



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Brinsford

**For reporting year
1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024**

Published July 2025



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	11
6. Health and wellbeing	17
7. Progression and resettlement	21
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	26
Applications to the IMB	26

All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Brinsford is situated north of Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands. It holds both remand and sentenced young men, between 18 and 22 years of age, with a temporary increase from 22 years to 29-year-olds, to support population pressures. In 2021, Brinsford changed from a category C prison to a resettlement prison. Sentences are for less than four years and resettlement prisoners have less than 16 months to serve.

Prisoners are housed in five two-storey residential blocks, with two wings on each block. Each wing has some single and some double cells. All cells have in-cell sanitation, but shower facilities are provided elsewhere on the wing hub (other than on residential block 5, which has in-cell showers).

Additionally, three further blocks provide 16 beds in the care and separation unit, (CSU, for segregating prisoners), a vulnerable prisoner unit for stays up to 28 days and a 24 hour healthcare unit of 10 beds.

The care and separation unit (CSU) is a 16-bed unit in a separate block. The contract for providing healthcare services is held by Practice Plus Group, formally Care UK, which has provided a good service throughout the reporting period, in the Board's view. GP services are provided on a contract basis. Nurses are on duty, in shifts to cover 24 hours, seven days a week.

Some prisoners have serious mental and behavioural issues, requiring both psychiatric and psychological support, which is provided by the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust. It is helpful that a psychiatrist visits each week.

The establishment is fully operational and can accommodate 577 prisoners when all cells are to be used; however, there was a reduced operational capacity of 539¹ to support the delivery of a major project to upgrade the cell call system. This has been completed and accommodation is back to full capacity. During the reporting period, the numbers in residence fluctuated considerably, for various reasons.

On average, the population is made up of 66.6% of young adults (18 to 22 years), and 33.4% of adults; this of course can change daily.

Education and training facilities are provided by Novus and helped and supported by partner agencies PACT Family Services, Department for Work and Pensions, Information Advice & Guidance, Shannon Trust, Samaritans, Trailblazers, Kinetic Youth, Maverick Sounds, The Invested Man, Ernest Young, Staffordshire Library, Nacro and CF03 PACT Inside Job.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Staffing levels at times are very low, which can affect the safety of the prisoners and staff.
- Self-harm has reduced from the previous reporting year as a result of staff teams working well together.
- On occasion, there have been concerns over body worn video cameras not being fully utilised
- Incidents of violence have continued to increase. Whilst the challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP, used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence) have had an impact, not enough is being done to combat gang-related violence.

Fair and humane treatment

- The availability and fair distribution of essential kit (bedding, towels, clothing) is a constant challenge, as some prisoners are hoarding kit.
- Prisoner property is still a cause for concern due to the transient nature of arrivals and moves between wings and specialist residential units.

Health and wellbeing

- Regulating the temperature on residential units is a major concern as without local thermostats there is no flexibility, and the heating is either on or off.
- The Board has observed a very good service provided by healthcare
- Ongoing care for prisoners with severe mental health needs is a concern, as they are staying in the establishment too long and they need dedicated mental health care.

Progression and resettlement

- Education, training and work continues to be an area of concern for the Board: there are insufficient purposeful activity places available and prisoners are reluctant to attend them, which has caused frustration.
- Movement following morning and evening unlock has improved.
- Several successful employer events were held this year.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Recruitment and retention of staff across the Prison Service.
- The Crown Prosecution Service does not follow up and prosecute sufficiently on assaults.
- Delays in the court system mean prisoners are on remand for longer.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Investment in infrastructure of residential wings to provide flexible heating system is needed. (5.1)
- Improvements to dedicated mental healthcare so that prisoners can access services in a timelier way is necessary.
- Prisoners with mental health issues wait too long for a bed in a secure hospital. (4.4)
- Lack of investment in infrastructure – most cells need refurbishment and there are windows that don't open. (5.1)
- Amey do not provide an adequate service. (5.1)
- Loss of property on transfer, slow and unreliable solving of resulting issues. (5.8)
- Ongoing concerns regarding management of diagnosis of mental health issues and transfer to appropriate care. (6.3)
- There is an incentive for Novus not to run courses, in case prisoners withdraw and they are penalised. (7.1)
- Prisoners do not complete relevant courses prior to transfer to Brinsford (as per sentence plan) and then find they are not available to them. (7.3)

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Concern about lack of body worn video camera use and faulty equipment. (4.2)
- Increase in violent assaults during prisoner movement. (4.4)
- Gang violence and how to address this. (4.3)
- Support for self-harm reliant on peer support due to reduction in available key worker sessions.
- Managing levels of self-isolation, if it increases. (4.4)
- Concerns of an increased use of PAVA (an incapacitant spray) as a first line of defence, rather than a baton. (4.5)
- Poor photocopying of prisoner correspondence and a lack of colour copies. (4.6)
- Increase in 'hooch' (prison-brewed alcohol) finds and how do you plan to prevent this? (4.6)
- Poor condition of some beds (broken slats) and mattresses and lack of availability of clean bedding and towels. (5.1)
- Black and mixed ethnicity prisoners are more likely to be in the CSU. (5.2)
- Keyworker sessions reduced when short of staff. (5.3)
- An increase in prisoners allowed to stockpile canteen. (5.1)
- Purposeful activity places reviewed to allow more opportunity to all prisoners. (7.1 & 7.2)

