



Ministry
of Justice

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

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Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service

Ministry of Justice Analytical Series

2024



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First published 2024



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This publication is available for download at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research-and-analysis/moj>

ISBN 978-1911691-22-8

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to thank the staff and prisoners who took part in this research, for generously giving their time and sharing their experiences with us. We would also like to thank Bethan Hawkes (G4S Deputy Director at Five Wells) for her unwavering support of the research, and Victoria Chapman (G4S) for assisting us with the organisation and implementation of the fieldwork, and to both for being so accommodating. Thanks also to Sian Blake (HM Prison and Probation Service Transforming Delivery Directorate) for supporting us with data gathering, and to all internal and external reviewers who kindly gave their time to review and refine the report.

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Contents

List of tables

Glossary	5
1. Summary	1
2. Introduction	4
2.1 Current Prison Context	4
2.2 Resettlement	4
2.3 Prison Design	6
2.4 HMP Five Wells	7
2.5 Study Aims	9
3. Method	11
3.1 Context	11
3.2 Design	11
3.3 Participants	11
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis	12
3.5 Limitations	14
4. Findings	16
4.1 Staff and Prisoner perspectives on life at Five Wells	16
5. Conclusions and Implications	36
5.1 Summary of Findings	36
5.2 Learning to inform design and operational functioning of new prisons	40
5.3 Future Research	42
5.4 Conclusions	43
References	45
Appendix A	50
Participant Demographics	50
Appendix B	52
Focus Group Questions for Residents	52
Focus Group Questions for Staff	54
Individual Interview Questions for Staff	57

Appendix C	58
Thematic Analysis	58
Appendix D	59
Peer Led Initiatives	59

List of tables

Table 1: Table of Themes	16
Table 2: Staff Demographics	50
Table 3: Prisoner Demographics	50

Glossary

Term	Description
Amber regime	Restricted regime (reduced but sustainable delivery of activities and services)
Bid	HMPPS use the Prison Operator Services Framework to run competitions to manage private prisons. Each potential private provider submits a bid which outlines how they will meet their objectives.
CSU	Care and Separation Unit where prisoners can be segregated away from the general prison population for their own safety or the safety of others, for breaking prison rules or because they are suspected of having drugs or other illicit items in their possession.
FLM	First Line Manager (equivalent to Supervising Officer)
G4S	Security and Facility Services Company
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges prison scheme which uses the principles of reward and reinforcement to encourage certain desired behaviours and punish undesired behaviours.
Key Worker	Each prisoner is allocated a key worker, who is a prison officer, whose role is to guide, support and coach an individual through their custodial sentence via one-to-one support.
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
Normalisation	Creating an environment which best reflects community life and helps prepare the prisoners for release.
PCO	Prison Custody Officer (equivalent to Prison Officer)
PLI / PLIs	Peer Led Initiatives OR Prisoners who have a role as part of a Peer Led Initiative Peer Led Initiatives describe programmes whereby people in prison take responsibility for the delivery of services (such as peer mentoring) for the benefit of the community. Those involved in PLIs, lead, co-ordinate and represent their initiative and are trusted with certain privileges and freedoms as part of their role.
Rehabilitative culture	Culture where all aspects of the prison support rehabilitation
ROTL	Release on Temporary License is the mechanism for releasing prisoners for a short time into the community to help enable participation in activities outside prison that contribute to community resettlement.

Term	Description
SMT	Senior Management Team
T60	Houseblock designs of four storeys that accommodate 240 prisoners, 60 per floor
Value-added	Addition of features to a model for which the buyer is prepared to pay extra

1. Summary

HMP Five Wells is a Category C prison for adult men, managed by the private security and facilities company G4S. Five Wells is the first purpose-built resettlement prison in England and Wales where resettlement has been embedded into the building design, daily practices and routine prison polices. This whole systems approach is intended to increase the likelihood that prisoners will successfully reintegrate back into the community.

The aim of this study was to understand what it has been like to work or live in Five Wells, one year on from its opening in February 2022. This research took place very early in the life cycle of Five Wells to ensure that any findings and learning points could be incorporated by Five Wells and built into future prison design and management. The study was purposefully broad and exploratory in its aims to produce learning at pace and to focus on early lessons. An exploratory and descriptive case study research design was used. Qualitative data was gathered using interviews, focus groups and ad-hoc conversations with 72 staff members and 94 prisoners.

Through thematic analysis six main themes were found that reflected the experiences of staff and prisoners. These were: **Vision, Belief and Drive** – Five Wells had a strong and positive vision, belief, and drive, but there were some issues with the balance of control and freedom of movement, in part due to the speed of implementation. **Rehabilitation and Resettlement** – many features of a rehabilitative culture were present at the prison, but there were gaps in the resettlement offer meaning that some prisoners felt that they were not progressing. **Safety and Control** – a mix at times of less experienced staff, drug use and more time required for processes to embed meant some fundamentals for order and control were not always in place. **Staffing** – there were high numbers of very motivated staff. However, some inexperience and occasional lack of supervision meant that there could be inconsistency, varying levels of confidence and trust in staff, and some difficulties in managing conflict. **Peer Led Initiative (PLI)** – this was a central feature of the innovative offer of Five Wells. There were mixed experiences and views of the legitimacy, management and impact of the scheme. **Design and Build** – the innovative design and technology were seen as contributing to a positive environment which enabled

resettlement. However, some staff felt that requirements such as a staff or prisoner gym and a staff canteen had been missed resulting in some challenges for operational practice.

Five Wells is an innovative new prison and is doing well on several features deemed key for a resettlement prison. The prison had a clear vision and ethos; this, along with the design of the prison, and the normality principle in action, meant that Five Wells was making great strides in the operationalisation of a rehabilitative prison. The prison was also doing well in terms of the provision of family contact. As this study was conducted at an early stage in the development of Five Wells it is perhaps not surprising that further progress was needed on the provision of activities to support resettlement and in always maintaining the appropriate use of influence and control. The PLI system also needed some further consideration.

The report identifies six learning points to inform the design and operational functioning of new prisons. In brief:

Consideration of the pace necessary to bring in staff and prisoners safely and well, and the potential impacts of challenges from external pressures. Prisoners, who are at an appropriate point in their sentence for resettlement, need to be inducted at a rate which supports the provision of adequate resettlement and rehabilitative offers, in a way that does not compromise order and stability.

The importance of belief and drive and effectively communicating this. At Five Wells there was a clear vision and belief that rehabilitation and resettlement was the best way to achieve positive outcomes for prisoners.

Provision of resettlement and rehabilitation activities must enable prisoners to progress. Allocation of places for education, resettlement activities, and purposeful work should be based on need and prisoners' interests. A realistic scaling up of release on temporary licence (ROTL) should be linked to predicted numbers of prisoners who will be eligible. At Five Wells, there is more work to do in relation to resettlement activities available.

Working in a new prison can be especially challenging, and it is important that staff have the right support, skills and experience. If there are high levels of less

experienced staff, the prison will need procedures in place and sufficient capacity to provide coaching, shadowing and support from more experienced staff. New prisons need to consider how quickly staff are promoted to reduce the risk of having too many people in leadership positions without sufficient breadth and depth of experience.

Peer led initiatives can be beneficial but to be used to best effect they need governance processes that support staff, PLIs and the general population. PLIs need the right level of autonomy to fulfil their roles and there needs to be clearly defined boundaries to maintain an appropriate balance of influence with staff.

Optimise specific design elements and make sure staff needs are sufficiently considered in new prison blueprints. The Five Wells experience identified several quick wins that could be incorporated in future blueprints, such as the location of light switches in relation to showers, ventilation, location of the library, a purpose-built gym and a staff canteen. Differences in the design of the T60 building, which result in reduced visibility between floors, need to be incorporated into staffing models. Many staff felt that Five Wells had been built to enhance the prisoner experience, but their own needs had been forgotten.

Operational and external organisational input was part of the design process however, the process of designing the new prison prior to awarding the contract creates some limitations. It means that building requirements are set when the operational model and requirements are unknown which potentially creates some omissions or missed opportunities.

The findings and learning points of this study have been fed back to Five Wells to support ongoing learning, as well as to MoJ teams involved in the design and operational functioning of other new prisons, refurbishments and extensions. Whilst this study provides new insight into prison design, purpose, and operating models for resettlement, due to the exploratory nature of the design, further research would develop this understanding.

This report is an example of MoJ delivering on its recently published Evaluation and Prototyping Strategy. In complex areas such as this, building in opportunities for early learning will improve the impact of our evidence by making it timelier and more accessible for decision makers.

2. Introduction

2.1 Current Prison Context

Prisons in England and Wales have experienced challenges with their operation through a rise in the prison population (MoJ, 2023), a reduction in the numbers and experience of prison staff (HMPPS, 2022) and high levels of substance use, self-harm and violence (MoJ, 2023). However, there has also been significant effort to improve prisons. For example, in recent years there has been a focus on recruitment and retention of staff, improving how responsive the service is to prisoners (e.g., introducing neurodiversity leads, and a Keyworker system), alongside efforts to improve the prison culture. Further there has been renewed attention and investment in the development of new prisons, such as HMP Five Wells, which is the topic of this research.

2.2 Resettlement

Resettlement prisons are those which have a specific role in preparing prisoners for release. Generally, they hold prisoners who are serving sentences of three years or more. The premise of resettlement is to support prisoners to address factors which may act as barriers to integration back into the community.¹ Evidence indicates that there are some overarching principles of effective resettlement practice including (Cracknell, 2023):

- early identification of needs, through-the-gate support and continuity of care from custody to community;
- ensuring that resettlement plans are produced collaboratively and are not solely risk focused;
- a focus on building good relationships;
- ensuring prisoners have sources of social capital and practical support when they leave prison;

¹ This includes supporting prisoners to secure appropriate accommodation on release from prison (e.g., Williams, Poyser & Hopkins, 2012), to continue to take part in interventions aimed at building skills, resilience and positive attitudes, to support family links, to secure employment and/or training, and to access appropriate support and benefits (PHE, 2018).

- being responsive to the needs of different groups;
- using strengths-based and restorative approaches.

