



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leyhill

**For reporting year
1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025**

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	6
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	10
5. Fair and humane treatment	13
6. Health and wellbeing	22
7. Progression and resettlement	26
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	34
Applications	35

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

2.1 HMP Leyhill is a category D open prison for men, located a short distance from junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds, with many attractive features. It has an operational capacity of 460 prisoners¹, housed in three residential units. Most of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century. The addition of a 40-bed temporary unit, installed during the Covid pandemic lockdown for isolation purposes, is now used for accommodation and is known as Cedar 4. Unit Cedar 1 remains closed, as it failed a fire inspection, and is in the process of being upgraded to comply with current regulations. Completion of the refurbishment is scheduled for early 2025 and will result in 30 additional rooms.

2.2 At the end of the reporting period, there were 107 prisoners serving life sentences, 28 of whom were on an IPP (indeterminate sentence for public protection) and 357 prisoners with a determinate sentence (a fixed length of time).

2.3 Approximately 47% of its prisoners are over 50 years old, 26% of which are over 60. Approximately 39% of all prisoners have declared some form of disability, with some having two or three disabilities.

2.4 The prison holds a highly complex population. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept those convicted of sexual offences, irrespective of sentence length. The number of men in the prison who have been convicted of sexual crimes varies and, on occasion, has been more than 65% of the prison's population.

Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.

2.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, support was also offered to prisoners by the following organisations:

- Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Integrated Mental Health and Substance Misuse Team
- Care after Combat (CAC)
- Changing Tunes
- Department for Work and Pensions
- GeoAmey
- Hardman Trust
- Intervention Alliance
- Lobster Pot
- Nationwide Bank
- New Futures Network - industries and employment support
- Open University
- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)

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.

- Prisoner Education Trust
- Prodigal Arts
- Rehabilitation Culture Community Interest Company
- SSAFA, the armed forces charity
- The Homeless Prevention Team (HPT)
- Walking with the Wounded (WWTW)
- Wayout TV/Way2learn
- Weston College

3. Key points

Background to the report

Leyhill is in a transitional phase, having demolished old residential units while not yet having new buildings constructed. This means that a higher percentage of the reduced operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the prison) of 460 prisoners has been required to fulfil the demands of internal work and keep the establishment running. At the end of the reporting year, this statement was correct. The current prison strategy is to encourage and facilitate prisoners to gain work experience externally. This situation will be closely monitored in the forthcoming months.

In the last year, a noticeable focus has been placed on meeting the needs of the elderly and disabled prisoners, who make up over 50% of the Leyhill population.

Due to the pressure on the closed estate and associated early release schemes, Leyhill's occupancy rate was above 99% towards the end of the reporting year. The increasing prison population and limited number of spaces in the open estate has resulted in Leyhill being required to accept prisoners who would usually be placed in other establishments.

Work to increase the operational capacity has commenced. Rapid deployment cells (RDCs), with capacity for 97 prisoners, will be installed in the forthcoming year and are expected to be completed in August 2026. Plans for two phases of 120 bed units are progressing and expected to follow and be constructed within the next 18 months. The predicted operational capacity on completion of all programmes is 825.

The IMB and prison staff have had concerns about the continuously changing demographic of Leyhill, from a predominantly older, sex-offending population to one that is younger, on shorter sentences and with far fewer sentenced for sex offences. The change in demographics regularly provides challenges in all areas. The number of drugs finds has fluctuated over the year and the substances seized has often changed. Cocaine, cannabis, Subutex and ketamine finds have not generally increased. Anabolic steroids and syringe finds fell towards the end of the reporting year. Alcohol finds increased slightly over the Christmas period.

Towards the end of the reporting year, following the implementation of the early release scheme SDS40 (which allows prisoners serving a 'standard determinate sentence', as in, with a 50% conditional release point, to be released at the 40% point of their sentence, subject to eligibility criteria), the prison has been populated by those who have longer remaining sentences. The prison population has subsequently stabilised, which is demonstrated by security and safer custody data indicating a significant reduction in negative behaviours and actions.

The number of known organised crime group (OCG) members decreased significantly following the SDS40 releases, from 42 to 21 in the reporting period. Instances of bullying, assault and anti-social behaviour have declined, along with positive mandatory drug test (MDT) rates, and fewer finds of drugs and mobile phones.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The safety of prisoners, in a wide range of areas, is discussed and monitored by a group made up of staff and prisoners who meet on a regular basis. The care

shown for vulnerable prisoners has been evident in meetings observed by the IMB (see 4.0). Self-harm incidents have been few in number and are well-monitored by staff (4.2). There was only one serious incident in the reporting period.

Fair and humane treatment

- Fair and humane treatment of the prisoners is evident in the extensive use made of the Samaritans trained Listener scheme (7.4); in the provision of both children and adult family days for prisoners (7.4); and by the community interest company (CIC) manager, who has been taking vulnerable prisoners out on day release (7.3).
- The chaplaincy team has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support to those of all faiths and none, in particular for those in difficult circumstances (5.4).
- The low availability of spaces in approved premises (supervised accommodation) can result in a delay in progression to release on parole for a small number of prisoners, which the Board believes is unjust (7.3).
- Nearly all of the 28 prisoners on indeterminate IPP (imprisonment for public protection) sentences in the prison remain in prison beyond their indicative tariff date (the minimum time a prisoner must serve in prison before becoming eligible for parole). The IMB regards this as deeply unfair, particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place (7.3).

Health and wellbeing

- Prisoners have been encouraged to take responsibility for their own healthcare by holding most drugs in their own possession and by their enthusiastic involvement in the health improvement group (6.2).
- Waiting times for healthcare services are in line with the community and it is noted that prisoner feedback gives more compliments than complaints.
- The health and wellbeing of the elderly and disabled prisoners, who constitute over half the prisoner population, has been enhanced by the provision of table tennis, indoor carpet bowls, pitch and putt (6.5), as well as the special sessions for the elderly and self-isolating (who are often disabled) prisoners in a quieter room on their own in the over-50s centre (6.7).

Progression and resettlement

- The new strategy for coordinating education, skills and work, in order to reduce re-offending and enhance prisoners' employability, is to be commended by the Board. Courses provided will equip prisoners with transferrable skills to help improve their future employment prospects. For some courses, completion results in interviews for employment towards the end of the sentence and on release (7.1). Market gardens, which supply the prison with vegetables for part of the year, and an ambitious scheme of recycling are among the many areas of work in which prisoners are purposefully employed in the prison (7.2).
- Much of the work of the former community rehabilitation company (CRC) has been taken on by CFO3 (a voluntary scheme to help prisoners prepare for when they leave custody and re-enter the community), with a particular focus on removing barriers to employment for those imprisoned on indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) (7.2).

- The process of risk-assessing prisoners applying for release on temporary licence (ROTL) has been streamlined and has enabled more prisoners to take up external work placements and visit their homes and families for short periods. However, prisoners' progress towards parole has often been slowed by delays caused by the external probation service (7.3).
- The various early release schemes, implemented in an attempt to increase the availability of prison spaces, have resulted in reduced availability of approved premises (APs). Prisoners on early release are prioritised for accommodation in APs. Prisoners serving their sentence and progressing to parole are consequently disadvantaged, due to the reduced availability of AP accommodation. This remains a cause of justifiable frustration for prisoners and results in a delay before they are eligible for parole. The Community Accommodation Service 3 (CAS3) has been introduced, which provides up to 84 days of emergency accommodation for someone leaving prison or APs. The Community Homelessness Prevention Team (HPT) manages the service for the Probation Service and co-ordinates the placement on behalf of the provider and the Probation Practitioner.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Will the Minister ensure that the mobile phone pilot scheme referenced in the annex of the Ministerial response to the 2023-2024 annual report will take place and will not be subject to further delays?
- What action will the Minister take to ensure that Leyhill prisoners receive access to communication devices equivalent to those available in the majority of the closed estate in order to maintain contact with family members?
- What action will the Minister take to remedy the lack of spaces in approved premises, which leads to some prisoners facing incarceration beyond their release dates and many experiencing delays in progression towards their eligibility for parole?
- What action will the Minister take to raise the food budget in line with inflation?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Will the Prison Service urgently review the availability of PIN phones to prisoners and seek to improve the system and reliability?
- What further action will be taken to speed up the release and resettlement in the community of prisoners serving IPP sentences, many of whom have spent far longer in custody than recommended in their indicative tariffs?
- What steps will be taken to speed up the work and enhance the efficiency of the community offender managers (COMs) in the external Probation Service, whose workload has increased significantly due to the implementation of the various early release schemes?
- Will the Prison Service provide equivalent telephony to that provided in the majority of the closed estate?
- Will the Prison Service increase facilities and staffing levels in proportion to the proposed rise in operational capacity?
- Will the Prison Service seek to expand the opportunities through national engagement for prisoners to gain work experience and qualifications in preparation for release?