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Progress
No thermostats fitted when renewing the central heating.	No change; still a problem when the prison is either too hot or too cold.
The length of time prisoners remain on remand before sentencing.	No change.
Long-standing leak in roof over reception.	Minor repairs carried out but not completely fixed. If there is a storm, the repair is likely to

	be breached.
Not enough activity places for a resettlement prison.	Not enough and not enough choices.
Education contract and curriculum.	Ongoing concern.
Directions to staff by the Governor are not being carried out.	No change; some officers will flatly refuse.
Key worker scheme.	Such a necessary and useful tool in a prison officer's box, but not enough are carried out.
Loss of property between prisons.	This is a nationwide problem, but no one seems to want to fix it.
Challenge, support and intervention plans.	Not effective. Only effective if spaces are available to implement it.
Gang culture and non associates making it difficult to place prisoners safely.	No change.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

In general, HMP Brinsford has a reasonable and improving record in this area. The senior leadership team continues to strive for higher standards. The safety department is working hard to improve the situation by providing more targeted support and training for all staff.

Monthly meetings take place that are well attended, and any issues of concern are discussed. IMB are invited to observe the meetings and do have opportunities to raise any issues of concern.

In-cell fires continue to be a rare occurrence and when they have happened, staff have shown they have been trained well by dealing with them swiftly and professionally. There were 21 fires recorded in the reporting year. There continue to be false alarms, often caused by prisoners vaping.

On occasion, there have been concerns over body worn video cameras not being fully utilised. This is due to either staff not turning them on or the cameras not working correctly.

4.1 Reception and induction

Prisoners are received at reception, where there is a body scanner, and have been observed to be treated well. Prisoners are always searched for contraband or banned items. A nurse checks all new arrivals, and those with specific vulnerabilities are identified. An induction leaflet is provided with all key information (available in different languages) and induction proceeds immediately at reception or, if not possible, on residence 3, the specialist unit. In particular, 'education induction' is carried out here and a red band prisoner (trusted men who support new prisoners and provide initial peer support) has been introduced to help in this process. The Board has not received any complaints in this area, and the prisoners questioned have expressed satisfaction.

4.2 Suicide, self-harm and deaths in custody

There have been no deaths in the reporting period. The Board is particularly pleased to report that there has been a continued reduction in the number of prisoners who self-harm in this reporting period. Many of the incidents have been caused by the same prisoners regularly self-harming. From the Board's observations, staff continually work to help those vulnerable to self-harming and healthcare provides good support to those involved. There is good work by prison staff and mental health staff to try to prevent this.

Overall, during the year, there were 400 incidents by 159 individuals recorded as self-harm. Cutting remains the most common form of self-harm. Good support has been made available by the Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners); however, at times, there

has been a reliance on this peer support, due to the reduction in number of key worker sessions being completed.

4.3 Violence

Incidents of violence between prisoners continued to increase, possibly because of more movement and interaction between activities, education and work. There were 484 assaults. Eight were serious assaults on staff and 17 were serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults.

There appears to have been a lack of Crown Prosecution Service involvement in assaults that HMP Brinsford has reported. The reason is not known, but the police do not seem to follow up on referrals or, in the Board's view, take the appropriate action following initial contact from the prison.

Gang culture continues to be a major problem that causes group violence, and the prison does make every effort to keep groups apart where possible, but is not always possible in areas of work and education.

The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP, used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence) programme has had an impact on those who need help, but not so much on the gang-related violence, which is proving much harder to address. Not enough is being done to combat gang-related violence. Brinsford continues to provide training for staff on CSIP, ensuring that staff are aware that it is not just for violent prisoners, but also prisoners at risk of being violent. Mediation is still used with good use of de-escalation techniques to prevent the need for force.

4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities

From the Board's observations, these prisoners have been very well looked after in the development and progression unit on residence 1 and, when needed, in healthcare. Healthcare has done some excellent work in helping prisoners cope with their circumstances, with some having more complicated needs or having several issues. Dedicated officers and healthcare staff work hard with in-patients, with some excellent progress made.

There are still some prisoners with severe mental illness who need treatment elsewhere. As reported previously, these prisoners can often wait a long time to get a bed in a secure hospital (see 6.4).

Residence 6 was opened in 2024 and accommodates more vulnerable prisoners who have been struggling in the general population. Whilst early stages have been positive, it is too early to judge the success of this new residential unit and the longer-term impact it has on individual prisoners.

Self-isolation

Those who choose to isolate themselves from other prisoners have been observed to be well cared for and monitored. They are regularly visited by healthcare, chaplains and others to ascertain their risk. Staff working on the wings are aware of

those who are isolating and provide them with some out-of-cell time, when it is safe, as regularly as possible.