Within a resettlement prison, the evidence would suggest that these overarching principles can best be achieved by the presence of the following features:

- **Resettlement focus and purposeful activities:** Prisons should prepare prisoners for release by providing them access to purposeful activities (e.g., Maguire, 2018; Prison Reform Trust, 2021), supporting them to build skills for future employment, and helping them find steady employment upon release (e.g., Weaver & McNeill, 2015). Preparing people for release also includes the appropriate use of release on temporary licence (ROTL), particularly close to release dates and for overnight stays (Hillier & Mews, 2018).
- **Positive rehabilitative culture:** Prisons should have a culture where all aspects of the prison support rehabilitation. Additionally, the prison environment should contribute to the prison being safe, decent, hopeful, supportive of change and progression. It should also be set up to help prisoners desist from future offending (Mann, Fitzalan Howard, & Tew, 2018; Mann, 2019). This has been shown to reduce reoffending, improve prison safety, improve prisoners' life chances, enhance resettlement outcomes, and provide high-quality sentence management (Auty & Liebling, 2020; HMPPS, 2019).² Prison staff also need to exert appropriate authority and control, and use consistent rules, so that prisoners feel supported, have appropriate oversight and feel like they are treated as individuals (e.g. Colvin, 2007; Crewe, Liebling & Hulley, 2015; Crewe & Levins, 2021; Day, Brauer, & Butler, 2015; Rocheleau, 2013). There is evidence that both over- and under-use of authority can be problematic (for a full discussion of institutional 'grip' see Crewe & Levins, 2021).

² A positive rehabilitative culture is one in which there is presence of positive relationships between staff and prisoners, prisoners having hope and believe that change is possible, staff are supported and have the right training and supervision, prisoners are supported to learn and practice new ways of thinking, positive behaviours are rewarded, people have access to naturalistic settings and green space, prison conditions are good, and both staff and prisoners are treated in procedurally just ways (e.g. Bierie, 2012; Fitzalan Howard & Wakeling, 2020; ; Fitzalan Howard & Wakeling, 2021; Lambert, Altheimer, Hogan, & Barton-Bellessa, 2011; Maguire, 2018; Nadkarni et al., 2017; Prison Reform Trust, 2021; Wakeling & Fitzalan Howard, 2022; Walker et al., 2013).

- **Principle of normality:** This principle states that life in prison should resemble life on the outside as far as possible, to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment.
- **Responsivity:** Being responsive to the needs of the individual which includes, for example, providing people with the right support, such as effective services for recovery from substance use (PHE, 2018; Walters, 1998), and ensuring that people can access the appropriate interventions as outlined in their sentence plans.
- **Peer mentoring:** The use of peer mentoring which inspires mentees, offers high levels of support, reassurance and encouragement, and provides a bridge to other services; this mentoring should be structured and accompanied by training, support and supervision for the mentors (e.g., Bagnall et al., 2015). This can help with supporting prisoners to adopt a non-criminal identity, whereby they see themselves as good people who made a mistake and not 'doomed to deviance' (e.g., Maruna, 2001, Wakeling & Saloo, 2017).
- **Maintaining family contact:** Being able to maintain strong and supportive links to family and significant others (e.g., Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; May, Sharma, & Stewart, 2008; Mitchell, Spooner, Jia, & Zhang, 2016).

2.3 Prison Design

The architecture and physical design of a prison itself can have an impact on the feel, purpose and functioning of a prison (Jewkes & Moran, 2017). For example, design can facilitate or hinder social interaction among staff and prisoners, effective regimes and rehabilitation, and can have an influence on prison behaviour (e.g., Beijersbergen et al., 2016). The Woolf report (1991), which investigated the causes of major riots and disturbances across British prisons in the 1990s, suggested that the design of the building (as well as the physical state of a prison) can significantly affect the atmosphere of prisons, and can affect staff-prisoner interactions.

Overall, the research suggests that smaller prisons, newer prisons, those with single cells, and those built with an emphasis on relationships and community are generally associated with better outcomes. Reducing overcrowding, improving cleanliness, improving lighting, attention to interiors and views of naturalistic settings are also likely to improve outcomes

(e.g. Beijersbergen et al., 2016; Beyens, Gilbert & Devresse, 2012; Cox, Paulus & McCain, 1984; Jensen, Granheim & Helgesen, 2011; Moran et al., 2021; Morris & Worrall, 2014; Weinrath, Budzinski & Melnyk, 2016). Additionally following the Norwegian ‘normalisation principle’ (Rijt et al., 2023), prisons that strive to create an environment inside prison which is like life outside, are also likely to see benefits.³

2.4 HMP Five Wells

Five Wells is the first in a new generation of prison design to be delivered as part of the prison capacity programme.⁴ Its design is based on extensive research and consultation with the operational frontline, and the use of quick learning and evaluation has been embedded into the programme.

New prisons take around two and a half years to build whilst the process to appoint a prison operator takes about one year. During this period, the potential operators can ask questions about the design and are given technical specifications to help inform their tender. The design is approved in conjunction with HMPPS operational teams to ensure it reflects frontline requirements, but construction is well underway before the successful operator is selected. On appointment, the operator usually has twelve months in advance of the prison opening to begin preparation for service, which includes recruitment of staff and engagement with the construction team to help familiarise them with the facilities, technical systems, and equipment.

Five Wells is a Category C prison⁵ in England, for adult men, with a capacity of 1,680. It is the first purpose-built resettlement prison in England and Wales. The prison is managed by the private provider G4S; HMPPS (Custodial Contracts Directorate) manage the delivery of the contract.

³ An effective prison design that delivers a normalised environment, provides opportunities for autonomy, genuine ability to scale up or down privileges or opportunities, and an environment that enables direct supervision and access to services can support a reduction in recidivism (Jewkes & Gooch, 2019).

⁴ A programme to deliver a safe and secure prison estate that meets future capacity demands and challenges.

⁵ Category C prisons aim to give prisoners the opportunity to develop skills so that they can find work and resettle back into the community on release and are primarily designed for prisoners transferred from other prisons for the last few years of their sentence.

The accommodation is divided into seven houseblocks which are based on the T60 design.⁶ The prison opened in February 2022, with a plan to gradually increase the number of prisoners. The general approach at Five Wells was to be a flagship resettlement prison, in which resettlement is embedded into all activity, from induction through to release. The aim of this is to transform resettlement from a series of activities into a 'way of life'. The operational model for Five Wells was adapted from a model provided by another prison of a comparable size and function (HMP Oakwood). This model aimed to unlock the potential of prisoners, to transform their lives and successfully prepare them for their return to the community. From an operating perspective, the bid⁷ by G4S had significant value-added⁸ innovative aspects to support the resettlement objectives of the prisoners residing there. The strategy for Five Wells included the following operational and design features:

- **Resettlement activities:** Extending the core day to maximise opportunities for purposeful activity and resettlement (longer unlock hours, evening and weekend visits, work, and education sessions), providing a range of education, industries and resettlement-focused activities, and incentivising prisoners to engage with purposeful activity.
- **Rehabilitative culture:** Adopting key rehabilitative culture values, focusing on promoting health and wellbeing, building hope, promoting personal development by rewarding participation in resettlement activities, embedding values of integrity and respect, and building positive relationships between staff, prisoners, families, and partners. The prison also aimed to provide access to physical activity, and open air.
- **Normality:** Operating a normalisation approach, encouraging prisoners to take responsibility for their own lives, and creating an environment which best reflects community life and helps prepare the prisoners for release. The use of in cell technology aimed to enable greater access to resettlement tools and purposeful

⁶ Houseblocks of four storeys that accommodate 240 prisoners, 60 per floor.

⁷ HMPPS use the Prison Operator Services Framework to run competitions to manage private prisons. Each potential private provider submits a bid. The bids are assessed using a Price per Quality Point methodology which is designed to assess the relative value for money of competing bids from different companies.

⁸ Value-added are the addition of features to a model for which the buyer is prepared to pay extra.

activity and empower individuals to take responsibility and ownership for their lives, and resettlement. Most prisoners living at Five Wells would have their own cell with a shower to promote independent living. The design of the prison also aimed to prioritise normalisation, with a concentration on natural light, ventilation and reduced noise, windows with no bars, views of greenery, therapeutic gardens, outdoor exercise sessions, outdoor visit areas, and greater access to green spaces. Wider corridors and separate landings (not galleried) aimed to reduce noise, provide more activity space, improve perceptions of personal space and increase the quality of prisoner-staff relationships.

- **Responsivity:** Meeting the needs of different cohorts by prisoners living in small community groups and having dedicated communities for particular groups (e.g., older prisoners, prisoners convicted of sexual offences, prisoners with substance use issues). The design of the prison (T60) aimed to maximise the community feel; each landing (which can hold 60 prisoners) was designed to include an association space for prisoners to use recreationally, an individual exercise area and a kitchen. Additionally, the prison intended to hold weekly Key Worker sessions for every prisoner to continuously discuss their progress and needs.
- **Peer Mentoring:** Reinforcing the staffing structure by using a Peer Led Initiative (PLI) model (adopted from HMP Oakwood; see HMIP, 2018). The use of peers to provide support to others aimed to create a calm environment, to drive engagement of the prisoners, to promote healthy relationships, and lay the foundations to maximise access to resettlement activities.
- **Family contact:** Prioritising the maintenance of family contact, with the use of a large visitor hall, designed to be open and light to instil a sense of normality for those visiting.

2.5 Study Aims

The main aim of the research was to understand what it has been like to work or live in Five Wells since it opened in February 2022 as the local leadership team aimed to establish a successful resettlement prison with a strong rehabilitative and inclusive ethos. The research purpose was to help G4S, HMPPS, and MoJ gain early insight into what elements were already working well and what might need further attention as prisoners

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

and staff interact with the new elements of prison design, culture, and operational processes. This would allow the team to adapt various processes or undertake further testing of new ways of working as the prison expands. It was anticipated that this insight might help inform the future design of new prisons or additional units within the current estate. The study was a foundational piece, which was purposefully broad and exploratory in its aims to produce learning at pace.

The specific research aims were:

1. To gather views and experiences on what life was like at Five Wells for both staff and prisoners, including how this differed from their experiences in other prisons.
2. To examine the extent to which Five Wells was operating, at an early stage, as intended as a flagship resettlement prison.
3. To generate better understanding of the design and operational model of Five Wells that could be shared with other prisons to inform physical and operational design.

3. Method

3.1 Context

This project commenced in January 2023; the prison was just over half full (55% capacity), and a temporary Governor had just been appointed. Prisons are complex institutions, and it takes time to mobilise operations so that they operate safely at intended capacity. This research took place very early in the life cycle of Five Wells and, given the complexity of opening a prison, there was considerable scope to learn early lessons to improve resettlement design, regime management and how to build a rehabilitation culture.

Creating these opportunities for more timely evidence to help policymakers take time-bound decisions is a key pillar in MoJ's Evaluation and Prototyping Strategy.⁹ Insight from this research will be utilised by Five Wells to improve their delivery and by MoJ and HMPPS to build and mobilise other new prisons and extensions. At the time of the research the prison was preparing for a rapid increase in the population and had some concerns around staffing levels, order and safety. As a consequence, the prison was moving to an Amber regime, which meant that the regime was due to be curtailed, with prisoners having less time out of cell.