- What steps will the Prison Service take to improve the accessibility of transport to enable prisoners to gain work experience?
- Will the Prison Service apply the volumetric limits defined in the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework at all establishments in order to alleviate some of the problems encountered with prisoner property during transfer?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board encourages the Governor to build on the continued improvements made in the ROTL process.
- The Board urges the Governor to maintain the current standards at Leyhill in the forthcoming refurbishment, upgrade of facilities, challenging expansion project and installation of rapid deployment cells.
- The Board encourages the Governor to continue to prioritise increasing the number of prisoners gaining external work experience over some of the work done within the prison grounds.

3.3 Progress since the last report

- The prison is developing software for data analysis in order to improve attendance at education and identify prisoners eligible for specific work experience opportunities.
- A prison shop, accessible by prisoners and the general public, is scheduled to open in 2025.
- The Lounge at Leyhill café, staffed by prisoners for general public use, is scheduled to open in 2025.
- The Railtrack maintenance course, run on site by Betaris, is expected to provide future work experience.
- There has been a focus on providing external employment to develop skills in preparation for release.
- The work of the offender management unit (OMU) continues to improve the processing of ROTL (release on temporary licence) paperwork, especially in the risk assessment of prisoners, so that more of them have become available for work in the wider community.
- The Board recognises that the increased workload imposed on the prison by the various early release schemes has been demanding and that staff have responded to the challenge.
- The introduction of improved methods of communication from the OMU to prisoners and staff, including monthly updates, is to be commended by the Board.
- There is ongoing refurbishment of the Cedar 1 unit, to provide accommodation for prisoners on the enhanced level of the prison's incentives scheme.
- The ramps for disabled access in Ash unit have been completed.
- Phone booths have been installed on Ash unit.
- There has been a focus on education to provide skills relevant to employment on release.
- The Board recognises the prison's efforts to gain agreement of the quarterly prioritisation board to secure a start date for the mobile phone trial.
- A red line policy has been introduced, detailing agreed behaviour standards for prisoners.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

- The safer custody group, consisting of staff and prisoner representatives, has met quarterly in the past year and has been observed by the Board. Most participants have attended the meetings at the prison, while a few staff have used teleconference facilities. The view of the IMB is that the group has remained focused and aware of the impact of the regime on prisoners safety. Areas covered include challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs; which are used to manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence), assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents (which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide), debt, relationship and social care.
- The IMB has observed the safety intervention meetings (SIM), which have exemplified the care and humane treatment of prisoners who are, or may be, vulnerable, give cause for concern or who may need a watchful eye or other assistance.
- During the reporting period, 142 prisoners were transferred back to closed conditions, 121 (85%) of which were for 'security reasons'. The previous year saw 113 prisoners transferred back, with 94 (83%) being for 'security reasons'.
- There were 73 temporary release failures (TRFs) during the year, mostly concerning late returns or missing paperwork. There were three absconds during the year.

4.1 Reception and induction

- Late arrivals at Leyhill continue to create challenges for prisoners, prison officers and the healthcare department. On occasion, prisoners have arrived after healthcare staff have left the site, so they cannot be screened until the following day. This is especially acute on Fridays, when late arrivals might mean a general induction does not take place until the following Monday. Prisoners arriving late in the day can also pose problems for gate and reception staff, who have to deal with existing prisoners returning from ROTL and RDR (resettlement day release), as well as contractors leaving the site at the same time.
- A passport-style scheme with stamps was implemented to identify which induction modules have been completed by incoming prisoners and which still need to be completed. This process is now well established. Newly arrived prisoners have expressed satisfaction with the induction process, which allows them a two-week period to get used to the layout of Leyhill (with the help of fellow prisoner orderlies, who are trusted to take on work and provide services that contribute to the running of the prison). New arrivals are provided with a letter from the chaplaincy team with contact details, should they wish to speak in confidence with a member of the team. A weekly meeting on Wednesdays is also held with each new arrival. Reception orderlies continue to provide reassurance for recently inducted prisoners. The prison management surveys new arrivals (via the Leyhill Community Council) about their first-night experience.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- The number of self-harm incidents and ACCT documents opened has remained low (22 ACCTs involving 20 prisoners compared with 19 ACCTs for 20 prisoners in the previous year). One of the ACCTs concerned a prisoner who required hospital treatment. The most common reason for an ACCT document to be opened was a prisoner having thoughts of self-harm. There were no worrying trends in the ethnicity or ages of the prisoners concerned, or of the prisoners transferred to closed conditions. Quality assurance checks on ACCTs have been routinely carried out by staff and the IMB. There were no deaths in custody.
- The prison's 'GOBOFF' scheme, which enables prisoners to talk with a Samaritans trained prisoner, a Listener, for emotional support, was used, on average, over 380 times per month (which is a fall of about 60% over the previous year). The scheme continues to provide a useful conduit for prisoner issues. Most complaints in the first half of the year concerned the offender management unit (OMU) and the handling of previously submitted paperwork.
- Latterly of concern is the number of complaints involving 'intimidation and bullying' of vulnerable prisoners by those not convicted of sexual offences. There is a wide-spread belief, held by both prisoners and staff, that the changing demographic, in that there are fewer prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs), has contributed to this change. Security staff have regularly identified individuals causing such discontent and, following a review, may result in the prisoner being transferred to closed conditions. At one point in the reporting year, the proportion of the population imprisoned for sexual offences fell to less than half of the population. Recently, the percentages of PCOSOs have risen to 57%. There are also increasing numbers of prisoners transferring from category C prisons serving relatively short sentences at Leyhill, with some not willing to fully engage with the established life and customs at Leyhill. If, as expected, this trend continues, the prison will need to monitor the effect on prison life.
- In January 2025, 52% of prisoners were under 50 years old (55% in January 2024), 67% of prisoners were serving sentences of over four years (the same as a year ago), 9% were serving sentences of under four years (7% last year), and 23% were sentenced to life (including IPP sentences), the figure for which was 26% a year ago.
- The safety phone hotline, which is a way for family members outside to raise concerns with the prison, was monitored daily by the Duty Governor.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 13 violent incidents at Leyhill during the year (committed by 13 prisoners), compared with six incidents in the previous year. One prisoner-on-prisoner incident was deemed 'serious'.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are used to manage prisoners who are violent, pose a heightened risk of being violent or who may be victims of violence. Both perpetrator and victim are managed and supported on a plan with individualised targets and regular reviews. No significant trends have been identified.

4.4 Use of force

The use of force is very rare at Leyhill, with only seven incidents reported during the year (there were 15 in the previous year) and none being categorised as serious. Each incident is reviewed by prison management, and most involved the application of rigid-bar handcuffs when transferring a prisoner to closed conditions. Rigid-bar handcuffs are no longer used routinely, as prison officers now make a risk assessment and act accordingly.