4.5 Use of force

The use of force using PAVA, an incapacitant spray, has increased. Last year PAVA was drawn and used 123 times. It was drawn and not used 18 times. The Board is satisfied that PAVA's use this year was justified and fairly used, and that the quality of the paperwork has improved since last year. However, there is still a certain amount improvement to be done in this field, in the Board's view. The use of PAVA has shown that it can quickly de-escalate group violence and prevent injuries. Those affected by PAVA are checked by medical staff.

The use of batons has decreased, with only four occasions drawn and used. It is possible that PAVA is now the first line of defence in a violent incident or to disperse prisoners when there are many involved. That said, it does de-escalate incidents and prevents further harm quickly.

4.6 Substance misuse

The prison is making some progress in preventing drugs from entering the establishment, largely through better screening both at the gate and by totally photocopying mail (to prevent the paper soaked in illicit substances entering the prison). However, the latter has had a certain disadvantage because prisoners are no longer able to receive coloured pictures from their children (and sometimes the printing is badly done), which can lead to some disgruntlement. On the other hand, there has been a growing trend in the discovery of hooch (prison-brewed illicit alcohol). The use of sniffer dogs and CCTV in social visits has been largely successful and several incidents of visitors detected with illicit substances has shown that increased vigilance is having an impact. The security team have worked hard in tackling the use of drones, which are used in attempted drug drops.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing and food

There are six residential units, with most cells in need of refurbishment, like other areas within the prison. In particular, the toilets and sinks are in a very poor condition. This is often due to the prisoners not cleaning them, but this should be part of the accommodation fabric checks (AFC), with sanctions if prison property is not taken care of. They are so badly stained that cleaning - even deep cleaning - will not have any effect. Many of the toilets and sinks in the prison - and all in the CSU - need replacing.

One sink has been out of action for six months. A new sink was recently purchased and placed in stores, but it cannot be fitted by Amey (the facilities service provider) as they do not have enough time. Contractors will be brought in at an added cost to the public purse. In the Board's view, Amey is not supplying a satisfactory service.

Mattresses are an issue, as many are old, torn and sunken from use. Prisoners are sitting and lying on these mattresses for many hours each day.

Kit change, as reported in last year's report, remains an issue. Prisoners have raised issues regarding clean sets of bedding and towels being available and this is unacceptable. Often prisoners hoard these items, using towels as mats, but generally they seem to just go 'missing'. Stores keep a count of the laundry, and they report that laundry in and out of the establishment is accurate; therefore, the missing items are within Brinsford.

During the reporting year, residence 6 was closed and refurbished and after a few months re-opened as the Sycamore unit. This 19-bed unit is providing extra support for vulnerable prisoners. It is hoped that they will gain confidence and strength to rejoin the 'normal' residential units after a period of 28 days.

Faulty windows are an issue across the prison. Some windows open and some do not, leading to varying levels of comfort or discomfort within the cell (especially during extremes of temperature). An audit of the windows throughout the prison was conducted in April 2022 and repairs are ongoing.

During the previous reporting period, boilers were replaced site-wide at major capital cost and investment in the prison. Unfortunately, the Board was told by prison management that the contract written by the MoJ did not include thermostat controls and flushing pipes, which resulted in many problems and a subsequent hefty cost to the prison. Bids have been submitted to gain further funds to have thermostat controls added to the system.

With the current system, the heating cannot be regulated: it is either on or off. It will often turn off, or on, independently, requiring Amey to attend.

It was reported in last year's annual report of a rolling programme to upgrade cell lighting and cell bells. This has continued throughout the reporting year, moving until completion in early 2025.

There is an ongoing programme of repainting, but it seems there is never a time when everything is complete. There are still areas in stairwells and corridors that

require work. Often, the prisoners re-paint various areas as part of their purposeful activity.

The Board is still concerned about the amount of stockpiling of 'canteen' products in cells. It notes that this can lead to bullying and hiding contraband. There doesn't seem to be any control of the amount prisoners can store. If they have money on their canteen, they can keep buying.

The social visitors' room continues to be a warm and welcoming environment, recently re-fitted with new furniture, and with a good range of food and drink items available. There are four themed family visits a year; the staff volunteer to supervise, provide games, etc, for the children and are fully engaged with the visitors, making it a 'happy place' for families.

The 'care leavers' flat was completed at the end of the reporting period, somewhat later than expected. It is under-utilised but, going forward, it is expected to be used regularly for a care leaver to experience living on their own. In the meantime, it is a comfortable area for prisoners and officers to meet parents of 'troubled' prisoners and, most recently, for fathers to meet their babies or children for the first time.

When kitchens were visited, they appeared to be clean and tidy; meals are an important part of the prisoners' day. All prisoners working in the kitchens work to level 2 food hygiene and prisoners on serveries work to level 1.

There has been no change in the catering: food provided still seems to be very good and caters for various diets, allergies, and halal. The Board has not received any complaints about food during the reporting year. Sometimes portion control is not carried out by the supervising staff, so occasionally the servery will run of 'first choice' foods.