3.2 Design

This project used a case study research design due to the nature of the research questions. The design was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Qualitative data was gathered and used to gain insight into what happens as prisoners and staff interact with the new elements of prison design, culture, and operational processes.

3.3 Participants

The prison was selected as it is MoJ's first purpose-built resettlement prison. A total of 166 people contributed to the research through interviews, focus groups, or more informal ad-hoc conversations (72 staff and 94 prisoners). Staff participation consisted of a focus

⁹ [MOJ Evaluation and Prototyping Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/moj-evaluation-and-prototyping-strategy.pdf)

group ($n=8$) with G4S senior management, interviews ($n=20$), and ad-hoc conversations¹⁰ ($n=44$). 63% of staff interviewed were female, 88% white, and nearly a third were under 30 years of age (see Appendix A). The sample was ethnically representative of the overall population but more staff in the age 50–59 were represented and those aged 40–49 were underrepresented. The median time staff had worked in the Prison Service was two years, and the median time staff had worked at Five Wells was one year. Data from Five Wells showed that 52% of the staff population had between 0–1 years' experience of working in the Prison Service; 43% of staff had 1–2 years' experience and 5% had more than two years' experience.

Participants included staff directly employed by G4S, HMPPS, and third-party partners,¹¹ representing 20 different roles. All grades of staff (from prison officer to Director) were represented in the staff sample, with the most frequently represented being Prison Officers ($n=14$), Functional Managers ($n=11$) and Supervising Officers ($n=8$). Three visitors were also involved in ad-hoc conversations with the researchers. The demographics of these individuals were not recorded.

The participation of prisoners consisted of two focus groups ($n=21$) with PLIs and ad-hoc conversations ($n=73$). The majority were white, and two thirds were aged between 18 and 40 (see Appendix A). The sample was ethnically representative of the overall population, but more prisoners in the age 18–30 were represented and those aged 50–59 were underrepresented. The average (mean) sentence length of prisoners who took part in the research was 69 months, excluding five prisoners who were serving life sentences. The average (mean) time spent at Five Wells for this sample was seven and a half months.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

In January 2023, a team of four researchers spent five days on-site gathering a range of data. A total of three focus groups (each with six or more participants), four interviews with two or three participants each, and ten individual interviews were conducted. Focus groups ranged in length from 44 minutes to 57 minutes; the length of interviews was not recorded.

¹⁰ See section 3.4 for more details.

¹¹ For example, staff working for the charity HALOW which provides support to families of prisoners, and staff working for Change Grow Live, a charity organisation providing health and social care to people with drug addiction and involved in crime.

Sampling was based on availability and coordinated by Five Wells. The aim was to speak to as many staff as possible from different groups, grades, and areas of work, and as many prisoners from the PLIs (as they are a particular feature of the operational model for Five Wells) and different houseblocks.

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix B) was used to guide the focus groups and interviews, but interviewees were able to lead the discussions so that they could talk about any factors they felt were important.¹² Information was given to prisoners and staff about the research, their right to withdraw from the study, how their contributions were going to be used, as well as details of who they could contact if they had any questions or concerns. Following this, interviewees provided either written or verbal informed consent prior to participation. All focus groups and interviews were conducted face-to-face at the prison. Verbatim transcripts were produced for all focus groups. For all interviews, notes were taken by one of the researchers. In total, there were approximately 183 pages of transcripts, observation and research notes produced for analysis.

On all five days the researchers walked around the prison conducting ad-hoc conversations with consenting staff and prisoners, unaccompanied by local staff. This enabled the voice of more people at the prison to be heard (and to be done 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 gathered. The questions asked of participants within the ad-hoc conversations were taken from the semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix B). Relevant official documents and data were sourced before and during the time the researchers were at the prison.¹³ This enabled the researchers to familiarise themselves with the prison's 'story' and provided a contextual description of the prison.

¹² The schedule contained questions around what it was like to work at Five Wells, whether staff experiences were mapping onto the operating model, understanding the experience of various design features, understanding how Five Wells differs to other prisons and what could improve working at Five Well.

¹³ Documentation included the Resident Induction Handbook, Peer Lead Mentors Training Programme, policies and charter and Safety Reports.

The analysis was both data- and theory-driven. The main analysis concentrated on the focus groups, interviews and notes from the ad-hoc conversations. Using an iterative approach these data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021) – see Appendix C.

3.5 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was its exploratory design; while experiences could be examined, and hypotheses generated, on how different elements of the prison were interacting, causal determinants of change could not be established or tested. This research aimed to uncover early learning around design and culture, but it should not be viewed as a full appraisal of the operating model itself as Five Wells had been open for less than one year and some elements were not yet in place.

Further, external factors, which meant that the prison had to significantly increase the number of prisoners on short term sentences over the research period, brought unanticipated changes to the regime and some restrictions on activities and movements. It was decided prior to the start of this study that the Amber Regime itself was not in scope as the focus was on a broad exploration of the first year of operation. The researchers do not believe that the findings on resettlement access were impacted by the change to an Amber Regime.

Many of the staff were new to the Prison Service, and Five Wells was the first prison they had worked in. This meant some staff were unable to compare between Five Wells and other prisons in England and Wales.

The prison itself selected all focus group participants. There were fewer in-depth conversations with operational staff than desired due to low staffing levels. However, the researchers worked hard to mitigate this by purposefully having more ad-hoc conversations with operational staff on houseblocks in the second week of data collection.

The researchers attempted to overcome potential selection bias 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. The researchers were also aware of potential researcher investment bias which was mitigated first by working together as a

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

group to check analyses and thematic coding, and then through internal HMPPS/MoJ and academic peer review.

The researchers could not use quantitative monitoring data (such as security and safety performance data) to triangulate findings with the qualitative data as the first 200 prisoners were hand-picked to help establish the new regime and were known to be well-behaved. In addition, the numbers were relatively small in the first few months. As such, any changes in safety metrics over time, could be attributable to the make-up and increase in population rather than providing a meaningful baseline.

4. Findings

4.1 Staff and Prisoner perspectives on life at Five Wells

Six main themes, presented in Table 1, were identified from the analysis. This further comprised 19 subthemes which summarises the accounts of participants' experiences at Five Wells during the time of the study.

Table 1: Table of Themes

<p>Theme 1: Vision, Belief and Drive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief and drive Learning culture Conflicting aims Speed of ambition 	<p>Theme 2: Rehabilitation and Resettlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitation Decency Resettlement Population 	<p>Theme 3: Safety and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security and safety Order and control Newness
<p>Theme 4: Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and experience Motivation and wellbeing Staffing issues Collaborative working 	<p>Theme 5: Peer Led Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity and support Relationships and power balance 	<p>Theme 6: Design and Build</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical environment Technology

Theme 1: Vision, Belief and Drive

“See the person not the prisoner – we’re here to rehabilitate.” – Staff

“We are expected to do something novel, something new, something game changing but we’re...having our cards marked like an old prison.” – Staff

This theme related to staff, leadership and PLIs all having a clear belief in the purpose of the prison, a drive to make this vision a reality, and a positive learning culture to try to achieve this. The speed at which the prison opened and tried to achieve its vision created some issues, and there were particular struggles between balancing control and freedom of movement.

Almost all operational staff, non-operational staff and PLIs had a clear **vision of, and belief in, their purpose** which was regularly articulated. This vision was that a new approach to resettlement was needed in the prison estate and that, through this vision, Five Wells would make a positive difference to prisoners’ lives. In most cases, this vision was attributed to the original Director:

“When I started the Director of Five Wells said to me ‘We want to see the man before we see the prisoner’ and treat everyone with respect – that has stayed with me and feels like the ethos of the prison” – G4S Functional Head

There were several elements of Five Wells’ operation that were described as **distinctive from other prisons**, such as the greater freedom that all prisoners were given to move about the estate and take responsibility for their own actions, the co-design of programmes with the PLIs, and the community focus on houseblocks. In addition, several operational approaches were different from those seen typically in other prisons. For example, on arrival prisoners at Five Wells were met by PLIs and were given enhanced privilege status.¹⁴ Whilst most of the prisoners found the increase in their freedom as normalising and positive, some staff (particularly those with experience of other prisons) shared that

¹⁴ As part of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Programme, prisoners are allocated to different levels of privileges, dependent on behaviour. Enhanced status means that prisoners can have access to additional things for example, wear their own clothes, have more visits or spend more money.

they struggled with the level of freedom afforded as they were used to a more controlled movement, regular roll calls, and restricted regimes.

It was clear that there was a **positive learning culture** at Five Wells. The G4S Security team felt that the G4S management team were open to new ideas and willing to try them out. Some staff, such as those in training, felt empowered to **respond quickly** to issues which reinforced the learning culture: “We are open to new ideas and have the attitude that it's good to try things” (G4S Admissions Team).

Some staff who had worked in both private and public prisons shared that there were more opportunities to **innovate** in private prisons and that this added to the positive view of Five Wells. Staff across many functional areas described how they developed **feedback mechanisms** to gather and act upon the views of both staff and prisoners. However, not everyone felt that they could voice their concerns. Some staff felt that there was a lack of safe feedback options, noting that they did not feel they would be backed by their senior leadership if they raised any concerns.

“I spoke to my G4S lead and I was told not to raise it. They said to me that nothing good will come from it and that I would be penalised.” – Person in Partner Organisation

There also appeared to be **conflicting aims** in action, particularly at management level. The Senior Management Team (SMT) at Five Wells believed that they were trying to deliver the **flagship resettlement prison** they had described in their bid document, with a radical new approach to prepare prisoners for release, but were caught up in a **clash of old and new systems**. Other staff who had worked in other parts of the prison estate described an **internal battle** between the old system of control with the new system of normalisation and freedom of movement. Some felt that the model of Five Wells conflicted with their views of what a prison ‘should be’, that it is not always readily accepted, and some staff and stakeholders will need time to adjust to these new ways of working.

The SMT, many other staff (in Programmes, Safety, Visits, Education, Houseblocks) and the PLI group talked about how the move to the Amber regime, the new focus on control, along with **the number of new prisoners arriving**, were making it hard to maintain the original vision of Five Wells.

Capacity pressures meant that there was a high proportion of young prisoners on short sentences (3–4 months) who were either not motivated to engage in resettlement activities or not at Five Wells long enough to take advantage of the resettlement offer. Some staff felt that the increase in the population of young prisoners was exacerbating issues of control (see *Theme 3 Safety and Control*). They were concerned that these changes were a **backwards step** and a move away from the uniqueness and overall vision of Five Wells. There was also concern that it would be hard to shift back to the original vision once it had been changed. The SMT felt that these factors were affecting their ability to implement **innovative normalisation elements** that were key to Five Wells resettlement focus. The HMPPS Controller Team felt that the vision of the SMT had been excellent, but there had been difficulties in delivering value added resettlement activities when some foundations of safety, security and decency were not fully embedded (see related *Theme 3 Safety and Control*). They believed that the sequencing of activities in future bids needed to be **more realistic**.