Pava spray (similar to pepper spray and used to temporarily incapacitate someone) is available for use on all night shifts and body worn video cameras (BWVCs) appear to be routinely worn by all officers.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The nature of substance misuse varies and has often been linked to newly arrived prisoners. Targeted searches and subsequent transfers to closed conditions, where necessary, have continued. The IMB and prison staff believe this is linked to the changing demographic of Leyhill, moving from a predominantly older, sex-offending population to prisoners on shorter sentences.

Mandatory drug tests (MDTs) detected more drugs as the year progressed, with buprenorphine (Subutex) the most common, followed by cannabis and cocaine, although the number of finds fell towards the end of the reporting period. There were no positive MDTs in the last two months of the reporting year. There have been regular discoveries of syringes. Staff use mobile phone detector (MPD) equipment which, over the reporting year, has detected numerous mobile phone signals (an average of 30 per month). Most of these have occurred at night and, with fewer staff on duty at that time of day, the prison has been unable to follow up and investigate the source of the signal. Most mobile phone discoveries have been through random searches of common areas (an average of three phones found per month).

An alcohol testing device has been installed and 10% of prisoners returning to the prison after ROTL are randomly selected and tested for alcohol consumption. There have been few positive tests.

Incentivised substance-free living (IFSL) was introduced in March 2024, with over 1500 tests for drugs performed so far in the reporting period. There were only four positive tests for non-prescribed drugs.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation is split over three units: Ash, Beech and Cedar. Each unit has its own kitchens and association rooms. Ash has been predominantly reserved for younger prisoners, whilst Beech tends to be prioritised for the older population and those with a physical disability. Cedar is occupied by a small number of prisoners on the enhanced level of the incentives scheme. There is no segregation of any sort for prisoners convicted of sexual offences.

The maintenance of the toilets and showers is ongoing, with contractors regularly being called back to correct defects, including poor ventilation, leaks and damaged safety buttons, which are installed in the disabled showers to raise an alarm if a prisoner requires assistance.

The cleanliness of the toilets and showers continues to vary, depending on the users, dedication of the prisoner cleaner on the wing or volunteers who take it on themselves to maintain standards.

New ramps are now operational in Ash unit, providing wheelchair access to more rooms. There is also a new ramp on the main access path to the unit.

Phone use privacy in Ash has improved, with new soundproofed booths. However, the limited number of phones in Ash and Beech continues to result in long queues whilst prisoners wait to use a phone at peak times. Prisoners stand outside the booths waiting for a phone to become available, which can be intimidating for the prisoner using the phone. The soundproofing is not perfect and results in a lack of privacy when speaking to family members. Ventilation in the booths is limited and a prisoner may need to open the door at regular intervals to obtain some fresh air.

The Board is concerned by the regular failures of the installed BT phones. Faults identified have been attributed to copper cabling, handsets and the on-site hardware and software. The number of failures continues to rise and, on occasion, has been more than once a week. Failure often means that there are no phones available for prisoners to use until BT rectifies the fault. This results in frustration and stress for prisoners who are unable to contact their friends and family.

There are no telephones in Cedar 4. Prisoners in Cedar 4 are permitted to use the telephones in Cedar 1 from 6am until 8pm. After this time, they are required to return to their unit. All other prisoners have access to PIN protected phones until 11pm. For prisoners located in Cedar 4 and employed externally, the time available to use a telephone at the end of a working day is limited.

The proposed trial of issuing a PIN-protected mobile phone for each prisoner has not commenced. The model of phone handset supplied has been subject to rigorous testing. Signal surveys have identified that reception for the proposed handsets is poor, as they use ageing technology, namely 2G and 3G, rather than the latest 5G network. The quarterly prioritisation board has yet to agree to the trial. The Board recognises the prison's efforts to secure a date for the trial to commence. This continues to be a source of frustration for the Governor and their staff. The Board considers the situation to be unacceptable.

The provision of induction cookers to replace the old grills has proved very popular. More prisoners are minded to do their own cooking, reducing the demand on the

kitchens. Cooking also gives many prisoners some enjoyment and more meaningful engagement.

Prisoners transferring to Leyhill often arrive with property in excess of the volumetric control limit. If the prison transport has limited space, some of their property may follow at a later date. The prisoner may have been subject to an overnight stop at another prison, where their property is unloaded and stored overnight. The prisoner is then transported the following day to the receiving prison, on occasion without all of their property. A recent reception was transferred with 17 bags of property which is far in excess of the volumetric limit. As a result of the above, there is an ongoing problem with items getting lost in transit and a significant amount of time and effort wasted in trying to track down these items.

Previously, all clothing had to be purchased through the business hub, online from approved suppliers. Now prisoners are allowed to request up to six items to be sent from home in their first two months at Leyhill. There is also a new gifting provision of items, from one prisoner to another, via an application process. Games consoles are excluded from the gifting provision.

A residential forum, known as the Leyhill community council (LCC) and run by prisoners under new terms of reference, is now in operation. The monthly meeting is attended by prisoners, Governors, departmental heads and other staff. Board members have been present at the meetings and have observed that the LCC has had a very positive start and offers opportunities for prisoners and staff to engage and provide feedback. A Governor recently commented that 'it was really useful to be able to sit down, discuss and understand the issues and concerns of prisoners at Leyhill'. Other staff have valued the open and honest conversation with prisoners.

The kitchen manager has had another challenging year but has largely provided a steady service. The budget for food for each prisoner has been increased but has not been kept in line with inflation. Kitchen equipment continues to suffer from breakdowns and call ins for engineers, who usually have no long-term knowledge of the issues. In the long term, there are plans for new kitchen equipment as part of the expansion project. This means that the facilities are kept going without new investment. The kitchen staff appeared to cope well with the limitation placed on them by the phased closing of the restaurant area for new flooring. A reduction in the highest pay levels for kitchen workers, as a result of the new incentives scheme (see below), and a reduced available prison workforce due to growth in external opportunities, has meant a less consistent workforce.

Introduction of a late evening meal service means hot food is available for those returning late from external employment.

The food forum was inactive for a while but has recently been restarted. Provision for submitting feedback appears to be limited. There does not seem to be a large number of issues. The Leyhill Grounds café closed at the end of 2023, due to the retirement of the manager, and it hopes to reopen in March 2025 with prisoner management.

The Governor has plans to open a Leyhill shop located adjacent to the cafe in the first quarter of 2025, where goods can be purchased by prisoners and the general public.

Prisoners continue to be encouraged to grow their own fruit and vegetables in the allotments, which are very popular.

5.2 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

As in the previous year, prison officers have been tasked with conducting a meaningful, monthly conversation with each of their allocated prisoners and recording the salient points as part of the personal officer scheme. These entries are reviewed by more senior staff.

For much of this year, as with last year, this has had mixed results: some prisoners are very satisfied with the system, while others report that they rarely or never see their allocated personal officer. It is noticeable to the Board that some wing officers are very much better at this part of their responsibilities than others. However, the IMB is pleased to report that towards the end of the reviewing year, the prison has stepped up its efforts in this field and the latest monthly figures of recorded personal officer interactions have risen to 386, which equates to 84% of the population.

As with last year, the IMB has often observed very caring behaviour by prison staff when dealing with vulnerable prisoners, particularly when the news from home is not good. The chaplaincy staff in general, embodying a wide variety of beliefs, make for a very good team in this respect and we are satisfied that they are widely respected for it.

The IMB continues to observe adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) and finds that they are conducted both fairly and sensitively by the Duty Governor. In fact, this is very impressive, and certainly contributes to the prisoners' trust in the senior management team.

Nevertheless, despite all the above, there is no doubt that relationships between prisoners and staff vary enormously. The aforementioned LCC continues to receive a fairly continuous stream of verbal complaints about officers not doing their duty and not making themselves available to help when needed. Comments that have been passed to the IMB include:

- 'Staff need to learn how to treat people'
- 'Lack of interaction'
- 'False promises'
- 'Not helpful'
- 'Lazy and won't communicate'
- 'Arrogant, abusive and disrespectful'

This is undoubtedly only one side of the story and it is true that the number of complaints submitted to the prison regarding staff has fallen. However, the IMB does feel that, while many officers do an exceptional job, a minority of the staff have been observed to be content just to remain in their offices or chat among themselves rather than patrolling corridors (or other areas), either to observe indiscipline or to take the opportunity to get to know prisoners better.