The incentivised drug free living unit has moved to residential unit 5, where around 40 prisoners are attempting to become drug free. There are some settling-in allowances, and prisoners are given three chances before being removed from the unit. Agencies work with those who struggle in their recovery.

5.2 Segregation

There are 16 cells in the care and separation unit (CSU, for segregating prisoners); prisoners usually have access to radios but occasionally stocks are low as the model of radio supplied, wind-up and solar charged, are not robust and are easily damaged. They are then costly and slow to replace.

Relationships between staff and prisoners has been observed to be good or very good. Staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge of those assigned to their care. Reintegration planning appears to be good, with most prisoners returning to residential units within five or six days.

There was continuity of staff on duty during the reporting period, which had a positive impact on the quality of care provided to prisoners.

Although mentioned as a problem within the residential units, the sinks and toilets in the CSU are in a poor state. No one should be forced to use them in this condition. There are permanent stains, seats broken; one sink was broken for six months,

making the cell unusable. There are no plugs in the sinks and the occasional phone port is broken.

The floors are in a poor condition; some beds have broken slats.

The CSU should not be used to encourage prisoners to stay, but as they are being locked up for over 20 hours a day, the cells should be habitable. The IMB recognises that the damage is caused by prisoners, but believes that they should be made to clean up after themselves or sanctions imposed for the damage, in order for the prison to recoup the costs of cleaning and repair.

During the reporting year, 289 adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) were referred to the police for further action. Adjudications within the prison service refer to the charges rather than the number of prisoners; there may be multiple prisoners involved in one incident. The number of adjudications given might only refer to 30 – 40 incidents.

A total of 234 adjudications have been returned to the prison for action. Those not accepted by the police are often for lack of evidence and victims (prisoners and staff) refusing to support the prosecution.

SMARG (segregation monitoring and review group) figures:

MONTH	Number of prisoners placed in CSU	Total of days	Average days	Number of days over 42	Ethnicity	Asian	Black	Mixed	White	Not known	ACCTs in CSU
Jul 23	56	307	5.48	0		8	15	9	23	1	2
Aug 23	56	369	6.58	1 (43)		7	16	7	26	0	3
Sep 23	51	291	5.82	0		7	15	7	21	0	4
Oct 23	40	266	6.65	0		3	10	5	22	0	5
Nov 23	50	334	6.68	1 (42)		6	9	7	28	0	3
Dec 23	49	302	6.16	0		4	13	8	23	1	4
Jan 24	45	268	5.95	0		6	9	8	22	0	1j
Feb 24	45	298	6.62	0		9	13	5	17	1	2
Mar 24	54	288	5.33	0		9	14	16	15	0	4
Apr 24	38	296	7.78	0		8	7	7	16	0	2
May 24	48	246	5.12	2		8	6	11	23	0	9
Jun 24	48	346	7.2			7	7	6	27	1	4
Year total	579	3611	6.23 year average	4		82	134	96	263	4	43
Seg Ethnic %						14.16 %	23.14 %	16.58 %	45.42 %	0.69 %	
Prison average ethnic %						16.23 %	20.43 %	10.62 %	49.29 %	3.40 %	

ACCT refers to assessment, care in custody and teamwork document, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide.

The figures show that white prisoners are placed in the CSU more frequently than any other minority ethnic group; they are also the largest ethnic group in Brinsford.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships

The IMB has observed that most of the staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge of the prisoners in their care. Staff and prisoner interactions observed are largely respectful of one another.

The key worker programme continues to be an area of concern for the Board; it is of great importance to staff and prisoner relationships and pivotal to the continuity of pastoral support for the prisoners. The senior leadership team endeavours to prioritise this, with a clear plan going forward. But staff absences continue to impact on the frequency of sessions; often none is carried out on many continuous days.

5.4 Equality and diversity

During the reporting year, HMP Brinsford has received 41 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs); of these, 20 have been upheld, 18 were dismissed and three were re-directed to the complaints procedure.

DIRFs are sent externally to the Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT) to be scrutinised and are then returned for action. Fortunately, due to the low number of complaints submitted, this work isn't frequent.

Additional support for foreign national prisoners at Brinsford includes forums, which have been held with both staff and prisoners. Foreign national prisoners were observed by the Board to be treated fairly and have access to social video calls.

The ethnic breakdown for this reporting period was as follows:

- White – 43.1%
- Asian – 17%
- Black – 19.1%
- Mixed – 12%
- White other – 6.2%
- Other – 1.1%
- Refused to Disclose – 0.2%
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller – 0.6%
- Unknown – 0.7%

At the end of the reporting year there were 46 foreign national prisoners. With an average population of 529, 8.75% are foreign national prisoners, from 29 countries. The foreign national prisoner immigration surgery occurs monthly.

There were many national events and celebrations marked at Brinsford, with awareness being raised throughout the prison. These included, for example,

neurodiversity celebration week, transgender day of visibility, and LGBTQ+ pride month. In addition, there have been various forums to raise awareness, including a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller forum.