Most staff perceived the size of the prison, the speed of its opening and the need to expand quickly, to be the cause of struggles to achieve the planned ambition. Given the newness of Five Wells trying to implement the bid wholesale from the beginning, meant that inadvertently too much **freedom** was given to prisoners at times without the appropriate controls, **boundaries** and **processes** in place to support safe operation (such as roll call, mass movement and basic incident/intelligence reporting).

Some felt that **more time** was needed to establish processes and allow staff to practice within the Five Wells context to get them embedded, especially given the limited experience of many staff (see related *Theme 3 Safety and Control*).

Theme 2: Rehabilitation and Resettlement

“Staff here are more approachable. They treat you as a person.” – Prisoner

“I was promised plumbing and electric but I got emptying the bins.” – Prisoner

The rehabilitation ethos at Five Wells was clearly acknowledged by both staff and prisoners. Many features of a rehabilitative culture were present, and prisoners were treated with decency and respect. However, the resettlement offer needed significant improvement, with many prisoners feeling like they were not being offered what they had been promised, and not getting the support they needed to progress.

It was evident that the **rehabilitative ethos** of the prison was appreciated by many of the staff and prisoners. Both prisoners and staff frequently spoke about how normalisation was a key aspect of Five Wells (see related Theme 1 *Vision, Belief and Drive*), describing how there was a greater resemblance to life outside prison, especially in comparison to other prisons.¹⁵ Many staff articulated a **belief that the approach to rehabilitation** at Five Wells worked, describing the mechanisms which supported prisoners to change. These included prisoners having more control and autonomy over their choices; being able to take more responsibility; being granted greater trust and respect; being motivated to make progress and use their time more productively.

“Five Wells has more rehabilitation unlike other prisons which have nothing – better work opportunities and support for people with drug abuse issues/in recovery” – Prisoner

A **community** feel was described by some, particularly the PLI representatives and prisoners within the Drug Recovery Unit, as being an especially helpful and a positive aspect of Five Wells. There was also a general view that the **environment** of Five Wells was rehabilitative, particularly in comparison to other prisons. It was described as a learning environment, and prisoners found it clean, and less threatening. This was perceived to be positive for prisoners’ **mental health and wellbeing**. Most prisoners liked

¹⁵ Particular examples of normalisation in action included the flexible regime, the clothing the prisoners could wear, the language used around the prison (e.g., using first names), the community ethos, as well as the operation and booking systems for available workshops and personal appointments.

the greater levels of **freedom** afforded to them as it enabled them to associate with others and be out of their cell for longer periods, although this was not the case for all (e.g., “It’s jail, (we) shouldn’t have as much freedom” – Prisoner). Prisoners felt that having more time outside in the fresh air, more access to the gym, and greater provision of mental health services could improve their wellbeing further.

Five Wells was generally seen to offer prisoners a good opportunity to connect with **family**, with caring and responsive visits staff, a relaxed visits hall, and the offer of family days. Whilst these family days were perceived positively, some staff indicated that they were costly and consequently had had to be reduced in number. Some of the family days were also only offered to those on Enhanced status and sometimes used as incentives.

Prisoners and staff generally described **decent and respectful relationships and interactions**. People visiting their relatives or family members, described feeling less intimidated, welcomed, and having more privacy with their relatives compared to visiting other prisons.

“Not being treated as a prisoner. I am treated as a human who has done wrong.” –
Prisoner

Nevertheless, some prisoners felt that they were **treated unfairly** (for example, being taken off medication with no explanation or only some prisoners being able to access family days), that they were not always listened to, that they were sometimes stereotyped, and that there was a lack of transparency in some decision-making processes. The **incentives** scheme at the prison, for example, was felt by some prisoners to be ineffective and operating unfairly.

Whilst there was agreement from both staff and prisoners that the prison had been designed with a **resettlement focus**, the overwhelming view of the prisoners was that the **opportunities for resettlement activities** at Five Wells were lacking, particularly in relation to industries, courses and workshops. Some prisoners shared that they felt resentment and frustration due to education, skills, and work services not yet running as intended, and a lack of choice of vocational courses. Whilst some staff understood that services and regimes needed time to become established, many of the prisoners felt that they had been ‘sold a dream’. Popular courses had limited capacity; others had to wait a

long time to be offered a place or had been allocated work that they would not choose themselves. Staff described how some of these issues were due to workshops being inadequately fitted out at handover, such as the poorly placed and low number of electrical points (see related Theme 6 *Design and Build*).¹⁶ The regime was also not working for some with activities frequently being offered at the same time and limited gym access.

There was some disparity between prisoner groups regarding whether they felt that they had enough opportunities to make the **progression** needed to resettle. For example, PLIs were much more positive about the offers than the other prisoners (see related Theme 5 *PLIs*). Prisoners talked about the lack of support from Key Workers, and Psychology Services, and, specifically, the lack of **resettlement support** from the Offender Management Unit (OMU). Prisoners wanted improved release planning, alongside better communication and contact from OMU, with more understanding of how to progress and move on to a Category D prison.¹⁷ There was frequent reference to the lack of release on temporary licence (**ROTL**) which was causing significant frustration and was perceived by interviewed prisoners to be unfair, inconsistent, and poorly communicated.

At the time of research, Five Wells was serving a mixed **population**. This seemed to be causing difficulties with some staff describing a **mismatch** with the ambition and vision of Five Wells (see related Theme 1 *Vision, Belief and Drive*). Prisoners with short sentences had insufficient time to undertake resettlement activities, which in some cases led to a lack of motivation to engage. On the other hand, prisoners with longer or life sentences were more motivated, however, could not access the provision to progress.

The **culture of the houseblocks** also seemed to be impacted by the **population type**. Staff and prisoners generally indicated that every houseblock had a different feel, dependent on the prisoners living there. One of the proposed elements of Five Wells was to house similar prisoners in different houseblocks. This had led to significant differences between houseblocks, with some seeming to work reasonably well (e.g., the super

¹⁶ The design and build of the workshops commences prior to the contractor appointment and different bidders proposed varied ways to use the workshops. It is the winning bidders responsibility to ensure the workshops are fitted out and fit for purpose

¹⁷ D Cat prisons have minimal security and allow eligible prisoners to spend most of their day away from the prison on licence to carry out work, education or for other resettlement purposes. Open prisons only house prisoners that have been risk-assessed and deemed suitable for open conditions.

enhanced wing¹⁸), but others working less well (e.g., the basic wing¹⁹). Staff and some prisoners also talked about the fact there had been a significant **increase in the number of young adults** coming to Five Wells, which was not the original intended population. Their perceptions were that this had altered the culture of the prison causing issues with instability and drugs (see *Theme 3 Safety and Control*).

Theme 3: Safety and Control

“Got to stamp out the bad behaviour. Prisoners will always test their boundaries. Staff need to stand up and confront people.” – Prisoner

“Issues with movement happen more than you think as it goes unreported and unchallenged by staff” – Staff

There were mixed perceptions around levels of safety and control. Concerns included problems with security as well as order and command of the prison. Whilst there were issues that needed to be addressed, there were also indications that these problems could be a result of the newness of the prison and that with time they could improve.

There was a mixed perception of the levels of **violence and safety** in the prison, with some prisoners suggesting that Five Wells was the safest prison they had ever been in. For some, this sense of safety arose from the design of Five Wells. For example, the design removed some of the high-risk areas that are present in more traditional designs, such as netting areas and communal showers, reducing opportunities for violence.

“People feel safer here than other prisons because there are fewer dark corners” – Prisoner

Staff suggested that it was the ethos of Five Wells which made a difference to how the prisoners wanted to behave, with one staff member indicating that the cleanliness of the prison made prisoners behave more positively: “clean home, clean mind” – Staff

¹⁸ Housing those on Enhanced Incentive and Earned Privilege status.

¹⁹ Housing those on Basic Incentive and Earned Privilege status.

However, others expressed how the design and vision of the prison, in particular, the greater freedom of movement, increased a sense of vulnerability for some. Not all parts of the prison were felt to be safe for staff at all times; this primarily related to the specific mix of prisoners on some of the houseblocks, the lack of searching, low staffing numbers, the lack of cameras in areas such as industries and kitchens, and the lack of radios available to staff. The **lack of safety** felt by some of the staff and prisoners was also attributed to the levels of less experienced staff at Five Wells (see related Theme 4 *Staffing*).

Staff spoke about how the prison had **teething issues**, which in turn had amplified lack of safety. Some regarded this as a welcome challenge and **learning opportunity**, and staff frequently spoke about how **time was needed** to embed changes into the prison and meet their ambition. Their view was that Five Wells was **still new**, with many new staff, and therefore they had to give time to allow the prison to realise its vision.

“There will always be teething problems in new prisons, within a year it will get better and better – every month there is a new project starting up, but it takes time to embed but there’s good potential here” – Staff

Positively, security staff shared examples of how the learning culture (see related Theme 1 *Vision, Belief and Drive*) at Five Wells meant that they were able to respond quickly to security issues such as anti-drone kits, anti-dash for fences and restriction of sugar to prevent homemade hooch. But staff also identified ongoing security issues relating to issues such as the height of the fence,²⁰ which seemed lower than normal due to the geography of the land in some parts of the grounds, and the location of some of the buildings on the outer perimeter (see related Theme 6 *Design and Build*). Both staff and prisoners reported that **drugs**, and, to a lesser extent, alcohol, were problems at Five Wells. Drugs were described as relatively easily accessible; staff and prisoners reported a need for greater efforts to reduce drug use in the prison including more searching and scrutiny of staff.

Lack of control was also commonly highlighted by both staff and prisoners. As one staff member noted: “We lost it along the way. Not sure where or how but we lost control”. Staff attributed some of the **control issues** at Five Wells to the lack of a consistent and well-run

²⁰ The height of the fence is of standard height for Category C prisons.

regime and a lack of structure. This included staff and the prison not getting the basics right, such as searching both staff and prisoners, challenging and providing **consequences** for poor behaviour and facilitating mass movements. Some prisoners felt that processes such as unlocking took too long, and that there was a lack of clarity and ineffective communications around policies, practices, rules and regime, which led to confusion and frustration. For some prisoners this meant that they could be reprimanded for their behaviour due to a lack of clarity from staff rather than intentional disobedience.

