit of helplessness." [SLT]

However, when talking about the situation 'now' a range of staff, particularly those in management positions, described staff having greater autonomy and ownership over the decisions made. This appeared to be something that has been driven by the Governing Governor, and we heard from senior managers that they felt trusted by the Governor. This approach appears to have then been cascaded by others in supervisory and management positions:

"He'll tell us what he wants but not how he wants us to do it. He'll put that on us. Which is great because that gives us some responsibility and accountability, and again, it's cascaded". [SLT]

Some staff described being given greater ownership over the areas that they work within 'now', and how supporting particular groups has enabled this to happen:

"we've empowered our senior, our supervising officers a lot more … I see a big change when I go on the house blocks with the supervising officers, actually control the house blocks. They spend time with their staff, they're directing the staff, they're giving them coaching". [CM]

"We absolutely put faith in our SOs... you told them, you own that houseblock". [SLT]

However, not everyone described a greater sense of autonomy and empowerment being part of their current experience living or working in the prison. This was something reported more frequently from those in management / supervisory operational positions.