Opportunities to celebrate religious festivals are embraced; for example, Eid was celebrated in April, with a special curry dish available to all prisoners, regardless of their faith. Approximately 140 prisoners observed Ramadan during the reporting period.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

A new chaplaincy manager joined the team during the reporting year but, otherwise, there has been no change in the excellent work the team do.

In line with their statutory duties, the chaplains have made daily visits to the segregation unit. They have provided faith-based learning materials, given one-to-one support and have invited prisoners to attend services.

The chaplaincy team is a vital and integrated part of the pastoral provision of Brinsford. The team values the support of staff, in particular the senior leadership team (SLT). The senior chaplain is a member of the SLT, which demonstrates the value placed on this provision.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme is used to encourage good behaviour and tackle poor behaviour and breaches of prison rules. There are basic, standard and enhanced levels; prisoners complain that there is no difference in their regime for being on enhanced status, unless they are on residence block 5, which allows for enhanced privileges. Whilst on basic, the televisions are not removed from their cells and, again, there is little difference between basic and standard, so prisoners are not fearful of being placed on basic conditions.

5.7 Complaints

During the reporting year, there were 777 complaints submitted by prisoners, (through comp 1 forms); of these 130, were not dealt with in the allocated time. The majority of the complaints were about issues on the residential unit, followed by property.

Brinsford follows the complaints policy framework: a senior manager has ownership of the quality assurance process for prisoner complaints. Each month, a member of the IMB meets the manager with responsibility for overseeing complaints to scrutinise a random sample of these complaints.

A total of 12 complaints are selected and, on average, two complaints each month are found to be unfinished, written as an interim report when follow up is requested. Again, on average, two complaints each month are not answered within time. This is not a major concern for the IMB; however, we will continue to monitor over the next year.

5.8 Property

We reported last year about the loss of personal property. Prisoners do not have a lot and when they lose their belongings it has a profound effect on them, and they often express their frustrations.

Many complaints at Brinsford were related to property; this could all be avoided if proper care was taken in keeping items well documented, traceable and safe. In the IMB's opinion, there should also be a maximum value placed on all items brought into the prison estates and if lost or stolen there will only be the same compensation paid to everyone.

A major cause of items going missing is the inter-prison transfer. The delay in transferring items from the previous prison is too slow, unreliable and inconsistent. Often there is space on the transport van for the extra bags; however, the transport provider will only take a maximum of three bags, which causes the delays. The items are lost either at the old prison or not recorded as having arrived at the new establishment. All bags should be barcoded, so when a bag is found they will know exactly who it belongs to and where that prisoner is.

The Board feels that this is lack of care, consideration and professionalism. No one seems to take responsibility to get property to the correct place and it is unfair of inter-prison transport not to carry all personal property when, often, there is room in the van. It is also unfair that a contract should be written to allow this.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Practice Plus Group is responsible for the provision and delivery of medical services in out-patients and in-patients within Brinsford. There are 8 dedicated cells, including 2 for constant watch and one Listeners' suite. Facilities include a waiting room with a television, consulting rooms and opticians and dental facilities.

Brinsford is unusual in having in-patient facilities and accepts prisoners to this unit from other establishments; as a result, it cares for many more patients with mental health issues than other establishments.

The length of in-patient stays varies from a few days to many weeks; it is not normally the same at any given time. Patients could remain on the unit for a couple of months, as it is a rolling number. Some patients are waiting for an external hospital bed and others are assessed, given medication, and once improved, are returned to their respective residential house block.

The unit is well decorated and exudes a positive atmosphere. There are seven staff members allocated to the unit, who are experienced and acquainted with the issue and challenges which often occur within the unit. We see that longer-term patients respond well to this regime. However, during prison staff shortages, there can be long periods of lockdown due to there being only one officer within the residential care unit.

The IMB recognises the skill in the officers working with prisoners who are suffering from a mental health illness. We believe that it is important to staff this unit with officers who are trained and show empathy to these patients.

In the past there have been occasions when prisoners miss their prescribed (controlled) medication in a morning, due to early movement from the wing to an activity. However, there is no evidence of this occurring regularly. In the event that this does occur, the matter is raised by the healthcare senior management team at morning meetings, as it is documented on the handover sheet. Any continued issues are escalated to the weekly operations meetings. This method of logging and reporting back missed medications and appointments is a notable positive practice.

All prisoners arriving at the facility are screened, face to face, by a nurse within the reception area. All nurses are trained to carry out this function and as such, all are involved in the face-to-face primary and secondary screening process.

6.2 Physical healthcare

From the Board's observations, nursing staff and officers continue to provide good support for prisoners, with clear indications of integrated management between clinics and residential patients. There is an ongoing emphasis on care and support to ensure prompt return to the normal prison regime. However, where there are longer-term, ongoing issues, such as those prisoners waiting for a placement within a more

suitable facility, significant care and attention is paid to those who remain within the unit. It is noted that there is a national shortage of acute mental health beds.