“Depending on different officers, different officers have a different way of doing things. So, one’ll tell you one thing and you might get another that tells you another thing slightly different, it’s confusing. This officer says this, this one says that, it’s unsettling” – Prisoner

Linking to a similar finding in Theme 5 ‘Peer Led Initiatives’, some staff felt that too much authority and freedom had been given to prisoners which had created some issues with control and security. Both prisoners and staff reported feeling that, on occasion, **prisoners held undue influence** over staff and that some prisoners felt that staff were afraid of prisoners. Others felt that it was the increased freedom of movement, driven from by ethos and vision which resulted in the lack of control. Some staff in non-operational roles reflected that they were sometimes mistaken for operational staff because they were wearing the same uniform which heightened their feelings of vulnerability.

“Some prisoners think that they shouldn’t be challenged here as the regime is different” – Staff

In terms of improving order and control, several staff and prisoners felt that the **new Amber regime** would help increase the control that the prison had, mainly because of changes in the movement process and a greater number of staff being visible. However, a few staff felt that the new regime would increase control problems, with prisoners becoming frustrated due to reduced visits and time in workshops.

“It’s like children, they’ve been given these freedoms and now they’re being taken away, [prisoners are] not gonna be happy about it” – Staff

Theme 4: Staffing

“Staff are good. Problem is their young age, they can’t control things, don’t know how to handle things” – Prisoner

“We want to do it, we want to have a good reputation” – Staff

A common theme from both staff and prisoners was that further support was required to improve the skills and confidence of relatively inexperienced staff. Generally, staff were motivated and hopeful about how the prison could be and were supportive of each other (particularly within teams). Senior managers were also generally seen as visible and supportive. However, there were concerns about staff shortages and problems with staff retention, recruitment and promotion which resulted in concerns about safety and maintenance of the regime.

Overall, **staff were seen to be motivated**, both in their support for each other and in helping prisoners to progress through their sentences. Some of the staff said that they enjoyed their roles and stated that, whilst a new prison represented challenges, they had embraced them and enjoyed the learning experience. Staff also described being **hopeful** of the prison continuing to improve: “I love working here, can’t wait to see where we are further down the line”.

Many prisoners and staff suggested that the new staff just needed more time to increase their skills and confidence. Most of the staff spoke about the **need for more training**, noting that shadowing more experienced staff was helpful to develop skills and confidence. G4S had brought in staff from HMP Ryehill to support **shadowing for newer staff** (although planned programmes on mentoring had been paused so that focus could be given to establishing the new Amber regime).

Most staff described their line managers as being **supportive and approachable** and felt confident that issues were dealt with. Similarly, the management team were often described as being visible, having an open-door policy and valuing the voice of their staff.

Staff and prisoners described how many staff were seen to be **less experienced and lacked some skills** and confidence to challenge unhelpful behaviours or address conflict

in the prison, impacting on the safety of the prisoners and the staff. The **young** age of staff was also cited as a reason why some were not able to effectively manage conflict, undermining the security of the prison. This also increased **pressure on experienced staff**, mainly first line managers (FLMs), who described feeling responsible for the less experienced staff, the safety of new staff and for the wellbeing of prisoners. Staff expressed how this negatively impacted on their own wellbeing, noting that this was not something they could maintain over a long period.

“I have to play catch up with my other work – I prioritise staff. It’s a lot easier to do this rather than lose staff as if they don’t have support or make wrong decisions which creates a ripple effect of people in danger” – Staff

Some staff and prisoners did indicate that staff with less experience did not have unhelpful preconceived ideas and attitudes, and that older staff coming into the prison from other jobs (e.g., the military) were seen as valuable as they had transferable skills.

It was clear that staff **valued one another** and that the majority had positive home/work boundaries, which contributed to their ability to be **resilient** in their roles. Some, though, described feeling anxious and overworked, noting that this impacted on their mental health. One staff member described how “lots of staff are on leave for mental health issues”, with another member of staff simply saying that they felt “defeated”. Staff spoke about **feeling anxious**, and for most this was attributed to feeling unsafe at times and lacking control when working on the houseblocks (see *Theme 3 Safety and Control*). Some staff talked about others leaving their jobs because of this which created **staff shortages**. Lack of staff meant that taking breaks or annual leave was sometimes difficult due to the inability to cover essential roles.

The issues with retention, recruitment and promotion were clear. **Retention** issues, at both PCO and middle manager level, were often put down to a **disparity between what they had thought the job and their roles would entail and the reality**. The Five Wells vision that had been described to them was at odds with their experience of the prison, in part due to resource and population issues. This led to new staff leaving after just short periods of employment.

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

Due to the high numbers of new staff joining and then leaving there was a constant pressure on experienced staff having to train new staff and that this high turnover was seen to be impacting on the stability of the prison. Some thought the recruitment **process** played a part in this as new staff did not always seem suited to prison work.

“Feels like they employ anyone to get the numbers up. Out of an average of 10–12 people, 4 will pass. More drop out when they start the training” – Staff

Further, staff raised concerns about the speed with which people were **promoted** in comparison to other prisons; at Five Wells people were perceived as being given roles above their skill or experience level. For others, and recognised by local leadership, some staffing issues were due to having people **wrongly recruited** into their roles or a lack of skilled people in roles such as key worker or movement officers.

“We’re all sitting in the wrong jobs” – Staff

Several of the staffing groups (Education, Healthcare, Programmes, Visits) spoke about how they supported one another and worked well collaboratively as **a team**. However, some staff were frustrated by the **lack of collaborative working** between Five Wells and third-party providers, raising issues such as a lack of consistency or support. Also, some staff, particularly in non-operational roles, felt unsupported by managers and felt that their voice or request for help was not always heard.

Poor communication was another frustration voiced by the staff. This mostly referred to some of the written messaging from management, which resulted in inconsistent messaging and confusion.

“Everyone is singing from a different hymn sheet” – Staff

Theme 5: Peer Led Initiative (PLI)

“They can have relationships with prisoners that we can’t have” – Staff

“There is too much of a divide between banded prisoners and other prisoners”
– Staff

The PLI scheme (see Appendix D) was a key part of the vision and offer of Five Wells and was often the first topic raised by participants when asked to describe what life was like at Five Wells. There were some mixed views on the success of the initiative when the research study took place, not long after Five Wells had opened.

All the PLIs and some other prisoners believed that the PLIs were **critical to the effective running of the prison**. The PLI group were largely made up of the initial prisoner cohort hand selected by G4S from other existing G4S prisons to come to Five Wells and help to set the culture. They were often described as more helpful to prisoners than staff in making life easier for others in prison. The PLIs themselves were motivated and enthusiastic in their belief that they had a positive role in the safe running of Five Wells, including **the rehabilitative focus of the prison**, and in support of **de-escalating and diffusing situations**. For example, the PLIs believed that they were able to resolve issues quicker than staff, stating that their role contributed to violence reduction and **reducing the workload of staff**. Staff too valued the PLIs’ role in preventing gang related conflict. They also noted that PLIs were effective mediators in instances of ongoing conflict between individuals. Further, PLIs believed they were fundamental to effective communication in the prison as they were more approachable than staff and could pass on information more quickly.

“They wouldn’t come to say an officer and speak about certain things, where they’ll come to us and quite openly talk about it, d’you know what I mean? So, it’s like sometimes the officer can have that barrier” – PLI.

Some staff believed that the PLIs were **skilled** and able to develop good skills for employment in their roles, whilst being essential to the vision of Five Wells. PLIs described the effective **PLI-staff working relationship** as one of the key benefits of the PLI system.

PLIs, staff and prisoners often described how the PLI role helped to **bridge the gap between staff and prisoners**, by for example, providing valuable contributions to staff induction training and the induction process for new prisoners.

PLIs were seen as being better able to offer new prisoners **a relatable and approachable voice** to confide in. Given that they were not authority figures, PLIs were also considered better able to get through to prisoners who were more reluctant to engage. Most staff and PLIs agreed that the PLI system was a **source of motivation** for the general prison population, noting that it provided something for the other prisoners to aspire to. PLIs offered vulnerable prisoners wellbeing support and someone to talk to and were described by some as similar to key workers (in the absence of staff holding these positions). Additionally, PLIs had a role in recruiting to the industry workshops and were seen to be encouraging more **engagement** with education, skills, and work. However, PLIs' lack of official authority could also be a drawback. For example, some prisoners were described as reluctant to take advice from fellow prisoners.

The PLIs reported finding their work enjoyable, meaningful, and **fulfilling**; they reported increased confidence, self-worth, and skills which in turn contributed to their own progression and positive sense of identity. A key part of this was their belief in their ability to help others and the view that this commitment to the community enabled self-development.

“Overnight I got made this PLI, and you suddenly get this renewed sense of purpose, you almost become human again” – Prisoner.

However, the PLIs themselves also identified some negative impacts the role had on their own wellbeing. For example, some felt that the work was a **burden**, and that they could be misunderstood. The PLIs spoke of how their role could be stressful and pressurised, as they were well known in the prison, making the work not suited to everyone.

“It’s the stress. Some people just don’t want to take on that kind of stress.” – PLI

Some staff and prisoners strongly felt that, in a few cases, PLIs abused the system, by **exploiting their authority and freedom**, and there was some friction between staff and PLIs. PLIs were believed by some to be responsible for the circulation of drugs and other

contraband around the prison, and in turn some PLIs felt that they were not trusted by staff. Additionally, there were concerns around safeguarding staff as there had been instances where PLIs had been allowed access to rooms where non-operational staff were working. As a result, some staff and prisoners agreed that the **balance of authority** was not always right and described their perception of “prisoners running the prison”, with some (although this was not a universal view) believing that PLIs had too much **influence** within Five Wells and over senior management (“PLIs are more listened to than the staff are” – Staff). Some thought there was also potential for PLIs to exert influence inappropriately over other prisoners. The Big and Better PLI group in particular was identified as one that was problematic in its operation.

Some staff, prisoners and PLIs also agreed that there was a divide in terms of opportunities and freedoms between PLIs and non-PLIs. Some thought PLIs were given **differential treatment**, including their poor behaviour not attracting the same sanctions as for other prisoners, or their rooms not being searched so frequently.

“Who are they bigger and better than? Who are they to say that”? – Prisoner

The PLIs believed the **selection, process and governance** behind the programme was **fair, transparent, and motivational**, thorough in terms of risk assessment and security vetting, and earned fairly through hard work and merit. Despite this, PLIs themselves did acknowledge that the selection process was viewed by other prisoners as unfair, many believing this was down to the PLI selection process being **misunderstood and misjudged**. Some staff and prisoners also noted that PLI **selection** and governance was unfair, lacked rigour, should involve other departments such as Security and the Offender Management Unit and **needed review**.

“There was no governance or checks and balances. It was woolly and not reinforced. The lack of governance and control enabled some people to take advantage.” – Staff

In addition to issues with the structure and processes involved in the PLI system, there was also a view that the **number of PLIs was too large** and required review and potentially reduction (see also Theme 2 *Rehabilitation and Resettlement*). Navigating the

different PLI roles and what freedoms they were allowed were also confusing to some staff at the time the research fieldwork took place.