5.3 Equality and diversity

There were 35 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) in the reporting period, completed by prisoners and staff, a fall from last year's figure of 52. Of these, nine were submitted for alleged prisoner-on-prisoner discrimination, 24 for alleged discrimination by staff and two showed unintended discrimination.

Of the 35 DIRFs, one was withdrawn, seven were proven, 19 showed no evidence of discrimination and eight were redirected to the prison complaints process.

Scrutiny panels meet regularly to ensure that DIRFs are answered both correctly and promptly. The overall quality of DIRF responses appears to be very good. All of those submitted during the reporting period were completed within the specified timescales, with an average response time of 2-3 days at the beginning of the reporting year, falling to an average of seven days at the end of the reporting year.

At the end of the reporting year, a breakdown, by age, of prisoners at Leyhill revealed the following:

Age group: 21 years to 24 years: 4 (0.87%)
 25 years to 29 years: 30 (6.55%)
 30 years to 39 years: 107 (23.36%)
 40 years to 49 years: 99 (21.62%)
 50 years to 59 years: 101 (22.05%)
 60 years to 69 years: 74 (16.16%)
 70-plus years: 43 (9.39%)

This shows a decrease from the 158 prisoners in the 2023 annual report, down by 124 (27.07%) prisoners in the 22-29-year-old age group, with a corresponding increase over the other age groups.

At the end of the reporting year, population demographics were as follows:

Race/ethnicity	Number of prisoners	Percentage
White: Eng/Welsh/Scot /N Irish/British	357	77.95%
Black/Black British: Caribbean	19	4.15%
Black/Black British: African	11	2.40%
White: any other background	10	2.18%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	9	1.97%
Asian/Asian British: any other background	9	1.97%
Other ethnic groups	Remaining population	

Gender	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Male	453	98.91%
Transgender	4	0.87%

Sexual orientation	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Heterosexual	401	87.55%
Gay/lesbian	17	3.71%
Bisexual	13	2.84%
Other	1	0.22%

The four transgender prisoners have been supported throughout the year by the equalities team.

Other demographics	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Ex-Forces	40	8.73%
Foreign national prisoners	4	0.91%

From the Board's observations, the prison continued to discuss and actively engage with issues of race and ethnicity in regular equality and diversity meetings.

Information entered on the national offender management information system (NOMIS) showed 179 of the prison population declared disabilities, up from last year's 126, with 262 prisoners declaring no disability.

There were seven unplanned use of force (UoF) incidents in the reporting period. The ethnic breakdown was, four white prisoners, two black prisoners and one mixed race prisoner. In the 25-29 age group, there were two UoF incidents; 30-39 age group, four incidents; and in the 40-49 group, one incident.

At the end of the reporting year, there were 26 ex-Forces (5.71%) prisoners, who required support from SSAFA (Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association) on release. Both CAC (Care After Combat) and WWTW (Walking with the Wounded) have stepped in to pick up from SSAFA. Each year, 'Walking home for Christmas' is an activity that sees a group of staff, prisoners and volunteers walk ten miles from a nearby town back to Leyhill to raise money for homeless veterans. This year, they raised £755 for WWTW. An Armed Forces Day event took place to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Second World War D-Day landings.

Of the 19 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened in the reporting period, eight were for prisoners with a recorded disability and one related to a veteran.

At the end of the reporting year, the population of PCOSOs was 270 prisoners (59%). There was a perceived inequality of opportunity for these prisoners, but statistics show they held 41 (48%) of 85 orderly positions (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison). In the kitchen, they held 12 (37%) of 32 positions; and in DHL (the prison's retail supply chain service) 22 (44%) of 50 positions.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community accounted for eight prisoners (1.75%) and it has been reported that it can be challenging to engage with them, as they feel intimidated using the GRT forum as a platform. The quarterly diversity and inclusion meeting monitors engagement with GRT prisoners and continues to develop strategies and provide opportunities in an attempt to increase the numbers seeking assistance.

During the reporting year, most prisoners subject to an adjudication were, White: 'Eng/Welsh/Scot/N Irish/British', at 62.5%; followed by 25% for Black: 'Black British/Caribbean', and 12.5% for 'Mixed, any other background'. The 25 to 29 age group accounted for 50% of adjudications, followed by the 30 to 39 group, at 25%, with the over 50s accounting for the remainder.

Focus groups were held bi-monthly for each of the protected characteristics (as set out in the Equality Act and which include age, disability, religion, sex and sexual orientation). Equality and diversity are the specific responsibility of a custodial manager, whose job is to support the equality officer and to assure the dedicated lead that all aspects of equality and inclusion are managed effectively in accordance with the prison's strategy. All of one officer's time was ring-fenced for equality issues. Diversity and equality action team meetings are chaired by a Governor on a bi-monthly basis. They are attended by the heads of residential services and the equality team, plus various representatives from the prison, including prisoners, and external agencies.

5.4 Faith and pastoral support

Members of different faiths staff the chaplaincy team, headed by the managing chaplain, including Church of England, Roman Catholic, Free Church, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Quaker and Pagan.

The chaplaincy team caters for all faiths, as well as those who are vegans. It provides adherence to congregational services, where possible, and one-to-one faith and pastoral support. In consultation with the Governor, the chaplaincy team provided religious festival meals. The chaplaincy team provided support for grieving prisoners and conducted several of their funeral services.

Open daily until 7.30pm, the chapel hosts diverse spiritual, wellbeing and social events, including movie nights, quizzes, games and music classes. The chaplaincy staff are prominent in prison life and seem to be highly regarded by prisoners and staff. There is good access to weekly communal worship, study classes and religious artefacts.

Faith facilities are excellent, with a centrally located, pleasant and well-equipped chapel, a separate multi-faith room and a mosque with ablution facilities. The outdoor Buddha garden and Pagan grove provide peaceful areas for private contemplation and worship.

The chaplaincy team has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support, and it has nurtured prisoners in their faith and wellbeing. In particular, the chaplaincy team has supported prisoners in difficult circumstances, such as when a family member is seriously ill.

Chaplaincy employs a sessional chaplain to focus on resettlement. This person liaises with dioceses, mosques and other faith communities to link up prisoners who are about to be released and wish to be part of a faith community on release. There is also a chaplain who is willing to support those leaving the prison imminently to deal with any last-minute issues that may have arisen. In the reporting year they recruited several new volunteers, one a former probation officer, who works one day a week on resettlement. They hope, within the next few months, to see 90% of prisoners leaving within their last 12 weeks. These initiatives will undoubtedly result in a more successful reintegration into the community.

Recent events have included an interfaith week, with a day focusing on how faith communities can be more inclusive, one element of which was to hold a LGBTQ+ affirming Christian worship service. The chaplaincy team had a very busy Christmas and the charity that mentors them every year gave them bags of presents for each prisoner. This year, nearly every prisoner in Leyhill received a present whereas, in previous years, many did not collect them.

5.5 Incentives schemes

There has been a complete review of the Leyhill incentives scheme, which was made operational at the beginning of August. This has been an extensive process intended to provide fairer payment levels, provision to get salary increases for good performance within roles and, critically, to ensure prisoners do not suffer financially if they undertake training or education. This is important for supporting prisoners to obtain the required level in learning Mathematics, English and IT, enabling the Governor's proposed significant increase in ROTL paid work and reduction of internal commercial contracts.

The intention of the review is to provide more motivation for meaningful employment and engagement, training and a greater chance of securing employment on release.

The initiative needed to be budget neutral. This means that the implementation of the revised salaries has resulted in some winners and losers. There has been extensive engagement with the LCC to try and ensure that there is an understanding for the reasons for the implementation. One concerned group has been the pensioners who saw their pay drop from £10 a week to £5.75 (in line with national policy). The Governor has softened the effect on this group by removing the requirement to pay £2 a week for the use of a television.