The number of constant watch prisoners is not significant, although those with significant mental health issues are sometimes kept on the unit beyond a reasonable and appropriate period, due to a lack of space in a more suitable establishment. During this time, officers show care, compassion and attention to the needs of these prisoners. This often results in early de-escalation from constant watch.

Requests for medical attention from prisoners are observed to be handled efficiently. Triage occurs without delay, then healthcare issue an information slip to prisoners covering an appointment if needed. Urgent matters are attended to in good time. Daily lists of prisoners who need to attend the surgery are sent to each residential unit a day before an appointment is due.

Non-attendance can be caused by a lack of officers to move prisoners to healthcare from the residential units. However, other reasons include prisoners declining to attend in favour of association or gym, appointment no longer required, court appearances or declining to get out of bed.

Prisoners sometimes complain about the time it takes to see a doctor, but this is driven by unrealistic expectations most of the time, with no instances of medical neglect. The Board has no concerns over healthcare waiting times.

When the Board has occasionally investigated claims of neglect by healthcare, it has been found that records of applications for and completion of treatment have been thorough.

During the reporting year, there have been no occasions of substantial cross-infections within the establishment. A regime to cover this possibility was well demonstrated recently when there were reported to be a small number of diagnosed scabies infections; patients diagnosed were not connected and infection was thus not linked. At the time, this was quickly identified and treated promptly, isolating those with the condition and therefore reducing the risk of cross contamination.

Clothing, bedding and other contact items were cleaned as per guidelines, avoiding re-infection and cross- contamination, resulting in the infection being contained, then eradicated from the prison.

There have been no reported outbreaks of communicable diseases at Brinsford for a number of years. This includes scabies.

6.3 Mental health

There are long-term concerns over the management of prisoners with diagnosed mental health issues. Whilst every care is taken to facilitate them within the system, there remains a concern over the length of time that is needed to transfer them to more appropriate specialist facilities, due to a lack of bed capacity in these

establishments.

Healthcare remains focused on assisting prisoners who self-isolate and the 'team around the prisoner' appears to be compassionate and supportive within the facilities available.

There is an increased focus on the management of substance abuse. An incentivised 'drug-free living' facility is now located on the top floor of residence 5, where prisoners are regularly tested. The regime within this area is more relaxed and this goes some way towards maintaining the incentive of prisoners to remain drug-free. Test failures result in removal from the facility and back into the normal regime.

6.4 Social care

Social care is conducted adequately at the prison. Outside agencies provide support and training to staff about care leavers and similar issues, such as awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Neurodiversity support is recognised as an important factor in rehabilitation and a structure is in place to ensure awareness of and consideration to individuals who demonstrate neurodivergent conditions.

All prisoners have access to the Samaritans and other prisoners who have been trained as Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners). Listeners have clear signs on their cell doors so they can be easily identified.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Regular exercise is available for each prisoner if they choose. There is an outside facility for fresh air and exercise for in-patients and an association room with games and television. Those on 24-hour watch will often be escorted around the gardens for exercise. In exceptional circumstances, an individual may have gym sessions but this is dependent on circumstances and staff availability; this is not a concern of the Board at this time.

Community study days can divert much needed staff from regular duties and further exacerbate the need for extended lockdowns; therefore, the Board recommends additional staff be assigned during these times. Ongoing professional training is required but it impacts on the prisoners with extended time in cells.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

There is an increased focus on the management of substance abuse and indicative (not quantitative) voluntary drug tests are being implemented.

6.7 Soft skills

A further review and restructuring of education and training is underway, sited at the Acorn centre, where prisoners have an increased availability of chosen activities to include training and social skills. There is also an initiative to develop a more

integrated approach to helping with rehabilitation and preparing prisoners for release. However, this aspect of rehabilitation is under ongoing review to try to extend the range of meaningful activities and focused educational needs.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education

In previous reports, the Board has expressed concern about the education provision at Brinsford. Many of these concerns continue to be an issue.

There are insufficient spaces to facilitate fulltime education for all prisoners, meaning there are many prisoners sitting in their cell without the opportunity to do anything purposeful. To compound this, when classes do run, they are frequently under capacity. Available teaching space is not fully utilised. There are several dormant classrooms within the Hawthorne unit. The prison also has a large multi-skills workshop, which has been out of use since the last reporting period. This is due to difficulty in finding tutors to teach classes. Where tutors are recruited, it is not uncommon for them to leave. An example of this is the business course, which only lasted for a matter of months due to the teacher leaving.

The standard of teaching and engagement is mixed. The Board has observed some classes, such as, for example, hospitality and catering, where the teacher has a strong command over her students. These students consistently appear well engaged and to be learning. In contrast, the Board has observed classes where the teacher sits behind a computer and students are gathered in groups chatting or, in another case, styling each other's hair. There have also been multiple occasions when prisoners congregate around the classroom door, more interested in what is going on in the corridor or who is passing by than learning.