Theme 6: Design and Build

“If we want to preach rehabilitation then it should be within a decent environment.” – Staff

“There are some things that are so obvious it’s like ‘How did you mess that up?’ It’s unreal” – Staff

The innovative design and build of Five Wells were a common theme raised by both staff and prisoners. Many of the innovative design elements and technology were seen as contributing to a modern, decent and positive environment which enabled rehabilitation and resettlement. However, there were some requirements for the productive and safe operation of a prison which needed further consideration.

Most staff and prisoners referred to the design of Five Wells as a **modern, positive environment** that supported rehabilitation and normalisation. Several staff and prisoners on the houseblocks commented that rehabilitation requires a **decent environment** and that the building reflected this ethos.

“I’m not worrying so much about trouble. It’s modern. It’s not fearful.” – Prisoner

Prisoners often mentioned the amount of **light** afforded through large barless windows and the **open environment** which made houseblocks and outside areas feel spacious. Staff and prisoners commonly referred to Five Wells as having a campus feel and commented that the **transition spaces** allowed for plenty of walking outside and built-in green space. The visits and play area for children were described as well designed and prisoners and staff felt it created a positive welcoming environment for building **family ties**. It was also described as less intimidating for families to visit.

The admissions team reflected that prisoners arriving at Five Wells had a different experience compared to other prisons, and that they tended to have a **positive reaction** during their induction.

“When I arrived, I couldn’t believe it. Someone made me a cup of coffee, there was music playing, I thought I’d walked into a university. Took away the threat. This helps with my confidence”. – Prisoner

Houseblocks were described as **clean** and providing better living conditions, such as single cells with built in showers; these allowed for more **privacy and decency**. A few prisoners commented on the **recreational and social spaces** on the houseblock landings, noting how this enabled them to play games and engage with others; the research team observed prisoners engaging in social activities on most landings. There was a perception that the design of the houseblocks allowed for better visibility, allowing staff to see all spurs from the centre. Some prisoners shared that the environment was less intimidating than other prisons. For example, the open space and absence of dark corners, allowed prisoners to look out for each other and were perceived to prevent violence.

However, the houseblock design and the operating model use of the design had created some issues with **staff resourcing** and **staff perceptions of safety**. Five Wells staffing model had eight PCOs per houseblock, with two on each landing and a FLM who had responsibility for all four floors. Each landing was closed off which helped reduce the amount of reverberating noise. However, this meant that there were only two PCOs on each landing with no line of sight to other floors. The FLM operated between closed landings and had no oversight of the whole unit. PCOs on the ground floor also managed prisoners entering and leaving. PCOs on some houseblocks described feeling isolated and that they frequently did not see their FLM.

Many staff felt that they had been ‘forgotten’ in the physical design of Five Wells and there was a perceived **lack of expert voice** from an operational perspective. Staff reported that several basic requirements were missing that they would expect to see in a new prison. For example, there was no staff or prisoner gym or purpose-built sports hall in the original specification,²¹ no staff canteen and a lack of segregated space per houseblock to exercise outside. The operator had converted one of the workshops to a gym but there were concerns that it was too small for the existing population, which was significantly

²¹ The operator knew that a gym wasn’t included in the original design.

below capacity, and that this would cause additional problems as the prison population rose.

There were specific design features in the original blueprint which were not operating as intended. For example, the open plan library, designed to be in a central location and accessible, was too noisy which made it unusable. A new wall was planned to section it off from the main atrium. Healthcare facilities, which had been agreed with the NHS at design phase, had been designed with no shutters to isolate staff if there was an incident, and the houseblocks had healthcare hatches on two floors rather than one central location which had resource implications. These design issues were exacerbated as operational staff were not always at the medicines' hatch as they should be. This meant that healthcare staff reported that they didn't always feel safe. Wooden furniture in CSU which had been designed to crumble and be brushed out, opposed to robust furniture like metal or resin bonded whitewood which could be broken up and made into weapons, was damaged too regularly to make it feasible operationally.

Finally, staff identified several design aspects that should be considered for future buildings. Issues identified included alarms which made no noise or didn't pin point the specific workshops where deployed, the location of Oscar²² staff, the location of electric points in cells in relation to showers, how space was configured on the houseblocks (space envisaged as group rooms was being used as staff offices and there was not any space for private one-to-one meetings with Healthcare and probation), and no CCTV coverage in the laundry and serveries.

Some teams had no allocated **operational space** to deliver their rehabilitative and resettlement programmes.²³ A number of these pressures were likely to increase as Five Wells moves toward full capacity.

“We are borrowing space off education but when we are full, we will be homeless.”

– Staff

²² Managers who were responsible for the operation of the site and who were situated a long way from operational areas which had implications for safety and security

²³ There is no allocated space for staff to run programmes, no training rooms, limited space for probation teams, the admissions area is too small, limited treatment rooms/private 1:1 space to speak to prisoners confidentially, and there is a lack of storage in all areas.

Staff described how in education areas ventilation was too noisy. In the houseblocks, there was a perceived lack of **ventilation and poor air quality**. Many prisoners complained of a lack of air movement, feeling claustrophobic and poor temperature regulation in the education areas.

The introduction of electronic tablets for every prisoner was generally **positively received**: “To release somebody into the modern technology that we have now is frightening.” – Staff. PLIs and SMT felt that tablets helped **support normalisation** as they mimicked the outside world. Tablets enabled prisoners to complete normal everyday actions such as booking their own healthcare appointments, undertaking other administrative processes and applying for job roles. They additionally saved time and supported smooth processes as paperwork did not get lost. A few prisoners also felt that tablets supported **purposeful activity and distraction** when they were in their cells. One prisoner described how tablets supported **inclusivity** as they helped to reduce the stress of completing actions on the kiosk by removing literacy barriers.

“I’m dyslexic and not good at paperwork. Found it stressful on kiosk when people standing behind me. Got frustrated. Now it is much easier.” – Prisoner

Prisoners commonly shared that the tablets helped to enable greater **family ties** as they could add friends and family for visits. The text messaging facility on the tablet also enabled family contact through more regular communications (see related Theme 2 *Rehabilitation and Resettlement*). One prisoner also felt that the tablets helped **improve security and reduce violence** as they effectively cut out the black market for access to phones which, in turn, reduced friction points in the prison.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to understand staff and prisoner experiences of working and living at Five Wells since its opening, to draw out immediate learning for Five Wells and to use this learning to improve the design and operational functioning of other new prisons or extensions. The research identified multifaceted experiences for both staff and prisoners, and six themes were identified: vision, belief, and drive; rehabilitation and resettlement; safety and control; staffing; PLIs; and build and design.

Rather than going through the themes identified in turn here, this chapter will first focus on what the themes tell us about how well Five Wells upheld the features associated with successful resettlement. Following this, the chapter focusses on the initial challenges encountered when attempting to deliver a new flagship resettlement model. Not unexpectedly, due to the newness of Five Wells, it is a mixed picture.

Features associated with successful resettlement

Resettlement focus and activities:

This research identified the focus on resettlement and provision of key resettlement activities to be a key area in need of further development as the prison was not, at the time of research, able to fully prepare prisoners for their release or provide the comprehensive support that some needed. Staff and prisoners agreed there were not yet enough opportunities for resettlement activities, and that Key Worker sessions were not always routinely delivered. This was impacting prisoners' ability to progress as there were a lack of available workshops, training qualifications, ROTL and support. Partly due to the need to accept more prisoners on short sentences than anticipated and the move to Amber regime, the prison was not yet able to deliver the services they had planned to, and this, along with difficulties in navigating the balance of control and freedom, created a disconnect between the vision of Five Wells and the reality at the time of the research. Several issues appeared to have arisen because the prison was still new, and it was suggested that the prison needed more time to embed changes, develop processes, and

formalise the resettlement regime. Further research is warranted to determine if this is the case (see Further Research section).

Rehabilitative culture:

Key aspects of rehabilitation were reflected in both staff and prisoners' experiences, including giving prisoners more autonomy, having greater amounts of freedom than other prisons, being a positive and clean environment, being a hopeful place to be, treating people decently, developing positive relationships, and providing good opportunities for family connection. For the majority, the design of the prison was also positive, and reflected the ethos of the prison. The prison was clearly adopting a positive learning culture, with numerous examples of responding quickly to difficulties, innovating and continually trying out new approaches. Whilst there were many positive features of the prison design, some staff believed that this was centred around the experience of prisoners and that they had been forgotten in the design process, as reflected in the lack of some key features for staff such as a canteen.

A further barrier to an effective rehabilitative culture were the concerns about safety and control across the prison. Issues raised included a lack of security measures, perceptions of unfair processes, the prison design (including un-galleried landings and poor visibility on houseblocks), the population makeup and staffing. Whilst there were some excellent and motivated staff at Five Wells (and an SMT perceived as visible and supportive), the youth and relative lack of experience of many of the operational staff was thought to result at times in inconsistency, a lack of legitimacy, a failure to manage conflict and an over reliance on prisoners to provide intelligence. Staff felt they needed more training and support to develop their confidence and skills, and greater levels of collaborative working *between* different groups of staff. The shortage of staff and problems with staff retention, recruitment and promotion also contributed to these issues.

The principle of normality:

One of the key findings of the research was around the prison adopting a normalisation approach and the impact that this had on both the staff and prisoners. The design of the prison certainly contributed to this, with many staff and prisoners describing Five Wells as similar in design and feel to a university campus, and not like a traditional prison. Most prisoners also felt that they had more freedom compared to other prisons. However, with

the introduction of the Amber regime it is possible that this view will change over time, as greater restrictions were being introduced at the time of the research. Many prisoners described having greater access to green and recreational spaces. The use of technology, particularly tablets, enabled prisoners to feel more empowered and allowed them to take responsibility for their appointments and schedules, giving them greater autonomy and control over their lives. The prison was clearly attempting to develop a positive community feel, and to some extent was achieving this. Certainly, within some houseblocks, prisoners felt like they had a supportive community around them. However, the size of the prison and a recent influx of younger prisoners, were perceived to be barriers to developing this desired community feel across the whole prison.

Responsivity:

Five Wells were exploring the use of dedicated communities within houseblocks (i.e., prisoners with substance use issues being housed together, older prisoners being housed together). To some extent this seemed to be working. Prisoners in the older prisoner community certainly liked the model, as did those on Enhanced status, and those on the drug recovery wing. Despite showing promise, there was some indication that the dedicated houseblock model may be working less well for some communities (e.g., the basic wing). As such, this model needs some further work, and more research is needed to fully explore its benefits and risks. To some extent, the prison was falling short of meeting the needs of the prisoners. Again, it is possible that these issues would be resolved with time. Keyworker sessions for example were not being delivered as intended, some prisoners described not being able to access the courses or interventions that they needed to meet their sentence plans, people on the drug recovery unit talked about having little contact with the Substance Misuse Services or other dedicated support, and others talked about a lack of input from OMU.