Prisoners on the standard (middle) level will be paid 10% less, and prisoners on basic (lower) level will be paid 20% less, although this is rare at HMP Leyhill.

Pay point	Weekly payment (enhanced rate)	Description
1	£30	Roles that are business critical.
2	£20	Roles that support prisoners or the business; relevant qualifications to undertake role.
3	£15	Roles that support prisoners or the business; no relevant qualifications.
4	£12.50	Induction.

Inconsistencies and disincentives led to a revision in December 2024. The revision made provision for additional opportunities under an innovation scheme. There are also capabilities for ad hoc additional payments, provided pre-authorisation is obtained.

Bonuses can be paid to prisoners at the discretion of the Governor, such as, for example, working in the kitchen at Christmas, bio-hazard cleaning (£5), DHL (£5), and additional work within a job role (£1 to £5).

Recently implemented is an innovations fund, where an increase in prisoner pay budget has been held back and will be used to incentivise prisoner or staff-related ideas to increase employability and positive community outcomes.

There is now a provision for a hardship fund for the most financially vulnerable prisoners (e.g. pensioners or long-term sick).

Prisoners who consistently fail to work as required are seen as not complying with the regime and subsequently may be returned to closed conditions to maintain good order and discipline in the prison.

The prison has also promoted an incentivised substance free living (ISFL) initiative. This rewards prisoners with access to privileged events (e.g. sports competitions, celebrations) for avoiding drugs and providing a negative test result. The organisers hope to make drug taking something that is not respected and that is looked down on by the majority of prisoners.

Prisoner celebration events have been introduced to allow staff to recognise prisoners who work hard and make an impact.

5.6 Complaints

The IMB is pleased to report that the number of complaints submitted by Leyhill prisoners has fallen by nearly 15% in the reporting year. The leading categories for complaints are the offender management unit (OMU), followed by residential and other. Complaints about residential problems have increased, possibly due to the continued dissatisfaction over the lack of in-cell telephony at Leyhill, a situation that the Governor is working very hard to rectify.

Complaints regarding property have remained the same as in 2023.

5.7 Property

The transfer and storage of property has continued to be a source of frustration for staff and prisoners. The Board welcomed the introduction of the Prisoners Property Policy Framework in 2022, which sought to address the issues regarding storage by the application of volumetric control. The policy states that a prisoner's property must fit into two standard storage boxes, with a maximum weight of 15kg each. There are exemptions, which are not included in the volumetric limit. The policy has not been fully implemented at Leyhill and evidence suggests a similar approach at other prisons. A recent transfer had 17 bags, plus large items. The company transporting prisoners is only contracted to take three bags for each prisoner. Excess property is often transported at a later date. Movement between prisons, sometimes coupled with overnight stops and bags transferred at a later date, regularly results in property being misplaced.

The volume of property stored at Leyhill is already greater than the capacity of the storeroom, but a new storeroom is planned as part of the prison's future expansion.

An inordinate amount of time is spent by prisoners, IMBs at various locations, and Prison Service staff attempting to locate property in different locations. This often results in a claim processed by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).

The number of applications (prisoners written representations) to the IMB regarding property at Leyhill has fallen this year and the Board is pleased to report that the amount of property stored at Leyhill is gradually reducing.

The Board continues to be concerned about the property transfer arrangements at Leyhill and other establishments.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare at Leyhill is provided by a dedicated team of health professionals under the auspices of Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, which was awarded the contract in 2022.

The service provided mirrors that which can be found in the outside community and the Board has no concerns about the healthcare provision.

The healthcare department is open from 7.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, and 7.30am to 12pm at weekends and on bank holidays. Outside of these hours, the NHS 111 medical helpline is used.

Healthcare is required to be open every day in order to issue prescription medication that prisoners require daily and are not permitted to retain overnight. The majority of medication is retained by prisoners to take as and when prescribed.

Late receptions from the previous day can also be inducted the following morning on any day of the week.

There is one nurse prescriber and another in training.

The head of healthcare continues to be a conduit for any prisoner ideas and feedback via the LCC. Another route for the prisoner voice comes from the patient experience surveys, which are analysed monthly and are a useful indicator of what is going well and not so well. However, it is noted that the positive comments far outweigh the bad.

A sample of prisoners' comments:

- 'Excellent attitude, communication and compassion': about a nurse
- 'Waiting times: it took four months to see physio': with regard to physiotherapy
- 'All brilliant': concerning the mental health team
- 'To have what the appointment is for on the slip': with regard to a GP appointment
- 'Don't change a thing': about the mental health team
- 'I wanted to thank the whole of Leyhill team for all the help and support. You are all brilliant': regarding the mental health service
- 'Very informative, given options. Listened to and given time to ask questions': feedback on a GP appointment

On arrival, prisoners have an induction with a member of the healthcare department. However, the Board is concerned that prisoners sometimes arrive after nursing staff have gone off duty, despite having two staff members there until 5.30pm. In these cases, the induction happens on the following morning.

Healthcare is always involved when an ACCT is opened and at subsequent meetings.

From the Board's observations, the working relationships between healthcare and prison staff remain very good, with staff from all areas attending the monthly safety intervention meeting (SIM), where prisoners with complex needs are discussed.

To provide better understanding of managing medical emergencies, prison staff have joined healthcare staff in scenario-based emergency training. This covers areas such as code red (when a prisoner is bleeding), code blue (when a prisoner is not breathing) and responding to diabetic hypoglycaemia and prisoners under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The 'health bar' continues to be popular as a place where prisoners can purchase items such as may be found in an outside pharmacy for self-care. Paracetamol, previously available through the canteen service (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials using their allocated funds), is now only available from the health bar. All items purchased are recorded on the patient's S1 record and monitored closely.

There were 18 complaints throughout the year; all were responded to within policy timescales, with few upheld. A recurring theme was dissatisfaction concerning medication and the GP service.

The Board is concerned about the delay in providing an emergency call bell system in the wing, where less able prisoners and elderly men live. We have been told that a solution closely mirroring the personal emergency buttons, which can be worn by those who are vulnerable in the community is being considered.

6.2 Primary healthcare

Staffing levels fluctuate from time to time and occasionally, senior members of the management team need to step in so that the day-to-day running of the prison is not compromised. The pharmacy is one area where staffing is a problem, and a case has been made to return to the pre-Oxleas cover of two nurses rather than just one, with the associated problems at times of sickness or annual leave.

Prisoners get most of their outpatient secondary healthcare from Southmead NHS Foundation Trust. The IMB is unaware of any issues providing bed-watch when necessary.

The areas of concern noted in the 2023 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection reports, as well as in the July local quality and delivery board meetings (LQDB), regarding waiting times for allied health professions services, notably podiatry, optical services and physiotherapy, continue to fluctuate. As a temporary measure, extra funds were found from local healthcare budget from May to July 2024 towards purchasing extra physio clinics, which had a positive, if temporary, effect. This is still under discussion with providers.

Other services, such as nurses, healthcare assistants, mental health, dentistry and audiology have acceptable waiting times. However, missed appointments, known as DNAs ('did not attend'), are still too high, despite efforts to reduce them.

Screening sessions including fibroscan for liver health, AAA (abdominal aortic aneurysm) ultrasounds, targeted lung checks and CT scans where appropriate, bowel screening and retinopathy have all been delivered this year.

Health forums have focused on making prisoners aware of the dangers of steroid use. These have been deemed useful because of the continued increase in the number of younger prisoners at HMP Leyhill.

6.3 Mental healthcare

Mental health also comes under Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. The mental health ongoing caseload tends to be between 60-70 patients.

Leyhill is now placing greater emphasis on helping prisoners to recognise what they may encounter and need to cope with mentally on release, rather than offering group therapy sessions, which most prisoners will have experienced many times before on their prison journey.

An ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) support group has been set up, as well as eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy for prisoners who have encountered trauma. Both have had good results.

It is good to note that the palliative care unit, which has not been in use for a couple of years, is to become a wellbeing hub. This will be used by the mental health, substance misuse, psychology and neurodiversity teams. It will have a sensory room, sensory gardens, one-to-one therapy and breakout rooms. This will help ease the predicted lack of space in the healthcare building, following the prison's proposed expansion.

Prisoners with a terminal condition and those too sick to be at Leyhill but not needing to be hospitalised have been able to go to a local care home. This has been shown to work well, although it has not been needed this year, as there were no deaths in custody.

6.4 Social care

Under South Gloucestershire Council, a social care service is provided by Fresh Haven Healthcare. Three prisoners have a care package. Mobility aids are available, if considered necessary following a referral.

6.5 Exercise, time out of cell

As an open prison with plenty of outdoor space and extensive gardens, Leyhill offers opportunities for exercise, both personal and organised.

The popularity of the gym continues, with all ages being accommodated at different times throughout the week. In 2024, the gym weekly calendar was amended to allow for older prisoner access. This was initially unpopular with some of the younger users who would train daily, but it seems to have settled into more established routines. Prisoners can be referred for remedial gym sessions, e.g. pre- or post-operatively, as well as for the wellbeing gym for mental health, substance misuse or obesity. There are chair-based exercises for the less able. It is noted that some of the equipment needs to be repaired or replaced.

Leyhill has its own weekly 'Parkrun', which is a global, community-driven initiative that organises free weekly 5k runs in open spaces. The Leyhill Parkrun uses the large top field, which is also used for football. The tennis courts, which will soon be used as the area for new rapid deployment accommodation, should be a temporary loss as it is proposed that another area will be provided for use.

6.6 Drug rehabilitation

This service is provided by Change, Grow, Live, which is sub-contracted by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

There are several services focusing on helping prisoners with substance misuse issues and towards how they will cope in the community on release.

There are practical drop-in hubs for prisoners nearing release, where information is available about services in the area where they will be living (e.g. AA/Alcoholics Anonymous; and NA/Narcotics Anonymous meetings), as well as details of the location of 'dry houses', if that is what the prisoner needs.

Groups are available on a need basis for specific substances and relapse prevention.

Change, Grow, Live works closely with Developing Health and Independence (DHI), the community drug and alcohol team covering Bristol, Bath and south Gloucestershire. DHI

is providing a peer mentor once a month to share their recovery experiences with Leyhill prisoners.

There is a move to offer Buvidal (an injectable substitute for methadone) at Leyhill. At the end of the reporting year, two prisoners were receiving this medication. Instead of needing to attend pharmacy daily, this weekly injection allows greater freedom, with the ability to take outside work. Leyhill has been selected to pilot this in the south west region.

Prisoners going out on ROTL can be provided with nasal naloxone to reverse the effects of any opioids taken.

The drug testing to allow prisoners access to the Government initiative to tackle drug-fuelled crime, ISFL fails to reflect the drugs of choice at Leyhill, notably Subutex and ketamine. The healthcare department has asked that wider testing be considered to better reflect the local habits.

6.7 Soft skills

The 'Lobster Pot' is an area for the over 50s and those under 50 referred for mental health reasons. It is very popular, so well used. Games and quizzes are organised, plus tea, coffee, opportunities for a chat and to read the newspapers, plus other activities.

Daily breakfast clubs, where prisoners are able to cook for themselves, and cake-making competitions are a regular feature of the 'Lobster Pot'.

Informative sessions on men's health are well attended.

Management of the allotments and provision of compost and seeds are also provided.

Some prisoners find the prospect of taking ROTL for the first time quite daunting and the staff in the 'Lobster Pot' have been very helpful during this difficult stage, offering advice and sometimes accompanying the prisoner.

The staff provide support and guidance to all visitors on any subject.

The contract for this service is due for renewal and interested parties are in the process of submitting bids.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education, learning and skills

This year has seen much progress against the targets set by Ofsted. The targets included: the ability to show evidence of intent and impact and reflection for the learners. There is a greater unity of purpose between education, learning and skills and work experience (WEX) departments, led by the coordinator of these areas and the heads of the teams involved.

The quality improvement group (QIG) is responsible on a monthly basis for what is being achieved. There is now much more statistical data as evidence of their success in the areas they have pushed forward. The focus is on providing evidence of progression and behaviours and attitudes of the prisoners.

In most working areas, all prisoners carry with them their progress in work (PIW) booklets, where the tutors recognise the skills and talents of the prisoners in their workplaces and record it. Last year, this only happened in DHL, but has gone wider this year and the current target is on the use of the booklets in kitchen work. A future challenge is for staff to recognise the literacy and numeracy skills being used in their areas. The ability to set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) targets is a training need. However, the prison officers' association (POA) has rejected the use of these booklets by their members.

It was hoped to publish the Prisoner Pathways booklet in October. However, this has been delayed due to budget constraints, although we understand that it is due to go ahead in March 2025. The functional skills policy is out for consultation. A new neurodiversity tracker has been developed that will link support strategies for each individual and is available to all staff.

It has been agreed that it is not the job of the education department to listen to disclosures or help prisoners to write them (a prisoner is required to disclose their offences to a potential employer). It is the responsibility of a much more integrated team, which includes the offender management unit (OMU), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), CFO3 (a scheme that helps prisoners make the transition to employment and social inclusion by identifying and addressing their needs) and, information, advice and guidance (IAG).

It is hoped that the Governor's new Red Line Strategy will support the culture change that will lead to growth of an employment-ready ethos.

New incentives that promote the work ethos are happening. The Governor proposed to start a 'Dragons Den' style initiative but was not able to progress due to financial rules and constraints regarding business set ups. In the future, it is hoped that the prison can work with the charitable sector to set up a scheme and bid for an innovation fund grant. The prisoners are very keen on this and suggest it would need a bit of a longer lead in for them to get their plans totally in place.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Weston College did not submit a bid for the new prison education contract, commencing in October 2025. However, they will continue delivering education services under the current Prison Education Framework, which concludes in September 2025. A needs' analysis, which provides information for individualised learning pathways, identified that there needs to be more emphasis on business, education and team leadership, as well as more information on employability in hospitality, catering and construction. In January, warehousing and storage was offered at Level 2 and will be offered at Level 3 later. A sample of courses running in July/August includes:

- Functional Skills in English and Maths: Levels 1 and 2
- Professional Cookery
- Business Administration
- Accountancy: Level 1
- Essential Digital Skills
- CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card: a key credential for many construction jobs
- Painting and Decorating: (this course is extremely popular)
- Horticulture: Level 2 City & Guilds
- Warehousing, Storage and Distribution: Level 2 City & Guilds
- Independent Learning Skills: (100% pass rate)
- Health and Safety in the Workplace: (100% pass rate)
- Construction : (100% pass rate)
- Food Safety: (100% pass rate)
- Peer Mentoring: Levels 2 and 3 (100% pass rate)

A sample of employer events planned to offer more work placements for prisoners includes:

- Unlocking Construction: 250 prisoners attended, and there were nine trainers.
- Greene King (a pub and brewing company) invited 24 prisoners to a workshop informing them of the training requirements and opportunities available within their business. However, this employer will not employ PCOSOs (Prisoners Convicted of Sexual Offences).
- The INTEND Group offering work opportunities in vegetation management on rail tracks and sidings.

A new person is in place to manage an external work-search team, particularly for the warehousing and storage pathway.

There is a plan to clarify for prisoners what employers expect on a CV.

It is thought that some courses need to be mandatory and this includes Food Safety, Health and Safety Training and Fire Training, all of which can be done online. These courses are accredited at Level 2, and each takes approximately two hours to complete.

The push on reading development continues via a programme, 'That Reading Thing'. Work in the library and on the wings with reading mentors is ongoing.