Population pressures have meant Brinsford has received prisoners who are older in age than usual. Many of these prisoners have experience of other establishments and naturally compare those experiences with what they encounter at Brinsford. In conversations with these prisoners, the Board has found that they consider the offering at Brinsford to be inadequate. They note that other establishments offer a wider range of practical courses, such as, for example, fence panelling. Prisoners are disheartened when they see that there is nothing like this at Brinsford. Brinsford offers a selection of vocational learning opportunities which include warehousing, forklift truck and traffic management.

Many prisoners say that they have completed qualifications in English and maths at previous establishments and do not see the point in repeating them. When the Board has queried this with the allocation team, there is no record of the prisoner having completed these qualifications, so they are expected to attend and complete the course before being considered for any other courses. Whilst the Board understands the allocation team do make efforts to find records of past qualifications, there are instances where this information is not available and thus prisoners are expected to attend and complete the course before being considered for any other courses. Prisoners then become frustrated and refuse to attend. In the Board's view, asking prisoners to provide evidence of qualifications is not tailored to the prison environment and all this could be resolved by better record keeping and information sharing between establishments.

The population pressures have also resulted in a high turnover of prisoners. A prisoner leaving a course partway through due to early release or a transfer to

another establishment is recorded as a withdrawal and this affects the figures of the education provider Novus. To avoid this, Novus show reluctance to enrol prisoners who may be withdrawn partway through the course. This is particularly the case for foreign national prisoners, who are potential learners on the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course, as they are increasingly transferred to immigration detention centres. As a result, the number of students teachers see in ESOL classes has reduced from previous reporting periods.

The Shannon Trust programme (a charity that helps people learn to read) is in an improved position compared with previous reporting periods. Towards the end of the reporting period, there has been a new manager, and she has made a determined effort to recruit mentors and mentees. Brinsford has been slow to embed its reading strategy, so the Shannon Trust programme is a crucial mechanism for encouraging reading and developing reading skills amongst prisoners. However, the high turnover of prisoners can make this difficult, as it means mentors leave, which can cause figures to fluctuate. This is beyond the control of Shannon Trust staff.

Brinsford has a neurodiversity support manager; however, this role is in its infancy and the prison seems to be still grappling with how to ascertain and manage the neurodiverse needs of prisoners. There does not seem to be a clear path for accessing records held within the community which show if a prisoner has a diagnosis. The prison has at times been reliant on a prisoner disclosing their neurodevelopmental condition/s. Rarely can an existing education health and care (EHC) plan be accessed. This is an important document, as it provides information that informs the reader of the individual's needs and requirements for support. On occasion, the parents of prisoners have provided a prisoner's EHC plan, and this is welcomed; however, it should not be the sole method for accessing this information. Educational support for learning disabilities and neurodiversity is not comparable to that in the community. This widens the disadvantage that prisoners with these needs experience.

It has been raised in previous reports, and continues to be the case, that education staff do not attend or input into Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated). This is a missed opportunity to engage the prisoner in purposeful activity. Often the Board observes reviews where prisoners express an interest in learning. Having a member of education staff present would allow the interest to be acted on. This is a missed opportunity to address the deficit in prisoners engaging in education.

Library

The library continues to be a well-resourced, inviting environment. It benefits from a manager who is keen to engage prisoners with reading. As in previous years, several initiatives and competitions have run to encourage and develop skills in reading and writing.

As in the last reporting period, staff shortages have been an issue. At these times, regime is restricted and one of the first things to be stopped is library access. This has caused frustration amongst prisoners, with complaints made to the Board.

Reading corners were introduced on units but had limited success. Their location seemed poorly thought out, as they were often in high traffic areas, such as, for example, the association area, which is not conducive to a quiet reading time. Many

prisoners we spoke to said they want to use their time out of cell to speak to others or play games and prefer to keep reading for when they are in their cells.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Similar to education, there are not enough spaces to facilitate full time work for every prisoner. This means there are prisoners who lack opportunity to spend their sentence purposefully. The number of unemployed prisoners remains a concern for the Board.

Prisoners allocated to tea-packing complain that the work is boring and tedious. It is a way of passing the time, but provides few skills that prisoners can utilise on release. It does not motivate them to spend time out of their cell or develop themselves.

The Board continues to assert that more practical-based learning should be offered. Prisoners have expressed and demonstrated that they are more willing to engage with this style of learning, and it can offer a pathway to employment on release. It is acknowledged that a long-term teaching vacancy has impacted the delivery of courses in multi-skills such as carpentry, tiling and general maintenance. This is regrettable, as prisoners are not benefitting from the workshop, which is well equipped for these courses.

Painting around the prison that has been done by prisoners is poor. Walls are only painted up to a certain height and there are paint splashes on the floor. This looks unprofessional and has happened multiple times over the reporting period, which suggests that these prisoners are not being given feedback on how to improve.

The gym is popular amongst prisoners and delivers a selection of courses, including first aid, and fitness instructing. Qualifications are either level 1 or 2 and are accredited, so provide pathways to progression on release. It was raised in the previous report, and continues to be the case, that the prison does not have any employment links in the fitness industry. This is regrettable, as this would allow prisoners to develop their learning and explore post-release employment opportunities.