The use of peer mentoring:

A priority for Five Wells was to develop and maintain an effective peer led initiative. It was clear that this was one of the features of Five Wells which distinguished it from other prisons. In line with the evidence of the benefits of peer mentoring, the use of PLIs supported the prison and staff in dealing with difficult situations, was perceived to encourage greater engagement, and certainly provided rehabilitative gains for the PLIs

themselves. However, there was also a sense among prisoners and staff that the PLIs had too much autonomy, influence, and freedom and the perception from some was that they were treated 'more favourably' than other prisoners fuelling perceptions of unfairness. The selection process for PLIs was regarded by some as unfair and lacking rigour and clarity. Overall, Five Wells needed to work on the appropriate use and scale of PLIs, and the balance between control and freedom within the scheme. These issues illustrate the conflicts found between normalisation and freedom, versus security. It appeared that perhaps too much authority was given to PLIs, however the research methods used in the current study did not enable a full exploration of this or the selection processes used.

Family contact:

A strong feature of Five Wells was the focus on supporting prisoners to maintain good links with their family and significant others. This was enabled via in-cell technology, skilled and caring staff, and links with partnership agencies in developing family events. The provisions for visits were excellent, the staff in the visit's areas were exceptional, and the environment was positive for visitors including children. The visitors themselves were positive about their experiences, describing how they felt that Five Wells did not treat them like a prisoner as other prisons did. There were decent and respectful relationships between staff and visitors, both observed and indicated to the research team by visitors. Overall, the family contact provisions were extremely positive. However, the selective use of visits and family days as rewards by Five Wells should be reviewed.

Delivering a flagship resettlement model

The G4S bid for Five Wells was to deliver a flagship resettlement prison with a radical new approach to prepare prisoners for release. It was apparent that, at times, the principles of normalisation and freedom of movement were at odds with the existing traditional model based on security and control. The SMT felt they were being prevented from delivering value added activities that were central to their delivery model. Some prisoners also struggled with the level of freedom as this was not in line with their previous experience in other establishments.

Delivering a system which supports new possibilities for resettlement requires redefining expectations on prisoner suitability, prison regime, prisoner autonomy and prisoner involvement in supporting staff and other prisoners. People involved in designing,

mobilising, running and managing Five Wells (and future new prisons) come with their previous experience and expectations based on a different model of resettlement, different structures and different processes. Asking people to do things differently may feel uncomfortable and sometimes people can be unaware that past experience and beliefs, which are normally implicit and unexamined, may be shaping behaviour. As the Prison Service continues to strive to improve and change the way it delivers rehabilitative and resettlement outcomes, challenging and interrogating these expectations will be important.

5.2 Learning to inform design and operational functioning of new prisons

ONE: Opening and establishing the regime and operationalisation of a new resettlement prison takes time and requires investment. It is no surprise that opening a new prison requires significant time and money; the learning from Five Wells indicates there needs to be consideration of the pace necessary to bring in staff and prisoners safely and well, and the potential impacts of challenges from external pressures. The operator needs sufficient time to prepare for opening, providing staff the opportunity to practice and familiarise themselves in situ. Sufficient time is also needed to establish basic prison operational processes and procedures so that effective levels of control and safety are in place.

Furthermore, prisoners, who are at an appropriate point in their sentence for resettlement, need to be welcomed at a rate which supports the provision of adequate resettlement and rehabilitative offers, in a way that does not compromise order and stability. Systems and processes need to be tested and adjusted as the population increases and a consistent, predictable regime needs to deliver what prisoners have been led to expect.

TWO: The importance of belief and drive, and effectively communicating this.

Creating a vision of a resettlement prison which Senior Management *and* the staffing body are behind and bought into is critical. At Five Wells there was a clear vision and belief that rehabilitation and resettlement is the best way to achieve positive outcomes for prisoners. This was driven clearly by the Director and through the SMT and had been communicated well. A common quote that was heard numerous times by staff during the research: “See the man, not the prisoner”, exemplified this vision and shaped daily behaviour. Having a

clear vision and values, which are explicit and applicable to all, sustains a positive learning culture. Ensuring that the values of the prison are clear and consistent, and that they are reflected in all documentation and processes is also important.

THREE: Provision of resettlement and rehabilitation activities must enable prisoners to progress. At Five Wells, many prisoners felt let down by the range of resettlement activities available at the time of the research. Prisoners need the opportunity to access a range of meaningful workshops/skills and to gain qualifications for jobs that will help them when they leave prison. Allocation of places for education, resettlement activities, and purposeful work needs to be based on need and prisoners' interests. A realistic scaling up of ROTL should be linked to predicted numbers of prisoners who will be eligible. From a design perspective, Five Wells would have benefited from workshops with adequate equipment and sufficient electrical points so that they that could be mobilised quickly to help deliver the resettlement offer.

FOUR: Working in a new prison can be especially challenging, and it is important that staff have the right skills and experience. Linked to learning point one, staff need to feel confident to perform the duties of the prison regime. This will allow them to maintain control and ensure safety, whilst also having the necessary qualities to develop and maintain effective relationships with prisoners. At Five Wells there was a high proportion of less experienced staff resulting in an imbalance of control and, in this circumstance, the prison will need procedures in place and sufficient capacity to provide coaching, shadowing and support from experienced staff. Focusing on the basics of control, security and mass movements during the early period as well as ensuring all staff have access to basic equipment like radios and cameras may boost competence and confidence. Further, new prisons need to consider how quickly staff are promoted and the mix of internal and external appointments to reduce the risk of having too many people in leadership positions without sufficient breadth and depth of experience.

FIVE: Peer led initiatives can be beneficial but to be used to best effect they need governance processes that support staff, PLIs and the general population. PLIs need the right level of autonomy to fulfil their roles (and no more) and there needs to be clearly defined boundaries to maintain an appropriate balance of effective oversight with staff. Staff need to be aware of what is acceptable behaviour and what needs to be challenged

with the PLI group. Staff are likely to need more support in knowing when and how to challenge PLIs to maintain boundaries and keep everyone safe and confident in the system. Additionally, staff need to be confident that they have the backing of local leadership. To increase legitimacy, the general population need to perceive processes and decisions with the PLIs as fair. Increasing the transparency of the recruitment process for peer leads could help to improve perceptions of fairness in the recruitment and allocation processes for peer led roles. This could be done by embedding procedural justice into processes, improving communication on how decisions are made, and by mimicking normal recruitment process such as blind sifting and mixed interview panels.

SIX: Optimise prison design and make sure staff needs are sufficiently considered in new prison blueprints. The Five Wells experience suggests some issues with the safe staffing of the T60 houseblock design due to the lack of visibility between floors. This needs to be incorporated into staffing operational plans, so there is sufficient cover and support to maintain the proposed regime. Issues such as the location of light switches in relation to showers, ventilation, and bed design, also need consideration. Some facilities were not included in the initial Five Wells build and warrant inclusion in future blueprints, for example gym, sports hall, staff canteen, adequate private space for prisoner interviews and group work and staff offices on the houseblocks. Many staff felt that Five Wells had been built to enhance the prisoner experience but felt their own needs had been forgotten. Prison environments need to provide a safe and pleasant workspace for staff with the right resources and types of workspaces for the duties asked of them. Staff need access to light, airy and well-ventilated spaces to create a positive working environment as well as sufficient space to provide services to the expected levels of decency and privacy. Operational and external organisational input was part of the design process however, the process of designing the new prison prior to awarding the contract creates some limitations. It means that building requirements are set when the operational model and requirements are unknown which potentially creates some omissions or missed opportunities.

5.3 Future Research

Establishing and developing the right culture in a new prison and ensuring everything is in place for the prison to operate smoothly takes time. This research was conducted at an

early phase of the opening of Five Wells and, for this reason, was appropriately broad and descriptive. To build on this, future and more in-depth research at the prison could prove invaluable in continuing to learn how culture develops over time as changes are introduced in a complex, evolving environment. Many intended features were already working well at Five Wells, and the prison management team consider themselves to still be in a development, learning, and adapting stage. Understanding how the prison moves forward, overcomes challenges, establishes innovations and routine operation alike, and indeed whether the challenges faced were down to the 'newness' of the prison, could be crucially important to further the evidence base for new prison development.

Further work to explore in more depth elements of authority and control at the prison (not possible within this study), including how these change over time, would also be useful. Such research could include further exploration of the PLI scheme to unpack its successful elements and identify where improvements could be made. Other methodologies could be applied in future research that enable causal relationships between design elements and outcomes to be more thoroughly tested and examined.

This research highlighted mixed experiences from accommodating different subgroups of the prison population on different landings to create communities with similar characteristics. Further research would be beneficial to explore the impact of dedicated communities on safety, security and resettlement.

It would be beneficial to repeat this early learning research exercise at other new prisons opening in England and Wales. Doing so would provide an opportunity to determine how the present research could be transferred or applied in planning and supporting other new prisons.

5.4 Conclusions

The current study heard the experiences and views of staff working and prisoners living at a newly opened prison in England. There were positives reported in terms of some of the design innovations and the rehabilitative culture. However, the early learning exercise also highlighted that there were areas which required further work, particularly the resettlement offer, and the complex issues of order, control, safety and security. These perspectives

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

have furthered our understanding of prison design, purpose, and operating models which have the potential to improve outcomes for both staff and prisoners within our prisons.

What has been garnered from this research is that both the design of a prison and the operating model can impact the experiences of staff and prisoners in terms of safety and well-being. Prisons that are designed to be focused on resettlement and rehabilitation, need staff who have the right attitudes, skills, and experience. This will help them to maintain control, encourage and support prisoners, provide procedures which are fair, transparent and consistent, offer opportunities for family and community connections, and provide the chance to develop skills that will help in successful resettlement.

Learning from this research has been fed back to teams involved with operations, contract management, new prison design and mobilisation to inform the approach at HMP Fosse Way²⁴ and future prison builds. The report was also a key input into the 18-month post occupancy review of HMP Five Wells. Finally, it will inform the research questions and approach for some aspects of planned activity to deliver MoJ and HMPPS long-term evidence strategy for the prison capacity programme.

²⁴ HMP Fosse Way is the second new resettlement prison as part of the New Prison Programme and opened in June 2023.

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Appendix A

Participant Demographics

Table 2: Staff Demographics

Variable	Staff participants		Five Wells Staff Population (at time of research)	
	<i>n</i>	%		
Gender – Male	27	37	209	44
Gender – Female	45	63	265	56
Gender – Other	0	0	1	0
Age – 18–29	21	32	167	35
Age – 30–39	20	30	132	28
Age – 40–49	9	14	88	18
Age – 50–59	13	20	66	14
Age – 60 +	3	4	22	5
Ethnicity – Asian	2	3	17	4
Ethnicity – Black	6	8	31	7
Ethnicity – Mixed	1	1	15	3
Ethnicity – White	63	88	484	86

Table 3: Prisoner Demographics

Variable	Sample		Prisoners (at time of research)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Age – 18–29	23	26	322	35
Age – 30–39	32	36	331	36
Age – 40–49	13	15	142	15
Age – 50–59	17	19	86	9
Age – 60 +	3	3	46	5
Ethnicity – White	62	66	631	68
Ethnicity – Black	14	15	118	13
Ethnicity – Asian	8	9	98	10
Ethnicity – Mixed	6	6	73	8

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

Variable	Sample		Prisoners (at time of research)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity – Not reported	4	4	6	<1
Houseblock – A	17	18	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblock – B	3	2	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblock – C	16	17	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblock – D	20	21	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblock – F	12	13	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblock – G	24	26	Unknown	Unknown
Houseblocks – not reported	2	2	Unknown	Unknown

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions for Residents

Understanding what it is like to live at Five Wells

How would you describe living at Five Wells currently?

How has that experience changed over time?

- Prompts: What is it like to live here?
- What's positive, what's negative?
- What does it feel like to spend time here, and what does that mean for you/your life?

Understanding whether prisoner experiences are mapping onto the operating model

Can you describe a typical day living at Five Wells? How do you spend your time here at Five Wells?

- Prompts: meaningful work, placements, trades, spaces, education, employment opportunities

What things/processes/features are working well here at Five Wells? And why?

What things/processes are not working well here at Five Wells? And why?

- Prompts: houseblocks, layout, scanners, first night centres, green spaces, education/work centres, employment opportunities, accommodation features, cooking facilities, multi-function rooms and spaces, wifi-enabled, single cells, streamlined ROTL, regime, recreation spaces, transition spaces, private spaces, focus spaces, outside spaces.

What (if anything) can get in the way of processes working here at Five Wells?

How supported do you feel as resident here? Why?

- Prompt: To what degree do you feel valued and have a sense of purpose, achievement and hope?
- Prompt: To what degree do you feel treated fairly, that decisions are transparent, unbiased and consistent; and you trust the motives behind policies and practices?

Can you describe the quality of relationships here at Five Wells?

- Prompts: prisoner-staff, prisoner-prisoner

Can you describe how the in-cell technology works here at Five Wells? What impact do you feel this has had for you personally?

Can you describe what the physical environment is like here at Five Wells? To what degree is the physical environment around you decent and supportive of safety and rehabilitation?

- Prompts: small house-blocks, small community groups, access to facilities, spaces for different purposes (personal, group, focus, outside), single occupancy rooms, open outdoor spaces, natural light, space for staff.

Understanding how Five Wells differs from other prisons?

If you have lived in another prison previously, how does Five Wells compare to your experience of living in the other prison?

Compared to living in other prisons, what is different about Five Wells?

- Prompts: better or worse?
- Differences (specific) in (not exhaustive): activities, management, processes, communications, environment, opportunities, leadership, relationships, regime, progression, health and wellbeing.

Further development

What else could improve Five Wells?

- Prompts: what outstanding issues need attention?
- What else could be tried? (when, why, who, how, ...)
- What one thing would you like to see happen here next, and what impact would this have for you or others?

What one piece of advice would you give to another prison which was attempting to create a similar prison to Five Wells?

- Prompts: most impactful activities, people involved, sequencing, combinations of approaches, readiness, ...

Other

Is there anything else about living at Five Wells that has not been mentioned, which you'd like to add?

Focus Group Questions for Staff

Understanding what it is like to work at Five Wells

How would you describe working at Five Wells currently?

How has that experience changed over time?

- Prompts: What is it like to work/live here?
- What's positive, what's negative?
- What does it feel like to spend time here, and what does that mean for you/your life?

Understanding whether staff experiences are mapping onto the operating model

Can you describe a typical day working at Five Wells?

What things/processes/features are working well here at Five Wells? And why?

What things/processes are not working well here at Five Wells? And why?

- Prompts: houseblocks, layout, scanners, first night centres, green spaces, education/work centres, employment opportunities, accommodation features, cooking facilities, multi-function rooms and spaces, wifi-enabled, single cells, streamlined ROTL, regime, recreation spaces, transition spaces, private spaces, focus spaces, outside spaces.

What (if anything) can get in the way of processes working here at Five Wells?

What has been your experience of training and support? How supported do you feel as a member of staff? Why?

- Prompt: To what degree do you feel valued and have a sense of purpose, achievement and hope?
- Prompt: To what degree do you feel treated fairly, that decisions are transparent, unbiased and consistent; and you trust the motives behind policies and practices?

Can you describe the quality of relationships here at Five Wells?

- Prompts: prisoner–staff, prisoner–prisoner, staff–staff, SMT–staff etc.

Can you describe how the in-cell technology works here at Five Wells? What impact do you feel this has had for you personally?

Can you describe what the physical environment is like here at Five Wells? To what degree is the physical environment around you decent and supportive of safety and rehabilitation?

- Prompts: small house-blocks, small community groups, access to facilities, spaces for different purposes (personal, group, focus, outside), single occupancy rooms, open outdoor spaces, natural light, space for staff.

Understanding how Five Wells differs from other prisons?

If you have worked in another prison previously, how does Five Wells compare to your experience of living/working in the other prison?

Compared to working in other prisons, what is different about Five Wells?

- Prompts: better or worse?
- Differences (specific) in (not exhaustive): activities, management, processes, communications, environment, opportunities, leadership, relationships, regime, progression, health and wellbeing.

Further development

What else could improve working at Five Wells?

- Prompts: what outstanding issues need attention?
- What else could be tried? (when, why, who, how, ...)
- What one thing would you like to see happen here next, and what impact would this have for you or others?

What one piece of advice would you give to another prison which was attempting to create a similar prison to Five Wells?

- Prompts: most impactful activities, people involved, sequencing, combinations of approaches, readiness, ...

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

Other

Is there anything else about working at Five Wells that has not been mentioned, which you'd like to add?

Individual Interview Questions for Staff

How was the operating model for Five Wells created?

What specific design features have been used for Five Wells? How have these worked?
What has worked? What has not worked?

What have been the successes of the operating model? And why?

What aspects of the operating model have been harder to implement and why?

What have you learnt so far since Five Wells opened?

Reflecting back, is there anything you would do differently if you had this time again?

- Prompts: activities, approach, engagement, timing, sequencing, people, ...

What barriers have you come across since Five Wells opened?

What more is needed at Five Wells to further develop what has been achieved so far?
(outstanding areas of need or ongoing barriers, sustaining progress)

How have staff taken to working at Five Wells? How on board have they been with the ethos of the prison?

What do you see are the main differences between Five Wells and other prisons?

What are the top 3 pieces of advice you would give someone in your position, who was trying to open a new prison like Five Wells?

- Prompts: areas to focus on, most successful, methods/approaches, timing, ...

Appendix C

Thematic Analysis

Prisoners and staff experiences were analysed together. A series of codes were initially created which were then clustered into themes and sub-themes. This coding was initially conducted on transcripts for one of the focus groups and one of the interviews by all four authors together to establish a uniform process, following which the remaining data were coded separately by all four authors. The generation of themes was conducted by all four authors together. These themes were then considered alongside other observations. This consideration focussed on identifying supporting and contradictory additional evidence, to help refine and adapt the themes. Collectively this was then used to describe experiences of people living and working at Five Wells.

Qualitative research can be criticised for lacking quality and rigour. However, several criteria can be used to determine quality of this type of research. The present research adopted the criteria proposed by Bauer & Gaskell (2003) which suggests 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 following initial results formation.

Appendix D

Peer Led Initiatives

The following PLI were in operation when the research took place. The following information is provided to all prisoners on arrival at Five Wells in their induction booklet.

Big & Better

Empowers residents throughout their stay to live a pro-social life, the Five Wells way. Beginning with inductees, we will see all residents through their initial induction phase whilst promoting the Peer support to any resident in difficulty, creating a safe environment which can also offer media between any prisoners which have been involved in a violent incident.

Sapphire / Prison council

Designed to allow all residents to have a voice and be heard. Whether that be through resolving issues or helping to suggest and implement your ideas for improvements around the establishment. The council work on behalf of prisoners to improve services for the whole community.

Residents Experience Group

The Residents Experience Group (REG) exists to make residents life at Five Wells better. REG helps with recategorizations, adjudications, tag applications or anything related to prison rules. REG can help with external law topics such as appeals, free power of attorney or family court.

Social Prescribing and Empowerment to Encourage Change

An initiative to help and support those who are struggling through an illness, mental health or other issues. The service is designed to help navigate issues without the use of medical professionals unless they are absolutely required.

Cordial

For those residents who have little or no contact or visits with family and friends. Cordial, the friendship group, will step in and be a friend, to listen and talk and also offer coffee morning in the visiting hall to socialise with other residents in similar positions.

Health Champions

Providing regular help, information and guidance to address issues such as lack of exercise, excess weight, poor diet, and specific conditions such as diabetes. Health champions can be seen at regular intervals or as required should residents have any concerns.

Peace and Community Engagement

This is an intervention team that engages residents in order to create a safe environment to live and work. Strive for peaceful existence and harmony, engender meaningful cooperation between staff and residents in all areas, particularly in conflict resolution & highlight possible areas of friction and challenge anti-social behaviour.

Health Advisory Service

Is a project designed to improve healthcare delivery and provides information and helpline for resident to manage the booking and cancellation and notification of healthcare appointments. Also offers auxiliary services such as glasses repair.

Project Unite

A PLI group that works alongside chaplaincy to ensure all of our residents have access to anything regarding religion. The service will also help in situations like bereavement. The group promote that different religions should bring us together and not divide us.

Wellingborough Resettlement Advice Programme (WRAP)

Working alongside CGL²⁵ the WRAP team assist with delivery of all resettlement services such as housing, debts, bank accounts etc. The WRAP team help to speed up any processes by ensuring any communication required is delivered promptly.

²⁵ Third party provider for resettlement programmes

HMP Five Wells One Year On

What have we learnt?

Art Therapy Project

A project to reintegrate those who are not engaging with the prison regime. Art Therapy offers a chance to stimulate the mind through art and allow residents to be in control of aspects of their daily work routing, which in turn gives a sense of responsibility.