The majority of those of working age are employed inside the prison. The biggest employer is DHL where, on average 40 prisoners have been working in packaging and supplying goods for other prisons. Other internal workplaces include the kitchens,

market gardening, recycling, laundry (which serves five prisons and external contracts), woodwork and printshop.

Market gardening employed between 13 and 20 prisoners during the reporting year. All the gardens' produce is consumed within Leyhill. The prison believes that there is the potential to increase the output should they have the resources to do so. Training is all internal. There used to be qualifications available from the education department, but there are currently none listed on the curriculum. It is felt that there is potential to offer more formal training and qualifications and, consequently, increased employment potential.

Recycling employs 30 prisoners. Some are involved in recycling DVDs and CDs, which are brought in from suppliers, charity shops, retail outlets, etc. The cardboard is removed from the packaging and the plastic cases separated into coloured or clear, with the DVDs/CDs separated. All this is put into individual crates, which are then collected from Leyhill. The prison is paid to separate and bale its own waste cardboard, plastic and paper, together with these items received from Bristol and Eastwood Park prisons. A similar arrangement operates with scrap metals.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Stores, which employs 12 prisoners, is fully staffed and has forklift drivers, including high-lift telescopic handlers. There are three types of forklift truck, each requiring a separate course. There are several large contracts being fulfilled for MoJ paperwork and printing logos on T-shirts and high-visibility jackets. The stores also disperse thousands of books given free from a charity named Bang up Books. All are new and include children's books, which are distributed during family visits in other prisons.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Leyhill is a resettlement prison, so prisoners are understandably focused on securing parole. This process can be time-consuming, particularly because risk assessment has to be much more rigorous in a prison that has a high proportion of high-risk prisoners.

Between December 2023 and December 2024, offender management unit (OMU) resources were put under great pressure due to the introduction and implementation of a number of new and developing initiatives. Examples of these are:

- The Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) continued to operate although, by December, the numbers coming to Leyhill had significantly reduced, which relieved the pressure of finding additional accommodation. The numbers coming to Leyhill under this scheme continued to drop between January and June. In June, TPRS12 was introduced, which enabled eligible prisoners suitable for transfer to open conditions to be considered in the last 12 months of their sentence, which was increased from three months.
- The home detention curfew (HDC) scheme allows prisoners to serve the remaining part of their sentence at home under strict conditions which includes electronic monitoring and a curfew. There is an expectation from prisoners coming to Leyhill from the closed estate that those eligible for HDC will be released under the scheme. Unfortunately, finding suitable accommodation for eligible prisoners resulted in some having their release either delayed or rejected.
- In June, HDC4+ was introduced, to include prisoners serving standard determinate sentences of over four years. In September, 13 prisoners were released on HDC, with a further 38 released in October.

- The end of custody supervised licence (ECSL) scheme was started at Leyhill in February. It allowed eligible prisoners to be released up to 18 days earlier than their conditional release date. The criteria for the implementation of the scheme were complex and had a significant impact on the workload of the OMU. It was unfortunate that, in February, the usual ROTL work became a lower priority, as the OMU focused on the ECSL scheme. In March, eligibility under the scheme was extended from 18 days before the conditional release date to 35 days, and in May it was extended again up to 70 days. In September, the ECLS scheme was closed.
- In July, the SDS40 scheme was initiated nationally, replacing the SDS50 scheme, in order to assist with the prison capacity crisis. This would apply to prisoners expecting release at the 50% point now being reduced to 40%. The implementation of SDS40 had a significant impact on the workload of OMU, prison staff and the probation service, as they endeavoured to identify prisoners eligible for release under the scheme. Prisoners who are serving sentences related to sexual, violent and domestic abuse were excluded from the scheme. As reported in the July IMB monitoring reports, there was confusion amongst prisoners regarding their eligibility under the scheme. In September, six prisoners were released under SDS40, with a further 28 being released in October.

The IMB recognises that the OMU has been put under a significant amount of pressure implementing the above schemes/initiatives which, in many cases, have resulted in prisoners having their hopes raised, thinking they may qualify for early release. In July, the IMB was approached by several prisoners who believed they were eligible for release after serving 40% of their sentence, only to receive a letter from OMU stating that they did not qualify, despite being told by outside probation that they did fulfil the criteria. Another issue, reported in August, concerned delays in prisoners leaving, as paperwork had not been returned from their community offender manager (COM). Some prisoners do not have an allocated COM.

On a positive note, in August, the IMB was told that Leyhill was coping well with the expected early releases and that on 10 September, 42 prisoners were deemed to be eligible for release. Some were released at a later date, as they required Electronic Monitoring to be fitted. On the 22 October, 39 prisoners were released (12 on HDC and 27 on SDS40). On the same day across the whole prisoner estate, around 3000 prisoners were eligible for release.

In September, the OMU manager discussed the 'disruptive stresses' their staff had been under during the previous 18 months, following the Government initiatives to create space in the prison estate. Each initiative had required separate assessment and calculation to check eligibility. The Board was concerned that this extra work would result in OMU falling behind with the ROTL applications, with many of the prisoners visiting the OMU surgeries seeking an update on their ROTL dates.

The IMB was able to report in September that it felt the OMU appeared to have a good handle on the situation, producing weekly forecasts of prison numbers. Policy has been to keep the prison full of traditional long-term prisoners so that the space is not filled by potentially disruptive short-term TRPS prisoners. The IMB were pleased to hear that the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner had said they were 'happy with way that Leyhill was managing releases'.

Despite these added pressures, the OMU states that it continues to ‘rise to the challenge’ and we have seen an increase in the ROTL figures for January 2025, compared with December 2024, as shown below:

Category	December 2023	June 2024	December 2024	January 2025
ROTL applications	1862	2101	1414	1770
RDRs (day release to Bristol)	671	750	401	591
RDRs (unpaid work)	33	33	1	1
RDRs (paid work)	995	983	826	993
RORs	136	137	106	93
SPLs (special purpose leave)	94	81	71	85
Education and training	20	117	9	7

It should be noted that the drop-off in ROTL figures for December 2024, was due to the festive holidays and the shutdown of work placements.

All the above ROTL applications were successfully applied and are sometimes referred to as events.

Despite the above improvements in the ROTL figures, it is recognised that the number of prisoners working externally is still significantly low when compared with other open prisons. In December 2023, the Governor said that ‘Leyhill with just 52 working out was unacceptable and that the figure should be three times the amount’. It is unfortunate that we have not seen any improvement in the number of prisoners working outside. In July 2024 and January 2025, the Leyhill daily figure was usually around 50, with the addition of 12 drivers.

7.4 Resettlement planning

In January 2024, the IMB was told by the resettlement team that ‘they would like to see more external employment opportunities and that they support the Governor’s ambition to have a third of prisoners working externally’.

During the reporting year, both the resettlement team and the work experience (WEX) team were criticised for being partly responsible for what were perceived as low numbers of prisoners working outside the prison. In January 2024, WEX said that if you removed those unable to work externally from the total prison population due to age, disability, risk and employment locations, the number available was significantly reduced. WEX said that companies decide which prisoners they are willing to consider for employment depending on their skills and nature of their offences. This means that some prisoners are excluded by particular employers.

The issue of the lack of external jobs has been repeatedly raised by the IMB and discussed at length with the Governor and other members of the senior management team. There have been various initiatives tried throughout the year to improve the

figures, but as yet have shown little improvement. These initiatives have included hosting events, where companies were invited to Leyhill to discuss potential jobs, and visits to outside companies. Some of the companies that had positions available said that when vacancies came up and needed to be filled quickly, they had to deal with the 'prison bureaucracy'. National processes and policies were adhered to by Leyhill in order to safeguard all parties involved. The risk assessment and vetting for certain roles can take a considerable amount of time. On occasion, employers have changed their criteria after advertising their vacancy, which is their prerogative. Complications and delays have meant that the opportunity was lost for a small number of applicants. In order to reduce the time period from application to employment, the prison is building a database of prisoner qualifications, skills and restrictions. This will enable the prison to quickly identify prisoners suitable for specific vacancies. It is envisaged that this will reduce the time between the vacancy being advertised and the prisoner being available to start work. The end result will help increase the number of prisoners employed externally.

In December 2024, the Deputy Governor said he would be setting in motion 'a regime to improve WEX into getting more prisoners working out'. In January 2025, the IMB was told by the resettlement team that outside businesses were reluctant to take on PCOSOs, even though they initially stated that they were open to taking all types of prisoners.

The OMU figures for January 2025 show that 270 of the 459 Leyhill prisoners were PCOSOs, which equates to 59% of the prison population. The IMB has always recognised the high proportion of PCOSOs at Leyhill, whilst being aware that other category D prisons with a high proportion of PCOSOs are able to show greater successes in the prisoner working out of establishment figures. An example of this is HMP Hatfield, which was visited by the head of WEX in December 2024. It is hoped that a new Leyhill 'delivery plan', which has been written and is largely based on the visit to HMP Hatfield, will bear fruit in 2025.

In January 2025, the resettlement team said that they were increasing their search area, up to a 40-mile radius, with the hope it will increase the availability of external jobs. Also, the team has taken on two construction companies to 'act as agents' in helping prisoners find external work. In the resettlement team's defence, they have said that the pool of prisoners available for external work is quite low, based on the 50 to 55 that are working externally, plus 12 drivers. The resettlement team reiterated what was said in January 2024 (see above), that this is down to many prisoners who are beyond retirement age, sick, a sex offender or have just six months left on their sentence. Another problem that the team mentioned was that there was 'apathy amongst some prisoners, in that they are reluctant to apply for external jobs, particularly those who are sent money from outside'.

The Board takes some comfort, however, from the Governor's continued statements that he hopes to fulfil his ambition of achieving half of the prison population being employed externally.

The IMB does recognise the above issues but, at the same time, we are concerned that the numbers working outside are deemed to be low. Through working outside, prisoners will be able to demonstrate to the parole board that they have made progress in their offending behaviour. This is particularly relevant to the indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) prisoners, the majority of which remain in prison beyond their indicative tariff.

The IMB continues to be concerned about the ongoing situation of IPP prisoners. The HMIP inspection report stated that they 'regard the treatment of IPP prisoners as deeply unjust, particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place'.

In January 2024, the number of prisoners serving life sentences was 119, with 65 non-IPP and 54 IPP. In June 2024, the number of prisoners serving life sentences was 94, with 48 non-IPP and 46 IPP. In January 2025, there were 107 prisoners serving life sentences, with 79 non-IPP and 28 IPP. Although this shows a drop in the number of 'lifers' and IPP prisoners, it has not been as low as we have seen across the prison estate. The OMU commented that it is an indicator of progress that prisoners are transferring from the closed to the open estate. Recent parole outcomes show a release decision of more than 50%. In September 2024, the IMB was told that there was a shortage of approved premises for IPPs and lifers, due to places being filled with the SDS40 and HDC releases. This clearly has resulted in a delay in the release of both IPPs and lifers.

In February 2024, the IMB was told by WEX that they were not actively looking for new placements, but stated that if prisoners could find their own placements, they would look into them. Unfortunately, the opportunities that prisoners had in looking for outside jobs were severely limited. Between February and August, the IMB repeatedly reported that the three laptops in the resettlement/employment hub, despite being available had a number of issues. In July 2024, the IMB reported:

- The laptops have no office software, meaning prisoners could not create CVs or covering letters.
- They have a very limited job search capacity, allowing only access to the Government website which, at the time, showed no job vacancies.
- Prisoners were unable to set up an account, meaning they cannot have an email address.
- Due to issues with the security software, there were constant breaks in internet availability.
- Prisoners were unable to make copies of any letters they received or sent, because the laptops were not connected to any printers.

Unsurprisingly, the laptops were not being used. The IMB reported that it found the above wholly unacceptable, when prisoners were being encouraged to seek their own external employment.

In February 2024, the WEX team told the IMB that one of the biggest stumbling blocks to getting prisoners working outside is transport as 'we have only a certain capacity and struggle to find room for prisoners going to potential workplaces'. This has been a recurring problem over the years and has been frequently raised with various Governors. The current Governor did say he would look into prisoners using their own vehicles and how this could be funded. At present, the prison is unable to accommodate prisoners' vehicles, due to reduced car park availability on site. Expansion-project contractors, vehicles and temporary offices located in the upper car park have reduced the number of spaces available. The IMB, during previous visits to HMP Prescoed and HMP Hewell, did see successful schemes operating where prisoners were able to use their own vehicles for working externally. HMP Prescoed, which is considerably smaller than Leyhill, has 35% of the prisoners working outside compared with approximately 10% at Leyhill.

The WEX team, over the last six months of the reporting year, has come under criticism from the resettlement, learning and skills teams, and route office. In March 2024, the IMB were told that WEX is perceived as a hindrance to finding outside jobs for prisoners, as they do not go out to find and facilitate working outside.

Prisoners are expected to engage with education and achieve a prison-mandated Level 2 in Maths and English. Some prisoners are clearly not able to achieve that level. The IMB was told that, where prisoners cannot achieve the required level, education will assess whether or not they have reached their maximum potential.

In August, the IMB was told by the learning and skills team that the Level 2 requirement in Maths and English for outside work and courses would be dropped, which has since been implemented.

The WEX and resettlement teams have been involved in a number of initiatives with various companies to offer training and outside workplaces. These initiatives have resulted in some work placements, although somewhat limited. A number of Betaris Railtrack courses have delivered far fewer work placements than was originally expected. In July, Greene King, which had said they could offer jobs, restructured and the vacancies were withdrawn. Part of the problem for Greene King was that when they informed the prison of a potential vacancy, they were told by WEX that it would be at least six weeks before a prisoner would be able to start due to health and safety, police checks, etc. Betaris had put around 10 prisoners through HGV Level 2 by the end of July. However, none of the prisoners are known to have gone on to be employed, either on ROTL or employment after leaving Leyhill.

Family contact is maintained by visits on Saturday and Sunday, from 1.30pm to 3.30pm. Social video calls are available, when pre-booked, on a Thursday. Due to the introduction of social video calls and the increasing costs of travel, demand for mid-week social visits reduced significantly. Therefore, the option of general weekday visiting is no longer provided. There are some family visits on weekdays. The prison has stated that they will carry out a review if there is an increase in demand.

PIN protected phone contact is available for all prisoners in phone booths, with time limitations for some, depending on the unit in which they are located. The number of telephones available is limited and results in long waiting times at peak demand. Many prisoners had access to in-cell telephony in the closed estate and believe that their transfer to an open prison with reduced opportunities to speak with family is a retrograde step.

8. The work of the IMB

There were 257 visits in 2024-2025 compared with 270 in 2023-2024.

The Governor, senior members of the team and staff have all been cooperative and supportive of the Board. The appointment of a permanent IMB clerk is appreciated by the Board and the role continues to develop. The business hub has provided support where possible, often with a reduced number of staff.

Board meetings were held monthly at Leyhill, with some members attending remotely via Teams. The option of remote attendance has allowed the Board to improve its demographics by offering opportunities to members who remain in full-time employment. The annual team performance review was held in November 2024.

A weekly rota has been maintained throughout, with members in regular contact with staff and each other. A weekly report is prepared, with a copy sent to the Governor. There has been regular contact between the Governor and the Board chair.

The Board has reviewed and analysed completed discharge surveys to identify any trends.

IT access following the system upgrade continues to provide challenges for Board members. The outsourcing of IT administration has resulted in difficulties for Board members to gain access to the system.

Two members transferred to Leyhill from other local establishments and one new member joined the Board.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	14
Total number of visits to the establishment	257

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	2	1
C	Equality	3	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	1
F	Food and kitchens	3	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	5	1
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	2	6
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	5	11
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	4	8
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	4	1
	Total number of applications	31	36



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