A new employment lead appointed partway through the reporting period has continued the advancements made by her predecessor in maintaining and securing links with employers. Brinsford has hosted multiple employment days at Brinsford, which employers have attended and offered prisoners employment on release. Employers cover the construction and hospitality trade and link well with qualifications that the prison offers, such as, for example, forklift truck operation, construction skills certification scheme, hospitality and catering. However, figures for the number of prisoners released with employment is small when considered against the total population.

During the reporting period, there have not been any prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL).

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3 Offender management, progression

The number of remanded prisoners remains high, along with the length of time some are detained on remand. This is believed to be due to the delays in the court system.

The thinking skills programme (TSP) is the only programme offered at Brinsford and has low attendance. Some prison officers do not appreciate the benefit and opportunities that programmes can provide a prisoner with and so do not encourage attendance. Brinsford has a lot of new staff, and this may indicate a training need. More needs to be done to help officers understand what programmes involve and the impact they can have. As the main point of face-to-face contact with the prisoners, these officers should know about the programme. Officers have regular contact with the prisoners and could influence prisoner engagement with programmes by sharing programme information with the prisoner and promoting attendance.

There have been prisoners transferred to Brinsford who have not completed programmes that are a requirement of their sentence plan. Examples include Kaizen and parenting courses. These programmes are not offered at Brinsford. Prisoners complain that the non-completion is detrimental to their eligibility for placement at a category D (open) establishment, home detention curfew (HDC) or parole. One prisoner who spoke to the Board stated that without completion of a parenting course, he could not have his child visit him in prison. Non-completion of programmes such as Kaizen, which is for prisoners considered to be at high risk, mean that, during their time in custody, the prisoner's propensity for violence is not addressed, so the opportunity to rehabilitate and reduce the risk of offending using an accredited and evidence-based intervention is missed.

To its credit, Brinsford has fostered strong links with external partners whose programmes and visits have had a positive impact. The Maverick Sounds project continues to deliver its music-based programme, which now includes an element of maths learning and is well engaged with. There have also been talks given by people with lived experience of prison to demonstrate and promote the benefits to be obtained from a life that leaves offending behind. These have been well received by prisoners.

The long-awaited care leavers' flat has been completed and is a modern, well-equipped and inviting space. It is intended to replicate a home environment where prisoners can develop essential skills in cooking, cleaning, ironing and general home maintenance. This is crucial for care experienced prisoners, who tend to struggle to demonstrate an ability to live independently, which is a requirement to secure independent accommodation upon release. It is hoped that the initiative will improve prisoners' prospects of being able to satisfy these criteria. It is too early to see how successful this will be; however, the space is already being utilised by prisoners.

7.4 Family contact

Brinsford has hosted regular family visit days, supported by the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). The Board has observed determined efforts to think innovatively of ways to engage families. This has included an animal man, books and temporary tattoos provided as a fun activity for the children who were visiting on family visits day. These efforts have been successful, as children have been happy to attend and both prisoners and family members have enjoyed the time together.

Population pressures have caused Brinsford to receive prisoners who do not live within the local area. The distance between 'home' and prison for these prisoners has made it difficult for family and friends to visit. This is particularly so where visitors have health difficulties. The Board has spoken to multiple young prisoners who have

not had any social visits during their time at Brinsford because of this. These young men report that they feel lonely and isolated and worry about their family and the impact on them of not being able to visit.

Only being able to top up phone credit once a week has been the subject of many conversations prisoners have had with the Board. Prisoners compare the system at Brinsford with that in other establishments where they have been detained. In these other establishments, kiosks and/or devices are used for canteen and phone credit and can be accessed more frequently. Prisoners struggle to understand why Brinsford does not have this and become frustrated.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Prisoners benefit from the hard-working pre-release team, who endeavour to ensure prisoners have bank accounts and accommodation on release. As a result, there have been very few prisoners released without accommodation.

Where prisoners transfer to Brinsford with little to no resettlement planning and only a short time before release, this places additional burden on staff who can do little to overcome the timeframes that it takes for external agencies to process needs such as bank accounts and benefit applications.

Another continuing issue from previous reports is the lack of key work, which has caused an increase in the demand on prison offender managers (POMs). This has been exacerbated towards the end of this reporting period by the end of custody supervised licence (ECSL) scheme, which has caused an influx of prisoners querying when they will be released.

The increased workload that the ECSL scheme has placed on the offender management unit (OMU) has made it unviable to update prisoners until closer to the time of release. The Board has received multiple requests from prisoners who are confused about their release and anxious about having sufficient time to make arrangements for this.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	294

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	4	8
C	Equality	2	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	6	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	16	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	4
F	Food and kitchens	2	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	19
H1	Property within the establishment	5	23
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	10	11
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	9	24
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	11	13
K	Transfers	6	14
L	Miscellaneous	0	12
	Total number of applications	92	166



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk